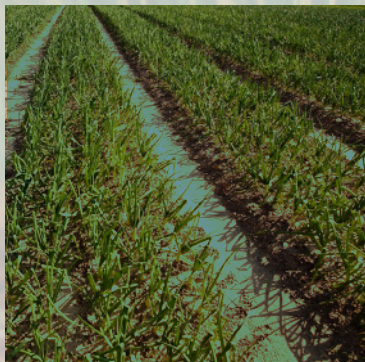




ONE TOOMBS — Building on Collaboration



A Joint Comprehensive
Plan for Toombs County,
Lyons, Santa Claus, and
Vidalia, Georgia

August 2024

ONE TOOMBS

Building on Collaboration

A Joint Comprehensive Plan for Toombs County,
Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia, 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 Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee
The Toombs County Local Governments
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission

August, 2024

Contents

Introduction & Executive Summary	1
Community Goals	10
Needs & Opportunities	36
Broadband Services	44
Economic Development	47
Land Use	54
Community Work Programs	70
Appendix	103

Introduction & Executive Summary



One Toombs: Building on Collaboration -- The Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan is a comprehensive plan prepared in compliance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The current Minimum Standards became effective on October 1, 2018. It is a joint plan for Toombs County and its municipalities - the City of Lyons, the City of Santa Claus, and the City of Vidalia.

Toombs County is a vibrant rural community in Southeast Georgia, situated just south of the I-16 interchanges along U.S. 1 and Georgia 297. It serves as a thriving regional hub for trade, employment, healthcare, and services. The community is well-served by highway and rail access with U.S. 1, U.S. 280, and Georgia highways 15/29, 56, 292, and 297. It has easy access to I-16 and both of Georgia's coastal ports. Toombs County's advantageous location is about

equidistant between the metropolitan areas of Augusta, Macon, and Savannah. The county has a population of nearly 30,000 persons (27,223 at 2020 Census). The county contains the incorporated communities of Vidalia (10,785 persons), Lyons (4,239 persons), and Santa Claus (204 persons). The community is designated by the Census Bureau as the Vidalia, Georgia Micropolitan Statistical Area. Toombs County is now the third most populous county in its rural Region which lacks a metropolitan area. The county has per capita retail sales about 33 percent above Georgia's average (\$18,988 vs. \$14,267), and has a labor force of 12,343 jobs in 2024, and was about 10 percent of the Region total in 2023.



L Toombs County Government Center **R** The Real Squeal - Lyons Barbeque & Music Festival

The community offers outstanding facilities and services which belie the community's relatively small size and rural status. The community hosts the Memorial Health Meadows Hospital, one of the top regional employers; the Ladson Genealogical and Historical Library; the Altama Museum of Art and History; an outstanding airport with 6,000-foot runways, and many other facilities and services. Vidalia boasts the impressive renovation of the historic Pal Theatre in downtown, as well as the municipal annex repurposed from a former grocery store. Lyons has made significant efforts to revitalize its downtown, with ongoing projects that continue to enhance the area. Santa Claus has improved its community center, added a Christmas-themed Museum and gift shop, and developed Santa's Garden, a charming roadside park. The community is also home to Southeastern Technical College, two public school systems, two private academies, and excellent multi-venue recreational areas with extensive facilities. Family, culture, and the arts are celebrated through various offerings, including multiple museums, festivals, and events. The Vidalia PorchFest, a grassroots walking and music festival that began in 2023, is entirely resident-owned and operated. Notably, Vidalia's Sweet Onion Festival is ranked as one of the top five in the U.S.; Lyons hosts the annual Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby, The Real Squeal: Lyons Barbeque and Music Festival, and the folk life play "Tales from the Altamaha." With all these advantages for growth and development, the community is most well-known as home to arguably the world's

sweetest onion, the Vidalia Sweet Onion. Agriculture and forestry remain integral components of the local economy and continue to diversify as well. The community's fields and forests and other natural resources, including Georgia's Altamaha River, a world-class ecosystem with much natural and scenic beauty, are abundant and create an appealing landscape.



Ohoopie River Campground

While there is much to celebrate and be optimistic about future growth and development within the community, there are issues requiring attention. About 17 percent of Toombs County residents are 65 or older, compared to 15.1 percent in Georgia in 2022. Also measured in 2022, about 21.1 percent of the population lives in poverty, compared to 12.7 percent in Georgia. The county is one of a number in Georgia with poverty levels exceeding 20 percent for decades. Per capita money income in the county, as measured by the Census Bureau from 2018-2022, (\$27,912) is about 74 percent of that of Georgia (\$37,836). The county median household income for the same period (\$47,310) is only about 66 percent that of Georgia (\$71,355). Unemployment in the county was measured at 6.6 percent in 2022 with is slightly higher than the Georgia unemployment rate of 4.2 percent and the U.S. rate of 4.3 percent for the same year. Such statistics have resulted in Georgia ranking Toombs County as a 2024 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 Toombs County.

The future Toombs County will take advantage of its assets and opportunities and address its issues. It will be known worldwide as the home of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, but for so much more as well. It will continue to be a vibrant and thriving regional leader, economic center, and renowned model in rural Georgia. The community will be a desired address for both business and residential growth, and an exceptional place to live, work, recreate, or visit. Growth will be well managed and guided to locate near existing infrastructure and services of Vidalia/Lyons, and will be respectful and protective of existing character, and the community's fields, forests, open spaces, and natural and cultural resources.



L Altama Museum of Art & History **R** Vidalia Porchfest

DCA planning standards, with reduced and simplified requirements, aim to engender local plans to be more attentive to individual needs and generate more local pride, ownership, and use. This Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan was developed with this as an overarching objective. It was intended to be a locally driven plan principally addressing local needs and cultivating widespread community interest, support, and buy-in, while meeting state standards. The title was developed to demonstrate the unity in vision the local governments share and the combined responsibility to manage public resources for maximum benefit. The Toombs County community wants to protect its heritage and rural character; conserve its fields and forests and natural splendor; improve its infrastructure; attract new residents and retirees; locate businesses and compatible jobs; utilize and celebrate its natural resources and heritage; and grow tourism, among its guiding aims and principles outlined herein. The community truly wants to be a thriving regional rural center, where growth and prosperity is shared by all aspects of the community.

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 1992, while the second comprehensive plan was adopted in 2009 in accordance with state requirements. Both plans were intensively data and state requirement driven, although local objectives are outlined and portrayed. The second plan contains much local information which may not easily be found elsewhere and may remain of use. The third plan, Sweet! So Much More than the Vidalia Onion, was developed in 2014 and focused on individual needs of the community. The fourth plan, One Toombs: A Legacy of Leadership, adopted in 2019, added additional sections such as the new Broadband Services element and individual municipal visions. The fifth plan,

One Toombs: Building on Collaboration and each of the previous plans should remain, at least in hard copy, available from the Toombs County local governments and the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission. All plans since 2009 are updated and posted to www.dca.ga.gov and www.hogarc.org websites.

Data. Today, the world wide web provides vast data repositories accessible through free search engines and allows anyone easy access to significant amounts of data, and profiles of any jurisdiction, including Toombs County and its municipalities. For this reason, this comprehensive plan includes only limited data to depict or illustrate points. The current 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 Toombs County, its municipalities, or any other jurisdiction is quickly accessed at quickfacts.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.stat-samerica.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 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 has available data for cities and counties under "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 www.georgia.org.

Population Projections. As noted earlier, the official 2020 Census population of Toombs County was 27,030, down 0.7 percent from 2010's 27,223. This decline is compared to Georgia's 10.6 percent growth and further to the U.S. growth rate of 7.4 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau estimate for 2023 Toombs County population is 27,040, an increase of 10 persons from 2020. This suggests a very slight increase in population. Toombs County's location inland from the Georgia coast and close to 1- 16 and Georgia's metro areas has likely helped. Except for slight dips from 1930-1940 during the Great Depression and again from 1950-1960 after WWII, the county has always exhibited slow, but steady growth. Toombs County's location, the new industrial park along U.S. Highway 1, existing industries and businesses, agricultural

Population Projections, Toombs County

	2020	2030	2040	2050
OPB Long-Term Population Projections, 2024	27,081	27,517	27,712	27,581
HOGARC Staff Projections	26,973	27,638	28,077	28,522

Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting, Series 2024 Long-Term Population Projections; Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Staff projections

crops, quality of life, and easy access to larger metro areas and Georgia's ports are positive factors and influences for future growth and development. The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) is responsible for generating official state population projections for Georgia counties. Current OPB projections for Toombs County from 2020-2050 are listed above.

Coordination with Other Plans. Toombs County has an approved and adopted hazard mitigation plan prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to remain eligible for federal disaster assistance. This Hazard Mitigation Plan's preparation was coordinated with past comprehensive plan preparation. It is clear that the two most prominent hazards facing Toombs 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 working 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 with, and offer implementation to, the hazard mitigation plan. The Toombs 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 Toombs County Comprehensive Plan. The local plan is similarly supportive of espoused state economic goals.

Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria Consideration. Toombs County is part of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council. The adopted regional water plan, Altamaha Regional Water Plan (2023), was considered by the Toombs County Local 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 Toombs County, including Toombs County, the City of Lyons, the City of Santa Claus, and the City of Vidalia, are now in compliance with the Environmental Planning Criteria, having adopted a consistent implementation ordinance. The local governments, with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, adopted the Region's model "Environmental Conservation, On-Site Sewage Management, and Permit" Ordinance in 2018.

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 Toombs 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 Toombs County, which is consistent with a quality community and the DCA Quality Community Objectives. The Toombs County Local Plan Coordination Committee reviewed and considered these Quality Community Objectives at one of its meetings.



Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan Meeting

Community Involvement. Throughout the planning process, Toombs County, and its municipalities, actively collected and incorporated input from community members. Creating civic engagement was an essential and central component to developing the comprehensive plan. Several opportunities, including stakeholder meetings, an online community survey, and community drop-in sessions, were provided to the community to gain as much input as possible. The first step that was taken in the civic engagement process was to identify a list of stakeholders. Each stakeholder was invited to participate as a member of the Plan Coordination Committee. The committee met regularly over a period of several months and was responsible for guiding the development of the comprehensive plan. In addition to holding regular stakeholder meetings, several other opportunities were also given to the community to participate in the planning process. An initial public hearing was held on February 13, 2024, and was advertised in the newspaper to make citizens aware of the plan update and the planning process. On March 26, 2024, a community drop-in session was held at the Dahlia Event Center to provide citizens with another opportunity to discuss their opinions on what changes they would like to see with the plan and with their community. In addition, a final public hearing was held on August 29th, 2024, to provide the public with the opportunity to review the updated final comprehensive plan draft.

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 January 24, 2024. During this meeting, members of the steering committee participated in a SWOT analysis where they identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Toombs County. Figure 1 shows the results of the SWOT analysis. This activity provided a starting point in identifying the overall Needs and Opportunities of Toombs County, which are addressed in "Needs and Opportunities". The SWOT analysis highlighted Toombs County as a regional hub for businesses, industry, and medical services. The identified strengths include the Toombs County Housing Study serving as an effective guide to address the community's housing challenges; The Greater Vidalia® Workforce Development Strategy 2021, developed by the Toombs County Development Authority to address the community's workforce needs; the Greater Vidalia® Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, which plays a vital role in stimulating the establishment and growth of entrepreneurial companies; the City of Vidalia's branding strategy; the excellent school systems; the new 604.83-acre industrial park along U.S. Highway 1, and the county's rich natural and cultural resources. During the SWOT analysis, several weaknesses affecting Toombs County were identified, including the shortage of affordable housing, daycare facilities, and the need to sustain the existing workforce, businesses, and industries. The next portion of the SWOT analysis pertained to identifying opportunities in Toombs County. The community's strategic location, coupled with robust private and public partnerships, has made it an attractive destination for new industries and small businesses. The latest nationwide growing trend of remote jobs would encourage more people to reside in Toombs County, enjoy the community's high quality of life, lower living cost, while working remotely. The City of Vidalia's Rural Zone designation will enhance opportunities to attract investment and businesses. The final segment of the SWOT analysis addressed potential threats to Toombs County, emphasizing challenges like retaining young people in the community, addressing public safety concerns, and revitalizing blighted neighborhoods.

3. Community Survey

A community survey was developed with the help of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, Toombs County, and its municipalities, to distribute to community members. The survey consisted of 11 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 Toombs 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 Appendix A.

One Toombs: Building on Collaboration is truly a locally developed guide to, and framework for, future growth and development of Toombs County designed to generate local pride and enthusiasm, to accentuate assets and improve weaknesses, and ultimately bring about a desired future which makes the Toombs County community an improved place to live and work with an outstanding and enhanced quality of life. It is realized that to take advantage of opportunities and to make a difference will take time and considered 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 with delineation of the Community Goals element and a Community Vision which essentially and succinctly summarizes the community's aspirations and plan's objectives.



