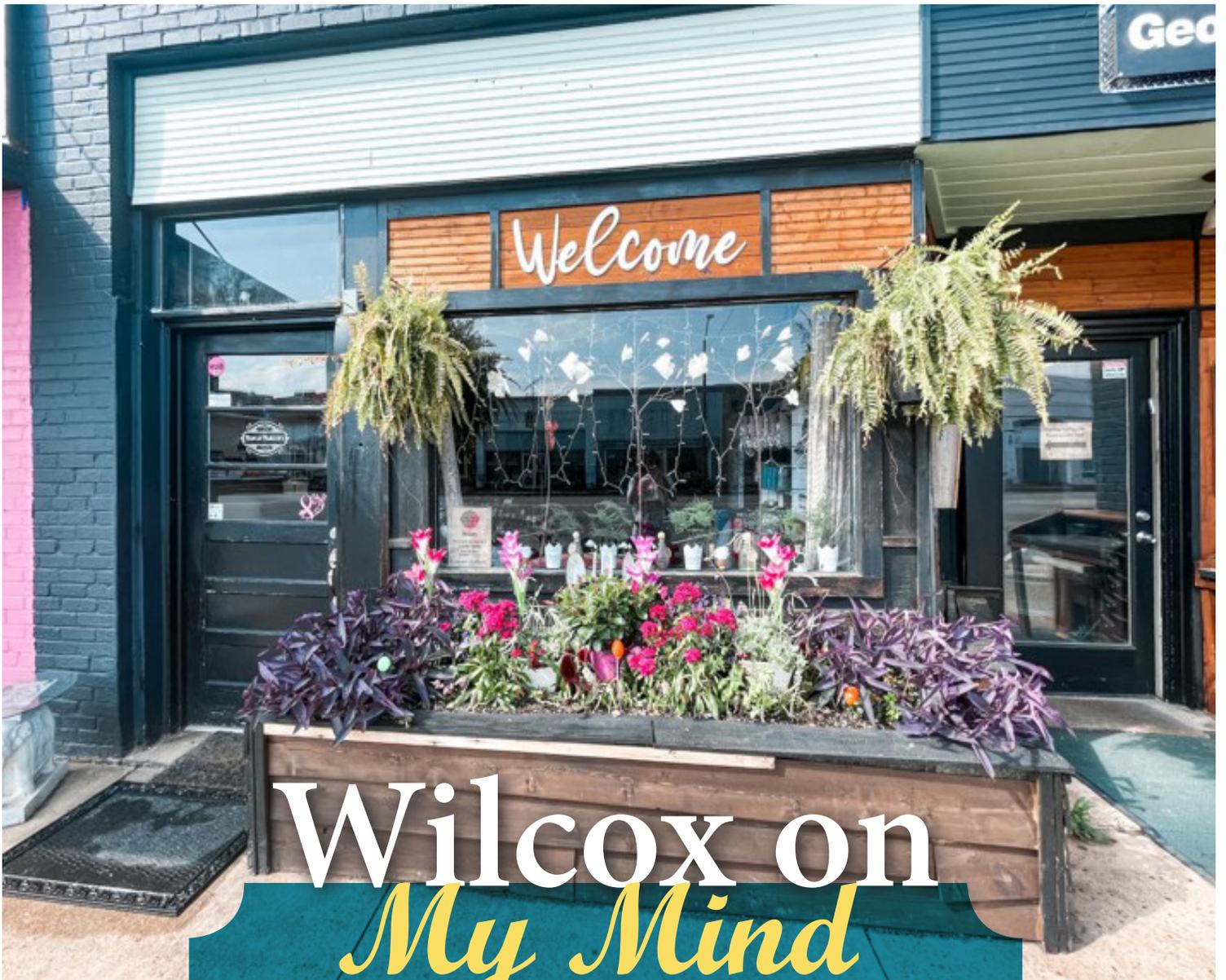




August, 2023



# Wilcox on *My Mind*

A Joint Comprehensive Plan for  
Wilcox County, Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle, Georgia

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A Joint Comprehensive Plan for  
Wilcox County, Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle, Georgia  
in accordance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 and  
the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures  
established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
with an effective date of October 1, 2018

Prepared By:

The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee  
The Wilcox County Local Governments  
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission



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# *Introduction & Executive Summary*



***Wilcox on My Mind*** -- The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan is a comprehensive plan prepared for Wilcox County, the City of Abbeville, the City of Pineview, the City of Pitts, and the City of Rochelle, Georgia. This plan was prepared in accordance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 and the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (effective date of March 1, 2014). *Wilcox on My Mind* serves as the five-year update to the previously adopted version of the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Everlasting Wilcox* (previous effective date of October 2, 2018).

Wilcox County is a rural county in south central Georgia with a 2020 Census population of 8,767 (ranking 132nd in the state of Georgia). The county's size of 377.7 square miles ranks 64th in Georgia. This gives Wilcox County an estimated 2020 population density of 23.2 peo-

ple per square mile, much less than the estimated Georgia total of 185.6/sq. mile, and significantly less than the U.S. total of 93.8/sq. mile. Over one-fifth, or 20.8 percent of Wilcox's 2020 population was living in group quarters, nearly all 92 percent were the Wilcox State Prison population of inmates. Wilcox County experienced a 5.2 percent population loss from 2010 to 2020 according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data. The Georgia population had a 10.5 percent increase during this same time frame, and the U.S. average increased by 7.3 percent. Wilcox County is one of Georgia's counties described as having persistent poverty, currently measured around 20.9 percent of its population, compared to 13.3 percent in Georgia overall. The unemployment rate in Wilcox County improved from 12.9 percent in 2010 to 4.1 percent in 2022. Median household income and per capita income in Wilcox County rank significantly low in the state. Per capita income within the county is reported at averaging \$16,629 from 2017 to 2021. Such statistics have resulted in Georgia still ranking Wilcox County as a 2022 Job Tax Tier 1 county. While this ranking is for Georgia's bottom 40 percent or so of counties needing an economic boost, it has the advantage of offering Georgia's largest tax breaks for job creation within Wilcox County, and thus a substantial incentive for business job creator entities and further economic improvement. Wilcox County's economic future does have many positive factors which hold much promise.



*Aerial View of Wilcox County Courthouse*

Wilcox County has a rich history of early settlement related to the Ocmulgee River, its fields and forests, and its status on the Georgia Frontier. It is believed to have been explored by DeSoto; which was the site of the last major conflict, the Battle of Breakfast Branch in the Creek Indian War in Georgia; and was where Jefferson Davis spent his penultimate night before capture nearby. It is said that settlers were attracted to the county because of free land, and stayed because of the beautiful streams, rivers, pine forests, healthy spring waters and fertile soils. Although settled early,

the county was not formally established until 1857. Growth remained only modest until the arrival of railroads in the late 1800s. The county's heyday of growth was from 1880 to 1920 when county population soared from 3,109 in 1880 to 15,511 in 1920. Unfortunately, with the decline of the railroads, the advent of the automobile, the subsequent development of highways and larger commercial centers in nearby Cordele, Eastman, and Warner Robins, the Great Depression, and the mechanization of agriculture, Wilcox County and its cities declined in a steady spiral from the population peak in 1920 all the way to the 1990s. Only the opening of Wilcox State Prison in 1994 reversed these trends. Population in the county now is relatively stable, and there is some residential growth because of the same reasons initial settlement occurred – the charm, natural beauty, and quality of life afforded by its natural resources, fields, and forests and bedroom community living close to nearby job centers.



*Rochelle, Wilcox County*

As with initial development in the county, Wilcox County's location, scenic natural beauty, its active fields and forests, and overall rural quality of life offer potential for future growth and progress. Wilcox County was ranked 31st in Georgia for total Farmgate value (\$128,938,959) in 2021. The county was ranked the 3rd highest valued county for watermelon production, 4th in oats, and 7th in rye. Abbeville's Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival is a widely known celebration of outdoor amenities, and an example of local civic pride and cooperation, having been given organization and a foundation of success through a local civic club and community involvement. The county's strong family values, many faith-based organizations and dedicated community caring are evident in many endeavors. The same leadership and involvement which brought tourism to the county's healing spring waters and the Georgia Normal College and Business Institute to Abbeville to address educational deficiencies in the early 20th cen-

ture remain evident today. The community school system's motto is "I Believe in You," and it has developed an innovative program, the Patriot Academy for School Success (PASS), to improve academic performance and otherwise meet the needs of local students in achieving standards, despite local funding problems. Continuing cooperation, preparation for growth, promoting and accentuating assets can attract additional visitors, residents, and retirees to share in the bucolic, special quality of life available in Wilcox County. The growth of the inland port being created in nearby Cordele, the planned widening of U.S. 280, the further enhancement and support to local agriculture, increasing access and attention to abundant local natural resources of breathtaking beauty and soul-soothing pastoral vistas offer many avenues to facilitate desired, compatible growth and get more people to recognize the allure of the community's everlasting beauty. There is much opportunity in farming, family, and future within the community to recognize this potential and achieve the expressed Community Vision. This plan seeks to capitalize on these assets and improve weaknesses through a multi-faceted strategy to better the community as a place to live, work, play or visit, and otherwise enhance quality future growth and development.



*Cotton Farm, Wilcox County*

The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan is locally driven, addressing local needs and cultivating widespread community interest, support, and buy-in. The title of this plan was chosen to capture the spirit of a community which desires to keep its rural values while providing opportunities for growth and sustained community. The Wilcox County community wants to protect its rural character, conserve its fertile fields and forests, improve its infrastructure, develop more leadership and public/private partnerships, attract new residents and compatible jobs, utilize its natural resources and heritage, and grow tourism, among its guiding aims and principles outlined herein.

**Previous Plans.** This comprehensive plan is the fifth within the County prepared under the auspices of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. The first was adopted in 1995, while the second comprehensive plan was adopted in 2005. A partial update of the second plan was also adopted in 2010 in accordance with state requirements. Both plans were intensively data and state requirement driven, although local objectives can be discerned. The second plan contains much local information which may not easily be found elsewhere and may remain of use. The third plan, Wonderful Wilcox – Farm, Family, and Future, was adopted in 2013 and set in motion new DCA planning standards which greatly reduced the data content required of a comprehensive plan. The document was designed to be more user friendly and inclusive of issues determined to be a challenge to the community. Everlasting Wilcox, the fourth plan adopted in 2018 is an update to the previous plan with additional sections such the Broadband Services element and individual municipal visions. Wilcox on My Mind, the fifth and most current plan will build and continue to work towards the county’s long-term goals. Each of these plans will remain available with the Wilcox County local government, Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, and the Department of Community Affairs.



**L** Wilcox State Prison    **R** Narcoa Car Train

**Data.** The world wide web provides vast data repositories accessible through free search engines. This allows easy access to significant amounts of data, and profiles of any jurisdiction, including Wilcox County and its municipalities. For this reason, this comprehensive plan includes only limited data to depict or illustrate points. The new DCA planning standards encourage such non-inclusion of data. Almost any data depicted at a moment in time quickly becomes dated, and maybe irrelevant. The world wide web offers the opportunity of more relevant and up-to-date data at the time of access. There are a variety of reliable public and private sources of data. Of course, the traditional source of official community data is the U.S. Census Bureau. Data on Wilcox County, its municipalities, or any other jurisdiction is quickly accessed at [data.census.gov/](http://data.census.gov/) which will provide a summary community profile on many popular data items and links to even more data. Another quality source of data is the website [www.statsamerica.org](http://www.statsamerica.org), which provides a compilation of primarily government data on many items for any county in any state of the U.S. The site is maintained by Indiana University in partnership with the federal Economic Development Administration. The University of Georgia maintains a website, [georgiadata.org](http://georgiadata.org), where county level data for nearly 1,300 variables related to a wide variety of subjects on population, labor, natural resources,

government, health, education, and crime can be accessed. The data can be compared to other counties and the state as well as on a historical change basis, among various user options. The data is compiled from The Georgia County Guide and the Farmgate Value Report prepared by UGA’s Extension Service. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (georgiaplanning.com) has available data for cities and counties under the heading “Your Plan,” and then “Community Planning Resources,” and will also prepare community data reports when requested under “Other Resources.” The State of Georgia has official labor and economic data in its Georgia Labor Market Explorer as organized by the Georgia Department of Labor at explorer.gdol.ga.gov. Additional state sponsored economic data is available at georgia.org. Excellent overall private data sources include city-data.com, www.usa.com, and datausa.io; while headwater-seconomics.org is an excellent source for socioeconomic information, including data and interpretation through its economic profile system.

**Population Projections.** As noted earlier, the official 2020 U.S. Census reported Wilcox County’s population to be 8,767, down 5.2 percent from 9,255 reported in the 2010 U.S. Census. The Georgia population had a 10.5 percent increase during this same time frame, and the U.S. average increased by 7.3 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau estimate for 2022’s Wilcox County population is 8,761, a decline of very little significance. This suggests a retraction in the area’s economy or very little current growth. The 1920’s marked the highest population in Wilcox County which climbed to 15,511. The 1970’s had the lowest recorded population of 6,998. Wilcox County’s location, quality of life, and easy access to larger surrounding growth centers, particularly Cordele, are positive factors and influences on future growth and development.

While past and present population levels are readily available on the world wide web, population projections are not so easily accessed. The Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) is responsible for generating official state population projections for Georgia counties. Current OPB projections for Wilcox County from 2020-2060 are 8,502 persons in 2020, the population for 2030 was reported at 8,425, the population for 2040 was reported at 8,221, the 2050 population was reported at 8,026, and the 2060 is projected to be 7,840. The OPB’s projections show a decrease over time. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) also prepares population projections which have proven to be relatively accurate in the past. HOGARC’s 2023 population projections for Wilcox County reflect the same projections as the OPB. Both organizations use similar methodology which use standard cohort component demographic methodology, relying upon recent historical fertility, migration, and age data. Year-by-year projections for the state are available through the year 2060. These projections include state and county level projections by age, sex, and race using baseline data from the Census Bureau’s vintage 2020 Population Estimates.

### Population Projections, Wilcox County

	2020	2030	2040	2050
OPB Long-Term Population Projections, series 2021	8,502	8,425	8,221	8,026
HOGARC Regional Plan 2040	8,800	9,819	10,401	----
HOGARC Long-Term Population projections, 2023	8,766	9,400	9,852	10,325

*Source: Governor’s Office of Planning and Budgeting, Series 2021 Long-Term Population Projections; Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, Regional Plan 2040, Population Projections; Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission 2023 Long-Term Population Projections*

**Coordination with Other Plans.** Wilcox County has an approved and adopted hazard mitigation plan prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to remain eligible for federal disaster assistance. While both plans have been cross-consulted and coordinated, it is clear that the two most prominent hazards facing Wilcox County that can be influenced by the comprehensive plan are the hazard mitigation plan goals to reduce damage from flood hazards and wildfire, and thereby protect life and health. The comprehensive plan objectives to conserve the county’s river and stream corridors, to maintain healthy active forests and fields (including employing proper management techniques), to improve fire/emergency management and other public safety services, and to enhance growth management/code enforcement regulation are generally consistent, and offer implementation to, the hazard mitigation plan.

The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan is also consistent with the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy’s goals and objectives to develop industrial parks, develop/improve local infrastructure, enhance telecommunications infrastructure, retain existing businesses/industry, attract new industry, and spur non-traditional economic development, like tourism and downtown development, are repeated as principal goals in the Wilcox County Comprehensive Plan. The local plan is similarly supportive of espoused state economic goals.



**L** Abbeville Methodist Church    **R** Residence in Wilcox County

**Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria Consideration.** Wilcox County is part of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council. The adopted regional water plan, Altamaha Regional Water Plan (2011) and its 2021 update, were considered by the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee and the local governments in preparation of this plan. This local comprehensive plan’s objectives to maintain viable agriculture/forestry uses, protect/conservate natural resources, to enhance intergovernmental coordination and government/efficiencies, and upgrade local infrastructure all help implement, and maintain consistency with, the regional water plan. The vision of the regional water plan, “to wisely manage, develop and protect the region’s water resources...to enhance quality of life..., protect natural systems..., and support the basin’s economy,” is inherent in this comprehensive plan’s community vision and goals.

Similarly, the Environmental Planning Criteria were also considered in the development of this comprehensive plan. The local governments of Wilcox County, including Wilcox County, the City of Abbeville, the City of Pineview, the City of Pitts, and the City of Rochelle, have long been in compliance with the Environmental Planning Criteria, having adopted and implementing, consistent “Environmental Conservation, On-Site Sewage Management, and Permit” Ordinances in 2001.

**Consistency with Quality Community Objectives.** In 2011, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs changed its Quality Community Objectives to a more general listing and summary of the 10 objectives. These include Economic Prosperity, Resource Management, Efficient Land Use, Local Preparedness, Sense of Place, Regional Cooperation, Housing Options, Transportation Options, Educational Opportunities, and Community Health.

The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan directly espouses (many of) these objectives and therefore, is very consistent with, and supportive of them. This comprehensive plan has goals to achieve a brighter future and better community for Wilcox County which is consistent with a quality community and the DCA Quality Community Objectives.

**Community Involvement.** As noted earlier, the Wilcox County local governments clearly wanted to develop a broad-based community plan which would involve and excite all concerned, both public and private, with the future growth and development of Wilcox County and its municipalities. To accomplish this, they created a steering committee, the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, of all local stakeholders who could be envisioned to help guide this plan’s development. Each participant had the common goal of making the community a better place to live, work, recreate, and learn. This committee did include elected and appointed members from the governing authorities, local economic development practitioners, and local government staff, as well as many others concerned with community and economic development and other issues within the entire community. This Coordination Committee was actively involved in the development of all facets of this comprehensive plan, and had numerous opportunities to both help develop, review, and revise all components. The first orders of business at any Coordination Committee meeting were review of any revisions to previous elements based on committee input, and chances to return to and modify earlier elements, if desired. The initial kick-off meeting conducted a visioning exercise to establish the community goals, challenges, and strategies. The vision exercise helped create a vision statement, which provided a roadmap for the follow-on comprehensive planning steps. The second meeting of the Local Plan Coordination Committee included a formal identification of strengths and weaknesses of the community, including opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). This identification was utilized in developing all plan elements. The public was offered the chance to participate in the two required public hearings (and with the Coordination Committee, if desired, after the initial public hearing). These hearings were advertised through unique wording to specifically generate interest and participation. The initial public hearing was held near the beginning of the plan development process to explain the process, offer opportunity for further participation, and solicit input

on an improved community vision and local issues/opportunities. The final public hearing was held after a plan draft was developed and reviewed by the Coordination Committee to allow citizen review, solicit any final input, and inform of pending submittal. Citizens were also afforded the opportunity to voice their input during a community drop-in/input session held at the Wilcox County Courthouse in Abbeville from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., which was both publicly posted and announced in the local newspaper. Also, a webpage specifically devoted to this plan was promoted throughout the community which allowed for the administration of a community vision survey. A more detailed summary of community involvement is included in the appendix.



*Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Kick-off Meeting*

## **1. Interactive Website**

In order to provide the community with a clear understanding of how the planning process would work and to keep residents updated throughout the process, an interactive website was developed. Through the website, citizens could access documents and notes from each stakeholder meeting and could submit responses to the survey questions at any time throughout the planning process. In addition, a planning timeline was made available on the website so that community members were always aware of when different meetings and planning sessions were occurring.

## **2. SWOT Analysis**

An initial steering committee meeting was held on February 28th, 2023. During this meeting, members of the steering committee participated in a SWOT analysis where they identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Wilcox County. Figure 1 shows the results of the SWOT analysis. This activity provided a starting point in identifying the overall Needs and Opportunities of Wilcox County, which are addressed in "Needs and Opportunities". The SWOT analysis showed that one of Wilcox County's greatest strengths was agribusiness, agritourism, and production. The location of Wilcox County is centrally located in a

prime area that produces some of Georgia’s highest yields in crop production. Additionally, schools and sports programs were identified as a strength to the community. The analysis also showed weakness in areas such as lack of public transportation in the area, and more continuity between local governments. Some of the opportunities that were identified were the surplus of land for development, and the Wilcox State Prison employment opportunities. The analysis identified drug use as a threat to the local community’s public safety. Additionally, the lack of career opportunities and challenges to retain young people proved to be a significant threat to the county.

### 3. Community Survey

A community survey was developed with the help of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, Wilcox County, and its municipalities, to distribute to community members. The survey consisted of 25 questions and the goal of the survey was to gain additional public input on the needs and opportunities of the community. The survey was distributed to community members through email, paper copies, and a link was made available on the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update webpage. The results of the survey were discussed at a later stakeholder meeting where the needs and opportunities of the community were addressed. A copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix.



*Downtown Abbeville*

***Wilcox on My Mind*** is truly a locally developed guide to, and framework for, future growth and development of Wilcox County designed to generate local pride and enthusiasm, to accentuate assets and improve weaknesses, and ultimately bring about a desired future which makes the Wilcox County community an improved place to live and work with an outstanding and enhanced quality of life. It is realized that to overcome challenges and to make a difference will take time and much effort, but it is felt this plan is pragmatic and practical in outlining a course and roadmap for steps and actions which can be achieved, and which will move the community forward. The plan continues to build on the elements included in the 2018 Wilcox County Plan titled Everlasting Wilcox.

# S

## STRENGTHS

1. Strong entrepreneurship
2. Arts council
3. Businesses
4. Trail on riverbank
5. Trail (private)
6. Depot in Rochelle
7. History
8. Blueberry, strawberry farms – agritourism
9. Historic building – courthouse
10. New K-12 school
11. School programs, Sports teams
12. Work force training program – Wiregrass Technical College
13. DDA in Rochelle
14. Wilcox County Development Authority Board
15. Local businesses trying to offer job positions to young people

# W

## WEAKNESSES

1. Need to incorporate all cities into the united plan view
2. Lack of public land in the county
3. Lack of use depot in Rochelle – need a survey
4. Lack of cooperation between cities and counties – lack of good leadership to work together – consistent disagreement on funding expense
5. Lack of animal control
6. No grant writer applying for grants
7. Division among local residents
8. Lack of chamber leadership to take actions on existing funding
9. Need new industry
10. Lack support from the local community
11. Lack of efficient advertisement for local events
12. Lack of a sense of unity
13. Lack of transportation getting to events
14. Tax bases need to be increased

# O

## OPPORTUNITIES

1. Railroad has large right of ways that is potential to be used for trails – rails to trails
2. Getting a new marching band
3. State prison
4. Land – opportunity for development
5. Vacancies at Chamber of Commerce

# T

## THREATS

1. Deterioration of the courthouse
2. State prison
3. Young people leaving
4. Lack of law enforcement for events with alcohol involved
5. Drug issue – threaten public safety services

Figure 1. SWOT Analysis Results

# Community Goals



The Community Goals Element is described in the State Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning as the most important part of the Comprehensive Plan. It is a summary of future community desires and wishes. It provides a clearly referenced roadmap for community leaders and all concerned with growth and development of the community and its future.