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 concise 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 Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes three of the four possible components detailed in the Minimum Standards for the required element. These include: a general Community Vision, separate municipal descriptions/visions, listing of Community Goals, and a description of Long-Term Community Policies. These components seek to paint a picture of the desired future community, and answer the planning question, ***“Where does the community wish to go?”*** To some degree, the Long-Term Community Policies also outline guidance strategy of, ***“How are we going to get where we desire to go, and also, what do we desire for other development parties to pursue?”***



Community Vision

Toombs County is a regional leader of commerce and culture with a celebrated history tied to a progressive spirit of achievement. We are a community with a bold vision of growth, and desire large town amenities with continued small-town charm. Our community seeks to define our future by enhancing our many strengths and investing as a regional leader.



Ohoopce River

Toombs County is a rural, progressive community of about 27,000 persons located just south of I-16 in south central Georgia about equi-distant between the metropolitan areas of Augusta, Macon, and Savannah. It is a thriving regional trade center with a diverse local economy best known for its world famous Vidalia Sweet Onion, but with many assets and attractions for business and residential growth. The county's cities include Vidalia with a population of about 10,800 persons; Lyons, the county seat, with 4,200 persons; and the small town of Santa Claus with a population of about 200 persons. All are located close together in the center of the county. The community has excellent transportation access given its location just south of Interstate 16 at the junction of two U.S. highways in process of multi-lane upgrade, the east-west U.S. Highway 280, and the north-south U.S. Highway 1. The community is served by the Georgia Central Railway, the Heart of Georgia (Georgia DOT) Railroad, and the City of Vidalia Railroad. There is also access to the Norfolk Southern and CSX Railway systems. For air travel, the community has a modern Level III airport with a 6,000 foot runway. The community has easy access to Georgia's two world class seaports, the Port of Savannah, North America's largest single terminal container facility, and the Port of Brunswick, known for both its auto/heavy machinery processing and bulk imports/exports.

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. Capitalize on our identified opportunities to successfully market our community as a place to live, work, play and invest**
- 3. Seek investment to capitalize on our diverse economic base**
- 4. Foster sustainable economic growth by taking a comprehensive approach to cultivate a ready workforce**
- 5. Develop diverse housing options to accommodate the diverse income levels and needs in the county**
- 6. Remain vigilant of tourism trends and seek ways to innovate promotion of the community**
- 7. Continue to remove blight and improve cost-burdened housing**
- 8. Continue enhancements of our historic city centers with sustained business recruitment**
- 9. Maintain the sense of place and small-town character and feel of Toombs County**
- 10. Ensure that future development is coordinated appropriately with infrastructure including transportation, water, sewer, and natural gas service areas**
- 11. Attract and promote investment in cultural amenities and economic opportunities for retention of young people after graduation**

Toombs County as a community is a thriving regional trade, service, employment and educational center located in a verdant and scenic landscape dominated by pastoral agricultural fields and towering southern yellow pines. There continues to be expanding growth and development because of coordinated, progressive leadership, increasing and improving community facilities and services, and continuing success in economic diversification. The community gained about 2,000 persons in the 1990s, 1,500 in the 2000's, and continues to grow despite having to overcome the loss of many apparel manufacturing jobs during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The community has attracted new services, manufacturing, distribution, and agricultural processing businesses. The community is home to a major Trane plant, Tumi Luggage, Oxford Industries, Inc., one of DOT Foods' (the US's largest food redistributor) distribution centers, and attracted Chicken of the Sea to its US 1 Corporate Center during the post 2008 recession.



L Tumi Groundbreaking **R** Toombs Corporate Speculative Building #3

In 2021, the community completed its third industrial speculative building located at Toombs Corporate Center at U.S. Highway 1, Lyons. In 2023, Toombs County Development Authority acquired a 604.83-acre site along U.S. Highway 1 North to develop publicly owned industrial product. In 2024, Oxford Industries and Tumi Luggage both expanded their facilities and operations in Toombs County. The community has also expanded its Vidalia Onion agricultural base and reach, while diversifying into additional vegetable crops, timber/pine straw production, and other alternative crops, like olive trees. Vidalia is one of the smallest communities in the United States to have a Chick-fil-A restaurant and its local WinShape day camp is one of the nation's largest. The community's hospitality sector continues to grow with two new hotels constructed in 2022. Both the cities of Lyons and Vidalia have state-of-the-art municipal complexes and public safety buildings. The City of Vidalia created a new downtown passive park and gathering place complete with an outdoor amphitheater stage. In 2019, the City also unveiled the refurbished Pal Theatre located in historic downtown Vidalia. Planned use of the facility includes movie showings, performing arts/live productions, and rental space for events. A new aquatics center is now available through the Vidalia Recreation Department. Vidalia was recognized as a PlanFirst community in 2020. It is a designation bestowed on local governments with a proven record of project completion and a devotion to planning ahead. The City of Lyons, with its active Lyons Main Street program, has been very effective in revitalizing its downtown, spurring private investment and fostering small business startups. The recent grand opening of the Lyons Welcome Center and Museum in its downtown area further supports the city's efforts to attract additional investment and enhance local activities. The City of Santa Claus has found great use in its newly constructed 4,500 square foot community center, and made other improvements such as a

quaint roadside chapel and garden to enhance its attraction to tourists and residents alike. Southeastern Technical College has expanded facilities, campuses, programs, enrollment, and its service area. It hosts the Southeastern Early College and Career Academy, Georgia's first regional career academy and the first to be certified. The Toombs County Board of Education has also expanded facilities with construction of a new high school in Lyons. Local healthcare services have also shown tremendous growth in expansion of specialties, practitioners, and regional reach. The community opened a new modern regional medical center hospital in 2011 at a time when many rural hospitals are closing. Memorial Health Meadows Hospital (previous Meadows Regional Medical Center) is a fully accredited continues to expand services offerings and outreach clinics to the surrounding multi-county rural area. In 2013, the hospital opened a cutting-edge cancer center, and provides some of the most modern and advanced cardiology services available, both at exceptional levels which belie the community's size and rural status. The hospital, like the community, states it is there "to help you get more out of life."



L Amphitheater at Ronnie A. Dixon City Park **R** Southeastern Technical College

The community and its leadership have always had a determined commitment to support a high quality of life, pay homage to heritage, and provide superlative cultural opportunities. Both Vidalia and Lyons are Main Street Program communities which use a preservation-based approach to downtown revitalization and economic development. Many stately historic residential structures on Vidalia's South Jackson Street have been adaptively recycled for office business uses. The community has developed the Stage at the Ronnie A Dixon City Park in its downtown on the site of its former police station. Vidalia hosts a six-day festival in April to celebrate the much acclaimed and world famous Vidalia Sweet Onion. Festivalgoers are often treated to an airshow, concert, carnival and much more. There is also a Vidalia Onion Museum which showcases the history and development of Georgia's state vegetable. Vidalia is also home to the Altama Museum of Art and History housed in the historic Brazell House, as well as the headquarters of the Ochoopee Regional Library serving four surrounding counties. The Ochoopee Regional Library also operates the large, preeminent Ladson Genealogical and Historical Library in Vidalia. The City of Lyons has transformed its historic downtown theater into the "Blue Marquee," which hosts a widely acclaimed annual folklife play on colorful local characters and events centered on the natural gem, the Altamaha

River, and written about in the local newspaper, along with other events. Lyons also hosts “The Real Squeal Barbeque and Music Festival” in the fall, as well as the Soap Box Derby for all of southeast Georgia. In addition, Lyons has renovated its historic railroad depot into a community center and special event space. The Altamaha Heritage Center Museum, also in Lyons, contains exhibits on the area’s local history. Appropriate to the community’s outdoor heritage, the historic Lyons Post Office has a terra cotta relief sculpture, funded by the Works Progress Administration and crafted by the well-known Italian sculptor Albino Manca, entitled “Wild Duck and Deer.” The City of Santa Claus, one of two towns so-named in the U.S., has taken advantage of the Christmas theme, providing hand-cancellations for letters to Santa Claus, Santa Claus entrance signs, as well as a museum and gift shop, and having its streets appropriately theme named.



L The Blue Marquee Theatre, Lyons **R** Memorial Health Meadows Hospital

Beyond the varied abundant cultural and outdoor recreational opportunities the Toombs County community offers, it is a regional leader in organized recreation activities and facilities. The City of Vidalia has two large community and regional parks, with many fields and facilities, the Ed Smith Complex and the newer Vidalia Regional Sports Complex; several neighborhood parks; four walking tracks at different locations; and a number of passive parks, including two located downtown. The City of Lyons hosts several parks, including one of Georgia’s finest, most well-rounded small town parks, Partin Park, which opened in 1975. This park can host multiple meetings or parties, both large and small in its four rental buildings and nine outdoor pavilions, as well as provide playing fields with covered bleachers, eight playgrounds, three concession stands, picnic areas, walking and nature trails, a skate park, batting cage complex, an outdoor environmental education classroom, and other facilities. It is home to one of the South’s largest youth baseball tournaments, ongoing for over 50 years. In the spring of each year, Partin Park also hosts the popular Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby, the largest such event in the Southern U.S. In 2014, the stock division of this annual event was the second largest in size of number of drivers in the country next to the world championship race in Akron, Ohio. Races are held a total of eight (8) weekends a year in Lyons. In 2024, Lyon’s Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby has been designated as the official Georgia Derby. The annual Real Squeal BBQ and Music Festival is also held at Partin Park. The Toombs County

Recreation Department recently completed major renovations of its facilities located adjacent to Toombs Central School. There are other recreational facilities in the rural, unincorporated community of Cedar Crossing, and a walking track in Santa Claus. The community offers many choices for an active and healthy lifestyle.

All of this growth, and attention to heritage and quality of life, is occurring in a relatively unspoiled environment of outstanding natural beauty and quality of life. Over 75 percent of the county's land use remains in agricultural or forest use. The county is home to two scenic blackwater rivers, the great Altamaha River and the lazy meandering Ochoopee River. There is abundant wildlife and outdoor recreational opportunities. The Altamaha River forms the southern border of the county and has been designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of 75 great natural places in the world. The climate is also outstanding with a growing season lasting about eight months and an average annual temperature of 66 degrees. There are future plans for bicycle connectivity along U.S. 1 and local roadways leading to Gray's Landing on the Altamaha River.



L Ochoopee River **R** Partin Park Playground

Toombs County was first settled by farmers and stockmen of Scotch Highland descent attracted to its fertile lands, and later by large numbers of timber and naval stores operators from the Carolinas because of its vast pine forests. The real growth period came after the establishment of the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery Railroad and the other railroads through the county in the late 1800s. Lyons and Vidalia both originated as railroad stops, and Vidalia soon became a railroad center and junction point for several railroads. Toombs County was created in 1905 through the political outcry and advocacy for local governance by involved leadership. This local leadership has also been evidenced in more recent years through the growth and marketing of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, and other economic and community success.

Though the modes have changed, Toombs County's current and future growth parallels that of its past. Steady growth will continue because of the strengths of location, transportation access, its abundant natural resources, its regional economic and service center status, its investment in infrastructure, and the progressive local leadership. The community's location between major metropolitan areas, near I-16,

and at the crossroads of U.S. Highways 1 and 280, is key to future growth. This key location, as well as the presence of Plant Hatch Nuclear Plant just south of the Altamaha River, will provide much impetus for additional economic and residential growth and development. The fertile fields and vast pine forests will feed the continued growth of the Vidalia Sweet Onion as well as other agricultural and value added enterprises, such as vegetable production, cellulosic biofuels, and food processing and distribution. The rural and pastoral landscapes created by these functioning fields and forests and other natural beauty added by the creeks and rivers of the county, particularly that of the Altamaha River, will be integral to continued and enhanced high quality of life which attracts additional residential and other growth. The expanding regional services, retail trade, employment opportunities, especially those in education and health care, will also attract additional residential and other growth. The progressive leadership enables the community to continue to expand the facilities and services necessary to attract and support this growth; to market, shape, and facilitate the growth; and to build upon successes.