The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes a general Community Vision, separate municipal descriptions/visions, listing of Community Goals, and a description of the Long-Term Community Policies. These components seek to paint a picture of the desired future community and answer the question **“Where does the community wish to go?”**

## Community Vision

**W**ilcox County is: “Brimming with spirit and pride for our rural heritage, we will vigorously protect, promote, and enhance our community assets. Having proximity to a major U.S. Interstate and rail access, the County is poised to capture our unique opportunity for economic growth. We will seek to implement innovative solutions and improvements in our public and private sectors that maximize operational efficiency and build upon the quality of community experience. Our community will forge, maintain, and prioritize efforts in community outreach and intergovernmental relations. Continual achievements in community betterment will be made through strategic actions taken in economic development, historic preservation, environmental protection, healthcare, education, community development, and public service. We will continue to promote our rich natural and cultural resources, and work to create an all inviting, lively community.”

Wilcox County is a small, enduring rural county rich in history with an eye to the future. Much of its existing economic base remains closely dependent upon agriculture and a state prison. However, Wilcox's small-town atmosphere, caring community, scenic countryside, and abundant natural and cultural resources, including the Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers, provide an excellent, slow-paced quality of life appropriate and conducive for living and raising children.

## **To fulfill our vision of the community we desire, we will consider the following goals when promoting our community:**

- 1. Promote a healthy, transparent citizen-government relationship**
- 2. Create a common brand that will enhance Wilcox County's improvements and successfully market it as a place to live, work, and play**
- 3. Seek investment to capitalize on our agricultural economic base**
- 4. Remain vigilant of tourism trends and seek ways to innovate promotion of the community**
- 5. Remove blight and improve cost-burdened housing**
- 6. Preserve, enhance, and promote the area's cultural and natural resources**
- 7. Maintain the sense of place and small-town character and feel of Wilcox County**
- 8. Ensure that future development is coordinated appropriately with infrastructure, including transportation, broadband services, water and sewer service areas**

Wilcox County aims to attract new residents and encourage quality growth compatible with and conducive to continuing its quality of life and maintaining its rural character. To accomplish this and encourage compatible future growth, the community's local governments want to continue to develop and expand community facilities supportive of and conducive to such residential and other growth. Continuing improvement of existing water and sewer systems, telecommunications, recreational facilities, educational facilities and services, public safety, law enforcement, health services, and industrial development parks, among other improvements, will provide the capability for accommodating growth and development. Completion of the U.S. 280 widening and the proximity to I-75 and Inland Port in Cordele will attract more growth and opportunities to the region and Wilcox County. As the local popu-

lation grows, new shops and further economic development would be attracted to serve the growing population. Wilcox County, Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle must be steadfast in their combined recruitment efforts and ensure infrastructure capacity is available for development to further realize the opportunities of Wilcox County. To endure, each local government recognizes what is good for one is good for all.

Wilcox County will remain both farm and family. The County remains one of Georgia's leading agriculture counties. The County is also recognized as one of the tops producing counties for watermelons. Due to the favorable climate and other agriculture production variables, farmers are able to produce a wide variety of crops throughout the year. Livestock farmers also fare well in Wilcox due to the availability of water, land, and the mild climate. Its people with strong family values, faith-based organizations, and dedicated community caring are evident in all endeavors. The school system's motto is "I Believe in You." The biggest county festival, the Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival, and the Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon owe their organization and success to local civic and community involvement.



**L** Sunflower Farm    **R** Pecan Farm

A growing percentage of residents have chosen to live in Wilcox County because of its outstanding character and quality of life, while working in nearby areas like Cordele, Warner Robins, or others. It is noted that while the aesthetics and appealing landscape and community characteristics are special, the cost of living within Wilcox County is 17 percent lower than the U.S. average. Teamed with the incredible natural resources of Wilcox County, including the pastoral scenes and open spaces of the many farms and forests and the unmatched natural wonders of the Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers, attraction to the community is almost effortless.

Heritage is also important within Wilcox County from its believed exploration by Hernando de Soto, to its early Revolutionary War veteran settlers, to the Battle of Breakfast Branch in the Creek Indian War, to its association with Jefferson Davis spending the night shortly befo-

re his capture, to its railroad development and the present. Nearly the entire town of Rochelle was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. The History Channel show titled “The Curse of Civil War Gold” included an episode filmed in Abbeville. While no gold has been found to date, one may surmise the allure of finding hidden gold in Wilcox County will attract visitors. The community seeks to welcome these visitors and will make a case that the lifestyle in Wilcox is as close to “golden” as one needs.



**L** Wilcox County Library    **R** Farm Land, Wilcox County

To realize this expected future and larger community of Wilcox County, there are needs and expectations. To allow its existing and new residents, workers, and retirees to enjoy a growing Wilcox County with a continuing high quality of life and preservation of its rural character and natural beauty and historic resources, there is need to manage this growth with appropriate land use ordinances, which support agricultural uses. There are needs to improve and upgrade community infrastructure and preserve aesthetics. High-speed broadband internet will be available countywide to accommodate the needs of business and industry. The agricultural base and farming uses will be strengthened and utilized for further economic development, including innovative, cutting-edge agri-business enterprises and plenty of related job opportunities. New facilities, amenities, shops, and diverse industries would be developed to both encourage and serve the growing needs and numbers of new residents, as well as provide more options for local graduates to remain at home if they so desire. Local quality of life would be enhanced through recreation opportunities for all ages, continued excellent quality of education facilities/services, availability of local entertainment options, and higher/improved housing standards. Wilcox County will have its own brand for marketing itself as a perfect rural setting to live, work, and raise children. The quality of its small-town life will be recognized and desired.

# City of Abbeville

## Description

The City of Abbeville dates from 1858 when it was laid out on a 60 acre site near the Ocmulgee River on land David Fitzgerald donated for the county seat of the newly created Wilcox County (1857). The county's new court justices accepted the land donation even though it meant that the seat of government would be on the county's eastern boundary rather than in a central location. The name Abbeville has been variously attributed to Abbie Fitzgerald, wife of the land donor, as well as to Abba McDuffie, wife of the county's organizer, Norman McDuffie, and to the Abbeville District in South Carolina from which some early settlers came. Criticism of Abbeville's location prompted the General Assembly on September 27, 1879, to enact legislation allowing any taxpayer in Wilcox County to challenge in court whether Abbeville's location complied with the 1857 act requiring that the county seat be in a central and convenient place (Ga. Laws 1878-79, p. 409). There was some interest in relocating the county seat to a site 1.5 miles south of present-day Rochelle. However, apparently, no serious challenge resulted, and Abbeville has remained the Wilcox County seat to the present. On September 15, 1883, the State Legislature incorporated Abbeville as a town.

Long before the town of Abbeville was established, several significant historic events occurred at or near its present-day site. The Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto is believed to have discovered the Ocmulgee River there on April 3, 1540. In addition, the last battle with the area's Creek Indians, known as the Battle of Breakfast Branch, took place in the vicinity on March 9, 1818. Thirty-four (34) men of the Telfair County Militia engaged about 60 Creek Indians in combat, leaving four Native Americans and five white men dead. Among the three wounded white men was Mark Wilcox (later Major General) for whom the county may have been named. Some believe his father, Captain John Wilcox, was actually the county's namesake.

A few years after Abbeville's founding, former president of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis fled through Wilcox County at the close of the Civil War. On May 8, 1865, his party crossed the Ocmulgee River at Poor Robin Ferry, just north of Abbeville. He camped that night at Abbeville, which at that time consisted of the courthouse, several stores, and at most a dozen houses. The next day he traveled 26 miles to Irwinville, where he spent his last night before Union troops captured him the morning of May 10, 1865.

Abbeville experienced its greatest growth in history during the 1880s, increasing from an 1880 Census population of 61 by an astounding 977 percent to 657 in 1890. Completion of the Savannah-Americus-Montgomery (SAM) Railroad, which later became the Seaboard

Coast Line, through Wilcox County from 1887 to 1888 was likely a major impetus in the community's growth. The SAM owned and operated a fleet of five (5) riverboats on the Ocmulgee and Altamaha rivers, which connected with the rail line in Abbeville. The riverboats hauled freight to the ports of Darien, Brunswick, and Savannah. This arrangement continued until not long after the rail connection to Savannah was completed. Rapid growth continued in the next decade at a rate of 75.3 percent with Abbeville's population reaching 1,152 by 1900. A visitor in 1899 observed in a newspaper article appearing in the Tifton Gazette that "the people of Abbeville and surrounding country [are] intelligent, sober, whole-hearted, enthusiastic, sociable and enterprising, and...give a hearty welcome to those coming to their city."



**L** Historic Residence    **R** West Main Street, Abbeville

Georgia Normal College and Business Institute opened in Abbeville in 1898 with an enrollment of about 300 students, most of whom were from Georgia and Florida. Families are said to have even moved to Abbeville to educate their children at the coeducational school in the areas of teaching, business, and/or the sciences. According to a contemporary account soon after opening, "the school ranks among the best in Georgia." The campus consisted of three two-story structures (two wooden and one brick), which were said to be quite impressive for such a small city as Abbeville. The college was indeed "the pride of the town." Sadly, ten years after its creation, the school moved 40 miles southeast to Douglas where it became the nucleus for the present-day South Georgia State College.

Wilcox County's first courthouse was built in Abbeville in 1858 and was used until the present courthouse's completion in 1903. This imposing Neoclassical Revival style structure was designed by noted architect Frank P. Milburn of Columbia, South Carolina. The three-story brick courthouse with basement was constructed at a cost of \$49,380. With its location at the intersection of U.S. 280 and U.S. 129, the courthouse's elaborate dome can be viewed from miles away. The National Register-listed Wilcox County Courthouse continues to be used for County and judicial functions.

Abbeville’s population continued to grow in the first decade of the 20th century, albeit at a much slower rate of 4.3 percent, reaching a total of 1,201 persons by the 1910 Census. During the early 1900s, natural mineral springs were popular locations for outdoor recreation, such as swimming and picnicking. Poor Robin Springs, located just northeast of Abbeville near the Ocmulgee River, was such a gathering spot. Today the spring is privately owned and provides water for Premier Water Bottling Company, which is bottled in Douglas under the name Emerald Springs, the name by which the springs was known in the 19th century.

According to U.S. Census figures, the City of Abbeville lost population for the next 60 years between 1910 and 1970. Losses ranged from a low of 0.8 percent from 1930 to 1940 (actually only a decline of 8 persons for a 1940 population of 1,010) to a high of nearly 12 percent during the next decade (down to 890 for the 1950 population). But by 1980, Abbeville’s population increased by just over 26 percent from 1970’s 781 to 985 residents. After declining once again in the 1980s by approximately 8 percent to 907 persons in 1990, the city’s Census count for 2000 was up again to 2,298, reflecting the addition of the inmate population at Wilcox State Prison, which was opened in 1994 in Abbeville. Today, the city’s estimated population is 2,757 (2022 U.S. Census, estimate).



**L** Wilcox County Courthouse    **R** Neeman-Matthews Auditorium - Wilcox County Arts Council, Abbeville

In recent years, the City of Abbeville has celebrated its rural, cultural, and natural heritage with special events and heritage tourism and recreation opportunities. Known as the “Wild Hog Capital of Georgia” for its large population of wild hogs, Abbeville has been the home of the annual Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival each May since 1991. The Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon is a relatively new event dating from 2015 during which participants roughly follow Jefferson Davis’ retreat route from Abbeville to Irwinville. The Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail, a regional trail sponsored by the non-profit Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails, Inc., passes through Abbeville as does the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway (officially designated in 2011), encompassing much of Wilcox and part of Pulaski counties.

## Vision

The City of Abbeville seeks to be a thriving, attractive, and well-kempt small town, which offers an outstanding quality of life for its residents. The fully restored and well-maintained historic Wilcox County Courthouse will continue to be the town’s focal point from its prominent location at the intersection of U.S. 280 and U.S. 129. Abbeville’s historic downtown commercial core will be revitalized with rehabilitated buildings, housing small businesses to serve locals and visitors alike. Staff at the Abbeville Welcome Center in the restored caboose will promote area attractions, such as the farmer’s market, the Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail, and the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway. The annual Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon and the Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival will continue to grow in popularity, attracting large numbers of participants. Half Moon Landing which features a new walking trail (completed in 2021), will continue to add other amenities to accommodate nature-lovers and paddlers on the Ocmulgee. Quality infrastructure, including water, sewer, and broadband Internet; well-maintained roads; excellent public safety protection; renovated low-moderate income housing; and upgraded recreation facilities at Lion’s Club Park (which features a new tennis court, completed in 2023) will all contribute to making Abbeville an attractive, safe, and comfortable place to call home.

Issues	Opportunities
Continuing downtown revitalization	Abbeville Downtown Development Authority
Abbeville caboose rehabilitation for welcome center	National Register-listed Wilcox County Courthouse
Water and sewer infrastructure improvements	Historic Downtown Abbeville
Low-moderate housing renovations	Half Moon Landing on Ocmulgee River
Public safety equipment	Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival
Maintenance building expansion	Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon
New gateway signage/landscaping	Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail
Improvements at City firearm range	Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway
Half Moon Landing enhancements	Historic buildings
Upgrades at Lion’s Club Park	T-SPLOST (TIA)
Update City’s zoning ordinance	Proximity to Inland Port in Cordele
Natural gas service	New Farmers’ Market
High speed broadband Internet	Abbeville School/Auditorium
	Local filming of “The Curse of Civil War Gold” History Channel production

# City of Pineview

## Description

Pineview developed in northern Wilcox County along the Hawkinsville and Florida Southern (H & FS) Railway, which was chartered in 1896. The city was incorporated in 1902 and appeared on the railroad's official map by at least 1903. The H & FS' north-south Pine Belt Route through Pineview ran 43 miles between Hawkinsville and Worth (three miles north of Ashburn, Georgia). According to a 1906 schedule, four trains passed through Pineview daily carrying freight and passengers. The 1906 Cyclopedia of Georgia described Pineview as having "a money order post office, some mercantile establishments and large shipping interests."

Pineview's highest population ever was recorded in 1910 at 708 persons. The city lost residents, however, from 1910 to 1920 at its largest rate 33 percent in history, declining to 474 people. Pineview continued to lose residents through the next 30 years by double digit percentages, except during the 1940s, when the decline was down to 8.4 percent. The H & FS Railway encountered financial difficulties, and the rail line was abandoned in 1923, likely contributing to the city's over 19 percent population decrease during the 1920s to 382 by 1930. By 1950, Pineview's residents numbered 310, but its population grew through the 1950s (19 percent to 369 by 1960) and an impressive 43 percent in the 1960s, reaching 528 in 1970. Growth continued at a slower pace over the next couple decades with the 1990 U.S. Census reporting 594 residents for Pineview. Since that time, subsequent Census counts have shown a decline in the city's population by as much as 10.4 percent in the 1990s to 532 followed by a much smaller loss of 1.7 percent to 523 by 2010.

Today, Pineview is a quiet agricultural community with a 2022 estimated Census population of 459 persons. The city has a radius of two (2) square miles. Reflective of Pineview's development as a railroad town, there is a restored train caboose as the centerpiece of the downtown city park. The Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway and U.S. Bike Route 15 both pass through Pineview, bringing possible tourism opportunities for the community.

## Vision

The City of Pineview desires to continue to be a quiet, safe, and attractive agricultural community for its residents and visitors alike. Improved infrastructure, including natural gas service and high-speed broadband Internet, will benefit current residents and businesses and make the city even more attractive to those desiring to relocate and/or start a business. Upgraded communications equipment, such as a repeater system, and a dedicated sheriff’s patrol will enhance public safety. Wash and repair stations and other amenities will be available to the growing number of cyclists who bike along U.S. Bike Route 15 through Pineview. There will also be increasing numbers of tourists traveling along the 35-mile Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway and stopping to visit Pineview’s downtown businesses and its city park caboose. Even with more visitors and a more prosperous economy, Pineview will continue to retain its small town character and enviable quality of life.



**L** City of Pineview Downtown    **R** Pineview Caboose

Issues	Opportunities
Communications equipment, including repeater system for public safety	Local park improvements
Concentrated Sheriff’s patrol	U.S. Bike Route 15
Continue with street resurfacing projects	Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway
Bike infrastructure (wash/repair stations)	“Unsafe Buildings and Premises Ordinance” adopted
Natural gas service	Historic structures/downtown
High speed broadband Internet	

# City of Pitts

## Description

Pitts originated as a settlement near the home of L.C. Peebles located two miles east of the Alapaha River in western Wilcox County. In the mid 1880s, Ashley J. Pitts and Brock Owens operated the first store at the site, which was known as King's Crossing. The name was changed to Pitts at the suggestion of J.A. King to honor his son-in-law, Ashley J. Pitts, after the Postmaster General requested a shorter name for the new post office. The name Pitts was approved in 1888, and Ashley J. Pitts became the town's first postmaster.

Like the City of Pineview in northern Wilcox County, the City of Pitts also developed in response to construction of the Hawkinsville and Florida Southern Railway (H & FS). The railroad was incorporated in 1889 as a line to transport lumber in the pine forests south of Hawkinsville along the Pine Belt Route. By 1895, the H & FS was hauling general freight and passengers as well on its freight trains. Pitts is shown on an 1895 H & FS map and listed as a stop in an advertisement from the same year, which also notes that the line connects with the Georgia and Alabama Railway (formerly the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery Railway) at Pitts.

By 1900, Pitts had a population of 454, the highest in its history. The city was incorporated five years later in 1905. The 1906 Cyclopaedia of Georgia described Pitts as being the junction for the Seaboard Air Line (absorbed Georgia and Alabama Railway in 1900) and H & FS rail lines and having "express and telegraph offices and a money order post office with rural free [delivery]." C.G. Waters of Pitts was listed in 1906 as being the H & FS Roadmaster or maintenance supervisor. Four H & FS trains passed through Pitts daily.

Pitts' population had already declined by 1910 to 279; however, the 1920 Census shows an increase of over 26 percent to 352 residents. Much slower single digit percentage growth continued during the 1920s and 1930s, with the population reaching 397 by 1950 for a 7 percent gain from 1940.

Probably one of the most famous events associated with Pitts' history occurred on April 20, 1921 when a meteor exploded resulting in three iron meteorite fragments being found just north of town. The largest recovered fragment weighed 3.76 kilograms and is presently in the Smithsonian Institution's collection. The very next year in 1922, the H & FS Railway went bankrupt, and the tracks were abandoned in 1923. Losing this north-south line dealt quite a blow to Pitts, although the Seaboard Air Line continued to provide east-west rail service to the community.

Dating from 1952, the historic Pitts Gymnasium is one of the community's most significant landmark structures. The community came together to raise funds and helped construct the gym. The gym has been well-maintained and renovated through the years, although it is currently in need of an HVAC

system. Pitts High School alumni use the facility for their annual Homecoming each November, while it is used throughout the year for reunions, the Junior’s ROTC Ball, basketball games, and other special events.

During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, Pitts lost population at a rate of 2.3 and 11.1 percent, respectively, resulting in 345 residents in 1970. The following decade largely made up for the loss with Pitts’ 1980 population increasing 11.3 percent for a total of 384 persons. By 1990, the population of Pitts reached its lowest level in history at 214, a loss of more than 44 percent; yet by 2000, the population was once again back up by nearly 44 percent to 308. More modest growth of about 4 percent occurred by 2010 with Pitts’ population reaching 320 residents.

Pitts is a quiet, residential community with a 2022 Census estimated 247 persons. Located along U.S. 280, the city has an area of 0.8 square mile. Many of the historic storefronts in downtown along 8th Street, the main street during Pitts’ heyday, have been privately restored or stabilized. The rail line through the town is increasingly busy due to the Inland Port at Cordele. Wilcox County’s only cotton gin and a pallet manufacturing plant are both located in Pitts.

## Vision

In the future, the City of Pitts will continue to be a pleasant, quiet residential community where everyone feels like family; however, there will be more well-paying jobs available in the county. The downtown park will be completed and feature amenities, including a walking track, playground, and gazebo/bandstand. It will be the site of a popular annual festival, perhaps celebrating music. The buildings in downtown Pitts will be occupied by various businesses serving both the community and visitors. The historic Pitts Gymnasium will be fully restored with an HVAC system, thus enabling expanded usage of this prominent local landmark. There will be reliable, quality infrastructure, including another well and high speed broadband Internet service, to provide for residential and business use. Pitts will continue to attract talented people to its special community.

Issues	Opportunities
City Park development	Historic Pitts Gymnasium
Pave 10th Avenue	Mobile home ordinance adopted
Jobs	Downtown renovations
High speed broadband Internet	Historic buildings
New well – nearly operational, at the time of this report	Proximity to I-75 and Inland Port at Cordele
	Active rail line
	Businesses, such as cotton gin, pallet manufacturer, crop dusting, auto-body shop, and others



**L** Pineview Downtown    **M** Pineview Water Tower    **R** Pineview Park and Community Center



**L** Pineview City Hall and Pharmacy    **R** City of Pitts



**L** Residence, Wilcox County    **R** Historic Residence, Pitts

# City of Rochelle

## Description

Located near the center of Wilcox County, the city of Rochelle first developed in large part due to the completion of the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery (SAM) Railroad (formerly the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad) through the county by the late 1880s. The first train arrived in what was initially called “Center” on October 17, 1887. This was also where the SAM crossed the Hawkinsville-Irwinville Road. In 1888, the city was incorporated as Rochelle, named after the French city LaRochelle. Colonel Samuel Hawkins, president of the SAM, allowed his daughters to name several towns which sprang up along the rail line for places they visited in Europe, hence Rochelle, Seville, Milan, Lyons, and Rhine received their continental influenced names. Peter Coffee was appointed as Rochelle’s first mayor.

Rochelle was already a bustling railroad town by 1888. There were several general merchandise stores, a wholesale house, and a cotton warehouse, as well as the Ashley House Hotel, among other businesses. Substantial growth occurred during the next decade when nearly the entire business district of Rochelle burned in a devastating fire in December, 1898. Those businesses lost included seven (7) general merchandise stores, three (3) millinery shops, a fruit stand, three (3) beef markets, a grocery, a barber shop, a drugstore, a saloon, a music store, and a telephone exchange. Several other fires struck Rochelle in the years afterward before an artesian well was dug and a volunteer fire department was formed in 1913. The first local electric light plant also dates from 1913.

By 1900, Rochelle had a population of 793 residents. The 1906 Cyclopedia of Georgia also noted the presence of express and telegraph offices, a money order post office with rural free delivery, a bank, “several good stores...[and] a cotton gin belonging to Rochelle Gin Company.” The city also had a “large trade in lumber and naval stores...and good educational and religious advantages.”

Rochelle’s population grew to 860 by 1910 for an 8.4 percent gain but achieved its greatest percentage growth between 1910 and 1920 at a rate of almost 22 percent, reaching a Census count of 1,046 persons. The arrival of the Ocilla Southern Railroad in 1914 further contributed to the community’s growth as the junction of two railroads. There were four (4) banks operating in town by 1910, and by 1918 Rochelle is said to have had in excess of 50 established businesses, four (4) churches, and two (2) schools. Most professionals were represented in the community, including four (4) physicians, a veterinarian, a dentist, three (3) attorneys, two (2) druggists, three (3) insurance agents, and several building contractors.

While Rochelle’s population remained essentially stagnant during the 1920s, increasing by only 7 residents or less than one (1) percent in the decade, the pace of growth picked up during the height of the Great Depression by 11.6 percent, reaching 1,175 persons by 1940. Increased automobile traffic in the 1930s led to U.S. 280 and Georgia Route 30 being routed through Rochelle in 1936 and their paving in the 1940s.

Rochelle lost population in the 1940s, dropping to 1,097, but the city experienced double-digit growth over the next three decades, reaching 1,626 in 1980, its highest number of residents ever. Since that time, Rochelle has steadily declined in population, losing a significant 17 percent from 2000 to 2010 and over 450 residents in 30 years, resulting in a 2010 Census count of 1,174.



**L** Rochelle Baptist Church    **R** Downtown Rochelle

The City of Rochelle has been recognized through the years for various achievements. In 1974, the City was the fourth community in Georgia and one of only 25 in the United States to be designated as a National Bicentennial Community. Much of Rochelle was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008 as a historic district encompassing 180 downtown commercial, residential, and other structures. Three years later in 2011, Rochelle was included on the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway, along with Abbeville and Pineview to Hawkinsville in Pulaski County, to highlight and showcase the agricultural and cultural heritage of the area. More recently in 2018, Rochelle has been included with Pineview on U.S. Bike Route 15, one of two such national routes in Georgia.

Today Rochelle has a current 2022 Census estimated population of 1,150. The community is working together to improve its water, sewer, streets, and drainage infrastructure to make it even more attractive to both residents and business/industry. With its new Wilcox K-12 facility, available industrial space with rail access, proximity to Cordele’s Inland Port, and wealth of significant historic resources, including its intact downtown, Rochelle has much potential for future growth.

## Vision

Rochelle will continue to be an attractive historic small town in the future, which recognizes and celebrates its heritage. It will have a thriving, revitalized downtown filled with prosperous businesses serving locals, as well as the many visitors who seek its unique offerings as they travel the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway and U.S. Bike Route 15. The community will have quality infrastructure, including high-speed broadband Internet, available to support existing and new businesses and industry and residential customers. There will be well-paying jobs for all skill sets in the local workforce. Rochelle will once again be a growing rural community with an enhanced quality of life.



*Downtown Rochelle*

Issues	Opportunities
New elevated water tank	Industrial land with rail access
Upgrade water meters	Proximity to Cordele’s Inland Port and I-75
Sewer extensions	Rochelle National Register Historic District
Equipment for City and police department	T-SPLOST funded transportation improvements
High speed broadband Internet	Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway
Bike infrastructure (wash/repair stations)	U.S. Bike Route 15
Completion of sewer system upgrades in southern part of city	Streets/drainage upgrades
	City Hall roof replacement

# Community Goals

## Economic Development



1. Improve education levels
2. Address continuing education/job skills improvements
3. Enhance high-speed connectivity/broadband Internet
4. Nurture existing businesses/entrepreneurs
5. Enhance public-private partnerships
6. Support continued viability of state prison
7. Support development of inland port at Cordele/Crisp County
8. Address/improve infrastructure needs
9. Develop/improve local industrial/commercial sites/parks
10. Attract new businesses/jobs
11. Revitalize downtowns
12. Address growth management/rural character preservation
13. Develop/enhance tourism, eco-tourism
14. Utilize/promote outdoor amenities/natural resources
15. Assure viability/support/enhance agriculture/agribusiness/forestry
16. Improve transportation access/quality
17. Promote quality of life/location
18. Enhance intergovernmental cooperation
19. Reactivate the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce





## Natural & Cultural Resources

1. Address conservation/utilization of rivers/natural areas
2. Protect significant natural resources of Wilcox County
3. Maintain open spaces/agricultural/forestry uses
4. Seek compatible development/utilization
5. Utilize/preserve/adaptively use historic resources/heritage of Wilcox County
6. Promote agri-tourism, heritage tourism, recreation and bicycling tourism opportunities, such as the Rails to Trails program/project



## Housing



1. Remove blight/improve quality of all housing
2. Address manufactured home quality/appearances
3. Guide/plan residential development
4. Develop/improve subdivision/manufactured housing/land use regulation/code enforcement
5. Seek retirees/new residents of all ages
6. More senior housing
7. Enable the Housing Authorities of Rochelle and Abbeville to apply for more housing grants.

# Long Term Community Policies



## Economic Development

1. The community will work together to improve education and skill levels to ensure a better-qualified workforce for existing and future employees.
2. The community will work to coordinate and enhance economic development marketing efforts through a reorganized, active Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority, other regional/state agencies, and through expanded public/private partnerships.
3. The community will work with the Cooperative Extension Service, re-established Chamber of Commerce, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, local civic groups, and others to establish an ongoing local leadership program.
4. The community will work to attract a diverse mix of jobs appropriate to the educational/skills levels of the local workforce.
5. The community will work together to develop, support, and promote programs that will enhance opportunities for local graduates to both live and work in the community upon graduation.
6. The community will work to develop the necessary infrastructure and industrial parks/site improvements to facilitate and accommodate desired growth for industrial/public utility development.
7. The community will seek and support infrastructure upgrades and improvements that will enhance/promote the community's economic development and quality of life, including broadband/high-speed connectivity and availability of natural gas.
8. The community will support future development of solar energy through appropriate land use regulations, as needed, and build upon current solar projects that are already in development.
9. The community will actively recruit new industry and commercial/retail development compatible with, and supportive of, the resources, infrastructure, existing economy, and the natural environments of the community, such as agribusinesses.
10. The community will support the Rochelle Marketplace Downtown Development Authority and encourage Downtown Development.
11. The community will promote the availability of access to the state inland port development at Cordele/Crisp County in industrial marketing and recruitment efforts.
12. The community will support and promote programs for the retention of existing local industries and entrepreneurs in its support and quest of business/industry retention and additional job opportunities for local residents.

13. The community will work to enhance regional economic development marketing efforts through appropriate use of existing authorities, as well as development and enhancement of activities or authorities with Crisp and/or Ben Hill counties.
14. The community will cooperate and coordinate with existing local, regional, and state agencies to improve all of Wilcox County.
15. The community will maintain agriculture/forestry as viable economic uses through traditional and alternative enterprises, such as agri-tourism and nature-based tourism.
16. The community will seek to enhance and grow tourism as an important component of the local economy through the promotion of festivals, recreation and leisure facilities/activities, agri-tourism, heritage, and nature-based tourism.
17. The community will work to enhance and expand hospitality accommodations and services in order to increase tourism.
18. The community will support and target countywide downtown revitalization and investment efforts in all municipalities to maintain them as important, functioning economic, social, and governmental centers.
19. The community will work to support the continued operation and viability of the Wilcox State Prison through all means necessary.
20. The community will promote and maintain its cultural heritage by encouraging the use of its historic buildings, historic districts, and landmark structures.
21. The community will work to promote increased utilization of the Wilcox Learning Center/Wiregrass Georgia Technical College.
22. The community will seek to attract and maintain residential growth, including young families and retirees, through promotion of proximity to nearby regional growth centers and quality of life.
23. The community will continue to seek transportation improvements (highway, roads/streets, rail, transit, bicycle and pedestrian) to enhance and support economic development efforts.
24. The community will proactively manage and guide its future growth and development through community investment and appropriate regulation.
25. The community will work cooperatively to increase awareness of tourism attractions/opportunities located on the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway, U.S. Bike Route 15, and the Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail



## Natural and Cultural Resources

1. The community will seek to conserve and protect the Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers, the county's significant groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, other important natural resources, and the open spaces and landscapes of the county.

2. The community will maintain, utilize, promote and preserve its heritage, and will seek to encourage public and private adaptive use/reuse of its historic buildings, historic districts, and landmark structures, as well as encourage continued ongoing revitalization of historic downtowns in all municipalities.
3. The community will pursue listing of significant historic landmark properties and districts in the National Register of Historic Places, development of cultural resource publications/brochures, and other recognition of important historic resources to aid in their preservation.
4. The community will continue to maintain the historic architectural integrity of the National Register-listed Wilcox County Courthouse
5. The community will proactively manage and guide its growth and development, and protect and conserve its important natural and cultural resources through community investment and appropriate regulation.
6. The community will seek to pursue expanded recreational facility and park development along the Ocmulgee River, as well as continue active participation in the regional Ocmulgee Water Trail Partnership
7. The community will seek and promote development that is respectful of, compatible with, and maintains and supports the existing rural character, open spaces, and landscapes of Wilcox County
8. The community will capitalize on its economic opportunities associated with its open spaces and natural and cultural resources, and will seek to promote, develop, and cultivate additional compatible uses of these resources.
9. The community will seek to increase awareness of and promote the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway, the Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail, and usage of U.S. Bike Route 15 through Wilcox County.
10. The community will seek to conserve, protect, and keep viable its valuable agricultural lands and timberlands, and will work to pursue additional public and private agri-tourism or nature-based tourism venues and support for the Abbeville Farmers' Market.
11. The community will continue to support, utilize, and promote the Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival and other community festivals, and will encourage the development of additional venues to further support/cultivate tourism.



## Housing

1. The community will seek to encourage a diverse mix of safe, quality housing, including affordable, rental, middle income, and compatible workforce housing mixed-use housing.
2. The community will encourage the use of state and federal programs to improve availability of affordable/quality housing, and to encourage homeownership.
3. The community will upgrade its appearance and the quality of its housing developments through the adoption and use of coordinated construction codes, mobile home regulations, subdivision regulations, and growth management.

4. The community will promote the ample availability of land for quality new development.
5. The community will address substandard housing and concentrations of blight, including manufactured housing developments, and will cooperatively upgrade their quality and appearance through rehabilitation, removal, code enforcement and regulation.
6. The community will cooperate to implement and enforce the need for land use planning, subdivision/mobile home regulations, growth management and code enforcement.
7. The community will provide guidance to, and for location of, compatible housing development through planning, infrastructure location, and regulation.
8. The community will seek development compatible with its quality of life, attraction of retirees, and new residents and commuters.
9. The community will work toward organizing a volunteer/nonprofit local Christmas in April/Habitat for Humanity or otherwise seek funds from state and federal agencies to assist with private rehabilitation or other housing needs, particularly for the low income/elderly.



## Land Use

1. The community will coordinate and cooperate to implement and enforce the need for land use planning, subdivision/mobile home regulations, growth management and code enforcement in all jurisdictions.
2. The community will continue to maintain and improve its appearance and aesthetics through ongoing landscaping/beautification efforts and code enforcement.
3. The community will encourage growth that preserves and maintains forestry and agriculture as viable, functioning land uses.
4. The community will seek and promote development that is compatible with existing infrastructure location to guide future growth.
5. The community will continue to encourage downtown revitalization and streetscape improvements which preserve and protect its rural, small town character and quality of life
6. The community will enhance existing industrial facilities and develop new facilities/uses, which will complement/promote economic development and the community's character.
7. The community will continue to seek and support the upgrade of U.S. 280 and other transportation improvements, as well as the promotion of U.S. 280 and the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway for tourism and economic development purposes.
8. The community will plan, manage, and guide its future growth and development, and encourage growth compatible with its existing character.

9. The community will encourage growth which preserves and protects its significant natural resources, rural character, and quality of life.
10. The community will continue to develop and improve recreation/leisure/river use facilities and programs, including park and facility development along the Ocmulgee River
11. The community will work to encourage appropriate infill development through planning, infrastructure location, and regulation.
12. The community will seek and support infrastructure upgrades and improvements that will enhance/promote the community's economic development and quality of life, including broadband/high speed technology capability.
13. The community will support future development of solar energy through appropriate land use regulations, as needed.



## Community Facilities and Services

1. The community will maintain adequate water/sewer service provision and pursue development of additional facilities and areas of service as needed.
2. The community will coordinate, maintain, upgrade, and expand its existing infrastructure and seek services, including natural gas, to enhance economic development and the quality of life, and to attract desired, compatible growth and development.
3. The community will pursue, develop, and promote transportation improvements of all types (highway, roads/streets, rail, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian) that are compatible with, and supportive of, the community's desired economic development, future growth, and quality of life.
4. The community will continue to seek and support the upgrade of U.S. 280 and other transportation improvements, as well as the promotion of U.S. 280 and the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway for tourism and economic development purposes.
5. The community will maintain/enhance the county's solid waste/recycling facilities, programs, and initiatives, in conjunction with other efforts to improve community appearance.
6. The community will continue to improve public safety, fire, and emergency medical services and facilities to improve quality of service, response times, and coordination in times of emergency and disasters.
7. The community will work together to maintain and upgrade its health care facilities, services, and equipment conducive to economic development and a high quality of life.

8. The community will enhance and promote existing parks and river landings, and establish new parks/recreational facilities and activities, such as along the Ocmulgee River, to serve existing and future populations and to further cultivate/support tourism.
9. The community will provide and maintain adequate government facilities and services, while striving to promote healthy/transparent citizen/governmental relations through improved communication, including use of social media.
10. The community will seek to continue to enhance educational and technological opportunities by continuing to maintain and upgrade its educational facilities and programs.
11. The community will guide growth and development to areas of existing infrastructure and will plan and develop expansions to help bring about desired patterns of growth.
12. Wilcox County will continue to replace its emergency vehicles over the next several years.
13. The community will encourage and support the maintenance, enhancement, and promotion of existing cultural facilities and opportunities, and will further develop cultural facilities and assets to pursue and promote additional venues/activities.
14. The community will seek and support availability of appropriate broadband/high speed connectivity service infrastructure upgrades and improvements that will enhance/promote economic development efforts and improve the quality of life.
15. The community will seek to develop public spaces, recreational areas, and parks to enhance public activity and activate underutilized areas.



## Intergovernmental Coordination

1. The community will continue to enhance cooperation locally, regionally and on the state level to improve, develop, and plan for the desired future of Wilcox County.
2. The community will continue to seek ways to cooperate and coordinate efforts in the delivery of services and will investigate the possibility of shared and consolidated services where appropriate and feasible.
3. The community will cooperate in coordinated land use planning and regulation and code enforcement to manage and guide its future growth and development.

# *Needs & Opportunities*



The Needs and Opportunities Element is required of all local governments by the Minimum Standards and Procedures. The community needs are those weaknesses or liabilities which must be addressed, changed, or mitigated to help achieve the desired community future. The community opportunities are strengths and assets which can be utilized as starting points and foundations to easily accentuate or capitalize on to move the community forward on its desired path.

This Element generally answers the question: **“Where are we currently?”** The answers can provide snapshots of insight and can be as useful as a compass in a community’s journey to improvement. The Needs and Opportunities section in the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan is organized roughly by a few major themes: those relating to Natural and Cultural Resources, Economic Development, Community Facilities and Services, Housing, Land Use, and Intergovernmental Coordination.



## Economic Development

### Opportunities:

1. Proximity to Inland Port at Cordele and I-75
2. Historic downtowns in Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle with rehabilitation opportunities
3. Local employment at Wilcox State Prison
4. Heart of Georgia Altamaha Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program
5. Transportation improvements, including TIA funded resurfacing and paving projects
6. Low unemployment/strong local workforce
7. E-SPLOST funding
8. Local post-secondary education resources through nearby technical colleges, such as Wiregrass Georgia, Fitzgerald campus
5. Abbeville caboose rehabilitation as welcome center
6. Support continuing operation of Wilcox State Prison in Wilcox County, including any future expansions
7. Rural Zone designation for downtown Abbeville
8. Continued improvements/promotion of all kinds of transportation access/quality, including highway, roads/streets, rail, transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and multi-modal/Complete Streets
9. Continuing street and road improvements, including paving and resurfacing projects utilizing TIA and other funding

### Needs:

1. Continuing education/job skills improvements
2. Reorganization of active Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce
3. Coordination/enhancement of economic development marketing through reorganized Chamber, Development Authority, regional/state agencies, and expanded public/private partnerships
4. Creation of common brand to market Wilcox County
10. Local/regional tourism enhancement/growth through events, such as Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival and Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon; recreation/leisure activities, including U.S. Bike Route 15; museum development/enhancement; heritage tourism involving Jefferson
11. Promotion of proximity to Cordele Inland Port
12. Small business incubator development
13. Promotion of available land for economic development/residential attraction
14. Establishment of ongoing, local leadership program
15. U.S. 280 upgrading to 4-lanes



## Housing

### Opportunities:

1. Lower property values/lower property taxes
2. Pitts' Manufactured Housing Ordinance
3. Lower cost of living and housing costs

### Needs:

1. Maintenance/extension/development of infrastructure necessary for desired growth/quality of life, including transportation, water/sewer, natural gas, and broadband high-speed connectivity
2. Enable, through grants, the Rochelle and Abbeville Housing Authorities to create

- more workforce housing
3. Development of housing to attract new residents, such as returning natives, commuters, and retirees
4. Existing and new housing quality/appearance improvements through rehabilitation, removal, code enforcement, and regulation
5. Adoption of county manufactured home ordinance
6. Substandard housing/concentrations of blight elimination, including rundown manufactured housing developments



## Land Use

### Opportunities:

1. Subdivision growth in rural areas
2. Have building/codes enforcement in city and county
3. Rural character/Quality of Life preservation
4. Agricultural resources
5. Natural resources
6. Annexation

### Needs:

1. Attraction/maintenance of residential growth, including young families and retirees, through quality of life and bedroom community promotion
2. Proactive growth management of future compatible development through community investment/appropriate regulation

3. Support for future development of solar energy through appropriate land use regulations
4. Updated, coordinated countywide land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing regulations/increased code enforcement/nuisance ordinances/growth management implementation and enforcement to improve appearance/quality of housing developments
5. Encouragement of appropriate infill and intense development/land uses through planning, infrastructure location, and regulation
6. Development compatible with existing infrastructure location to guide future growth



## Natural & Cultural Resources

### Opportunities:

1. Ocmulgee River eco-tourism/Ocmulgee River Water Trail/Ocmulgee Water Trail Partnership
2. Local/regional tourism events/venues, such as Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival and Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon
3. Nature-based, agri-tourism, recreation, heritage, and other tourism venues, including the Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers; Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway, Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail, and U.S. Bike Route 15
4. Presence on Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail
5. Existing agricultural/forestry uses
6. Community's rural character/small town quality of life
7. Half Moon and Statham Shoals landings on Ocmulgee river in Wilcox County
8. Significant natural resources, including Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers and their corridors, and others
9. Local cultural/historic resources, such as Wilcox County Courthouse, Abbeville and Pineview cabooses, Pitts Gymnasium, Abbeville City Hall, and opportunities for increased heritage tourism

### Needs:

1. Maintenance of agriculture/forestry as viable economic land uses through traditional and alternative means, such as agri- and nature-based tourism
2. More agri-business opportunities, such as processing and canning plants
3. Davis Heritage Trail, Rochelle National Register Historic District, and other resources;
4. Promotion of tourist attractions/opportunities on Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway, U.S. Bike Route 15, and Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail through Wilcox County
5. Conservation/protection of Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers, significant natural resources, and open spaces/landscapes of Wilcox County
6. Enforcement of model ordinance based on Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for significant wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and protected river corridors
7. Pursue listing in National Register of Historic Places for significant landmarks/historic districts in Wilcox County



## Community Facilities and Services

### Opportunities:

1. Continuing existing local, regional, and state agency cooperation/coordination
2. New permanent well in Pitts
3. Post-secondary education access locally at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College's Wilcox Learning Center in Rochelle, and other nearby institutions
4. Bicycle tourism/U.S. Bike Route 15
5. Excellent local schools, including new Wilcox County K-12 facility, technology, and dual enrollment opportunities
6. Strong local public safety/enforcement and low crime rate
7. Purchase of dump truck and zero-turn lawnmower for Rochelle
8. Wilcox County Senior Center
9. Wilcox County Recreation complex with growth potential
10. Wilcox County Library
11. Underutilized recreation space available, such as Abbeville recreation facility (Lions Park)
12. Continued use of historic Wilcox County Courthouse
13. County emergency shelter upgrades
14. Existing cultural facilities/services, including Abbeville School/Auditorium

### Needs:

1. Continuing support for the local school system and its increasing high school graduation rate/improving literacy rate
2. Increased utilization of Wilcox Learning Center/Wiregrass Georgia Technical College
3. Promotion/increased usage of N.W. Hudson Agriculture Center
4. Establishment of new community festival in Pitts
5. Organization of Wilcox County Historical Society
6. Continued support/promotion of Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival and others and development of additional tourism venues
7. Increased development of local bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, including wash/repair stations along U.S. Bike Route 15 (GA Hwy. 112)
8. Continued stewardship and local government use of National Register-listed historic Wilcox County Courthouse, including addition of elevator and other renovations
9. Continued support for local Wilcox County Public Library through facility, equipment, staffing, program, and other improvements/expansions, as needed
10. Provision of pre-school activity center/after school childcare
11. Wilcox County Jail renovations
12. Concentrated Sheriff's Department patrols of Pineview



## Intergovernmental Coordination

### Opportunities:

1. Existing local, regional, and state partnerships, including public safety/fire service cooperation, Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, and others

### Needs:

1. Consideration of possible joint Economic

Development Director with Crisp, Ben Hill, and/or Pulaski counties

2. Continuing local, regional, and state agency cooperation/coordination
3. County-wide downtown revitalization/investment in all municipalities
4. Continued efforts to seek sharing/cooperation/consolidation in delivery of services

# Broadband Services



The Broadband Services Element is a descriptive snapshot of the areas of the community served by broadband technology. The deployment of broadband technologies has become a major selling point for those communities which offer high speed connectivity, and conversely, a detriment to economic development for those areas lacking the infrastructure. The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes this element to outline a strategy for attracting an increased level of broadband deployment by the private sector and to meet the State Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

Over the last couple of decades, the internet has evolved into an essential part of our everyday life. Research, social media, banking, business operations, communication, and many other enabling tasks provided by the internet, have elevated this resource into one of the most important infrastructures in the world today. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the

need for faster and more reliable internet services became a critical asset to everyday life around the world. The pandemic resulted in much of the population remaining at home and conducting business remotely. Schools, work, communications, religion services, and many others relied heavily on the internet to function. As a result, the need for broadband services was recognized as a priority for the country. Wilcox County recognizes the importance of broadband and will continue to seek ways to improve its current position. Wilcox County has recently adopted an ordinance for a broadband ready community. This together with an updated comprehensive plan, containing the broadband element, will enable the County to apply for the Broadband Ready Status awarded by DCA.