The future Toombs County community will continue to be known worldwide as the home of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, but also for much more. The community will build upon the legacy of leadership and will grow as a united, vibrant, and thriving economic center which recognizes the mutual benefits of coordinating resources. It will be a desired address for both business and residential growth and be known as an exceptional location to live, work, and play. The community will have expanded retail and service businesses, and a diverse offering of well-paying jobs, quality employers, and a well educated and motivated work force. The community will be a recognized leader in health care, education, retail trade, service, and recreational facilities and services. It will seek to attract additional post secondary or satellite campuses to offer expanded educational opportunities to local and regional residents. The accompanying intense growth and development will be well managed and guided to locate near existing infrastructure and services of Vidalia/Lyons and the U.S. 1 to I-16 corridor, and will be of quality, well-maintained appearance. The downtowns and historic areas of Vidalia and Lyons will be immaculate, well preserved, and attractive government, social, cultural, and economic centers of the community, as well as important diverse, functioning contributors to robust local and regional economies. Santa Claus will be of unique charm to residents and visitors alike. All of this quality growth will take place in an environment offering diverse choices of exceptional housing and well-kept neighborhoods for all, while maintaining a scenic countryside and unique quality of life. The farms and forests will be working contributors to the local economy, while again adding to the preserved rural character and natural and scenic beauty. The abundant natural resources will remain relatively unspoiled backdrops to extraordinary living whose natural functioning and contributions to wildlife habitat, enhanced quality of life, and recreational outlets are retained and preserved.

Toombs County will enjoy much continued success, and be an even better place to live, work, visit, and invest. The community will be the envy of many others, and not just in rural Georgia.

City of Lyons

Description

The City of Lyons is located in the center of Toombs County at the intersection of Georgia Highway 292 and U.S. 1. It is also served by U.S. 280 and Georgia Highways 152 and 178. The community lies adjacent and east of, and shares city limits with, Vidalia. Lyons serves as the county seat. Lyons was established as a railroad station stop on the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery Railroad (later the Seaboard Air Line Railway) in 1891, and was formally incorporated in 1897. It became the county seat of the newly created Toombs County in 1905. The City of Lyons was named for Lyons, France at the urging of the railroad president, Sam Hawkins. Lyons has always been a social and governmental center within the county and a bastion of small town, Southern hospitality and culture. The community's downtown Elberta Hotel opened in 1905, and immediately became the county's social center. Today the community remains active in downtown revitalization of its historic district through long, active participation in the Main Street Program. In 2024, it inaugurated the Lyons Welcome Center and Museum. This new facility will house the Lyons Main Street Association, feature a selection of local products for purchase, and offer visitors an insight into the area's history through its museum exhibits.

The community maintains a small-town, family friendly atmosphere of Southern hospitality and culture attractive to residents and visitors alike, yet with "big city" offerings, such as high end restaurants, unique shopping, novelty eateries and a robust night life. The community's population has remained relatively constant in the low 4,000s since 1980. The 2020 Decennial Census estimate for Lyons is 4,239. Four of five county school system schools (primary, upper elementary, middle, and high schools), as well as the large, private Robert Toombs Christian Academy, are located within the city limits. A renowned historic WPA terra cotta relief sculpture, "Wild Ducks and Deer" by Italian artist Albino Mancu, is located inside the city's post office. The community's historic Pal Theater has been revitalized into the Blue Marquee, which hosts an annual folklife play, and other events. The play, "Tales from the Altamaha," featuring changing performances about colorful events and characters from the local area, has received widespread acclaim. The community also hosts the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby, and the Real Squeal BBQ and Music Festivals, and Tales from the Altamaha. These events and the focus on town history, culture, and downtown revitalization have all contributed positively to enhanced public and private investment, and improved economic and community development within the community. The City of Lyons is served by a compatible city hall along GA. Hwy 292, and an adaptive reuse of the National Guard building as a modern police department and public works facility. The Community has developed Partin Park into a showcase of unique recreation and community gathering place for all ages. Partin park is home to a 18 hole disk Golf Course, Inclusive Playground, Multiple meeting venues, Multiple walking trails including an outdoor environment classroom. The park

also houses the permanent track for the South East Georgia Soap Box Derby. It is the host site each year for one of the South's largest youth baseball tournaments, which has been held for over 50 years. The Soap Box Derby course attracts visitors from multiple states to its eight annual races/events, and in 2014 attracted the second most drivers in the country for the stock division. In 2024, Lyons's Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby has been designated as the official Georgia Derby by the state. Lyons has prepared for its industrial economic future by jointly extending water/sewer service to the county's U.S. 1 Corporate Center north of town toward I-16. The community truly is an evolving and expanding beacon of southern culture and family fun which utilizes its heritage and hospitality to stand out and remain vital and viable. It retains unique identity and appeal for business, industry, residents, and visitors. In 2022, Lyons was ranked as the 18th safest city in Georgia.

Vision

The City of Lyons wants to retain its status as a viable and vital **SMALL TOWN OASIS** of **FAMILY ORIENTED FUN** that is also **BUSINESS-FRIENDLY**. The community will remain the educational and governmental center of county government. Downtown Lyons will continue to utilize and **REVITALIZE ITS HISTORY** and **ARCHITECTURE** as an economic stimulus and cultural center for the community. The U.S. 1 Corporate Center and the U.S. 1 Corridor north of town to I-16 will become the address for new business location within Toombs County, creating further economic and community development impetus and appeal for the community. The community will continue to **INVEST** in and **PROMOTE** its **INFRASTRUCTURE, CULTURE,** and **IDENTITY**.



Southeast Soap Box Derby





L Lyons Baseball Field **R** Downtown Lyons
B Lyons City Hall

Issues:

Continued water/sewer/ infrastructure improvements; Continued street, drainage, and streetscape improvements; Continued downtown revitalization/utilization; Water/ sewer extension to Toombs Corporate Center on U.S. 1 industrial park expansion; Public safety improvements; Continued recreation/Partin and Hallmark Park improvements; Seek Rural Zone designation; Seek PlanFirst Designation

Opportunities:

Downtown Lyons/Main Street Program; “Tales from the Altamaha” and other events; Successful Events; Partin Park; U.S. 1 Corporate Center; Nelle Brown Public Library; Altamaha Heritage Center Museum; Toombs County High School; Robert Toombs Christian Academy; Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby designated as the official Georgia Box Derby; Commercial opportunities associated with U.S. 1 South and Bypass highway frontage; Lyons Welcome Center and museum; The Blue Marquee Theatre

City of Santa Claus

Description

The City of Santa Claus is a quiet, friendly municipality, almost a neighborly hamlet, of about 182 persons located about one mile south of Lyons, lying adjacent and east of U.S. 1. The community wholeheartedly embraces and celebrates its namesake and the associated Christmas holidays. City hall is located at 25 December Drive; all city streets, save one, are appropriately theme named; the City's motto is "The City that Loves Children;" and six-foot, welcoming Santas are located alongside the City's entrance signs on both edges of town. The community is one of two such named incorporated municipalities in the U.S. (the other is a larger Indiana town). The City of Santa Claus was incorporated in 1941 at the behest of C. C. (Farmer Green) who operated a roadside stand there to sell his pecans and other novelties to passing tourists. The development of the physical town was principally the work of real estate broker Bill Salem and his brother. The one, non-themed street in town is named, Salem, in his honor. The city's name, Santa Claus, was chosen to generate additional traveler interest and attention. The growth of Santa Claus was thwarted by the opening of interstates, and the resulting decline of U.S. 1 as a tourist route.

Today, the community merrily continues to embrace its holiday traditions and beginnings. Although without an official post office, the citizens of the community voluntarily hand-cancel many holiday letters and packages with a special stamp. The City operates a welcome center, historical museum and gift shop, and a new 4,200 square foot community center. The historical museum and gift shop hosts an annual community-wide, public Christmas party and other events. The community also hosts a public Christmas tree, replete with a town-wide decorating event and carol sing. An especially inspiring and beautiful celebration is the City's Christmas Eve Luminary Lighting which attracts many visitors to ride through town to see the many traditional luminaries (paper bags filled with sand and candles) lining its streets. Light from fire has been a destination beacon for weary travelers for centuries. A small chapel and peaceful garden have recently been constructed along U.S. 1 and is open to residents and visitors alike. The luminaries and chapel do succinctly capture the heritage and spirit of Santa Claus, the small, neighborly city of Toombs County, Georgia.

Vision

The City of Santa Claus wishes to be a **WARM** and **CARING COMMUNITY** with a friendly, neighborly population which embraces the Christmas spirit and holiday year-round. The magic and **SELFLESS TRADITIONS** of Christmas will be evident and embraced all year. The community will welcome both visitors and residents alike, and instill both **JOY** and **TANGIBLE REMINDERS OF THE HOLIDAYS** with appropriate decorations, shops, and community facilities, services, and events.



L Historical Museum and Gift Shop **R** Santa Claus City Hall **B** Community Center



Issues:

Improved water/sewer infrastructure; Street improvements; Establishment of a local arts/crafts festival; Additional playground equipment

Opportunities:

Municipal name and heritage; Location on U.S. 1; Proximity to Lyons/Vidalia; Community cohesiveness; Visitors from metropolitan areas; Prime location for residential development available; Renovated Apartments

City of Vidalia

Description

The City of Vidalia is located in southeastern Georgia along U.S. 280 just south of I-16, about equidistant between the Georgia metro areas of Augusta, Macon, and Savannah. The current municipality is by far the largest in Toombs County, with a population of nearly 11,000 persons, although it is not the county seat. Vidalia's history is tied to fields and forests, and lies in the rich fertile river valleys between the famed Altamaha River on the south, the scenic Ochopee on the north and east, and the mystic Oconee on the west. Even today, Vidalia is best known as the home of the world's sweetest onion, the Vidalia Sweet Onion. Vidalia had its municipal beginnings as Jenkins Station when the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery (SAM) Railroad came through the county in 1890. Sam Hawkins was president and principal owner of the SAM Railroad. According to the CSX Railroad historian at a meeting in 1980, Vidalia officially got its name by combining the names of Hawkins' two daughters. Even as a station stop on the SAM, Vidalia languished until the Macon, Dublin and Southwestern Railroad was extended from Dublin to a junction with the Seaboard Air Line Railroad (formerly the SAM) in 1902. Vidalia is said to have exhibited Georgia's largest percentage growth from 1900 when its official Census population was 500 to 1910, when it was 1,800. By 1917, Vidalia's population is estimated to have doubled to 3,500. The Vidalia City Directory of 1917 noted that Vidalia had the best railroad facilities of any little city in Georgia, radiating in six directions from the city and with direct lines to "Savannah, Macon, Augusta, and Florida cities." The Directory further noted that the railroads handled "fully 500 cars of freight" daily during the busy season. It was further pointed out that the community had "splendid clayed highways (which) lead out in every direction in making it easy and pleasant for automobile travel." The local businesses were still agricultural, forest, and agribusiness related. The community was noted as manufacturing the best cotton gin on the market, having the biggest wire fence market in Georgia, and the second largest mule market. Vidalia was also a leader with its newspaper, its Leader and Rosansky Department Store, and its large number of retail dry goods and grocery stores. It was additionally a regional leader in education, including its schools for African-Americans. Vidalia's first school for blacks was a converted Odd Fellows Hall made into a one-room school in 1904. It was established by James DeWitt Dickerson, who was instrumental in Vidalia education until his death in 1947. Professor Dickerson was instrumental in securing the local support of Vidalia's black and white citizens needed to attract the aid of the Julius Rosenwald Fund to build a two-story Rosenwald school on Third Avenue in 1918-1919, eventually known as the Vidalia High and Industrial School. Under the tutelage of Professor Dickerson, the school achieved Georgia Department of Education aid and elevated designation as the Toombs County Training School in the early 1930s. The Toombs County Training School also attracted Works Progress Administration funding in 1935 to build a new brick veneer school in 1937, appropriately named the Dickerson Training School. Dickerson Training School was said to be the most modern school building in South Georgia for African Americans at that time. Even today, Vidalia operates one of the few city school systems in the state, and has a J.D. Dickerson Elementary School, which pays homage to the Dickerson Training school.

Vidalia's elevated status today as a regional center of retail, service, economic opportunity, and health care can be traced again to location, agricultural heritage, and progressive leadership. Seeking to recover from the Great Depression, a local farmer, Moses Coleman, planted onions as an alternative crop and early spring cash source. Coleman's foresight was rewarded when he discovered the low sulfur soils of the area made the onions exceptionally sweet, therefore commanding a premium price. This price led other local farmers to follow suit and also plant onions. Vidalia was located at the juncture of some of South Georgia's most widely traveled highways. Given this and the fortuitous location of a state farmer's market in Vidalia in the 1940s, the fame of the sweet "Vidalia Onions" soon spread. The Tanner Brice Company, which was founded in Vidalia in 1919, began operating the first area Piggly Wiggly grocery stores in 1943. The community had a distribution center for Piggly Wiggly in the early 1950s, which became Piggly Wiggly Sims Stores and later Piggly Wiggly Southern. The business acumen of the local Piggly Wiggly distribution center manager, quickly led to much wider marketing of the sweet "Vidalia Onions." The state of Georgia gave the Vidalia Onion legal status in 1986, protecting it by restricting its production area to a surrounding 20 county area. Local onion producers received further federal protection under a marketing order in 1989. The Vidalia Onion was made Georgia's official state vegetable in 1990, and its season was extended by controlled atmosphere storage adapted from apples. Today the Vidalia Onion is a cash crop worth an estimated 90 million dollars to the regional economy.