Broadband is defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as a minimum of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed. It should be noted that the broadband definition has changed twice since its inception in 1996 due to technology advancements. Broadband delivery methods include, but are not limited to, digital subscriber lines, cable modems, fiber, wireless, broadband over power lines, and satellite connections.



**L** Residence, Wilcox County    **R** City of Pitts

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, within which Wilcox County is located, was determined in a 2015 Digital Economy Plan to rank 12th out of 12 regions in the state for technological capability. It is significant to note the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is the only region of Georgia without a metropolitan area included. Nationally, 99.9 percent of the population have access to either fixed terrestrial service at 25 Mbps/3 Mbps or mobile LTE at 10 Mbps/3 Mbps. This percentage drops to 99.7 percent in rural areas. FCC's 2021 Broadband Deployment Report, estimated that 67 percent of the population in Wilcox County have access to fixed broadband technology.



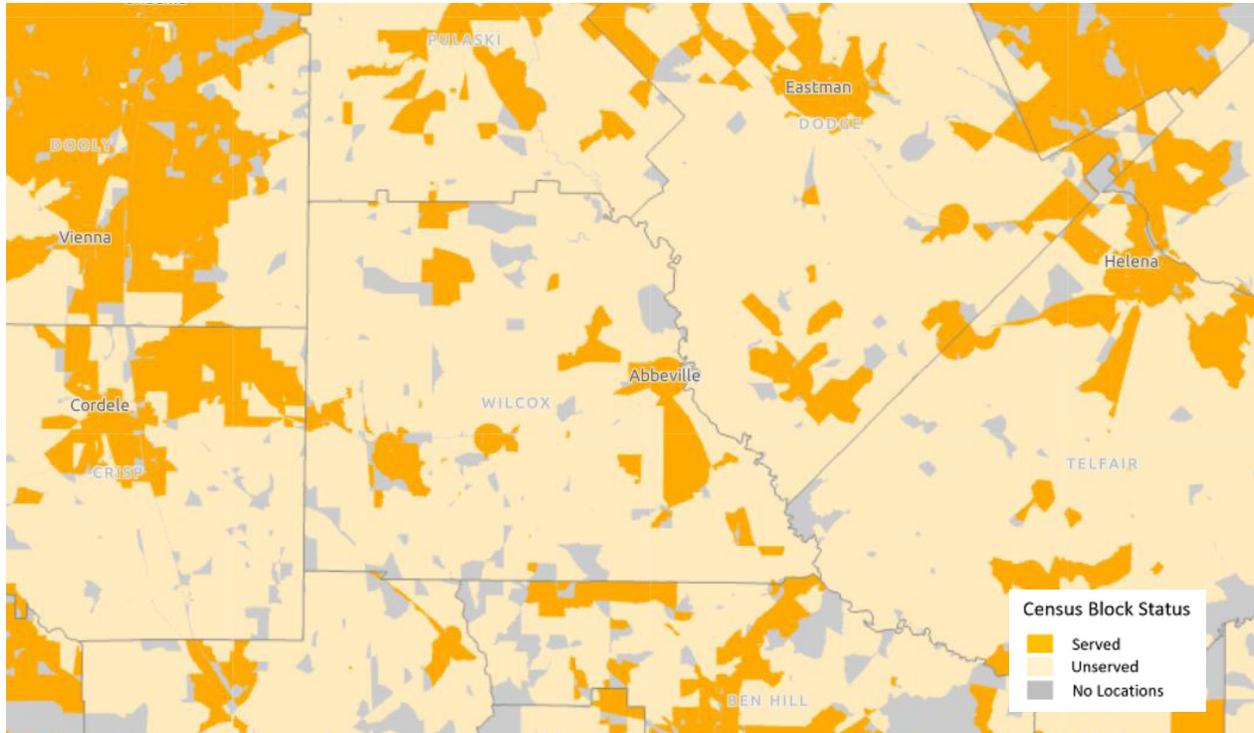
There currently is broadband technology access in the county that is provided by a DSL service provider in and around Abbeville, Pineview, Rochelle, and Pitts. The areas served by DSL services in the unincorporated areas are scattered with a majority along state highway rights-of-way. Fiber Optic service lines are also present in Wilcox County in the City of Abbeville, Pineview, and Rochelle. Although areas of Wilcox County are serviced by a variety of broadband technologies, the services provided do not all meet the FCC's definition of Broadband Service (25Mbps download, 3Mbps upload speeds)

In January 2023, Wilcox County was one of 28 counties impacted by the Capital Projects Fund Grant Program, which was formed in 2022 and, in part, sought to expand high-speed internet access to commercial, residential, and governmental locations across less dense areas of the state. With the American Rescue Plan Act, local government investments, and the funds from the Capital Projects Fund Grant Program, almost \$455 million will be invested into expanding internet access across the state over the next three years; This is expected to bring 76,000 locations online that were previously unserved.

Other avenues of broadband service technologies available in the community are either satellite or wireless 4G LTE service. Satellite service speeds are generally slower download speeds compared to wired infrastructure and are prone to weather related outages. Wireless 4G LTE technology is widely available throughout the State of Georgia and is used by smartphones and tablets to download content reliably, although speed is determined by proximity to a communications tower and the speed at which the tower is capable. Wilcox County has a reported 4G LTE coverage area over the majority of the county. This avenue of service is generally sufficient for a homeowner or cell service subscriber; however, commercial, and industrial users would certainly require greater reliability. 5G LTE is now available with some carriers in certain areas of the county. The 5G LTE allows faster download and uploads for mobile users.

Certainly, an industry desiring an improved communications network will seek a fixed connection service provider and will need at minimum 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. According to data provided by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the FCC, the infrastructure for broadband services is located in portions of Wilcox County, but fixed broadband technology does not provide adequate speed to term service in the county "Broadband." Wireless 4G LTE in the county meets minimum speeds of wireless broadband; however, it is inadequate for industry seeking to locate in the county. The need for broadband service in Wilcox County is critical as it is determined to be underserved by both fixed broadband technology and wireless broadband technology. Wilcox County, and the cities of Abbeville, Rochelle, Pineview, and Pitts desire to be fully served by broadband capability through broadband deployment with service areas reaching the minimum speeds to be considered "Broadband Service."

The Wilcox County community has chosen a multi-faceted approach and strategy to improve the availability of broadband and broadband deployment.



**The following items are actions steps the community will take to increase economic, educational, and social opportunities for citizens and businesses through the deployment of universal broadband and other communications technologies.**

1. Develop and maintain an inventory of Community Anchor Institutions (schools, library, medical and healthcare providers, public safety entities, and higher education facilities) within the community to determine areas of greatest broadband need.
2. Develop or otherwise enact a model ordinance which determines a contact person for any broadband projects within the community, outlines a streamlined permit process for broadband projects, keeps broadband project permit fees reasonable, and ensures equal treatment for applicants applying for use of jurisdictional rights-of-way.
3. Apply to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for certification as a “Broadband Ready Community” or similar certification by the State of Georgia.
4. Partner with state agencies (Georgia Technology Authority, Department of Community Affairs, and Department of Economic Development) and area local governments to promote broadband deployment in the community, region, and state.
5. Identify broadband deployment projects eligible for OneGeorgia Authority funding and/or other state and federal grant or loan opportunities.

# *Economic Development*



Economic prosperity is key not only to the improvement of a community, but also for its survival. A jurisdiction's comprehensive plan seeks, at its core, to make sure that the community has considered as many practical avenues as possible to welcome and foster economic growth and prosperity over the mid- and long-term horizons. In the case of Wilcox County, growth in both personal income as well as in the county's tax base are necessary to afford and enjoy the desired improvements suggested by its citizens. Before exploring potential paths forward for the local economy, however, it is critical to thoroughly understand the area's rich past.

Wilcox County's most vital period to date was spurred from a successful concentration of farmers and new entrepreneurs; as with many rural areas across the South, the establishment of railroads through the county made the area a tour de force. The county's population bloomed bright in the late 1800s through the early 1900s. A variety of factors, not unique to this county alone, such as logistical adoption of the automobile and subsequent deemphasis of the railroad, chipped away at what was once a thriving Georgia county.

More recently, Wilcox State Prison, the preservation of the county's agricultural importance, and its geographic location in relation to nearby logistical centers, transportation network, and its pristine and largely undeveloped embrace of the beautiful Ocmulgee River, have all served as Wilcox County's safety net following its trying period of the mid-20th century.

As present then as it is now, what would one day become known as the Ocmulgee River drew early European frontier settlers to the area in the early 1800s. An ample supply of rich land was irresistible to the area's pioneers. Though the county was not officially established until 1857, early settlers were certainly not without historic hardships and challenges prior to that point: what they would soon call Wilcox County was a part of the backdrop of the Creek Indian Wars; one bright fact that came from those years: it was during this period that the early settlers learned of the area's alleged healing spring waters (what is now known as Poor Robin Springs).



*Ranch, Wilcox County*

Once settled and established, Wilcox County's first residents marketed the healing power of their spring waters and, critically, in 1897, saw the establishment of the Georgia Normal College and Business Institute, which was built in Abbeville, Georgia.

A development of that size, especially for a young and barely-settled area, spawned the construction of buildings and institutions critical for the survival of the young county's economy. The Central Hotel, which is no longer standing, was necessary first for those involved in the construction of the college, and later, of course, for all those working, attending, and visiting the campus.

Economic prosperity is a key to community improvement. A community's comprehensive plan seeks at its core to make the community a better place to live, work, and recreate. To improve quality of life, there is a need for income and an increased tax base to help enhance the ability to afford needed and desired improvements and afford better housing and a

higher standard of living. Commerce and economic development have a major influence on overall population growth and development. The relationship is quite evident in Wilcox County. Wilcox County's heyday came from farming, entrepreneurship, and railroad establishment, resulting also in a population boom in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Wilcox State Prison, and keeping agriculture relevant and vital, along with highways and location, have recently stabilized growth in the county, despite suffering a long period of decline during the 20th century.

Wilcox County is an early frontier county and battleground in the Creek Indian Wars of Georgia settled in the early 1800s, but not formally established until 1857. It has been said that settlers were attracted by free land, but stayed because of the county's beautiful streams, rivers, pine forests, fertile soil, and healing waters. Transportation and access to markets were always important, first through the Ocmulgee River and later the advent of railroads. The community exhibited early tourism to the county's famed springs and exhibited leadership in attraction of the Georgia Normal College and Business Institute to Abbeville. History and cultural resources have always held prominent places in the county from DeSoto's exploration along the Ocmulgee, to the last battle in the Creek Indian Wars (Battle at Breakfast Branch), to the last free nights of Jefferson Davis prior to his capture. Nearly the entire community of Rochelle was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008, and the Wilcox County Courthouse in Abbeville is a noted historic landmark visible for several miles. Agriculture has always remained important to the county, and today the county remains one of Georgia's top agricultural producers, ranking in the top five counties for watermelon, cabbage, and cantaloupe production. The decline of railroads, the advent of the automobile and subsequent development of highways, the Great Depression, and the mechanization of agriculture all contributed to a long period of decline within Wilcox County. Wilcox County and its cities declined and lost growth to nearby commercial centers, particularly in Cordele and Eastman. From a peak population in 1920, Wilcox County suffered economic contraction and population loss all the way to the 1990s. Only the opening of Wilcox State Prison in 1994 reversed, or at least stabilized, these trends. Wilcox's abundant natural resources, its working farms and forests, transportation access, and location are again key strengths upon which to attract future growth and development. The county has unrealized potential for bedroom community growth, tourism, and economic development utilizing its agriculture, forest, and wild and scenic places. Its location, particularly close to Cordele and its inland port development, highway access, and associated rural character and quality of life allow facilitation and opportunities to capitalize on these trends. There are other local economic strengths and opportunities available today for exploitation and development.

There are continuing needs for Wilcox County's economic development. Incomes in Wilcox County remain relatively low. The per capita income in Wilcox County is \$16,629 and the Median household income is currently \$41,406. Approximately 20.9 percent of Wilcox County citizens are in poverty, compared to 13.3 percent in Georgia as a whole. This high poverty has persisted for a number of decades. There are needs for more jobs. Unemployment in the county improved from 12.9 percent in 2010 to 4.1 percent in 2022. Wilcox County's unemployment rate is slightly lower than the mean unemployment rate of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region as

a whole. A 2018 Esri Retail Market Place Profile for Wilcox County reports a retail gap in nearly every major industry group, suggesting local dollars leaving the community to purchase goods. Almost one-fourth of county workers work in nearby Crisp County (Cordele). Job skills of local residents are also a concern; about 17.7 percent of local residents are without a high school diploma compared to 11.8 percent statewide. Transfer payments represent more than one-third of total personal income in the county compared to about 22 percent statewide.



**L** Residence   **R** Strawberry Farm

There are opportunities and cause for optimism for economic development in Wilcox County as well. Wilcox County is a top agricultural producing county, ranking 31st in the state for total Farmgate values in 2021. There are 21 goods-producing farms located in the county, most of them home-grown. The county is served by the Heart of Georgia Railroad a short line railroad with easy connection to both of Georgia's Class 1 railroads. Employment within the county remains concentrated within educational, health care and social assistance workers 18.75 percent; government 13 percent; agricultural, forestry, fishing 8.8 percent; and transportation/warehousing 10 percent sectors. This reflects the stability and importance of agriculture and the state prison within the county, as well as the local schools. The large transportation/warehousing sector suggests the county is in position for positive influence from the Cordele Inland Port. There remain unrealized opportunities related to the abundant fields and forests and outstanding natural resources of the county. The cost of living in Wilcox County is relatively very low, and the crime rate is low making it even more attractive as a place to live for families and new residents and retirees, especially in the context of attractive open spaces, available fresh fruit and vegetables, and a verdant landscape punctuated by outstanding natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities.

**The Wilcox County community has chosen a multi-faceted approach and strategy to improve its economic status and further economic development in the county. The following goals and objectives were chosen to address identified economic development issues in Wilcox County.**

### **1. Address Low Educational Levels/Improve Jobs Skills**

Wilcox County will continue to support its school system, and their PASS Program, the adult education center in Rochelle and other Wiregrass Georgia Technical College programs, and regional Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act programs. It will revitalize its Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority, develop a local leadership program and other public/private partnerships, and utilize civic groups and continuing intergovernmental cooperation. The Great Promise Partnership will be investigated.

### **2. Support/Enhance Agriculture/Forestry Uses**

The community will support efforts to create additional markets, explore alternative crops, and seek value-added businesses which keep such uses viable and profitable. One local farm in Wilcox County is an award winning producer of food-grade natural oils derived from sunflower and peanuts and markets their products throughout the United States at fine dining establishments. The recently established Abbeville Farmers' Market teamed with the Georgia Grown marketing program are avenues of commerce for local producers. Increased development of agri-tourism attractions will further commerce for the community. The continued operation of the peanut buying point, McCleskey Mills (formally Doster Peanut Company), will continue to anchor agriculture jobs in the county while potentially providing the means of further expansion in Rochelle. The Wilcox Agri-Center continues to offer other avenues for agri-centered commerce and promotion.

### **3. Address/Improve Infrastructure Needs**

The Wilcox County community will jointly work to solve any infrastructure deficiencies, including highway needs, and otherwise address water/sewer and other needs. The lack of appropriate broadband telecommunications access will also be addressed. The Wilcox County Industrial Park at Rochelle will need to be fully served with infrastructure to further prepare for growth and development.

### **4. Nurture Existing Businesses/Entrepreneurs**

The Wilcox County community will work through its Development Authority and in cooperation with Wiregrass Georgia Technical College and state agencies to meet local needs and encourage expansions and new local business development.

### **5. Attract New Businesses/Jobs**

The Wilcox County community through its Development Authority, re-invigorated Chamber of Commerce, and intergovernmental cooperation will seek compatible business and industrial development. Recent developments in the Abbeville Industrial Park are examples of the need for intergovernmental cooperation to accomplish future growth. Over 130 acres total are available for industrial development in Wilcox County. Availability of infrastructure per industrial site varies; however, a developer can choose between three individual sites located in Abbeville, Rochelle, or Pitts.

## **6. Develop/Enhance Tourism**

Wilcox County was once a destination for Georgia tourism because of its natural springs and their healing waters. The Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers and other outdoor amenities; many historic structures; existing and potential festivals; its location along U.S. 280 and U.S. 129; the Agri-Center; as well as its farms and scenic countryside offer much potential to increase visitors. An increase in bicycle activity is anticipated with the recent designation of US Bike Route 15 along Georgia highways 112 and 215. This route offers cyclists a tour along the designated Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway. The Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon has become an annual event, originally created as a one-time celebration of Wilcox County history. The route follows the actual route Jefferson Davis traveled to escape capture by Union soldiers after the close of the Civil War in 1865. The Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival is already well-known and can be used as a springboard.

## **7. Improve Transportation Access/Quality**

The Regional T-SPLOST has resulted in many needed local resurfacing and other road improvements, which enhance the community as a place to live and work. The multi-laning of U.S. 23 with complete by-pass will also be a major enhancement. It may open up other opportunities for job creation, as well. Another Regional T-SPLOST authorized by voters upon the conclusion of the current 10 year period in 2022 will enable additional transportation projects to be built in the community. With anticipation of a reauthorization of the Regional T-SPLOST in 2022, Bleckley County and the City of Cochran plan to construct multi-modal transportation infrastructure to include sidewalks and streetscaping in the Downtown Cochran area. These and other improvements will continue to enhance local travel and make business markets more accessible. It would also make it easier to live in Bleckley, but work in nearby urban growth centers, something which already occurs. Promotion of trails including a possible Rails to Trails; improving bicycling opportunities and facilities, including upgrading Biking Bleckley; and otherwise promoting tourism would also help quality of life and economic development. The expansion of Georgia's ports will make the Norfolk Southern Railroad even more important, as will continued improvement of the local airport.

## **8. Revitalize Downtown**

The historic fabric and available buildings in all of Wilcox's municipalities, although limited to Pitts and Pineview, allow for much opportunity. Their historic nature allows for development incentives, preservation of unique character, and enhanced quality of life. Community projects, such as the old City Hall and School/Auditorium rehabilitations in Abbeville, privately owned, the caboose in Pineview, and community center development in Pitts and Pineview in historic structures create civic pride and community cooperation. Recent strides have been made in Abbeville with the creation of a Downtown Development Authority and development of a farmers' market. Pitts also plans a multi-purpose park. Such projects can further stimulate private investment.

## **9. Develop/Improve Local Industrial Parks/Sites**

The community has a number of available sites, including those served by rail, to market. Abbeville has an industrial park of about 35 acres. Other sites are available in Pitts and Rochelle. The Wilcox County Industrial Park at Rochelle and the Pitts Industrial Park are lacking complete infrastructure. The Deve-

lopment Authority is currently marketing the Hawkins Rail site, consisting of 51 rail served acres near Rochelle. Developments new to Wilcox County are able to claim a \$4,000 per job tax credit along with 5 percent investment tax credit. Proximity to a major interstate highway, Interstate 75, and to the Cordele Inland Port (about 30 miles) as well as rail access will be key drivers for economic development to the county.

### **10. Promote Quality of Life/Civic and Community Pride/Location**

Wilcox County has an opportunity to promote its small town and rural character and quality of life through a reinvigorated Chamber of Commerce and other means. The welcoming, family atmosphere; low crime rate; low cost of living; the availability of fresh fruit and vegetables; the Agri-Center and the many, active civic clubs; the Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers; the verdant landscape and outdoor amenities are all easy selling cards. The overall county location and ease of access to larger urban areas, particularly Cordele, Eastman, and Fitzgerald, further contribute to ease of promotion of the county as an excellent place to live, visit, or do business.

### **11. Enhance Intergovernmental Cooperation**

Community efforts working together both within the county, and through neighbors, the region, and state agencies can facilitate success and scope of effort. An active, revitalized chamber of commerce, many civic groups, and a leadership development program can make public/private partnerships easier to achieve and more successful. New efforts of cooperation with Cordele and Fitzgerald may open doors and facilitate new public and private investment.

### **12. Address Growth Management/Rural Character Preservation**

A well planned community and one which appears neat, orderly, and attractive supports and encourages additional investment. The community has developed individual land use regulations to address specific issues and nuisances, but stronger, general, and coordinated efforts and joint code enforcement are needed. The community can also utilize infrastructure location and civic organizations and programs to assist.

### **13. Develop Local Leadership Programs**

Wilcox County has been noted in the past for its local leadership and community cooperation through such examples as the Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival and Agri-Center. A Leadership Wilcox group supported by the local chamber and many local civic groups can develop broader support and new leaders and can accomplish much to help the community cooperate and advance in economic development.

### **14. Support Wilcox State prison/Cordele Inland Port Development**

Wilcox State Prison has stabilized the local economic base, along with proximity to Cordele and its larger pool of retail trade/services/jobs. The community needs to be vigilant to support and ensure these pillars and foundations for other growth remain strong and vibrant. Continued development of the Cordele Inland Port necessitates improvement of U.S. 280. Improving an already important access will support the developed transportation sector in the county, and otherwise will generate spillover jobs and further bedroom community growth.