L Vidalia Brand Lookbook **R** Ladson Genealogical Library

The Vidalia Onion is certainly one of Georgia's agricultural and economic success stories, and a state treasure. Vidalia is a success on many levels. The community has diversified itself economically by focusing on its location, maintaining the excellence of local education and other facilities, preserving and reusing tangible reminders of its heritage, and growing itself as a regional trade, service and healthcare center. The community was successful in getting the state to locate Southeastern Technical Institute (now College) in 1988 to the city. The community did not stop there. Through a local option sales tax, it expanded the state project to include the construction of a local funded 776 seat auditorium for both school and community use. In 2011, the community constructed Memorial Health Meadows Hospital (previous Meadows Regional Medical Center) in Vidalia, which continues to expand its regional focus and level of services at a time when many small-town rural hospitals are severely struggling. During the same year, the City of Vidalia converted a downtown vacated grocery store into an imposing, state of the art Muni-

cipal Annex. In 2014, Vidalia created the Stage at the Ronnie A Dixon City Park and passive park on the former police station site. In 2018, Vidalia established an Aquatic Center, featuring a lap pool for general and competition swimming, and a popular splash pool. The city has been a Main Street Program participant since 1989, and has long been a proponent of downtown revitalization. Its downtown area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2023, Vidalia received the Rural Zone designation from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), a move aimed at boosting job creation and private investment in its downtown area. With a branding strategy developed in 2022, the community successfully involved a comprehensive approach to promote its identity, highlighting its strengths and opportunities.



L Vidalia Onion Festival **R** Vidalia Aquatic Center

The Greater Vidalia® Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, newly established in 2024, is also located in Vidalia. The Vidalia Sweet Onion Festival is a nearly week-long celebration of the world-famous onion, recognized by MSNBC as one of the five don't miss festivals in the U.S. The community operates a Convention and Visitors Bureau, despite its relatively small size. It also has excellent recreation facilities, an airport with a 6,000-foot runway, along with many other amenities. Vidalia is home to a regional library, the Ohoopsee Regional Library, and to a renowned, pre-eminent genealogical library, the Ladson Genealogical and Historical Library. Many of the city's historic homes have been converted to professional, office, and community use, including the Altama Museum of Art and History, located in the National Register-listed Brazell House. This museum is home to 24 original Audubons. The historic Pal Theatre was purchased by the City and subsequently modernized in recent years as a multi-use theater/event space. The Vidalia Convention and Visitors Bureau notes, "the Vidalia area is full of local flavor, and we don't just mean on your dinner plate!" Vidalia truly is a modern urban area with small-town atmosphere, progressive leadership, outstanding facilities, expanding economic status, and with much attention and celebration to its heritage. The U.S. Census Bureau recognizes Vidalia's growing economic status, as the City of Vidalia is the central component of the Vidalia, Georgia Micropolitan Statistical Area, which includes all of Toombs County. The community is most definitely much more than the Vidalia Onion.

Vision

The City of Vidalia will continue its status as a **REGIONAL CENTER OF RETAIL TRADE, SERVICES, JOB OPPORTUNITIES**, and **HEALTH CARE**. The **VIDALIA SWEET ONION** and other local heritage will continue to be celebrated and utilized as a platform for economic diversification and community improvement. Vidalia's downtown and historic fabric will be lovingly preserved and incorporated into **ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS**, even as facilities and services are modernized and expanded. **EDUCATION, CULTURE, THE ARTS**, and **TOURISM** will continue to be major focal points of attention. The City and surrounding community will be a model of rural development respective of, and complementary to, existing heritage and culture.



L Pal Theatre **R** Altama Museum of Art and History

Issues:

Continued water/sewer/ infrastructure improvements; Continuing downtown revitalization; Drainage improvements; Continuing public safety improvements; Continuing transportation system improvements; Downtown wayfinding signage; Continuing landmark/historic fabric preservation; Housing stock improvements; Continuing culture/arts/tourism support/development; Recreational facilities/parks improvements

Opportunities:

Vidalia Sweet Onion, Museum, and Festival; Vidalia City School System; Vidalia Main Street Program; Vidalia Convention and Visitors Bureau; Greater Vidalia® Center for Rural Entrepreneurship; Intergovernment cooperation; Memorial Health Meadows Hospital; Southeastern Technical College; Vidalia Regional Airport; Vidalia Regional Sports Complex; Leadership; Aquatic Center; PlanFirst Designee; Rural Zone designation

Community Goals

Economic Development



1. Continuing education/job skills improvements
2. Continue to improve education levels
3. Support Southeastern Technical College
4. Retain local graduates
5. Attract new businesses/industry/jobs
6. Support small business/entrepreneurial development
7. Continue development of industrial parks/sites
8. Maintain/upgrade water/sewer infrastructure
9. Improve transportation access/quality
10. Seek broadband/fiber availability upgrades
11. Attract green businesses
12. Enhance intergovernmental cooperation
13. Maintain viability/support/enhance agricultural/forestry uses
14. Promote/enhance tourism
15. Organize local cultural arts umbrella group
16. Regional center promotion/enhancement
17. Maintain/increase local retail trade/service sectors
18. Continue downtown revitalization of Lyons and Vidalia
19. Continue support for active Greater Vidalia Chamber of Commerce and Toombs County Development Authority
20. Continue promotion of Vidalia Onion
21. Develop new/involved local leadership





Natural & Cultural Resources

1. Protect significant natural resources of Toombs County
2. Seek compatible development/utilization
3. Utilize/preserve/adaptively use historic resources/heritage of Toombs County
4. Continue downtown revitalization of Lyons and Vidalia
5. Conserve/protect Altamaha and Ochopee rivers in Toombs County
6. Maintain open spaces/agricultural/forestry uses
7. Promote nature-based, recreation, and agri-tourism opportunities
8. Address growth management/natural and cultural resources protection





Housing



1. Encourage diverse housing mix
2. Utilize state/federal programs
3. Improve quality/appearance of housing
4. Support Lyons and Vidalia housing authorities
5. Implement/enforce need for land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing/code enforcement
6. Collaborate on housing rehabilitation measures/programs

1. Implement/enforce need for land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing/code enforcement
2. Improve community appearance/aesthetics
3. Maintain open spaces/agricultural/forestry uses
4. Improve/promote transportation access/quality
5. Continue to maintain local Subtitle D landfill
6. Rural character/quality of life protection
7. Promote compatible development/utilization



Land Use



Community Facilities and Services



1. Maintain/upgrade/expand infrastructure/services, as needed
2. Maintain/upgrade water/sewer facilities and service, as needed
3. Upgrade quality/availability of broadband/fiber technology
4. Improve/promote transportation access/quality
5. Maintain Toombs Subtitle D landfill
6. Continue to upgrade public safety/emergency medical facilities/services
7. Maintain/upgrade local healthcare facilities/services within the community and regional healthcare provider status
8. Develop/improve/maintain recreation facilities and programs countywide
9. Provide/maintain appropriate governmental facilities/services
10. Maintain quality educational facilities/services
11. Support Southeastern Technical College
12. Encourage utilization/enhancement/promotion of cultural facilities/activities
13. Maintain/enhance Ochopee Regional Library and local libraries
14. Support/enhance local museums

Intergovernmental Coordination



1. Maintain/enhance local, regional, state cooperation
2. Seek sharing/cooperation/consolidation in service delivery
3. Coordinated land use planning/code enforcement

Long Term Community Policies



Economic Development

1. The community will work together to improve educational and skills levels to ensure a better qualified workforce for existing and future employers
2. The community will collaboratively support the local school systems and otherwise develop cooperative efforts to improve the graduation rate, and to engage students to remain in school
3. The community will continue to support Southeastern Technical College and its continued enhancement of educational and technological opportunities
4. The community will work together to develop, support, and promote programs which will enhance opportunities for local graduates to both live and work in the community upon graduation
5. The community will seek to maintain and enhance its diversified industrial base
6. The community will actively recruit new industry and commercial/retail development, utilizing the Industrial Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and other means, which is compatible with, and supportive of, the resources, infrastructure, existing economy, and the natural environments of the county
7. The community will continue to work regionally to support existing and new small businesses to maintain its Georgia Department of Economic Development's Regional Entrepreneur Friendly Community designation
8. The community will continue to maintain GRAD certified industrial parks and other industrial sites through technological improvements, infrastructure maintenance/improvements, and/or additional enhancements as needed
9. The community will work to maintain and upgrade, as necessary, its excellent water and sewer infrastructure (with excess capacity) and extend service to growth areas
10. The community will continue to seek transportation improvements (highway, airport, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian) to enhance and support economic development efforts
11. The community will continue to support and maintain the Vidalia Regional Airport, through necessary infrastructure/equipment upgrades and maintenance, service expansions and other means
12. The community will pursue obtaining broadband/fiber availability upgrades, including Wi-Fi accessibility in public parks and spaces
13. The community will seek to attract green businesses that improve the quality of life for the community and environment
14. The community will cooperate and coordinate with existing local, regional, and state agencies to improve all of Toombs County
15. The community will maintain agriculture/forestry as viable economic uses through traditional and alternative enterprises, such as value-added agribusiness and exporting, agritourism, and nature-based tourism

16. The community will continue to cooperatively develop and promote itself as a regional tourist attraction through festivals, the local folk play (Tales from the Altamaha), recreation and leisure facilities/activities, museums, cultural events, heritage tourism, agri-tourism, and nature-based tourism
17. The community will seek to organize an umbrella group to improve cultural arts facilities/programs coordination throughout Toombs County
18. The community will continue to maintain and enhance its position as a regional center for surrounding counties in terms of shopping, job opportunities, healthcare, education, recreation, and cultural opportunities
19. The community will continue to support the Greater Vidalia County Chamber of Commerce and the Toombs County Development Authority's active efforts to attract economic development, including maintaining and increasing the local retail trade and service sectors and their market share
20. The community will continue the revitalization of Downtown Lyons and Vidalia as vibrant, functioning commercial, governmental, and social centers through the Main Street Program and other means
21. The community will investigate usage of Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Business Improvement Districts, Enterprise Zones, and other economic improvement zone designations as tools for redevelopment/revitalization
22. The community will continue to promote the Vidalia Onion in terms of community identity and marketing, while at the same time broadening marketing efforts to promote the community's diverse opportunities
23. The community will seek to improve its social and economic fabric and overall quality of life by developing new and involved leadership, by inviting greater community involvement, and by marshalling broad-based efforts and initiatives to address pressing issues and concerns



Natural and Cultural Resources

1. The community will seek to conserve and protect the Altamaha and Ochopee rivers, the county's significant groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, other important natural resources, and the open spaces and landscapes of the county while promoting compatible utilization and recreational development
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 and pursue listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as appropriate
3. The community will continue the revitalization of historic downtown Lyons and Vidalia through the Lyons and Vidalia Main Street programs, Downtown Vidalia Association, and other means, including improved coordination and use of available state and federal preservation tax incentives
4. The community will capitalize on its agricultural lands/forestry economic opportunities, and will seek

to promote, develop, and cultivate additional compatible uses of these resources, including agri-tourism and nature-based tourism initiatives

5. The community will proactively manage and guide its growth and development, and protect and conserve its important natural and cultural resources



Housing

1. The community will seek to encourage a diverse mix of safe, quality housing, including affordable, rental, elderly, assisted living, starter homes, and compatible workforce housing
2. The community will encourage the use of state and federal programs to improve availability of quality housing, and to encourage homeownership
3. The community will continue to support the Lyons and Vidalia housing authorities in their efforts to provide affordable subsidized housing
4. The community will cooperate to implement and enforce the need for land use planning, subdivision/manufactured housing ordinances, and code enforcement
5. The community will continue to work collaboratively on housing rehabilitation measures and programs, where appropriate
6. The community will utilize the Housing Study for Toombs County, City of Lyons and City of Vidalia to improve its housing stock



Land Use

1. The community will cooperate to implement and enforce the need for land use planning, subdivision/manufactured housing regulations, growth management and code enforcement
2. The community will work to improve its appearance and aesthetics, including enhancing gateways/entranceways through landscaping/beautification and other means
3. The community will encourage growth that preserves and maintains forestry and agriculture as viable, functioning land uses
4. The community will pursue, develop, and promote transportation improvements of all types (highway, airport, rail, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian) that are compatible with, and supportive of, the community's desired economic development, future growth, and quality of life

5. The community will continue to maintain its Subtitle D landfill through technological and/or other improvements, as needed, and otherwise develop and expand its solid waste management services and facilities
6. The community will work to protect/conservate its existing rural character/landscape and quality of life, and will promote appropriately compatible development



Community Facilities and Services

1. The community will maintain, upgrade, and expand its existing infrastructure and services to enhance the quality of life; to attract desired, compatible growth and development; and to support its status as a regional trade/growth center
2. The community will seek to maintain and upgrade existing water and sewer facilities, as needed, and to extend service to areas of growth
3. The community will pursue obtaining upgraded broadband/fiber availability upgrades, including Wi-Fi accessibility in public parks and spaces
4. The community will pursue, develop, and promote transportation improvements of all types (highway, airport, rail, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian) that are compatible with, and supportive of, the community's desired economic development, future growth, and quality of life
5. The community will continue to maintain its state-of-the art Subtitle D landfill through technological and/or other improvements, as needed
6. The community will continue to improve public safety services, facilities, and personnel training to support an expanding population, improve quality of service, and better coordinate in times of emergency and disasters
7. The community will work together to maintain and upgrade healthcare facilities and services, as needed, and seek to continue its status as a regional healthcare provider
8. The community will maintain and improve existing parks/recreational facilities as needed and establish new parks/recreational facilities and activities to serve existing and future populations
9. The community will continue to provide and maintain adequate government facilities, including city and county administrative facilities
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 continue to support Southeastern Technical College and its continued enhancement of educational and technological opportunities
12. The community will continue to support its cultural facilities, programs, and events and provide enhanced service and programs, as feasible, in conjunction with organization of an umbrella group to coordinate efforts throughout Toombs County
13. The community will maintain and work to enhance its status as headquarters of the Ochopee Regional Library and continue to upgrade its local libraries and the Ladson Genealogical Library

14. The community will support and enhance its museums and their offerings both to preserve local heritage and encourage tourism



Intergovernmental Coordination

1. The community will continue to cooperate locally, regionally and on the state level to improve, develop, and plan for the desired future of Toombs 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 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 have to 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 future path.

The Needs and Opportunities Element generally answers the planning question, ***“Where are we currently?”*** The answers can provide the compass point guidance necessary to begin and advance along the improvement journey. The Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan identifies each community goal as an issue for improvement, and further identifies local needs and opportunities, as appropriate.



Economic Development

Opportunities:

1. Regional center for commerce, jobs, healthcare, education, recreation, and cultural opportunities
2. Proximity to Savannah and Brunswick ports, Interstates 16 and 95, and larger cities
3. Greater Savannah Regional Alliance participation
4. Active economic development organizations, including Lyons development Authority, Lyons Main Street, Vidalia DDA, Downtown Vidalia Association, Toombs County Development Authority, Greater Vidalia Chamber of Commerce
5. Greater Vidalia Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
6. Heart of Georgia Altamaha Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program
7. Post-secondary education access at Southeastern Technical College, Brewton-Parker College, Georgia Southern University, and other nearby institutions
8. Southeastern Early College and Career Academy
9. Vidalia Onion's national and international recognition
10. Vidalia Porchfest
11. Lyons Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby, The Real Squeal: Lyons Barbeque and Music Festival
12. GRAD certified industrial parks (Toombs Corporate Center at U.S. Highway 1 and Toombs Corporate Center at Vidalia Regional Airport)
13. Newly acquired 604.83 acres industrial site along U.S. Highway 1
14. Existing businesses/industries, such as Tumi Luggage, Trane, DOT Foods, Chicken of the Sea, and others
15. Nature-based, agri-tourism, recreation, heritage, and other tourism venues, including the Altamaha and Ochopee rivers
16. Lower property values/lower property taxes
17. SPLOST funding
18. Low unemployment rates
19. Existing agricultural/forestry uses
20. Existing support mechanism for small businesses
21. Greater Vidalia Workforce Development Strategy
22. Renovated Pal Theatre
23. City of Vidalia's recognition as a PlanFirst community for its successful comprehensive plan implementation
24. City of Vidalia Rural Zone Designation
25. Downtown Vidalia Master Plan
26. Meadows Regional Medical Center, cancer treatment center, and other available healthcare services
27. Santa Claus Welcome Center
28. Lyons Welcome Center and Museum

(Economic Development "Needs" Continued)

Needs:

1. Continuing education/job skills improvement
2. Maintenance of agriculture/forestry as viable economic land uses through traditional and alternative means, such as agri- and nature-based tourism
3. Continuing collaborative support/cooperative efforts for the local school systems to improve high school student retention/graduation rate
4. Support for enhanced post-secondary education and technology resources/programs at Southeastern Technical College
5. Retention of local graduates
6. Maintain/enhance diversified industrial base
7. Work to attract green businesses
8. Compatible new business/industry/jobs attraction/creation
9. Continue to work regionally to support small businesses
10. Appearance/aesthetics improvements, including enhancing gateways/entranceways through landscaping, beautification, and other means
11. Investigate use of/establish Tax Allocation Districts, Business Improvement Districts, Enterprise Zones, Rural Zones, and other economic improvement designations for redevelopment/revitalization
12. Continued maintenance of GRAD certified industrial parks and other industrial sites with technology, infrastructure, and other needed improvement
13. Water and sewer infrastructure extension, transportation infrastructure, gas, high speed broadband connectivity to industrial park expansion
14. Purchase additional property for expansion of Toombs Corporate Center at Vidalia Regional Airport industrial park and other industrial parks with gas, water, sewer, and high-speed broadband connectivity
15. Continue to paint murals throughout downtown Vidalia depicting locally recognized points of importance
16. Regional tourism development/promotion through events, such as Lyons' Real Squeal Barbeque and Music, Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby; Vidalia Onion festivals; Tales from the Altamaha folk play; recreation/leisure activities; heritage tourism; agri-tourism; nature-based tourism; and other means
17. Continued support for Chamber and Development Authority's efforts to attract economic Development
18. Continue to maintain/increase local retail trade and service sectors through Chamber and Development Authority efforts
19. Continued promotion of Vidalia Onion for community identity/marketing, while broadening marketing of community's diverse opportunities
20. Seasonal decorations for downtown Vidalia
21. Coordinate with local high schools and career academy to establish FLEX program at Southeastern Early College and Career Academy (SECCA)
22. Seek Rural Zone Designation, PlanFirst Designation, Lyons
23. Railroad along highway 280 limits development



Housing

Opportunities:

1. Lower cost of living and housing costs
2. Availability of CDBG/other public/private programs to rehabilitate low and moderate income housing
3. Mixed-use development (residential and commercial) in Downtown Vidalia and Downtown Lyons
4. Toombs County Housing Study
5. Vacant buildings present opportunities for infill development

Needs:

1. Diverse mix of quality housing (safe, affordable, rental, elderly, assisted living, starter,

compatible workforce

2. State/federal housing programs utilization to improve availability of affordable/quality housing and home ownership
3. Continued pursuit of CDBG/CHIP grants and others to rehabilitate substandard housing, as appropriate
4. Establish program(s) to remove dilapidated manufactured homes/housing units countywide
5. Continued collaborative housing rehabilitation measures
6. Adopt Georgia Uniform Building Codes and establish permit system Continued support for Lyons and Vidalia housing authorities' provision of affordable subsidized housing



Land Use

Opportunities:

1. Ample undeveloped land
2. Existing zoning in Lyons and Vidalia

Needs:

3. Cooperative implementation and enforcement of updated/coordinated land use planning, manufactured housing/subdivision regulations, growth management, and construction code enforcement
4. Encourage growth supportive of preserving/maintaining viability of forestry and agriculture land uses
5. Lack of land due to owners not willing to sell for developments
6. Need to protect agricultural land
7. Need to establish land use regulations county-wide



Natural & Cultural Resources

Opportunities:

1. Upgraded Ladson Genealogical Library
2. Local/regional tourism events/venues
3. Gray's, McNatt Falls, U.S. 1 Bridge, and Cobb's Creek landings on Altamaha River in Toombs County
4. Community's rural character/small town quality of life
5. Significant natural resources, including Altamaha and Ochopee rivers and their corridors, and others
6. Local cultural/historic resources, such as Altama Museum of Art and History and Pal Theatre (Vidalia), Lyons Depot, Lyons Welcome Center and Museum, historic downtown Lyons and Vidalia, and others, and opportunities for increased heritage and cultural tourism
7. Environmental Conservation ordinance adopted countywide
8. Active Vidalia Convention and Visitor's Bureau
9. New city-wide branding for Vidalia
10. Improved Ronnie A Dixon City Park in downtown Vidalia
11. Altama Musuem of Art and History
12. Rails to Trails program

Needs:

1. Develop/implement water quality protection ordinance consistent with Vidalia's watershed assessment
2. Continued revitalization of historic downtowns in Lyons and Vidalia through Main Street program participation, Lyons Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Vidalia Association, and other means
3. Historic resources preservation/reuse/promotion, including rehabilitation of downtown Lyons and Vidalia commercial structures
4. Compatible development supportive of community's unique landscapes; natural and cultural resources; open spaces; and rural character/quality of life
5. Conservation/protection of Altamaha and Ochopee rivers, significant natural resources, and open spaces/landscapes of Toombs County, while promoting compatible use/recreational development
6. Continue to pursue National Register listing for historic structures and districts, as appropriate
7. Continued stewardship and local government use of National Register-listed historic Vidalia City Hall including completion of remodeling
8. Continued support/promotion/maintenance/enhancement of existing cultural facilities/programs/events and development of additional ones
9. Increased utilization of state and federal historic preservation rehabilitation tax incentives
10. Proactive growth management of future compatible development, and protection/conservation of significant natural and cultural resources, through community investment/appropriate regulation
11. Establish arts and crafts festival in Santa Claus
12. Organize umbrella group to improve cultural arts facilities/programs coordination countywide
13. Renovate the Lyons Depot



Community Facilities and Services

Opportunities:

1. Transportation improvements, including TIA funded resurfacing and paving projects and planned new southbound U.S. 1 bridge over Altamaha River (CFS)
2. Excellent local schools, including facilities, technology, and dual enrollment opportunities
3. Increasing local high school graduation rate
4. Santa's Garden Park in Santa Claus
5. Vidalia Onion Museum
6. Part-time clerk employed by City of Santa Claus
7. Partin and Faison parks (Lyons) and Ed Smith Complex (Vidalia) and Vidalia Regional Sports Complex, Vidalia Aquatics Facility, and other recreation opportunities
8. Toombs County Senior Center
9. Playground upgrades in Santa Claus
10. Strong local public safety/enforcement and low crime rate
11. Excellent local public and private schools
12. Active local civic organizations, churches, and social services resources
13. Active Leadership Programs
14. Dollar General store in Santa Claus
15. The Stage at Ronnie A Dixon City Park in downtown Vidalia
16. Ohoop Regional Library, Ladson Genealogical and Historical Library
17. Convenient location within the Region and State
18. Excellent Broadband Infrastructure
19. United Way of Toombs, Montgomery, and Wheeler Counties
20. Boys and Girls Club of Toombs County
21. Active mental health recovery organizations, including Toombs County Prevention, Treatment, & Recovery; Gardens of Hope RCO; Forge Recovery Center
22. Flock Safety camera system installed
23. 2nd TIA four-laning of SR 292

Needs:

1. Continued improvements/promotion of all kinds of transportation access/quality, including highway, roads/streets, airport, rail, transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and multi-modal/Complete Streets supportive of desired economic development/future growth/quality of life
2. Support/enhance local museums and their offerings
3. Enforcement of model ordinance based on Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for significant wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and protected river corridors
4. "Complete Streets" policy to develop safe infrastructure for bicycle and pedestrian users
5. Increased development of local bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure
6. Maintenance/extension/development of infrastructure necessary for desired growth/quality of life and support of regional trade/growth center status, including transportation, water/sewer, natural gas, high speed broadband connectivity
7. Sewer system improvements in the Roosevelt Street area of Lyons
8. Continue to maintain modern Vidalia Regional Airport

(Community Facilities & Services "Needs" Continued)