# Land Use

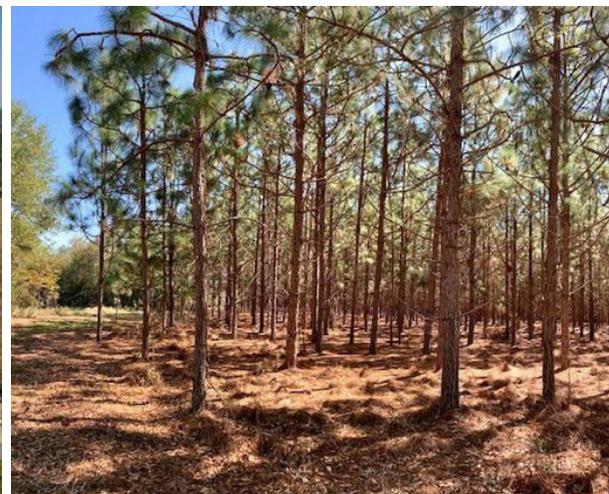


The landscape and the way land is used is often visible and tangible evidence of planning or the lack thereof. It can reveal patterns of growth, development, and how we relate to the natural environment; and it often defines the character of our community. Land use also affects our quality of life in a variety of ways. As our understanding of the natural world continues to evolve, we have realized with greater certainty that land use and management has significant implications for not only the quality of air and water in the immediate and surrounding areas, but also for the diversity and overall health of immediate and surrounding ecosystems.

The awareness of direct and indirect consequences of land use decisions illustrates the need for careful use of our finite supply of land and the necessity of sound decisions in its development and/or protection. The need for sustainable growth and development, which accommodates our development needs while maintaining balance and control, and limiting impacts on the natural and built environment, are both recognized in the state quality community objectives.

Sound, quality growth and development results from effective and balanced land use planning that anticipates, prepares, and exercises control over development decisions. It guides and directs growth and development into a desirable and efficient pattern of land use to achieve compatibilities in use, proper return, and effective use of public investments in infrastructure and services. Additionally, it regulates minimal impacts to the environment and natural resources.

The lack of planning can result in uncontrolled and unmanaged growth, which can negatively impact the community's desires and plans, property values, degrade the environment and landscape, and foster other detrimental effects or burdens in a short period of time. It can destroy important natural functions and treasured views or other parts of the landscape. It can cause new public tax or service burdens while lowering return on existing infrastructure investments. A community's overall standard of living will likely be negatively impacted by significant or long-term uncontrolled growth.



**L** Farm, Wilcox County    **R** Timber Land, Wilcox County

Land use planning efforts are an attempt to provide a policy guide and framework or blueprint for desired growth and development. Sound planning provides for managed growth and development, allowing for necessary land use and development, but guiding it in such a manner that balances and protects resources, systems, and other aspects of the landscape important to the community. Such planning tries to lessen, mitigate, or avoid inconsistencies, inefficiencies, or conflicting land use efforts. Existing patterns and trends of land uses, community investment in and location of facilities and services, important natural and cultural constraints, and overriding community desires are considered and accommodated in developing and delineating the desired pattern of growth and development.

Wilcox County and its municipalities are united in their vision and desire for healthy economic growth. It is a rural county with abundant fields, forests, and natural resources; great natural beauty; and many assets for growth. The county's vision for its growth and development is one

that protects and utilizes its natural resources and landscape to continue growth and development while being mindful to preserve the area's natural resources and beauty, as well. Land uses will continue to look similar to those existing uses, and the rural character will be maintained. Infrastructure and amenities will be expanded and developed to support and attract new residents and businesses, primarily in or adjacent to the existing municipalities and already-developed areas. Agricultural and forestry uses will be kept viable and remain the principal land uses of the county; those will be an integral component of the county's economy and the preservation of rural character supportive of open space and natural resource protection. Commercial and industrial growth, as well as new land use developments in public utilities, will be compatible and supportive of continued agricultural/forestry uses. These are integral conditions for the growth and development for Wilcox County, overall, as well as its municipalities.

All local governments were involved in developing the Land Use element for this Joint Comprehensive Plan. Existing land use maps visually convey to all concerned the current landscape and correlation of existing development. Future land use maps illustrate to all concerned the community's vision and desires for additional growth and development. Such depictions also lend credence and supporting background information important to understanding and illustrating official local government policy in designating lands unsuitable for solid waste handling facilities in local solid waste management plans. Land use maps provide an official display of community desires and goals for compatible future growth and development.

The community's land use maps are, however, a general policy guide and framework, not necessarily a rigid or unchangeable picture of future growth and development. Not all growth or developments can be foreseen, and other events could necessitate a change in community vision or desires. The depicted pattern of desired future growth and development displayed on future land use maps is a current statement and reflection of community expectations and desires. It provides a context, framework, and background for the public and private sectors to use when planning, evaluating, shaping, guiding, and influencing proposed developments and other decisions affecting the use of the land and community growth and development. The plan provides a context for forethought, examination of impacts and consequences, and mitigation of land use decisions on the community's growth and development and desired future patterns and community vision.

## Land Use Categories and Descriptions

Land use categories utilized in the development of this plan and in the land use maps are the standard categories established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and defined in the planning standards as below.

1. **Residential.** The predominant use of land within the residential category is for single-family and multi-family dwelling units.
2. **Commercial.** This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities, located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.

3. **Industrial.** This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.
4. **Public/Institutional.** This category includes certain state, federal or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc.
5. **Transportation/Communications/Utilities.** This category includes such uses as major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, port facilities or other similar uses.
6. **Park/Recreation/Conservation.** This category is for land dedicated to active or passive recreational and conservation uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, other wild lands, golf courses, recreation centers or similar uses.
7. **Agriculture.** This category is for land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or similar rural uses.
8. **Forestry.** This category is for land dedicated to commercial timber, pulpwood production, or other woodland use.

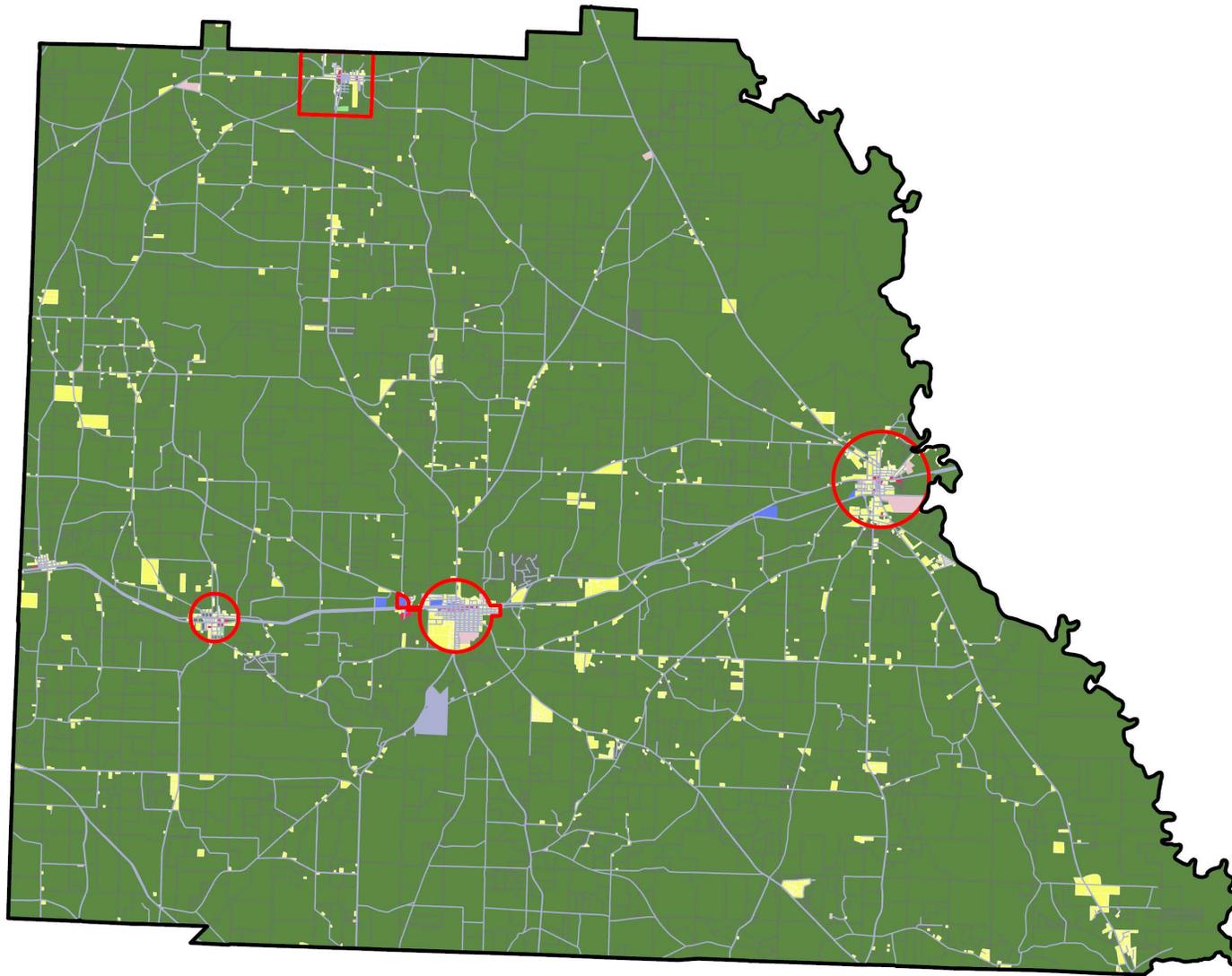
## Existing Land Uses

Existing land use patterns for Wilcox County and its municipalities are depicted on the following maps. A table depicting the existing distribution of land use acreage is shown below.

### Existing Land Use Distribution, Wilcox County, 2023 (Acres)

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent of Total
Agriculture	91,597	37.02%
Commercial	115	0.04%
Forestry	142,351	57.53%
Industrial	253	0.10%
Park/Recreation/Conservation	23	0.01%
Public/Institutional	376	0.15%
Residential	5,277	2.13%
Transportation/Communications/Utilities	7,464	3.01%
<b>Total</b>	<b>247,458</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

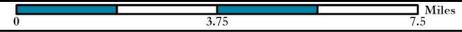
Source: Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Geographic Information System, 2023.



# Wilcox County Land Use Map

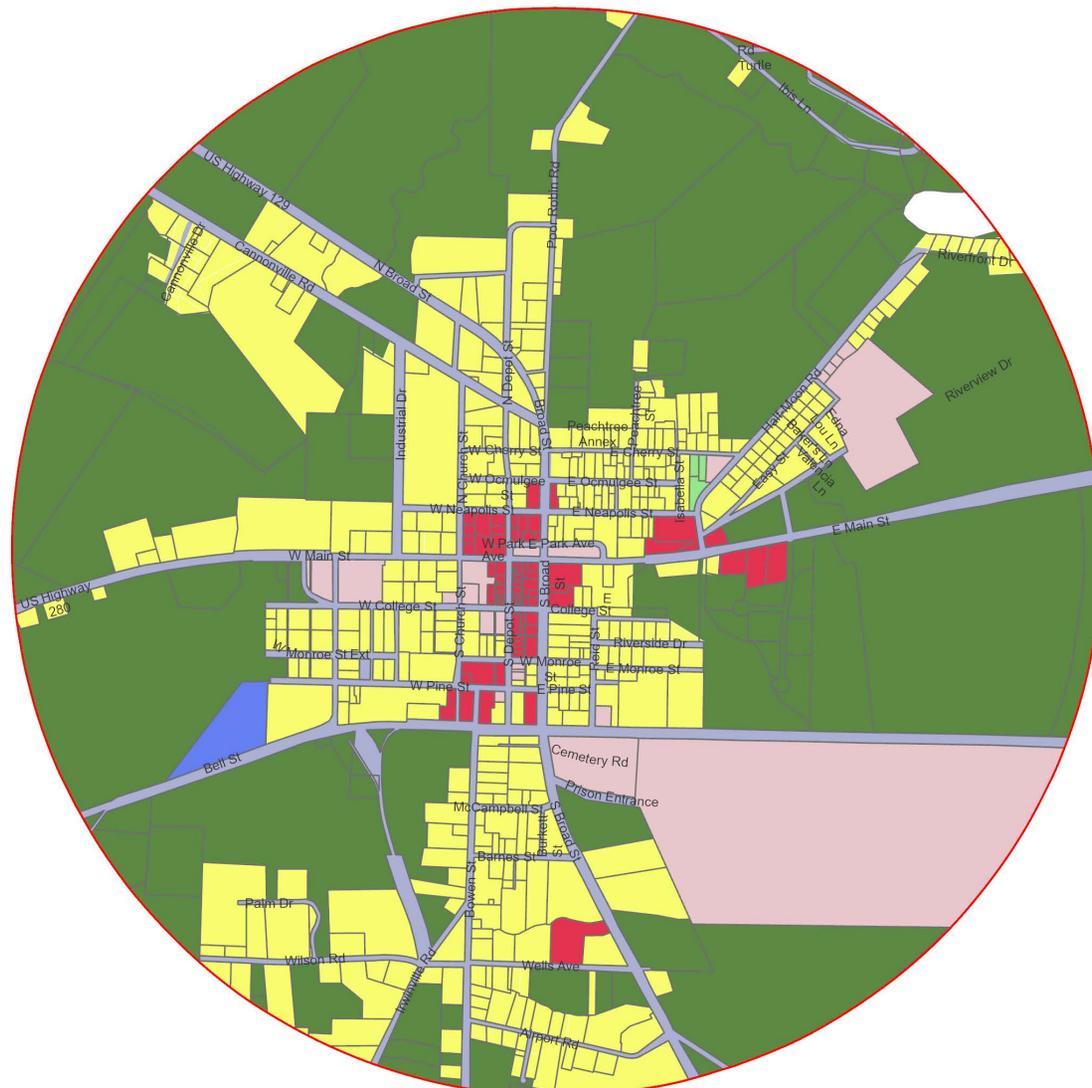
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2023



Existing

- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities



# Abbeville Land Use Map

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2023



Existing

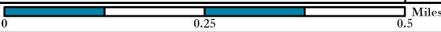
- Tax Parcels
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities



# Pineview Land Use Map

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2023



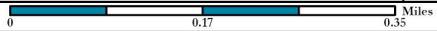
Existing	Tax Parcels
	Agriculture/Forestry
Commercial	
Industrial	
Park/Recreation/Conservation	
Public/Institutional	
Residential	
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	



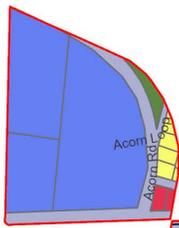
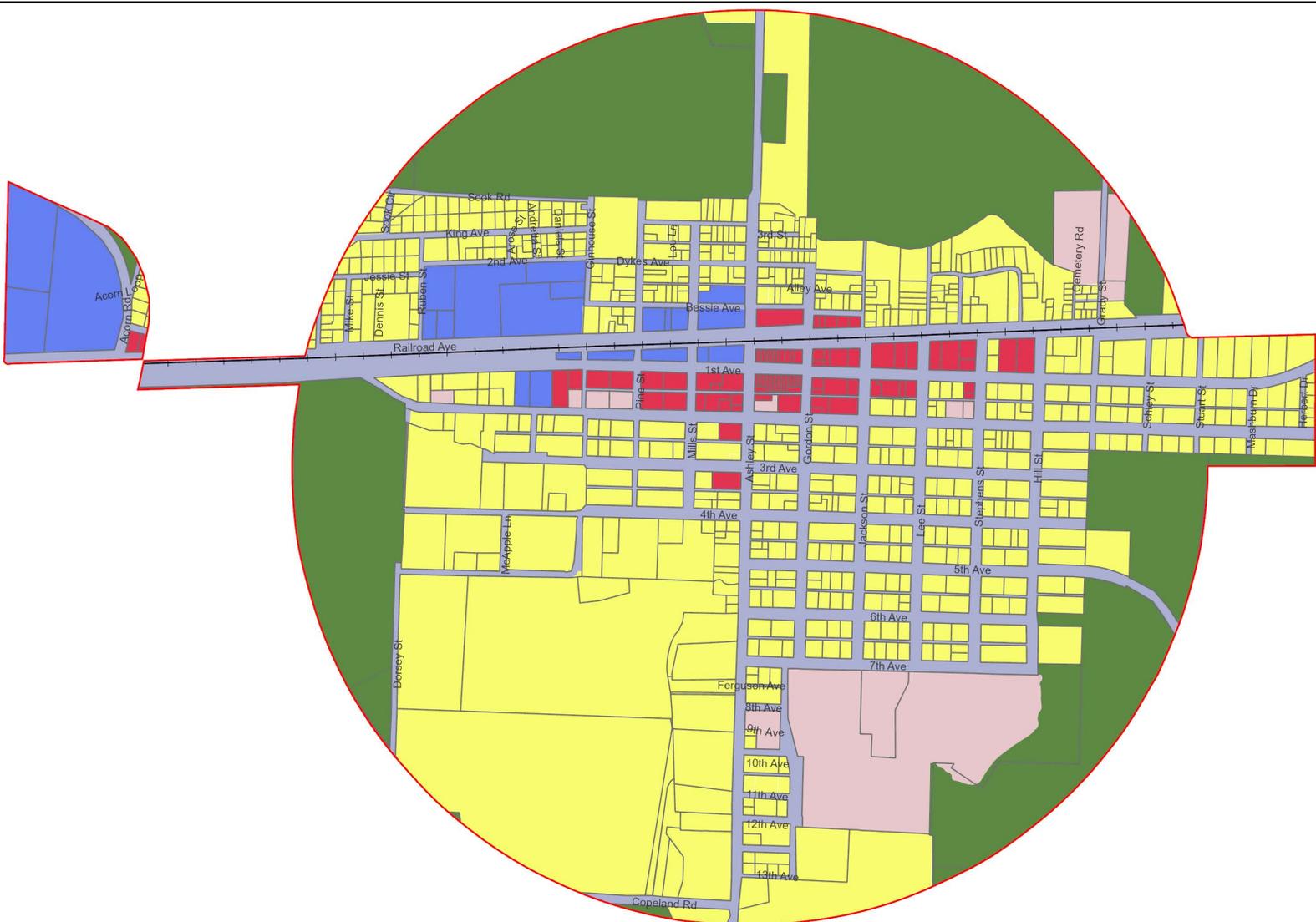
# Pitts Land Use Map

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2023



Existing	Tax Parcels
	Agriculture/Forestry
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Park/Recreation/Conservation
	Public/Institutional
	Residential
	Transportation/Communication/Utilities



# Rochelle Land Use Map

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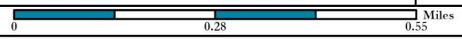
2023



Existing



- Tax Parcels
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities



## Future Land Uses

Wilcox County's history of development traces to its fields, forests, transportation, and leadership. The county was settled while still a frontier in the early 1800s, although the county was not formally established until 1857, with initial settlement and development centered on the Ocmulgee River and the county's longleaf pine forests. The county's heyday of growth from the late 1800s to 1920 was related to railroad development which was the impetus for development of all the county's current municipalities, other than Abbeville, the county seat.



**L** Ranch, Wilcox County    **R** Ocmulgee River

The location of U.S. highways 280 and 129 through the county, local civic leadership, the location of Wilcox State Prison in 1994, local agriculture, and proximity to larger urban centers, particularly Cordele, have helped create economic stability. Local leadership brought the Georgia Normal College and Business Institute in the 1880s, stabilized the Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival, and has developed an innovative local school program, the Patriot Academy for School Success, to assist students falling behind. Meanwhile agriculture has continued to remain key to the county's economy. Fruit production, particularly melons, and row crops, especially peanuts, have maintained Wilcox County as one of Georgia's top agricultural producers. These continuing factors; highway location along U.S. 280 and U.S. 129; the marketing of the Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway and the Jefferson Davis Civil War Heritage Trail; location near growth centers like Cordele, Fitzgerald, and Eastman; and the many scenic landscapes of the county continue to be assets which portend well for future growth and development within Wilcox County.

As many other counties are seeing across Southern Georgia over the last two to three years, Wilcox County has received interest from public utility firms interested in developing land for solar power utilization. There are two large solar projects involving large tracts of land in unincorporated Wilcox County that are expected to come online within the next year, or two, at most. Otherwise, there has been

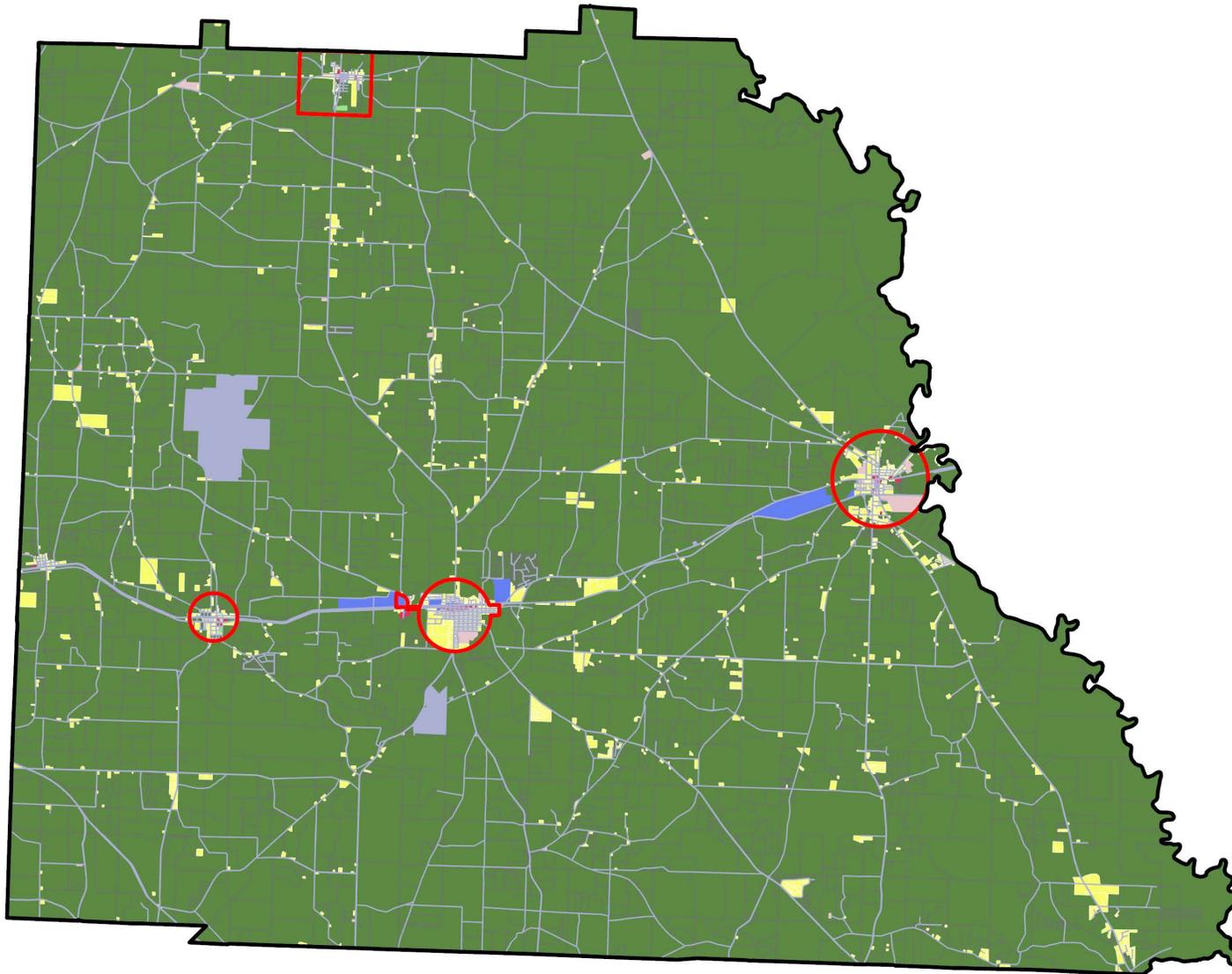
generally low levels of growth in Wilcox County in recent years, primarily residential bedroom growth in western and southeastern portions of the county close to Cordele and Fitzgerald. Minimal commercial development has concentrated along U.S. 280 in Rochelle and Abbeville. Residential growth, for the most part, has been scattered residential development across the county, often manufactured housing through individual lot sales and development. There have also been some subdivision development/land sales near Pitts/Seville because of the proximity to Cordele. In addition, there has also been some lot sales along or near U.S. 280 between Abbeville and Rochelle in a couple of locations.