9. Maintain/upgrade existing water and sewer facilities, as needed, including extending service to growth areas
10. Expand capacity of Lyons' east and north sewer plants to accommodate downtown and other areas of the city
11. Continue to maintain Toombs County's Subtitle D landfill through technological or other needed improvements/expand solid waste management services/facilities as necessary
12. Develop downtown passive park beside Lyons Fire Station
13. Improve Santa Claus water system citywide, including fire hydrants
14. Develop bicycle trail/route designation along Cedar Crossing Vidalia Road from Vidalia to Gray's Landing on the Altamaha River
15. Utilize Rails to Trails program to expand trail system
16. Continued maintenance/enhancement to retain excellent quality local educational facilities/services/technology
17. Continue to upgrade local libraries, retain/enhance the regional library system
18. Install outdoor sound system for downtown Vidalia and downtown Lyons
19. Install pedestrian wayfinding signage in downtown Vidalia historic district
20. Repair bridge aprons countywide
21. Continue sidewalk maintenance in Vidalia
22. Install way-finding signage on arterial routes throughout Vidalia
23. Continued improvements to local public safety/fire/emergency medical services, equipment, training, facilities, and emergency/disaster coordination, as needed
24. Renovate Lyons Fire Department building
25. Purchase three (3) 2-door top mount rescue pumper fire trucks for City of Vidalia
26. Construct training burn center/search/rescue building for Vidalia Fire Department
27. Replace 12 MSA SCBA (air packs) and 27 Veridian PPE (bunker) gear for Vidalia Fire Department
28. Purchase rescue equipment/accessories (Jaws of Life) for Vidalia
29. Purchase maintenance truck for Vidalia Fire Department
30. Purchase vehicles for investigators, administration, and police patrols in Vidalia
31. Purchase body camera equipment, portable radios, and patrol car laptops for Vidalia Police Department
32. Install rubberized material in lanes at Vidalia Police Department shooting range
33. Continued maintenance/upgrades, as needed, of Meadows Regional Medical Center and healthcare facilities/services/equipment
34. Maintain/improve existing parks/recreational facilities/activities and establish new ones, as needed
35. Construct new soccer complex and replace all field lighting at Partin Park in Lyons
36. Renovate Vince Faison Park in Lyons
37. Repurpose Lyons City Gym
38. Upgrades at Vidalia's Ed Smith Complex baseball fields, including new fencing, bleachers, dugouts, lighting, and back stops
39. Expand maintenance building at Ed Smith Complex in Vidalia
40. Need more EV charging stations
41. Need more childcare facilities
42. Construct a new fire station in Lyons
43. Need to seek funding for mental health recovery programs
44. Need to create a fishing place/pavilion for the disabled on the river landing with access to boat/kayak rentals



Intergovernmental Coordination

Opportunities:

1. Continuing existing local, regional, and state agency cooperation/coordination
2. Existing local, regional, and state partnerships, including public safety/fire service cooperation, Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, and others
3. Close networking with surrounding counties

Needs:

4. Continuing local, regional, and state agency cooperation/coordination
5. Maintain/enhance community's position as regional center for commerce, jobs, healthcare, education, recreation, and cultural opportunities
6. 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 Toombs 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 preemptively meet anticipated changes to the State Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

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 technological advancements. Broadband delivery methods include, but are not limited to, digital subscriber lines, cable modems, fiber, wireless, broadband over power lines, and satellites.

Nationally, 99.4 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 97.0% in rural areas. In the FCC's 2021 Broadband Deployment Report, it was estimated that 77.4 percent of the population in Toombs County have access to fixed broadband technology. 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.

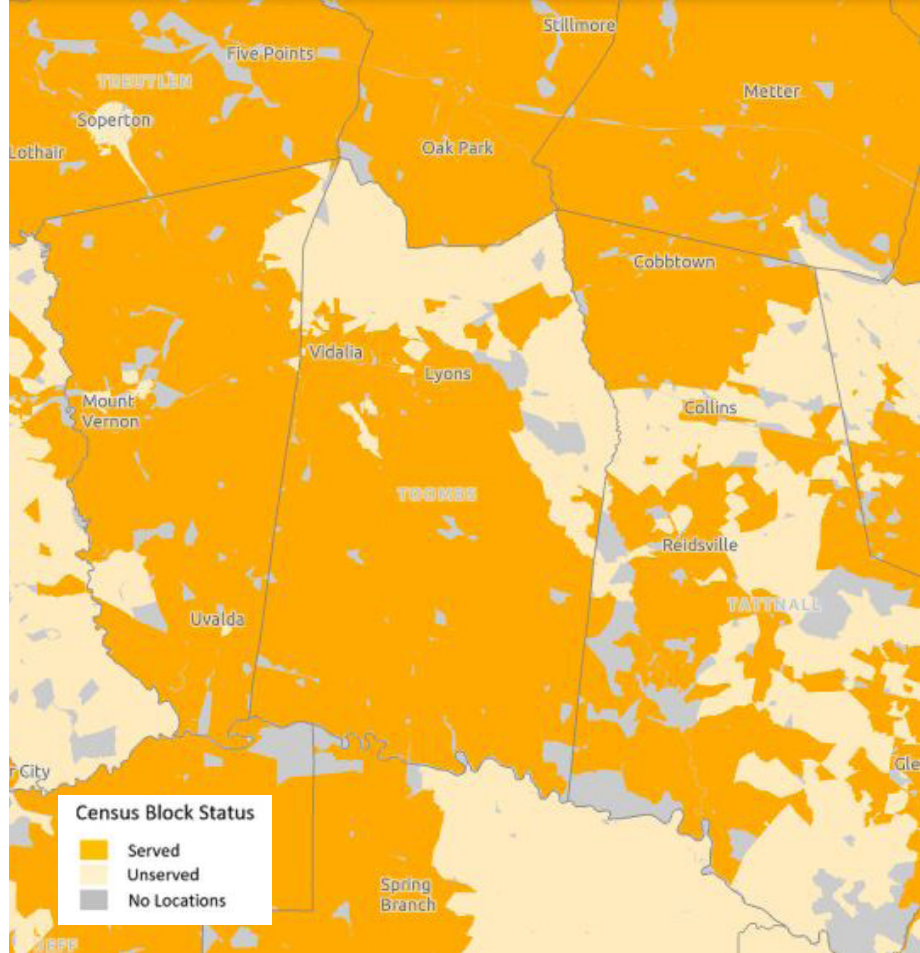


L DOT Foods Industrial Site **R** Vidalia Onion Fountain

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. Toombs County has a reported 4G LTE coverage area over the entire county. This avenue of service is generally sufficient for a homeowner or cell service subscriber. 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.

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 all relied heavily on the internet to function. As a result, the need for broadband services was recognized as a priority for the country. Since 2019, Cities of Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia have made notable strides in expanding high-speed broadband access. The 2024 Georgia Broad-

band Availability Map shows that these cities are now fully covered by broadband services. While the entire county has not yet reached full broadband coverage, ongoing efforts at the county and municipal levels continue to enhance connectivity. With support from the USDA Reconnect grant, the FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, and ARPA Grant projects, Toombs County is on track to achieve full high-speed broadband coverage in the near future.



Broadband Availability within Toombs County
Source: Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative 2023;
<https://broadband.georgia.gov/maps/gbdi-unserved-county>

The Toombs 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 served and unserved 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. 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. Partner with state agencies (Georgia Technology Authority, Department of Community Affairs, and Department of Economic Development), the Toombs County School System, and area local governments to promote broadband deployment in the community, region, and state.
4. Identify broadband deployment projects eligible for OneGeorgia Authority funding and/or other state and federal grant or loan opportunities.

Economic Development



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 Toombs County. Much of Toombs County's early growth resulted first from Altamaha River commerce and its farms and forests, and then, more importantly, from railroad establishment in the late 1800s. The Vidalia Sweet Onion, the location of I-16 along with other improving highways, the county's convenient location near the Georgia ports and between Georgia's metro areas, the location of the nearby Plant Hatch Nuclear Plant and continuing success in diversifying and transforming local industry, have stabilized and stimulated growth in the county. Establishing itself as a regional leader in retail service, health care, and jobs and the worldwide marketing of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, have distinguished Vidalia/Toombs County. The opening of I-16, continuing improvement to local

infrastructure and facilities, improvements to rail and airport service, attention and celebration to local heritage and culture have further opened doors of growth, opportunity, and exposure for the Toombs County community.

The Toombs County area was an early frontier area of Georgia, originally primarily part of Montgomery/Tattnall counties, settled because of its natural beauty, fertile soils, and abundant pine forests, and access to the Altamaha River. Its growth and formal establishment in 1905 followed economic growth and the further opening of outside markets with the arrival of the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery and other railroads in the 1880s/1890s. The abundant natural resources provided for important economic opportunities, and a profitable farming, and then lumber and naval stores industry resulted. Local leadership and improvement of infrastructure have always been important to Toombs County, beginning with its establishment and later with the Vidalia Sweet Onion and other improvements/diversification. The county's architecture, character, and many natural and cultural resources have always attracted attention and investment. The local economy received further boosts from transportation with the coming of major highways, most notably U.S. 1, U.S. 280 and 1-16. The county's pastoral landscapes, along with Vidalia's Altama Museum of Art and History, Ladson Genealogical Library, the Vidalia Onion Festival, and Lyons' "Tales from the Altamaha" folk life play, Real Squeal BBQ and Music Festival, and the Southeastern Georgia Soap Box Derby, highlight the community's natural beauty, rich heritage, and vibrant cultural



L *Tales of the Altamaha Folk Life Play* **R** *Walking Trail, Lyons*

scene. Quality of life, family orientation, devotion to culture and heritages, small-town charm, outdoor scenic beauty, and celebration of local heritage are local economic strengths and opportunities available today for supporting and developing additional economic development opportunities. These efforts are already paying dividends through the attraction of visitors, the location of retirees, new residents, and the location of businesses.

There are continuing needs for Toombs County's economic development. Incomes in Toombs County remain relatively low, ranking about two-thirds to three-fourths that of the state. The per capita money income in Toombs County as reported by the Census Bureau for 2018-2022 is \$27,912, compared to \$37,836 in Georgia as a whole. Median household income is \$47,310 only about 66% that of Georgia.

About one-fifth (21.1%) of Toombs County citizens are in poverty, compared to only 12.7% in Georgia as a whole. This high poverty has persisted for a number of decades. Despite job recruitments, there are needs for more jobs. Unemployment in the county was 3.2% in December 2023, slightly higher than Georgia's 3.1 % and lower than the U.S.'s 3.8%. About 72 percent of county workers do work inside Toombs County with a mean travel time to work of 24.6 minutes. Job skills of local residents continue to be somewhat of a concern; about 17% of local residents lack a high school diploma compared to 14.1% statewide.

There are opportunities and cause for optimism for economic development in Toombs County as well. Employment within the county remains concentrated within manufacturing (15.1%), government (13%), retail trade (13.6%), and healthcare (17.6%) sectors. This reflects the stability and importance of the local retail sector, Memorial Health Meadows Hospital and other healthcare facilities, as well as local schools and technical college, and continuing manufacturer attraction. Toombs County does remain a regional leader in many categories providing nearly 12,300 jobs, and more than one in nine of jobs regionwide. According to the University of Georgia's 2022 Farmgate Community Value Report, Toombs ranked as the sixth highest vegetable producing county with a value of \$77,879,950. Additionally, the county ranked third in the state for agriculture tourism with a value of \$7,500,000. In total, the value of agri-related goods and services produced in Toombs County was \$174,312,514 ranking 27th of 159 counties. There are additional opportunities related to the Vidalia Sweet Onion and other crops, the abundant fields and forests and outstanding natural and cultural resources of the county, tourism, and the county's location and transportation access. The cost of living in Toombs 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 overall high quality of life, attractive open spaces, and a verdant landscape punctuated by outstanding natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. The same can be said for location of business and entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly given county history and recent successes in having companies locate within the community. The community's overall high quality of life in a rural area with excellent access beyond will continue to pay dividends.

The Toombs 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 Toombs County.

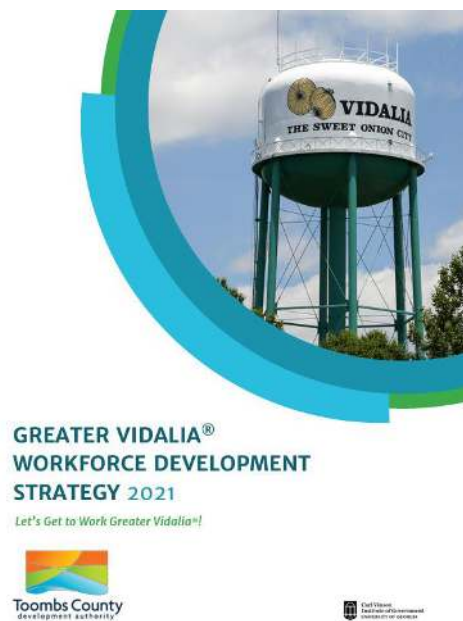
Improve Educational Levels/Improve Jobs Skills

Toombs County will continue to support its local school systems, Southeastern Technical College and regional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs. The retention of local graduates through enhanced opportunities will be pursued. The community will develop public/private partnerships through its Greater Vidalia® Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, and continuing intergovernmental cooperation particularly on the regional levels. Certified Literate Community participation will continue. Leadership

development programs offered by the Greater Vidalia Chamber, Memorial Health Meadows Hospital and Peoples Bank will remain valuable resources for fostering mentorship, nurturing talent, and cultivating the next generation of promising leaders. The Southeastern Early College and Career Academy (SECCA) will continue to be an important resource.