**L** Pond, Wilcox County    **R** Wilcox County High School

Abbeville and Rochelle, particularly along U.S. 280, will continue to be the focus of more intense land use developments, including commercial, industrial, and multi-family residential development. There are obvious reasons. Abbeville is the county seat, and Rochelle is the home of the majority of current economic activity and many countywide community facilities, such as the county recreation complex, schools, and industrial parks. Both municipalities have the only sewer systems in the county and are located along the U.S. 280 corridor. Abbeville also has a 35-acre industrial site available. Residential growth will likely continue to be primarily single-family manufactured housing located in southeastern Wilcox (near Bowen’s Mill/Fitzgerald), western Wilcox (Pitts/Seville area near Cordele), and near U.S. 280 between Abbeville and Rochelle. There could be scattered infill residential development in northern and western parts of Abbeville, western portions of Rochelle and Pitts, and very limited scattered infill development across Pineview. The disposable housing market of Wilcox County, where children leave the county for economic opportunity and later sell inherited homes of their parents, will provide some opportunity for resident/retiree attraction. Northside Villa, an assisted living facility in Rochelle, also might help attract retirees. The county’s future land uses will closely resemble existing land uses. Agricultural, forestry, and conservation uses will continue to predominate the landscape, and maintain the existing rural character. This quality of life will be important in fostering additional growth.

Future land use maps for Wilcox County, Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle are included following this description.



# Wilcox County Land Use Map

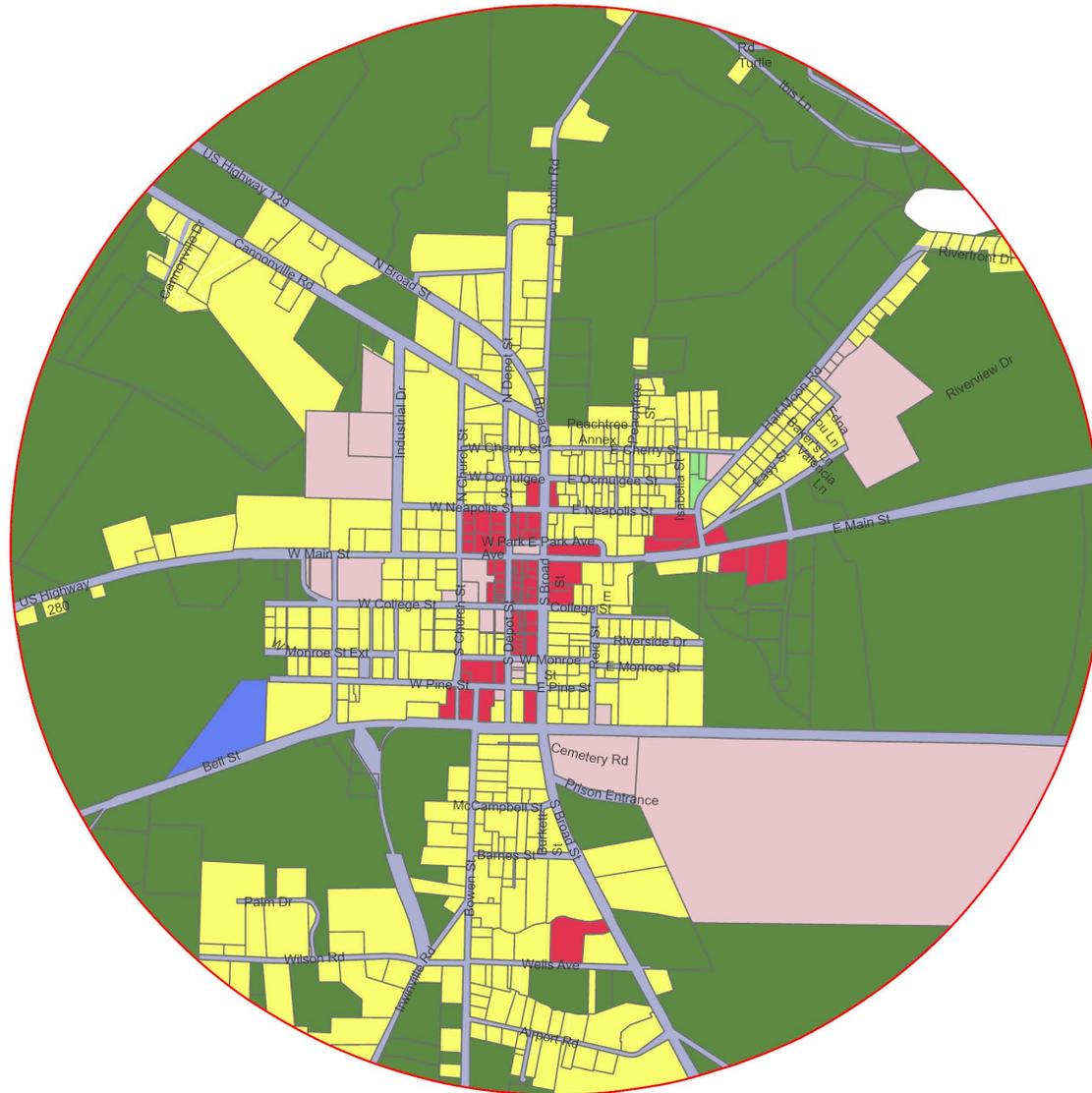
Future

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2023



- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities



# Abbeville Land Use Map

Future

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2023



- Tax Parcels
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential



# Pineview Land Use Map

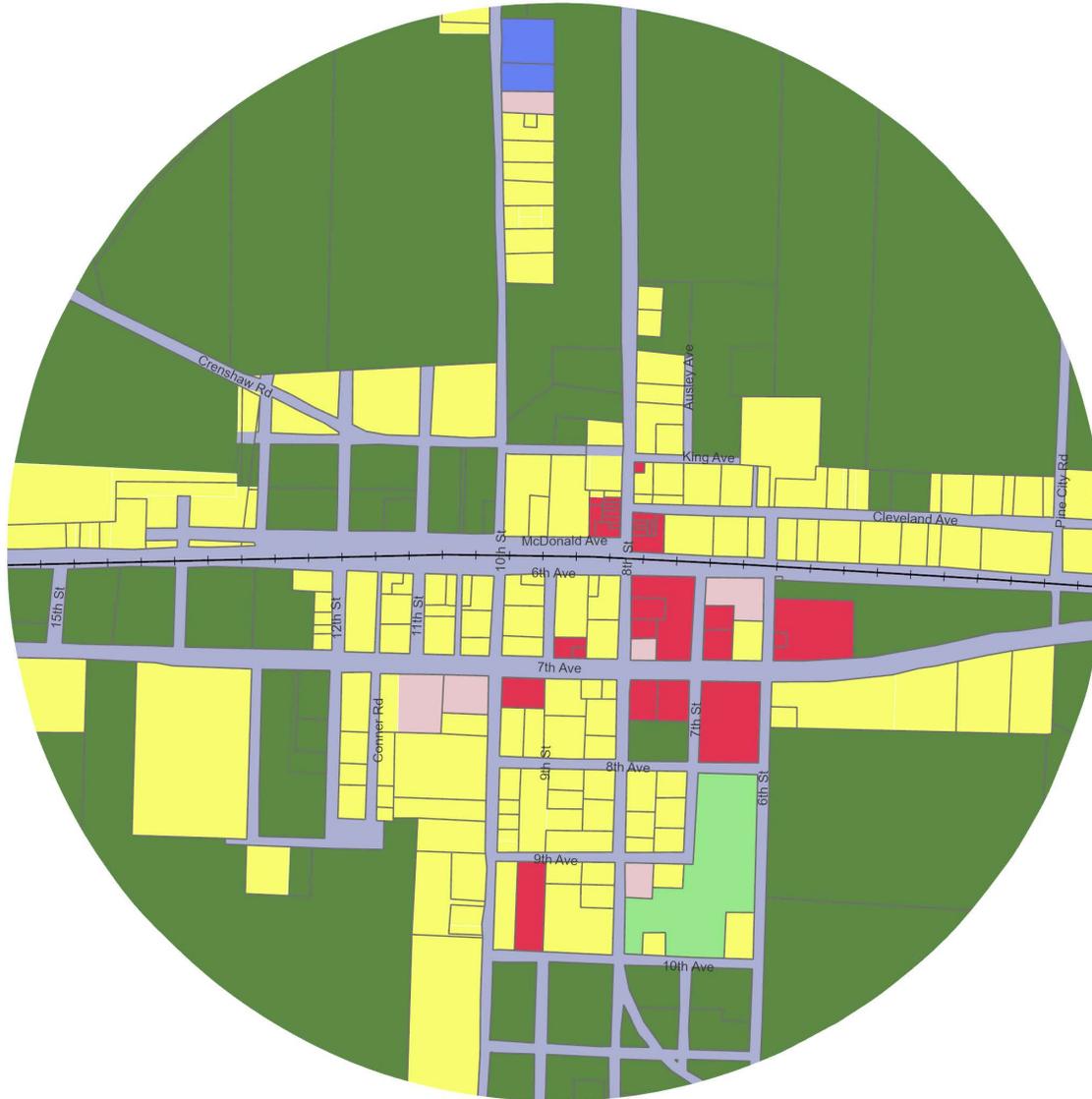
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2023



Future

-  Tax Parcels
-  Agriculture/Forestry
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Park/Recreation/Conservation
-  Public/Institutional
-  Residential



# Pitts Land Use Map

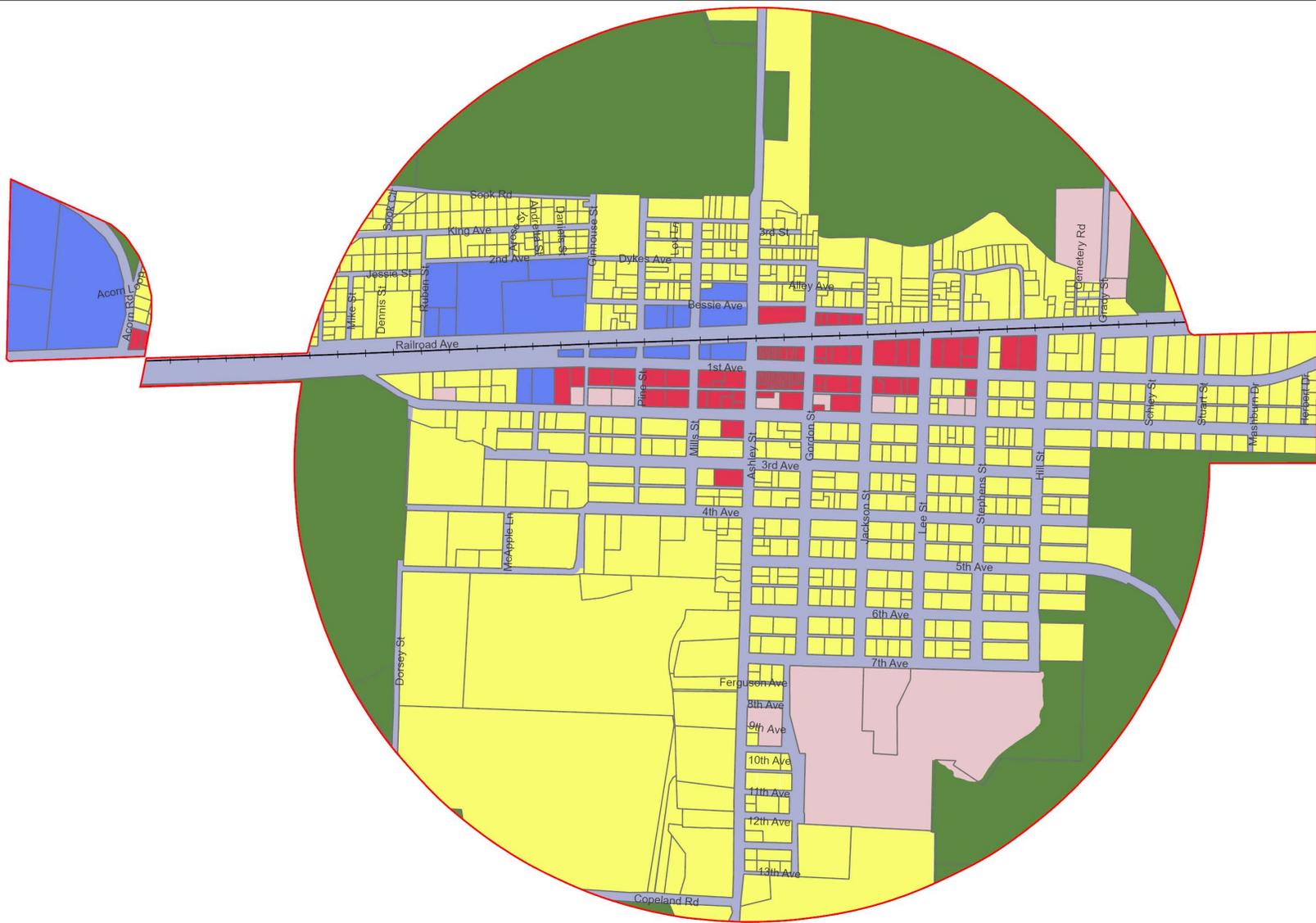
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2023



Future

-  Tax Parcels
-  Agriculture/Forestry
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Park/Recreation/Conservation
-  Public/Institutional
-  Residential



# Rochelle Land Use Map

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2023



Future



- Tax Parcels
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential

# Land Use Goals

Wilcox County and its municipalities seek future growth and development respective to its rural character, abundant natural resources, agricultural/forestry sector, and their existing quality of life. It desires growth patterns which maintain and keep viable existing agricultural and forestry and preserve its natural and cultural resources. The community has chosen the following land use goals to help bring about its desired future and delineated community vision.

## 1. Address Growth Management/Community Aesthetics

A well planned community and one which appears neat, orderly, and attractive supports and encourages additional investment. The community has developed only limited individual land use and building regulations to address specific issues and nuisances, but more general and coordinated efforts and joint code enforcement are needed. The community can also utilize infrastructure location; improvement of facilities and services; support of agricultural, forestry, and conservation uses; downtown revitalization; and involvement of its citizenry to assist.

## 2. Improve Subdivision/Manufactured Housing/Land Use Regulation/Code Enforcement

As noted above, Wilcox County has rudimentary land use regulations, road acceptance/subdivision ordinances, a manufactured home ordinance, and others to address specific issues or nuisances. Code enforcement in the county is related to solid waste although future plans are for increased inspections and enforcement. Only Abbeville and Rochelle have zoning ordinances and building code enforcement.

## 3. Guide/Plan Development

This management of growth and development can be accomplished through controlled, planned location of infrastructure and other public improvements; conserving natural/historic resources; maintaining viable agricultural/forestry uses; as well as through regulation enhancement.

## 4. Maintain Open Spaces/Agricultural/Forestry Uses

Development of new markets, supporting creation of alternative crops and uses, opening of a farmers market, utilizing the Agri-Center more, celebrating the heritage of these uses, providing professional support, and attracting compatible agribusiness or other industry all can help achieve this.

## 5. Protect Significant Natural Resources

The Ocmulgee and Alapaha rivers and the natural springs all have much history for recreation and tourism within the county. The Enduring Farmlands Georgia Scenic Byway and Jefferson

Davis Civil War Heritage Trail have significant potential. Increased recreational and outdoor land usage through continued park development, promotion, and community events will boost the community's potential to both enhance economic utilization and conserve the County's significant natural and cultural resources. It can also attract more visitors, more residents, and build a larger audience of citizen support for protection and enhancement of these resources.

## **6. Encourage Infill Development**

It only makes sense to utilize lands and buildings where taxpayers and private interests have invested in providing costly infrastructure and construction in the past before extending additional infrastructure or incurring completely new construction costs. There is an abundance of available vacant commercial, industrial, and residential structures within the community, as well as areas with readily available infrastructure. The fact that nearly the entire town of Rochelle is on the National Register of Historic Places, and state and federal tax incentives are thus available to encourage reinvestment and rehabilitation, is an unrealized opportunity.

## **7. Develop/ Improve Recreational/Leisure Facilities**

As noted above, appropriate continued and enhanced development of facilities, parks, museums, festival sites, and other venues can benefit the community economically, support protection of natural and cultural resources, and attract new residents and visitors. The community's rivers, particularly the Ocmulgee; existing and potential festivals and museums, and increased tourism, among others, provide such opportunities. The Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival and the newly designated U.S. Bike Route 15 provide a platform for such growth and expansion.

## **8. Seek Compatible Development/Utilization**

Growth supportive, not disruptive through use, scale, or intensity, of the community's existing rural character, small-town atmosphere, extant heritage, and current agricultural/forestry uses is desired.

## **9. Revitalize Downtowns**

The historic fabric and available buildings in all of Wilcox's municipalities, although limited to Pitts and Pineview, allow for much opportunity. Their historic nature allows for development incentives, preservation of unique character, and enhanced quality of life. Community projects, such as the old City Hall and School rehabilitation in Abbeville, the caboose in Pineview, and community center development in Pitts and Pineview in historic structures create civic pride and community cooperation. Additionally, Pitts has made progress on its multi-purpose park and has plans to continue to the facility. The recent creation of a Rural Zone designation by the State of Georgia offers municipalities like Abbeville, Rochelle, Pineview, and Pitts (under 15,000 population) an opportunity to provide tax credit incentives for investing in historic, rural downtowns. Although communities must submit applications for the competitive designation process, each of the municipalities located in Wilcox County are excellent candidates. Such projects can further stimulate private investment.

# Community Work Programs



The Community Work Program Element is the chosen implementation strategy which the community has identified to begin its path toward improvement and its desired future growth and development. These are the immediate steps the community has chosen to address identified community issues, needs, and opportunities, and begin the journey to achieve the desired community vision.

This plan element answers the questions, **“How are we, as a community, going to get where we desire, given where we are?”** The Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes a separate community work program for each local government involved, as well as a report of accomplishments on their previous work program. The Long Term Policies identified under the Community Goals element identifies implementation activities and ideals which may take longer than five years, or because of circumstances involved, including finances, are not envisioned to begin in the near future.