Enhance Workforce Development through A Comprehensive Approach

The community will leverage the Greater Vidalia® Workforce Development Strategy 2021 to strengthen its workforce development pipeline through a multifaceted approach. The implementation of this strategy will involve a dynamic and collaborative effort encompassing various sectors, including housing development, educational systems, the business/industrial community, health and wellness, etc. By integrating these elements, the strategy aims to create a cohesive support system that not only enhances job readiness but also promotes overall community well-being. This comprehensive approach ensures that the workforce development efforts are aligned with the diverse needs of the community, fostering sustainable growth and resilience.



Greater Vidalia® Workforce Development Strategy 2021

Support/Enhance/Maintain Viability of Agriculture/Forestry Uses

Toombs County will leverage the BDO Zone 'AA' Rating for Woody Biomass to enhance opportunities within the county's forestry sector. The community will support efforts to continue to expand the reach and depth of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, create additional markets, explore alternative crops, and seek value-added businesses which keep such uses viable and profitable. The marketing and development of agri-tourism and nature-based tourism are other means. Support of existing forest industries and uses will be maintained. 26-acres of high-density olive trees have been planted. Legal hemp production may be another commodity to explore. The county and cities will collaborate on land use regulations for agricultural land protection as new developments occur.

Develop/Maintain Necessary Infrastructure

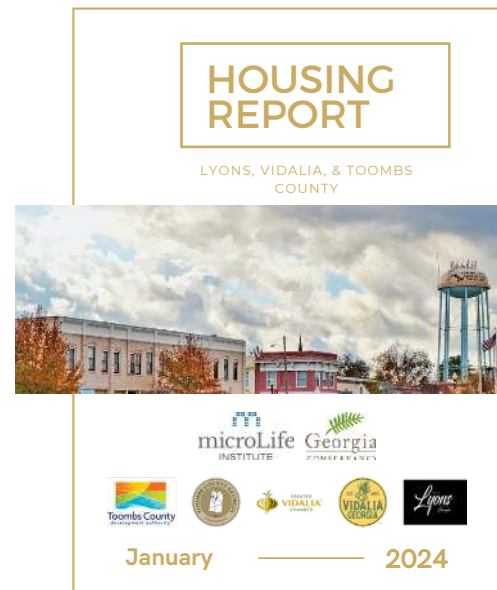
The Toombs County community will jointly work to solve any infrastructure deficiencies, including highway needs, drainage issues, and otherwise individually address water/sewer and other needs. Broadband telecommunications access has greatly improved across the county over the past five years. Altamaha EMC has already secured grants, and within the next three years, broadband service will be available countywide.

Nurture Existing Businesses/Entrepreneurs

The Toombs County community will work through its Development Authority, Greater Vidalia® Chamber of Commerce, Greater Vidalia® Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, local school systems, Southeastern Technical College, Southeastern Early College and Career Academy, and state agencies, to meet local industry and business needs and encourage expansions and new local business development. The community will collaborate to develop retail strategies that include Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), advancing product development, and exploring funding mechanisms.



L Local Businesses in Downtown Lyons **R** 2024 Housing Study Report



Attract New Businesses

The Toombs County community, through its Development Authority, Greater Vidalia® Chamber of Commerce, Greater Vidalia® Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, and intergovernmental cooperation, will seek compatible business and industrial development. The community will participate in state designation programs, and will work diligently to effect economic development through a multi-faceted approach. Downtown revitalization, tourism enhancement, expansion of industrial sites, and infrastructure improvements at the industrial sites and other areas, will all be emphasized. Support of the U.S. 1 Corporate Center (GRAD certified) and the U.S. 1 to 1-16 corridor will also be employed. Continuing local leadership development is key to all economic development strategies.

Promote/Enhance Tourism

Toombs County's Altamaha and Ochopee rivers and outdoor amenities; the Vidalia Onion Festival; Vidalia Forchfest; the Real Squeal BBQ and Music Festival; the "Tales from the Altamaha" folk play; the Ladson

Genealogical and Historical Library; the Altama Museum of Art and History; the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby in Lyons; Santa Claus' Christmas themes; Warmouth Sands Golf Course; other festivals, museums, and community facilities; many historic structures; its location near 1-16, and along U.S. 1, and U.S. 280; its farms and scenic countryside; its existing downtown revitalization; its culture/arts; Partin Park and other recreational facilities; bicycling events/routes/facilities; good quality hotels; excellent restaurants all offer much potential to increase visitors. The "Visit Vidalia" tourist information center serves as the gateway to exploring the rich cultural and natural attractions of the community.

Improve Transportation Access/Quality

The regional T-SPLOST has resulted in many needed local resurfacing and other road improvements projects which enhanced the community as a place to live and work. The bridge across the Altamaha River and the complementary U.S. 1 multi-laning west toward Vidalia opens up other opportunities for job creation. Improved U.S. 1 and U.S. 280 brings abundant usage and travelers to the county. Enhancement like this could support local travel and make business markets more accessible. It would also make it easier to live or retire in Toombs, but work or travel elsewhere. Continued promotion of trails and bicycling and other tourism will also help quality of life and economic development. The Vidalia Regional Airport and its continued improvement are also important, as are connecting bicycle facilities and trails.

Revitalize Downtowns

The historic fabric and available buildings in downtown Lyons and Vidalia allow for additional opportunity, even as much already is being realized. Their historic nature and participation in the Georgia Main Street Program allows for development incentives, preservation of unique character, and enhanced quality of life. The City of Vidalia's recent designation as a Rural Zone has infused new energy into its downtown revitalization efforts with more incentives provided for job creation, property renovation, and other investments. Building on this accomplishment, the City of Vidalia will aim to achieve Georgia Exceptional Main Street status. The City of Lyons will also pursue Rural Zone designation to further boost its ongoing downtown revitalization efforts. Community projects in historic structures create civic pride, community cooperation and further avenues for community use and celebration. They also can stimulate private investment. Further implementation of preserving and improving surrounding historic neighborhoods and connecting them to the downtowns, other commercial areas and other traffic destinations and landmarks will also help.

Support/Continue Development of Local Industrial Parks/Sites

The community has a number of available sites and buildings to market, and continues to have success with speculative building construction. The U.S. 1 Corporate Center and the Toombs County Corporate Center at the Vidalia Regional Airport are both GRAD certified industrial parks. The community recently acquired the 604.83-acre industrial site along U.S. Highway 1 which is the largest industrial site in the county. The community will continue to expand industrial properties, enhance their infrastructure and amenities. Services and marketing will stay ahead of opportunities, especially given recent local successes in industrial recruitment.

Enhance Intergovernmental Cooperation

Community efforts working together both within the county, and through neighbors, the region, and state agencies can only facilitate success and scope of effort. An active chamber of commerce, development

authority, and many civic groups can only make public/private partnerships easier to achieve and more successful. Active participation in regional economic, tourism, and natural resource partnerships, offer much potential and benefit.

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 overall has developed individual land use regulations to address specific issues and nuisances, but coordinated efforts and joint code enforcement are needed. The community can also utilize infrastructure location and civic organizations and programs to assist. There is already built in local support given the community's success in preserving the natural and built environment, and utilizing the culture, arts, and history of the community.

Retiree/Resident Attraction

Toombs County's location and high quality of life are already paying economic dividends. The community will increase and improve childcare facilities to better support families. These advantages can be attractive to retirees, families, and other residents as well, especially given the outstanding health care, recreational, and other facilities available locally.

Support Meadows Regional Medical Center/Southeastern Technical College

As noted earlier, the Memorial Health Meadows Hospital has been a very important continuing contributor to a growing local economic base. It is already one of the top ten Region employers. Educational facilities like Southeastern Technical College are also crucial to a diversified and stable economy, and educational levels/job skills improvement so critical to today's economy. The community needs to be vigilant to support and ensure these pillars and foundations for other growth remain strong and vibrant.

Utilize/Promote/Conserve Outdoor Amenities/Natural Resources

The fields, forests, and rich natural resources of Toombs County have always been important to community and economic development within the county, as is evidenced by the fame and success of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, and the growing promise of other vegetable production/processing and olive tree cultivation. Much of the community's high quality of life rests with the Altamaha and Ochopee rivers, fields, forests, and pastoral countryside; and local heritage preservation and celebration efforts. These amenities are treasured both for their contribution to quality of life and economic development.

Regional Hub Development

Vidalia and Toombs County and its other municipalities have become recognized leaders in retail, job creation, infrastructure/services, health care, attention to historic preservation, culture, patronage of the arts. It is a model for rural development across Georgia and beyond. Continued cultivation and support of this status is necessary and will continue to pay dividends in community and economic development. It is important to continue to cultivate/promote this status.

Vidalia Sweet Onion Protection/Promotion

The Vidalia Onion is now synonymous with community fame/association. Not only should this state vegetable production continue to be protected/expanded, it can also be the stimulus and door opening for broader community marketing.

Land Use



The landscape and the way land is used is often visible and tangible evidence of planning or the lack thereof. It reveals the pattern of growth and development, and how we relate to the natural environment. It often defines what we view as the character of our community, and is a major component in our determination of quality of life. As science evolves, we realize with greater certainty that the way our land is used and managed has definite implications for air and water quality, and the diversity and health of our ecosystems.

The awareness of the impacts and consequences of the way land is used illustrate the need for wise use of our finite supply of land, and the necessity of sound decisions in its development 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, is 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, and minimal impacts to environmentally or aesthetically important natural and cultural resources.

The lack of planning, on the other hand, can result in uncontrolled and unmanaged growth which can wreak havoc on community desires and plans, negatively impact 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 or lessening use of public infrastructure already paid for or invested in. Public desires or future plans or options can be precluded or prevented by such uncontrolled growth, while other ill-advised consequences or burdens upon the general public can result.



L New Industrial Site Facility **R** Farm, Toombs County

A community's 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.

Toombs County and its municipalities are united in their vision and desires for growth. Despite being a regional growth and economic center and a Census designated micropolitan statistical area, it remains a rural county with abundant natural and cultural resources, great natural beauty, fortuitous location, continuing success diversifying economically, excellent infrastructure, progressive local leadership, and many other assets for growth. It is home to the world famous Vidalia Sweet Onion, but also to so much more. The community's vision for its growth and development is one that protects and utilizes its natural and cultural resources and landscape to continue growth and development conducive to maintaining its regional leadership, and compatible with such natural beauty and important agricultural and forest

resources. Land uses would continue to look similar to those existing, and the rural character would be maintained. Infrastructure and amenities would be expanded and developed to support and attract both population and business growth, primarily in or adjacent to the existing municipalities, developed areas and along U.S. 1 to I-16. Agriculture and forestry use would be kept viable and remain the principal land use of the county, and diversification beyond the Vidalia Sweet Onion would continue. It would be an integral component of the economy of the county, and the preservation of rural character supportive of open space and natural resource protection. The natural beauty, landscape, and preserved historic landmarks would be utilized for tourism development and treasured for their quality of life contributions. Downtown revitalization and attention to developing cultural and arts programs and facilities would be integral components to the extraordinary high quality of life. Commercial and industrial growth would be compatible and supportive of continued agricultural/forestry/conservation uses, and would maintain the high quality of life and rural character while providing additional jobs and economic opportunity.



L Partin Park **R** Southeastern Early College and Career Academy

While technically only Lyons and Vidalia, because of their zoning ordinances, are technically required to have a Land Use element in its comprehensive plan under the DCA planning standards, all local governments in the county have chosen to participate and include the element in this joint comprehensive plan. Existing land use maps visually convey to all concerned the current landscape and correlation of extant 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 do provide 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 sector to utilize to plan, evaluate, shape, guide, and evaluate 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.

Residential. The predominant use of land within the residential category is for single-family and multi-family dwelling units.

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.

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.

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.

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. Roads are included in this land use category.

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.

Agriculture. This category is for land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or similar rural uses.

Forestry. This category is for land dedicated to commercial timber, pulpwood production, or other woodland use.

Existing Land Uses

Existing land use patterns for Toombs 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, Toombs County, 2024 (Acres)

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent of Total
Park/Recreation/Conservation	378	0.16
Public/Institutional	1,184	0.50
Commercial	1,833	0.78
Industrial	2,149	0.91
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	6,928	2.94
Residential	19,121	8.11
Agriculture	72,555	30.78
Forestry	131,596	55.82
Total	235,743	100.00%

Source: Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Geographic Information System, 2024.

Land Use Goals

Toombs County and its municipalities seek future growth and development respective of its rural character, scenic natural and cultural resources and agriculture/forestry use, and the existing quality of life. It desires growth patterns which maintain and keep viable existing agricultural and forestry use, which sustain its heritage, abundant natural and cultural resources, and which are otherwise compatible and complementary of existing uses and scale of development. The community has chosen the following land use goals to help bring about its desired future and delineated community vision.