# **Wilcox County**

## Community Work Programs

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

		Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	
Initiation Year	Description	Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	Status/Comments
2019	Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships			Y	2024				Underway; Wilcox County is currently in pursuit to re-activate the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce and the leadership program associated with the Chamber. Estimated date of completion: 2024; Item remains on CWP, as this item is in progress; "Private" added as funding source; "Chamber" and "Private" added to responsibility section of CWP
2019	Initiate entrepreneurial activities through the establishment of a mentoring group through the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce, or by other programs, that will help to provide the support structure necessary to encourage the increased development of entrepreneurs					Y	2026		Action Item postponed to 2026, as County and Cities are currently pursuing the activation of a Chamber of Commerce first.
2022	Seek to develop and enhance economic development activities through the development of an authority or other partnership with Crisp County and/or Ben Hill County			Y	2026				Underway--County and Cities and community are currently in pursuit of activating a Chamber of Commerce/ Development Authority. Estimated completion date: 2026.
2023	Organize a Wilcox County Historical Society					Y	2028		Postponed at the discretion of local officials, due to changing priorities. Estimated completion: 2028

Wilcox County Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program

**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2022	Pursue funding to purchase additional land for an industrial area with rail access					Y	2028		Action item postponed due to lack of funding. County will continue to seek funding for this endeavor. Estimated completion: 2028
2022	Pursue the expansion and/or modification of the existing countywide jail facility as appropriate			Y	2027				Underway; Wilcox County is utilizing SPLOST and USDA funding to expand the current jail facility. Estimated project completion: 2027
2020	Pursue funding for communications equipment, including a repeater system for public safety uses to be located in northwest Wilcox County					Y	2028		Action item postponed due to lack of funding. County will continue to seek funding and purchase equipment as funding becomes available. Estimated completion: 2028
2023	Pursue a location for a new County Office facility	Y	2023						Complete; County purchased and renovated a building for a new elections facility in 2023 at a cost of \$45,000
2020	Continue to pursue funding as appropriate for needed renovations/upgrades to the Wilcox County Courthouse			Y	2028				Underway; Since the previous plan update, Wilcox County has upgraded exit lights, serviced air conditioners, installed LED lights, and is in the process of installing an elevator at the courthouse (2023). Maintenance continues annually. Wilcox County will continue to seek funding to apply additional upgrades and repairs as needed; remains on CWP as this action is ongoing

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2021	Seek to attract a provider of natural gas service and develop the appropriate infrastructure for the services throughout the county							Y	Action item dropped/deleted from CWP, as this action is no longer a priority for the County
2019	Resurface Thistle Road	Y	2019						Complete; Thistle Road was resurfaced in 2019
2020	Resurface Statham Shoals Road	Y	2023						Complete; Statham Shoals Road resurfaced in 2023
2020	Complete TIA Band 3 Project (Walker Road)	Y	2023						Complete; TIA Band 3 Project (Walker Road) was completed in 2023
2019	Seek to locally enforce Georgia's Uniform Construction Codes, including sharing of a coordinated and unified code enforcement office, possibly through a cooperative agreement with an adjacent county					Y	2024		Action item has been postponed due to lack of community interest in countywide land use regulations. County will continue this pursuit as opportunities become available.
2022	Adopt basic land use development regulations countywide, including manufactured housing standards, subdivision development, and regulating permit/location					Y	2024		Action item has been postponed due to lack of community interest in countywide land use regulations. County will continue this pursuit as opportunities become available.
2019	Develop measures which accomplish the removal and prevention of abandoned mobile homes and other eyesores in the county and its municipalities					Y	2028		Action item postponed The County will seek to pass a manufactured home ordinance in 2028. Postponed at the discretion of local officials, due to lack of priority. Estimated completion: 2028

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2022	Build or otherwise renovate a building for use as an EMS facility	Y	2023						Complete; Action item completed in 2023 at a cost of \$700,000
2019	Complete installation of an elevator in the courthouse			Y	2023				Underway; Wilcox County is currently in the process of installing an elevator at the courthouse at a cost of 1 million dollars. Estimated completion: 2023
2020	Purchase/replace five (5) sheriff's office pursuit vehicles			Y	2027				Underway/Ongoing; Action item completed in previous 5 years; item remains on the CWP as action will need to be pursued again periodically within the next 5 years.
2020	Purchase two (2) new ambulance vehicles			Y	2028				Underway/Ongoing; Action item completed in previous 5 years; 3 ambulance vehicles were purchased in January 2023; item remains on the CWP as action will need to be pursued again periodically within the next 5 years.
2021	Purchase two (2) firetrucks for improved firefighting capabilities			Y	2024				Underway; Wilcox County received an AFG grant in 2023 for the purchase of 2 firetrucks; estimated completion: 2024

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2022	Exercise buyout option on lease-to-purchase one (1) motor grader			Y	2028				Underway; Wilcox County is currently leasing to purchase 2 motor graders; lease to purchase agreement ongoing; item remains on CWP as lease-to purchase is ongoing each year; estimated completion 2028
2023	Exercise buyout option on lease-to-purchase one (1) backhoe	Y	2023						Complete; County purchased backhoe at a cost of \$77,000 in 2023
2020	Purchase new voting machines and elections equipment	Y	2021						Complete; new voting machines were purchased as required by the State of Georgia in 2021
2019	Develop standardized 911 address markers and display requirements countywide					Y	2026		Postponed at the discretion of local officials, due to changing priorities. Estimated completion: 2026

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships	X							X	X	Civic Groups, cooperative Extension, Chamber, Private	\$5,000	X	X		X
Initiate entrepreneurial activities through the establishment of a mentoring group through the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce, or by other programs, that will help to provide the support structure necessary to encourage the increased development of entrepreneurs			X					X		Chamber, Dev. Auth.	Staff time	X			X
Seek to develop and enhance economic development activities through the development of an authority or other partnership with Crisp County and/or Ben Hill County			X					X		Planning Committee, Chamber, Dev. Auth.	Staff time	X			X
Organize a Wilcox County Historical Society					X			X		Chamber, Dev. Auth.	Staff time	X			X
Pursue funding to purchase additional land for an industrial area with rail access					X			X	Rochelle	Dev. Auth.	\$500,000 (total)	X	X	X	
Pursue the expansion and/or modification of the existing countywide jail facility as appropriate				X				X		SPLOST, USDA	\$500,000 (total)	X		X	

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Pursue funding for communications equipment, including a repeater system for public safety uses to be located in northwest Wilcox County					X			X		FEMA, GEMA	\$1.5 mil	X	X	X	
Seek funding to develop new facilities at the county recreation complex, including the construction of a walking track and a football field.					X			X		DNR (LWCF)	\$500,000	X	X	X	
Continue to pursue funding as appropriate for needed renovations/upgrades to the Wilcox County Courthouse						X		X			\$500,000 (total, SPLOST)	X			
Seek to locally enforce Georgia’s Uniform Construction Codes, including sharing of a coordinated and unified code enforcement office, possibly through a cooperative agreement with an adjacent county	X							X			\$1,000 (enforcement)	X			
Adopt basic land use regulations countywide, including manufactured housing standards, subdivision development, and regulating permit/location	X							X			\$10,000 (staff time)	X			
Develop measures which accomplish the removal and prevention of abandoned mobile homes and other eyesores in the county and its municipalities					X			X			\$1,000 (enforcement)	X			

**Wilcox County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Purchase/replace five (5) sheriff's pursuit vehicles		X		X				X		SPLOST	\$175,000	X			
Purchase/replace two (2) ambulance vehicles			X		X			X		SPLOST	\$280,000	X			
Purchase two (2) firetrucks for improved firefighting capabilities	X							X		FEMA, AFG, GA Forestry Surplus, SPLOST	\$96,000	X			
Exercise buyout option on lease-to-purchase one (1) motor grader						X					\$135,000	X			
Develop standardized 911 address markers and display requirements county-wide			X					X			\$8,500	X			
Complete TIA 2 Band 1 project: Resurface/replace corrugated metal pipes on Cemetary Road		X						X		TIA GDOT	\$1,052,000	X			

# City of Abbeville

## Community Work Programs

City of Abbeville Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program

## Report of Accomplishments

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2019	Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships			Y	2024				The Wilcox County community including the County, Cities (including Abbeville) and other agencies and groups are in pursuit of developing a local leadership program and re-activating the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce. Estimated date of completion: 2024
2019	Pursue funding to assist in renovating downtown buildings (Sims, Smith, Old Post Office) to an appropriate level for commercial rental space			Y	2024				Pursuit in progress; City/DDA seeking ARPA funds to complete project; estimated completion: 2024
2022	Seek funding to rehabilitate the Abbeville caboose as a welcome center			Y	2024				GDEcD/Tourism funds in the approximate amount of \$50,000 are expected to have this item completed by 2024.
2019	Pursue funding to upgrade water lines in areas of need			Y	2024				Project underway; USDA grant is being used to accomplish project; 60% complete; estimated completion: 2024
2020	Resurface Wilson Road			Y	2024				Underway; Project to be completed with GDOT TIA funds and LMIG; est. cost \$\$50,856; Estimated Completion: 2024
2019	Resurface Simon Keen Road			Y	2024				Underway; Project to be completed with GDOT TIA funds and LMIG; est. cost \$59,527; Estimated Completion: 2024
2020	Complete TIA Band 3 Projects (Depot St., Church St., (2 segments), Sibbie Rd, Burkett St., West Park Ave., East Park Ave.)			Y	2025				Underway; estimated completion 2025 through use of GDOT TIA funds (\$166,914)

**City of Abbeville** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2019	Seek funds to renovate low-moderate income homes in the Northeast and Southwest areas of the city			Y	2024				Project underway; CDBG funds are being utilized; projects completed in Northeast area of city; 1 house is pending in Southeast area; estimated completion: 2024
2019	Repair sewer infrastructure along Cannonville Dr., US 280 East, and Halfmoon Rd.			Y	2025				Project underway; new sewer infrastructure installed along Cannonville Rd. in 2020; repairs pending for US 280 East, and Halfmoon Rd. estimated completion: 2025
2020	Replace sewer pumps in lift stations 1 and 2			Y	2024				Project is underway; CWP edited to include verbiage of “and install aerators;” estimated completion: 2024
2023	Repair sewer infrastructure in the Northwest area of the City					Y	2025		Action postponed to 2025 due to lack of funding; estimated cost of \$750,000 and expected funding sources include SPLOST and CDBG grant funding.
2023	Conduct desludging of the wastewater treatment pond	Y	2022						Project completed in 2022 with the assistance of state funding; Cost: \$1 million dollars;
2020	Purchase police and fire department communication equipment and duty gear					Y	2024		Pursuit postponed until 2024 due to lack of funding; GEMA and state funds added to CWP for funding sources; action item remains on CWP to be complete in 2024

**City of Abbeville Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2023	Purchase a grapple truck for limb and debris collection					Y	2024		Pursuit postponed until 2024 due to lack of funding; GEMA and state funds added to CWP for funding sources; action item remains on CWP to be complete in 2024
2022	Purchase one (1) new tractor and mower implement					Y	2024		Action item postponed to 2024 due to lack of funding. Local and state funds are expected with an estimated cost of \$50,000; SPLOST, GDOT and TIA funds will be used. Estimated completion 2024
2021	Expand fire department building with additional firetruck bay							Y	Action item dropped/cancelled as this is no longer a priority for the city
2020	Construct new gateway signage and landscaping at city limits along state highways					Y	2025		Action item postponed due to lack of funding; action item remains on CWP to be complete in 2025; State added as a funding source on CWP
2023	Install air compressed turn targets at the City firearm range							Y	Action item dropped/cancelled as this is no longer a priority for the city
2019	Construct a walking trail at Half Moon River Landing	Y	2021						Action item completed in 2021
2022	Develop a public campground at Half Moon River Landing					Y	2025		Action item postponed to 2025 due to lack of funding.
2023	Resurface tennis courts at Lions Club Park			Y	2023				Action item in progress; the application/install of lighting, coating, and painting is pending; estimated to be complete in 2023

**City of Abbeville** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships	X							X	X	Civic Groups, cooperative Extension, Chamber, Private	\$5,000	X	X		X
Pursue funding to assist in renovating downtown buildings (Sims, Smith, Old Post Office) to an appropriate level for commercial rental space	X								X	DNR (HPD), DDA, ARPA	\$750,000	X	X		
Seek funding to rehabilitate the Abbeville caboos as a welcome center	X								X	GDEcD/Tourism	\$50,000	X			
Pursue funding to upgrade water lines in areas of need	X								X	GDCA (CDBG), GEFA, USDA	\$500,000	X	X	X	
Resurface Wilson Road	X								X	GDOT/TIA/LMIG/TIA	\$50,856	X	X		
Resurface Simon Keen Road	X								X	GDOT/TIA	\$59,527	X	X		
Complete TIA Band 3 Projects (Depot St., Church St., College St. (2 segments), Sibbie Rd., Burkett St., West Park Ave., East Park Ave.)		X							X	GDOT/TIA	\$166,914	X	X		
Seek funds to renovate low-moderate income homes in the Northeast and Southwest areas of the city	X								X	GDCA, HUD	\$600,000	X	X	X	

**City of Abbeville** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Repair sewer infrastructure along Cannonville Dr., US 280 East, and Halfmoon Rd.		X							X	DCA CDBG	\$600,000	X	X	X	
Replace sewer pumps in lift stations 1 and 2 and install aerators	X								X	SPLOST, DCA CDBG	\$300,000	X	X	X	
Repair sewer infrastructure in the Northwest area of the City		X							X	SPLOST, DCA CDBG	\$750,000	X	X	X	
Purchase police and fire department communication equipment and duty gear	X								X	FEMA/GEMA	\$50,000	X	X	X	
Purchase a grapple truck for limb and debris collection	X								X	SPLOST/ FEMA/ GEMA	\$75,000	X	X	X	
Purchase one (1) new tractor and mower implement	X								X	SPLOST/GDOT TIA	\$50,000	X	X		
Expand maintenance facility by 3,000 square feet					X				X	SPLOST	\$75,000	X			
Construct new gateway signage and landscaping at city limits along state highways		X							X	GDOT	\$100,000	X	X		
Construct new classroom and bathrooms at the City firearm range	X								X	SPLOST	\$60,000	X			
Develop a public campground at Half Moon River Landing		X							X	SPLOST	\$50,000	X			

**City of Abbeville** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Construct one (1) new ballfield at Lions Club Park	X								X	LWCF, SPLOST	\$50,000	X		X	
Complete TIA2 Band 1 Project: Resurface Bowen St.		X							X	GDOT/TIA	\$120,000	X	X		
Complete TIA2 Band 1 Project: Resurface Irwinville Rd.		X							X	GDOT/TIA	\$80,000	X	X		
Complete TIA2 Band 1 Project: Resurface Industrial Drive		X							X	GDOT/TIA	\$123,000	X	X		
Complete TIA2 Band 1 Project: Widen/Resurface Poor Robin Road		X							X	GDOT/TIA	\$290,000	X	X		
Revitalize Lions Club Park- install playground equipment and a splash pad		X							X	Improving Neighborhood Grant/SPLOST/LWCF	\$400,000	X	X	X	
Replace sidewalks along Highway 280		X							X	Improving Neighborhood Grant/GDOT/LMIG	\$1.2 MIL	X	X	X	
Install asphalt parking lot at Farmer's Market entrance to walking track		X							X	Improving Neighborhood Grant/GDOT/LMIG	\$1.6 MIL	X	X	X	
Install sidewalks along Industrial Way		X							X	Improving Neighborhood Grant/GDOT/LMIG	\$1.2 MIL	X	X	X	

# City of Pineview

## Community Work Programs

City of Pineview Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program

## Report of Accomplishments

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2019	Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships			Y	2024				The Wilcox County community including the County, Cities (including Pineview) and other agencies and groups are in pursuit of developing a local leadership program and re-activating the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce. Estimated date of completion: 2024
2020	Pursue Funding for communications equipment, including repeater system, for public safety uses to be located in northwest Wilcox Co.					Y	2028		Action item postponed due to lack of funding. County/City will continue to seek funding and purchase equipment as funding becomes available. Estimated completion: 2028
2020	Investigate the feasibility of purchasing a patrol vehicle for or otherwise contract with Wilcox County Sheriff for concentrated patrols of Pineview							Y	Though there has been increased Sheriff patrol in Pineview, new city leadership has begun to explore the feasibility of a new city police department with its own part-time patrol/police force, beginning 2024. This will be at an est. cost of \$100,000 and will be funded through grants, the city, and GEMA.
2019	Purchase 10-wheel water truck for increased fire protection	Y	2022						Complete; Purchased through Georgia Forestry Surplus in 2022 with local and private funds (donations)
2019	Resurface West Bay St., West Commerce St., and Jack St.			Y	2028				Underway; City completed resurfacing of West Bay St. and West Commerce Street in 2022 through LMIG and TIA funding; Jack Street is estimated to be completed in 2028 at a cost of \$200,000; Item remains in CWP with verbiage modified to "Resurface Jack Street"
2022	Install a bike wash/repair station along US Bike Route 15 (GA Hwy 112)					Y	2024		Postponed due to changing priorities of GDOT and local level. Estimated completion: 2024

**City of Pineview Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships	X							X	X	Civic Groups, cooperative Extension, Chamber, Private	\$5,000	X	X		X
Pursue Funding for communications equipment, including repeater system, for public safety uses to be located in northwest Wilcox Co.					X			X	X	FEMA, GEMA	\$100,000	X	X	X	
Resurface Jack Street					X					GDOT, LMIG	\$200,000	X	X		
Install a bike wash/repair station along US Bike Route 15 (GA Hwy 112)	X								X	GDOT	\$5,000	X	X		
Create a new fire station for the City of Pineview	X								X	FEMA/GEMA/AFG/SPLOST	\$100,000	X	X	X	
Create a new city police department for the City of Pineview	X								X	FEMA/GEMA/SPLOST	\$100,000	X	X	X	
Complete TIA2 Band 1 Project: Resurface S Landline Road		X							X	GDOT TIA	\$126,000	X	X		
Complete TIA2 Band 1 Project: Mt. Pleasant Church Road		X							X	GDOT TIA	\$96,000	X	X		

# City of Pitts

## Community Work Programs

**City of Pitts** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2019	Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships			Y	2024				Underway; Wilcox County/Cities are currently in pursuit to re-activate the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce and the leadership program associated with the Chamber. Estimated date of completion: 2024; Item remains on CWP, as this item is in progress; "Private" added as funding source; "Chamber" and "Private" added to responsibility section of CWP
2023	Seek funding to establish a new community festival in Pitts	Y	2022						Complete; Music Makers Festival established; financially the city broke even;
2023	Pursue the construction of a city park	Y	2023						Complete; Through DNR, SPLOST, and LWCF funding, this was accomplished in 2023; total estimated cost was roughly \$130,000.
2019	Seek funding for the construction of a walking track, in conjunction with the new city park			Y	2024				Underway; Private funding used: donations, mostly from local farmers using equipment to level walking track area; funding still required for gravel/asphalt
2021	Pursue funding for drainage improvements around the new city park area	Y	2022						Complete; Accomplished through private funding sources: local farmers used their equipment and delivered sand/soil to low-lying areas, making them less prone to flooding.
2023	Pursue installation of HVAC system in Pitts gymnasium							Y	Action item Dropped/Cancelled; No longer a priority due to the overall condition of the building and very high (more than imagined) cost estimates from contractors.
2019	Seek funding for new water well	Y	2023						Complete; Funding received 2023
2020	Pave 10th Avenue (2 blocks)					Y	2024		Action item postponed due to lack of funding; estimated cost: \$30,000; funding source: GDOT (LMIG, TIA, Discretionary Funds); Estimated completion: 2025

City of Pitts Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships	X							X	X	Civic Groups, cooperative Extension, Chamber, Private	\$5,000	X	X		X
Seek funding for the construction of a walking track, in conjunction with the new city park	X								X	DNR (LWCF), SPLOST, Private	\$25,000	X	X		X
Pave 10 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (2 blocks)	X	X							X	GDOT (LMIG, TIA, Discretionary Funds)	\$30,000	X	X		
Adopt basic land use regulation (specifically, a mobile home ordinance)	X								X	HOGARC/Staff Time	\$5,000	X			
Complete TIA 2 Band 1 project: Resurface 7 <sup>th</sup> Street		X							X	TIA GDOT	\$101,820	X	X		
Complete TIA 2 Band 1 project: Resurface 10 <sup>th</sup> Street		X							X	TIA GDOT	\$26,500	X	X		
Complete TIA 2 Band 1 project: Pine City Church Road		X							X	TIA GDOT	\$30,000	X	X		

# City of Rochelle

## Community Work Programs

**City of Rochelle Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2019	Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships			Y	2024				Underway; Wilcox County/Cities are currently in pursuit to re-activate the Wilcox County Chamber of Commerce and the leadership program associated with the Chamber. Estimated date of completion: 2024; Item remains on CWP, as this item is in progress; "Private" added as funding source; "Chamber" and "Private" added to responsibility section of CWP
2019	Complete sewer system upgrades in the southern part of Rochelle	Y	2021						Complete; action item completed in 2021 with CDBG funding
2019	Construct a new 200,000 gallon elevated water tank			Y	2025				Underway; USDA loan is in progress to achieve this action item; estimated completion 2025; item remains on CWP
2019	Upgrade approximately 700 water meters to AMI smart meters			Y	2025				Underway; USDA loan/ grant funding is in progress to achieve this action item; estimated completion 2025; item remains on CWP
2020	Seek funds to improve streets and drainage, water and sewer lines along Sook Rd	Y	2022						Complete; action item completed in 2022 with grant funding
2022	Seek funds to improve streets and drainage along King Ave & adjacent area					Y	2027		Action item postponed due to lack of funding; estimated completion: 2027
2023	Extend sewer lines to homes located on Second Ave					Y	2025		Action item postponed due to lack of funding; estimated completion: 2025

**City of Rochelle** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2022	Purchase a dumptruck	Y	2023						Complete; action item completed in 2023 with a final cost of \$71,000
2022	Renovate the Rochelle Community Center (ceiling, bathroom, kitchen)	Y	2022						Complete; action item completed in 2022 with a final cost of \$30,000
2022	Purchase a zero-turn lawnmower	Y	2022						Complete; action item completed in 2022 with SPLOST funding with a final cost of \$7,500
2022	Purchase one (1) new police pursuit vehicle	Y	2023						Complete; action item completed in 2023
2021	Replace roof on City Hall Building	Y	2020						Complete; action item completed in 2020 with a final cost of \$28,500
2023	Install a bike wash station and public work/repair station along US Bike Route 15 (GA Hwy 112)			Y	2024				Underway; action item in progress; request for bids underway 2023; estimated completion 2025; item remains on CWP
2020	Complete TIA Band 3 projects (Ginhouse Street, Mill Street)			Y	2025				Underway; these projects were open for key bids at last check; this could affect overall time-line/completion. Some funding will come from LMIG in addition to TIA.; estimated completion date 2025; item remains on CWP

**City of Rochelle Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Develop a local leadership program and utilize to assist in revitalization of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of other public/private partnerships	X							X	X	Civic Groups, cooperative Extension, Chamber, Private	\$5,000	X	X		X
Construct a new 200,000 gallon elevated water tank		X							X	GEFA, USDA, SPLOST	\$ 10 Million	X	X	X	
Upgrade approximately 700 water meters to AMI smart meters	X								X	GEFA, USDA, SPLOST	\$85,000	X	X	X	
Seek funds to improve streets and drainage along King Ave & adjacent area				X					X	GDCA, HUD	\$750,000	X	X	X	
Extend sewer lines to homes located on Second Ave		X							X	GEFA, USDA, GDOT	\$300,000	X	X	X	
Complete TIA Band 3 projects (Ginhouse Street, Mill Street)		X							X	GDOT, TIA, LMIG	\$145,000	X	X	X	
Seek funding for new wastewater treatment facility	X								X	SPLOST, TIA discretionary, CDBG	\$ 1 Million	X	X	X	
Construct new sidewalk along 7 <sup>th</sup> Ave		X							X	TIA 2, Band 1	\$105,600	X	X		
Rehabilitate sidewalk along Ashley St, Gordon St, 1 <sup>st</sup> St, 5 <sup>th</sup> Ave		X							X	TIA 2, Band 1	\$40,000	X	X		
Resurface Dykes Ave		X							X	TIA 2, Band 1	\$53,000	X	X		

City of Rochelle Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2024 - 2028**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Each Year	Beyond 2028	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Resurface Bessie Ave.		X							X	TIA 2, Band 1	\$26,500	X	X		
Resurface Grady St.			X	X	X		X		X	TIA 2, Band 2	\$26,000	X	X		
Resurface Lee St.			X	X	X		X		X	TIA 2, Band 2	\$40,500	X	X		
Resurface 4 <sup>th</sup> Ave.			X	X	X		X		X	TIA 2, Band 2	\$57,973	X	X		
Resurface Herbert St.			X	X	X				X	TIA 2, Band 2	\$30,000	X	X		

# Appendix

- **Public Hearing Notice 1**
- **News Release**
- **Comprehenisve Plan Website**
- **Community Vision Survey**
- **Public Hearing Notice 2**
- **Meeting Agendas**
- **Stakeholders Invited to Participate**
- **Active Participants**

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**  
**Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan**  
**“Everlasting Wilcox”**

*What principles should guide future development in Wilcox County and the municipalities within Wilcox County? What can be done to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of all Wilcox County?*

The local governments of Wilcox County and the Cities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle are in the initial stages of a process to develop a new joint comprehensive plan in accordance with state law.

The comprehensive plan outlines a community vision, identifies needs and opportunities, defines long term policies, and includes a community work program to provide a guide and blueprint for future growth and development within the community jurisdictions. It is desired that this plan not only meet state requirements, but also truly express the community’s wishes for future growth and development.

An initial public hearing is scheduled to provide an opportunity for citizens to express their thoughts regarding vision for the Community’s future, to receive input on the issues and opportunities facing the Community, and to identify solutions, strategies, and actionable efforts that could be employed to make Wilcox County and the Cities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle better places to live and work.

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE AND TIME:**  
**Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.**

**LOCATION OF PUBLIC HEARING:**  
**Mary Evelyn Warren Community Center**  
**211 West Monroe St., Abbeville, GA**

Please plan to attend, voice your opinions, and be involved. Help your community thrive, grow, and prepare a better future. If you would like more information, please contact Mandy Britt at the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 912-367-3648 or [mbritt@hogarc.org](mailto:mbritt@hogarc.org). All persons with a disability or otherwise needing assistance should contact Wilcox County Commissioner’s Office, 103 North Broad Street, Abbeville, Georgia, or call 229-467-2737.

# HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA

## Regional Commission



331 West Parker Street  
Baxley, GA 31513  
Phone: 912-367-3648  
Fax: 912-367-3640

5405 Oak Street  
Eastman, GA 31023  
Phone: 478-374-4771  
Fax: 478-374-0703

## NEWS RELEASE

### PUBLIC INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN DROP-IN SESSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**DATE:** Thursday, March 30, 2023  
**TIME:** 5:00 PM  
**LOCATION:** W.N. (Newt) Hudson Agricultural Center  
630 E. County Farm Road, Rochelle, GA

Are you concerned about the future of Wilcox County, Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle? Do you have thoughtful ideas on what needs to be done to make the community a better place? What do you consider to be pressing needs and issues in the community?

The local governments of Wilcox County, the Wilcox County Board of Commissioners, and the municipalities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle are in the process of updating their comprehensive plan required by state law. The current joint comprehensive plan dates from 2018 and is the principal guide to the long-term growth and development of Wilcox County and its municipalities. The new update will focus on achieving a vision set by the community on what it wants to be and addressing identified needs and opportunities.

You are cordially invited to get involved and to participate in this plan update process. You may do so by attending a public drop-in session concerning the comprehensive plan update to be held at the W.N. (Newt) Hudson Agricultural Center, 630 E. County Farm Road, Rochelle, GA, at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, 2023. The session is designed to be informal, to answer any questions you may have, and to allow for one-on-one input at your convenience. Planning staff from the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission will be on hand to discuss the plan and its process, and to receive your input and ideas. There will be no formal presentation. The event is designed as a drop-in at whatever time is convenient for those wishing to participate or learn more.

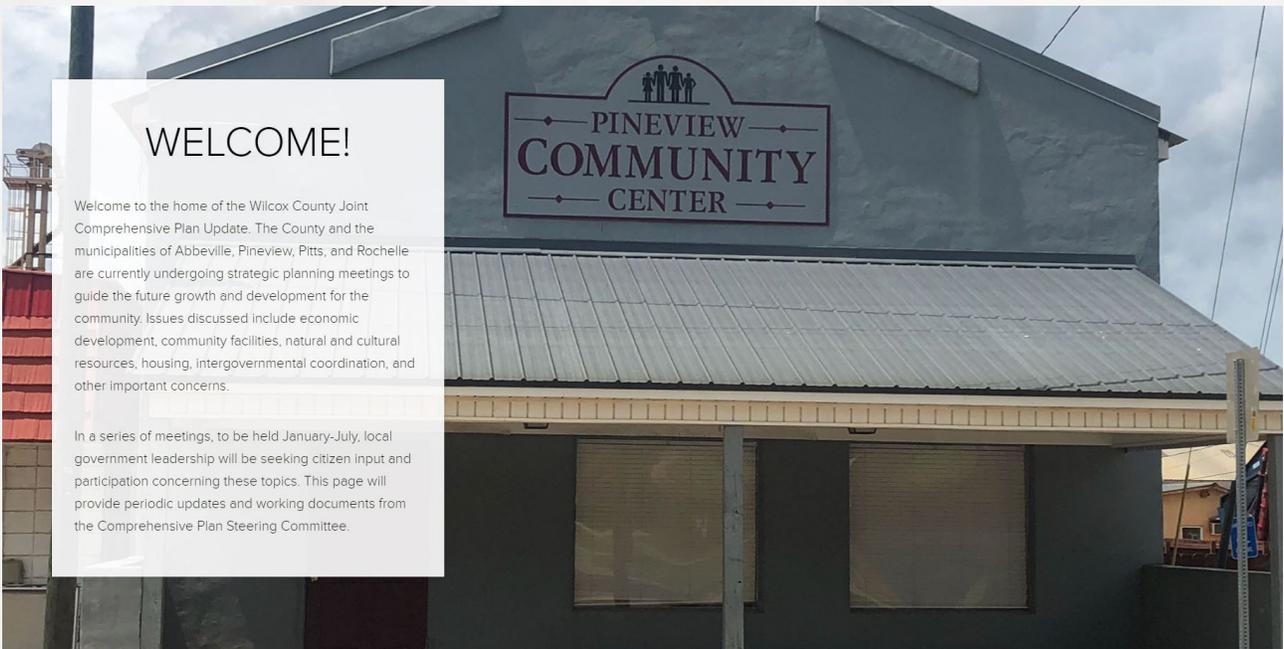
Please attend and voice your ideas. We want to hear them. Let us know what you think. Do your part in making Wilcox County an even better place to live, work, and play.

###



# Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan

WILCOX COUNTY, ABBEVILLE, PINEVIEW, PITTS, AND ROCHELLE



## WELCOME!

Welcome to the home of the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update. The County and the municipalities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle are currently undergoing strategic planning meetings to guide the future growth and development for the community. Issues discussed include economic development, community facilities, natural and cultural resources, housing, intergovernmental coordination, and other important concerns.

In a series of meetings, to be held January-July, local government leadership will be seeking citizen input and participation concerning these topics. This page will provide periodic updates and working documents from the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

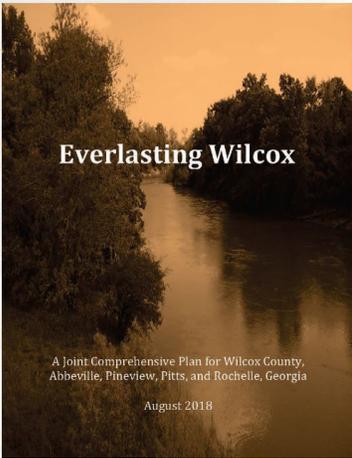


## WHY IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPORTANT?

Effective planning ensures that future development will occur where, when, and how the community and local government wants. There are several important benefits to the entire community that result from the planning process:

- Quality of life is maintained and improved.
- There is a vision, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the future of the community.
- Private property rights are protected.
- Economic development is encouraged and supported.
- There is more certainty about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met.

Previous Comprehensive Plan



Download a Copy of the 2018 Plan Here!



## Wilcox County 2023 Joint Comprehensive Plan Timetable

- **Thursday, 1/26/2023, 2:00 PM:** Kickoff Meeting, Introduction and Vision Making/SWOT
- **Tuesday, 2/28/2023, 2:00 PM:** Review/Needs & Opportunities/Goals
- **Tuesday, 2/28/2023, 5:00 PM:** Initial Public Hearing
- **Thursday, 3/30/2023, 2:00 PM:** Review Goals/Policies/Economic Development
- **Thursday, 3/30/2023, 5:00 PM:** Community Drop-In Session
- **Thursday, 4/24/2023, 2:00 PM:** Broadband & Land Use
- **Community Work Program Updates with Individual Jurisdictions:** TBD
- **April-July:** Draft Plan
- **Final Committee Meeting:** TBD



## OUR VISION

Brimming with spirit and pride for our rural heritage, we will vigorously protect, promote, and enhance our community assets. Having proximity to a major U.S. Interstate and rail access, the County is poised to capture our unique opportunity for economic growth. We will seek to implement innovative solutions and improvements in our public and private sectors that maximize operational efficiency and build upon the quality of community experience. Our community will forge, maintain, and prioritize efforts in community outreach and intergovernmental relations. Continual achievements in community betterment will be made through strategic actions taken in economic development, historic preservation, environmental protection, healthcare, education, community development, and public service. We will continue to promote our rich natural and cultural resources, and work to create an all inviting, lively community.



## The Joint Wilcox County Comprehensive Plan Survey

Please answer the following survey questions which will be used to help develop your community's updated comprehensive plan.

### My association with Wilcox County (Select all that Apply)\*

- I grew up in and currently reside in Wilcox County
- I moved my residence to Wilcox County
- I work in Wilcox County or my work involves working with/for organizations in Wilcox County
- I own property in Wilcox County
- Other

### If you moved to Wilcox County from somewhere else, please indicate which of the reasons explain your move:

(Select all that apply)

- Employment opportunity
- Family connections
- I grew up here
- Affordability
- Rural character
- Quality of local amenities
- To be closer to someplace else
- Quality of educational system
- Other

### My age range: \*

- 16-22
- 23-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-65
- 65+

**Occupation Type/Status**

Please choose or identify the most appropriate description of your occupational status or type from the following

- Financial Sector
- Agricultural Industry
- Public Services/Government
- Industrial/Manufacturing/Fabrication
- Healthcare
- Education
- Construction/Skilled Trades
- Commercial Sales/Retail/Customer Service
- Hospitality/Lodging
- Non-Profit/Faith-Based Sector
- Retired
- Disabled
- Homemaker
- Unemployed

**How would you rate the overall quality of life in Wilcox County? \***

- Excellent
- Good
- No Opinion
- Fair
- Poor

**What are the greatest strengths or assets of your community?**

**Our top 2 priorities in regard to revitalization efforts should be:\***

- Downtown locations
- Industrial locations
- Recreational locations
- Residential locations

**What are your community's greatest needs?**

**What type of businesses would you like to see more of in Wilcox County? \*  
(Select all that apply)**

- Retail stores
- Grocery stores
- Personal services (salon, barber shop, etc.)
- Restaurants
- Boutiques
- Bars and lounges
- Coffee shops
- Hotels
- Entertainment options
- Professional offices
- Medical facilities
- Industry (manufacturing/ warehouses)

**How well do you rate your local government in regard to openness and communicating with the public?\***

- Excellent (they are open to requests and responsive to needs)
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Poor (they do not interact well with the public and I feel they don't listen)

**Please select your top 3 ways that you would prefer to receive information regarding community events, community meetings, or community issues.\***

- Listen to an advertisement on the local radio station
- View a social media post (Facebook)
- Receive an email newsletter
- Read an article in the local newspaper
- Receive an insert in your utility bill
- View a post on the County/City website

**There are opportunities for the public to engage in community decision making efforts:\***

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**What is the quality of your internet (broadband) service? \***

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- No access/service

**What outdoor recreational activities are important to you?\***

- Biking
- Hiking
- Fishing
- Boating
- Hunting
- Kayaking
- Outdoor sports
- Running
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Infrastructure Rating**

Please rate the quality of infrastructure in Wilcox County on a scale of one to five with 1 star being "Poor" and 5 stars being "Excellent"

**Road Quality\***

(Potholes, pavement issues, washes, etc.)

1-5 Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Road Drainage\***

(Do you notice water drainage issues?)

1-5 Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Quality of Public Service Buildings\***

(Courthouses, Senior Centers, Health Departments, etc.)

1-5 Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Quality of Water/Sewer Systems\***

1-5 Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**What type of housing would you like to see more of in the future?\***

(Select all that apply)

- Single-family homes
- Apartments
- Townhomes
- Senior housing
- Affordable/ workforce housing
- Student housing
- Loft apartments
- None

**Our top 3 priorities with regard to housing should be:**

- Developing more high-end housing (>\$300,000)
- Working to address dilapidated/vacant properties
- Developing more single-family housing (<\$180,000)
- Developing more options for seniors
- Fostering more mixed use development
- Developing more rental options
- Developing more apartments

**Our top 3 priorities with regard to cultural amenities should be:**

- Need for new/improvement of parks and recreation areas
- Need for more/new entertainment options
- Preservation of historic sites and resources
- Need for more/new recreational trails
- Need for more/new social events in our community
- Need for new/improvement of athletic facilities
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What are your 3 favorite things about Wilcox County?**

**What are your 3 least favorite things about Wilcox County?**

**Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about your community?**

## **FINAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

### **Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan**

The local governments of Wilcox County including the Cities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle are in the final stages of a process to develop a new joint comprehensive plan in accordance with state law.

The comprehensive plan outlines a community vision, identifies needs and opportunities, and delineates long term policies and a community work program to provide a guide and blueprint for future growth and development within the community jurisdictions. The plan is in draft finalization before submittal to the state for review.

The purpose of the hearing is to brief the community on the content and strategies outlined in the draft comprehensive plan; to address the issues and opportunities facing Wilcox County and the Cities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle; obtain any final citizen input; and notify the community of the pending submittal of the comprehensive plan for state and regional review.

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE AND TIME: Thursday, August 24, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.**

**LOCATION OF PUBLIC HEARING: Mary Evelyn Warren Community Center,  
211 West Monroe St., Abbeville, GA**

All persons with a disability or otherwise needing assistance should contact Wilcox County Commissioner's Office: 103 North Broad Street, Abbeville, Georgia or call 229-467-2737.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing and voice your opinion to help your community achieve a better future. If you would like more information, please contact Mandy Britt at the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 912-292-4789 or [mbritt@hogarc.org](mailto:mbritt@hogarc.org).

**WILCOX COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE  
103 N. BROAD STREET, ABBEVILLE**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023, 2:00PM**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Agreements Needed**
- 3. Background/Committee's Purpose**
- 4. Proposed Timetable for Plan Development**
- 5. Community Vision Input**
- 6. SWOT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats)**

**Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:**

- Review draft of community vision**
- Plan Title Discussion**
- Goals/Policies Discussion/Introduction**

**WILCOX COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSION**

**2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR COURTROOM**

**103 N. BROAD STREET, ABBEVILLE**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2023, 2:00PM**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Regional Commission Service Agreement –*Pitts, Rochelle***
- 3. Brief Review of previous Meeting (01/26/23)**
- 4. Community Vision Outline Review**
- 5. Complete SWOT Analysis Completion**
- 6. Needs and Opportunities**
- 7. Goals/Policies Discussion/Introduction**
- 8. Plan Title Discussion**

**Adjourn**

**Upcoming Events:**

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Location</b>
Tuesday, <b>02/28/23</b> , 5:00 PM	Initial Public Hearing	Mary Evelyn Warren Community Center 211 West Monroe St, Abbeville
Thursday, <b>03/30/2023</b> , 2:00 PM	Review Goals; Policies/ Economic Development	Wilcox County Commission/ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Courtroom, 103 North Broad Street, Abbeville
Thursday, <b>03/30/2023</b> , 5:00 PM	Community Drop-In Session	W.N. (Newt) Hudson Agricultural Center 630 E. County Farm Road, Rochelle 31079
Monday <b>04/24/23</b> , 2:00 PM	Broadband & Land-use	Wilcox County Commission/ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Courtroom, 103 North Broad Street, Abbeville

**WILCOX COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING #3**

**WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSION**

**2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR COURTROOM**

103 N. BROAD STREET, ABBEVILLE

THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2023, 2:00PM

AGENDA

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Regional Commission Service Agreement –Pitts**
- 3. Brief Review of previous Meeting/Community Drop-In/Survey**
- 4. Goals and Long Term Policies Review**
- 5. Economic Development Update**
- 6. Plan Title Discussion**

**Adjourn**

**Upcoming Events:**

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Location</b>
Thursday, <b>03/30/2023</b> , 5:00 PM	Community Drop-In Session	W.N. (Newt) Hudson Agricultural Center 630 E. County Farm Road, Rochelle 31079
Monday <b>04/24/23</b> , 2:00 PM	Broadband & Land-use	Wilcox County Commission Board Room, 103 North Broad Street, Abbeville
TBD	Community Work Program Updates with Individual Jurisdictions	(Local jurisdictions will be contacted for meetings)
April-July	Draft Plan	
TBD	Final Committee Meeting	
TBD	Final Public Hearing	

**WILCOX COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
 LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING #4  
 WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSION**

**2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR COURTROOM**

103 N. BROAD STREET, ABBEVILLE

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023, 2:00PM

AGENDA

- 1. Introductions/Review**
- 2. Plan Title**
- 3. Survey Update**
- 4. Revised Draft Economic Development Element**
- 5. Environmental Planning Criteria/Altamaha Regional Water Plan**
- 6. Broadband Element**
- 7. Land Use Element**

**Upcoming Events:**

TBD	Community Work Program Updates with Individual Jurisdictions	(Local jurisdictions will be contacted for meetings)
April-July	Draft Plan	
TBD	Final Committee Meeting	
TBD	Final Public Hearing	

**Adjourn**

## **Stakeholders Invited to Participate in Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Preparation Process**

- Wilcox County Board of Commissioners
- City of Abbeville
- City of Pineview
- City of Pitts
- City of Rochelle
- Wilcox County Board of Education
- Wilcox County Development Authority
- Abbeville Downtown Development Authority
- Wilcox County Cooperative Extension
- Wilcox County Recreation Department
- Wilcox County Probate/Magistrate Court
- Georgia Forestry Commission
- Wilcox County Emergency Management Agency
- Wilcox County EMS
- Abbeville Fire/Rescue
- Wilcox County Sheriff's Department
- The Cordele Dispatch
- Wilcox County Board of Assessors
- Wilcox State Prison

# Active Participants in Wilcox County Local Plan Coordination Committee Meetings and Plan Preparation

## ***Wilcox County Board of Commissioners***

Michael Pomirko, Manager, Wilcox County Board of Commissioners  
Mel Powell, Chairman, Wilcox County Board of Commissioners  
Adam Dowdy, Wilcox County Road Department  
Mark Wilcox, Wilcox County Recreation Department

## ***City of Abbeville***

Victoria McWhorter, Clerk, City of Abbeville  
Aundrea Brannon-Hall, Recreation Director, City of Abbeville  
Larry Brown, Chief, Abbeville Fire Department

## ***City of Pineview***

Brandon Holt, Mayor, City of Pineview  
Taylor Faircloth, City Clerk, City of Pineview  
Catherine Lewis, Council Person, Pineview City Council  
Betty Ewing, Council Person, Pineview City Council  
Angela Bloodworth, City of Pineview

## ***City of Pitts***

Wilton King, City Clerk, City of Pitts

## ***City of Rochelle***

Wayne McGuinty, Mayor, City of Rochelle  
Fontella Benjamin, Municipal Court Clerk, City of Rochelle

## ***Wilcox County Tax Commissioner's Office***

Brittany McFall, Tax Commissioner

## ***Wilcox County Tax Assessor's Office***

Heather Harden, Tax Assessor

## ***Wilcox County EMS***

Charles Futch

## ***Wilcox County Sheriff's Department***

Robert Rodgers, Sheriff, Wilcox County Sheriff's Department

## ***Wilcox County Superior Court***

Janet Mauldin, Clerk of Court

## ***Wilcox County Development Authority***

Paula Bell

## ***Wilcox County State Prison***

Charles Mims, Warden, Wilcox State Prison

## ***Wilcox County Magistrate/Probate Court***

B. Shawn Rhodes, Judge, Wilcox County Magistrate/Probate Court

## ***Wilcox County UGA Cooperative Extension Office***

Katey Haynes

John Bennett

## ***Rochelle Marketplace DDA***

Prince Joseph Lopez, Director, Rochelle Marketplace DDA

Carolyn Grace, Rochelle Marketplace DDA

Vickie Kemp, Rochelle Marketplace DDA

Gwendolyn Smith, Rochelle Marketplace DDA

## ***Local Citizens***

Leroy Dantley

Xavier Ferguson

Jo Pittman

# Wilcox on *My Mind*

## WILCOX COUNTY

Joint Comprehensive Plan

August, 2023

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, Wilcox County, Georgia has participated with the municipalities of Abbeville, Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, for Wilcox County and its municipalities; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, Wilcox County is now desirous of adopting *Wilcox on My Mind* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Wilcox County Board of Commissioners hereby approves and adopts the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, as Wilcox County's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2018.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Wilcox County Board of Commissioners hereby instructs and directs that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

**SO RESOLVED**, this 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2023.

**BY:** Mel Powell

**ATTEST:** [Signature]

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Abbeville, Georgia has participated with Wilcox County and the municipalities of Pineview, Pitts, and Rochelle in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, for Wilcox County and its municipalities; including the City of Abbeville; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Abbeville is now desirous of adopting *Wilcox on My Mind* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Abbeville hereby approve and adopt the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, as the City of Abbeville's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2018.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Abbeville hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

SO RESOLVED, this 20<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2023.

BY: Ronald L. Spivey

ATTEST: Victoria McWhorter

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Pineview, Georgia has participated with Wilcox County and the municipalities of Abbeville, Pitts, and Rochelle in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, for Wilcox County and its municipalities; including the City of Pineview; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Pineview is now desirous of adopting *Wilcox on My Mind* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Pineview hereby approve and adopt the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, as the City of Pineview's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2018.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Pineview hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

**SO RESOLVED**, this 5th day of October, 2023.

BY: Brenda K. (Mayor)

ATTEST: Jayla Faircloth (City Clerk)

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Pitts, Georgia has participated with Wilcox County and the municipalities of Abbeville, Pineview, and Rochelle in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, for Wilcox County and its municipalities; including the City of Pitts; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Pitts is now desirous of adopting *Wilcox on My Mind* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Pitts hereby approve and adopt the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, as the City of Pitts's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2018.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Pitts hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

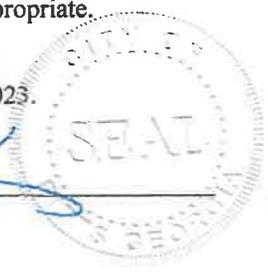
**SO RESOLVED**, this 10th day of October, 2023.

**BY:**

*Lucas Williams*

**ATTEST:**

*Robert K...*



**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochelle, Georgia has participated with Wilcox County and the municipalities of Abbeville, Pineview, and Pitts in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, for Wilcox County and its municipalities; including the City of Rochelle; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochelle is now desirous of adopting *Wilcox on My Mind* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Rochelle hereby approve and adopt the Wilcox County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Wilcox on My Mind*, as the City of Rochelle's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2018.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Rochelle hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

SO RESOLVED, this 4<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2023.

BY: Wayne McHenry

ATTEST: Betty Jo Adkinson