Address Growth Management/Guide Compatible Development

A well planned community and one which appears neat, orderly, and attractive supports and encourages additional investment. The community, outside of Lyons and Vidalia, has developed only limited individual land use 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.

Improve Subdivision/Manufactured Housing/Land Use Regulation/Code Enforcement

As noted above, Toombs County has only narrow, specific land use regulations, road acceptance/subdivision ordinances, a manufactured home ordinance, and others to address specific issues or nuisances. Only Lyons and Vidalia have a zoning ordinance and building code enforcement. The County should continue to enforce current regulations and consider expansion as necessary to address issues of major public concern.

Maintain Open Spaces/Agricultural/Forestry Use/Rural Character/Quality of Life

Development of new markets, continuing support and expansion of the Vidalia Sweet Onion supporting creation of alternative crops and uses, ongoing celebration of the Vidalia Sweet Onion and local heritage, providing professional support, and attracting compatible agribusiness or other supportive economic development ventures all can help achieve this. The celebration of the community's heritage and resources in festivals provides outside exposure and recruitment of residents and businesses. The Sweet Onion Festival has national clout, and "Tales From the Altamaha" continues to garner increasing notoriety. Protection of the Altamaha and Ohoopsee rivers; continued downtown revitalization; and development and support of history, culture, and the arts; and the existing high quality of life will also help. Regulation should also be utilized.

Encourage/Protect Utilization/Access/Tourism for Natural/Cultural Resources

The Altamaha River, U.S. 1, the Sweet Onion Festival; Partin Park and "Tales From the Altamaha" all have much history for recreation, tourism, and motoring within the county. Santa Claus' recent development of Santa's Garden Park complete with a picturesque chapel, the ongoing downtown revitalization and enhancements, historic preservation efforts, attention to trail development, and Altamaha River access will also enhance both protection and utilization. Increased recreational and outdoor usage through continued park development, promotion, and growth of tourism of many kinds offers much unrealized potential to both enhanced economic utilization and conservation of the County's significant natural and cultural resources. Vidalia's historic districts and ongoing efforts in downtown revitalization in Lyons and Vidalia are already garnering increased attention. This can also attract more visitors, and more residents, and build a larger audience of citizen support for protection and enhancement of these resources. Improvement and promotion of U.S. 1 also hold promise. Continued improvement of Altamaha River access, bicycle venues, and local recreational facilities; museums; enhancement of events or festivals; and continued preservation of community landmarks and heritage will also reap benefits.

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. Both Lyons and Vidalia are already reaping benefit from both public and private investment in its historic, downtown structures. There are an abundance of available vacant commercial, industrial and residential structures within the community, as well as areas with readily available infrastructure. Available historic buildings countywide are avenues for preservation of character and heritage and opportunities for economic and community development utilizing existing served areas. Public preservation of landmarks and important structures and public investment downtown, as has already happened in all three municipalities, can further stimulate nearby private investment.

Improve Community Appearance/Aesthetics

Toombs County and its municipalities have much intrinsic natural and cultural beauty and Southern charm attractive to residential location and tourism. Landscaping/beautification efforts, general clean-up, and rehabilitation/upgrade of existing structures/areas will serve to accent and highlight this. Continuing gateway improvements, particularly along U.S. 1, U.S. 280, and Georgia 292, can enhance community image and attractiveness. Upgrade of the housing stock quality and resurfacing of local streets under T-SPLOST will also help.

Toombs County

Existing Land Use

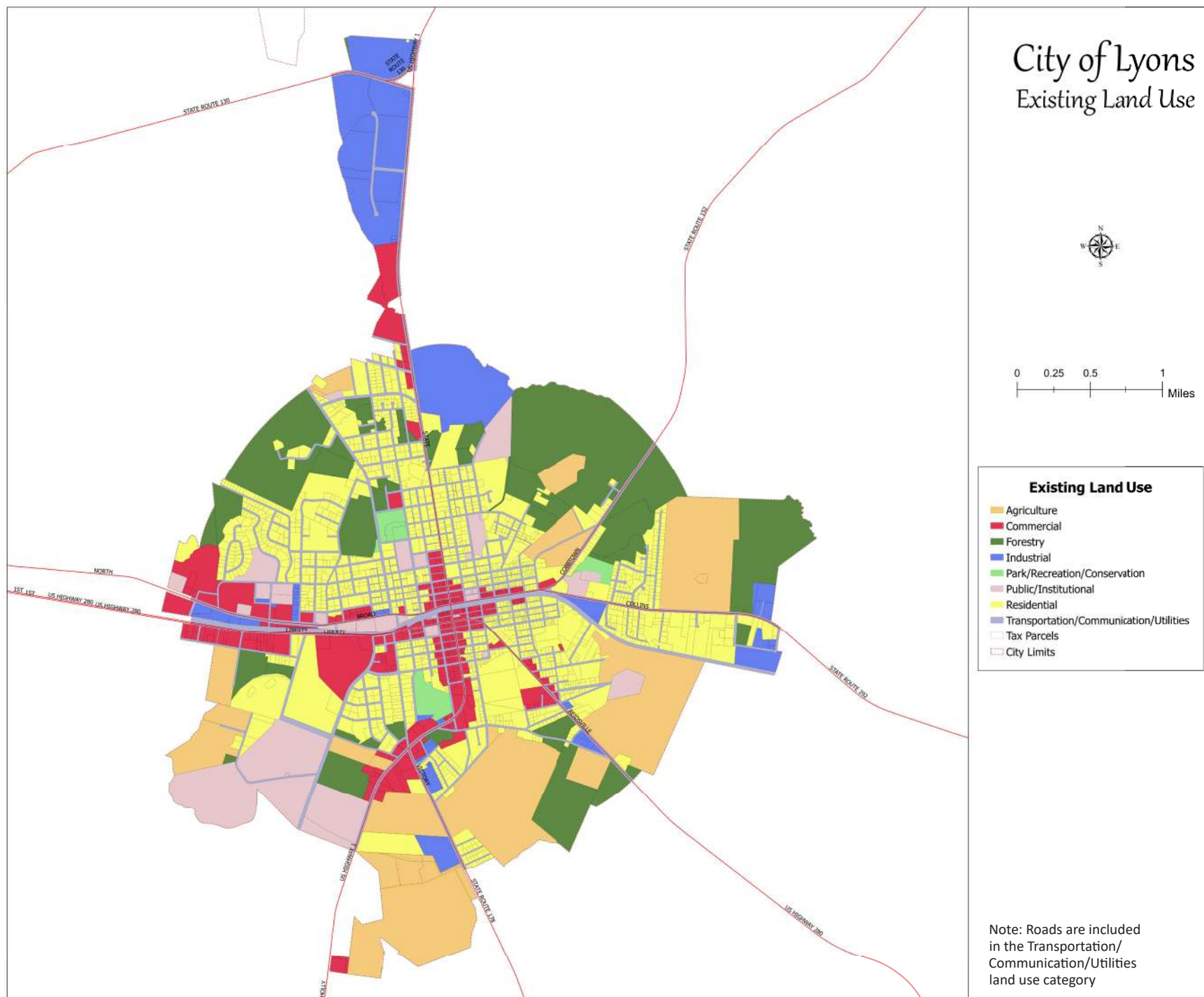


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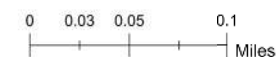
Existing Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Tax Parcels
- City Limits
- County Boundary

Note: Roads are included in the Transportation/Communication/Utilities land use category



City of Santa Claus Existing Land Use



Existing Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Tax Parcels
- Santa Claus City Limits

Note: Roads are included in the Transportation/Communication/Utilities land use category



City of Vidalia

Existing Land Use

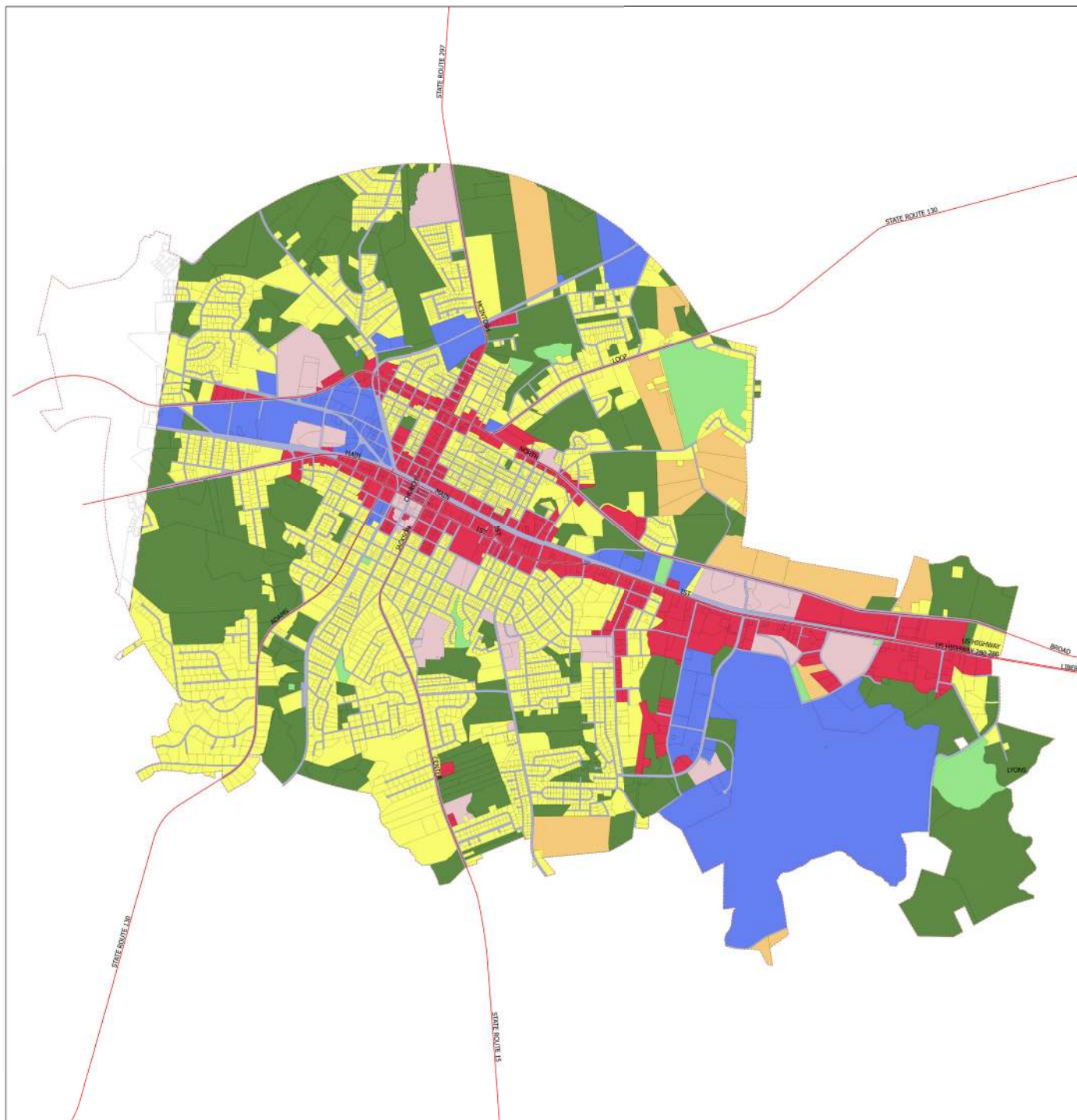


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Existing Land Use

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

Note: Roads are included in the Transportation/Communication/Utilities land use category



Future Land Uses

Toombs County is one of Georgia's newer counties (144th in creation), created in 1905 from Emanuel, Montgomery, and Tattnall counties. Initially settled because of the Altamaha River, its pine forests and fertile soils, the county was dominated by small farms and sparse population until the arrival of railroads in the 1880s. This attracted settlers from nearby counties and particularly, North Carolinians. Both Lyons and Vidalia originated as stops on the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery Railroad in the 1890s. The



L Lyons Barbeque & Music Festiva **R** Church in Lyons

growth fueled by railroad development led local leadership to create the county. Later growth can be traced to the opening of U.S. highways 1 and U.S. 280 through the county and the establishment of Toombs County as a regional trade center. The population of the county quickly grew from 11,206 in 1910 to 17,165 in 1930. The Great Depression, then World War II, and a general decline in agriculture took a toll on the county, and its population remained stagnant until the 1960s. In the 1960s, the emergence of the Vidalia Sweet Onion, followed by the location of the Plant Hatch Nuclear Plant just across the Altamaha River in neighboring Appling County, the development of I-16 just north of the county, and local success in economic diversification once again fueled slow, but steady population and economic growth since 1970. Toombs County's location, transportation access, local progressive leadership, and economic diversification continue to be key stimulators and facilitators of this growth. The growth of the Vidalia Sweet Onion marketing; the diversification of local agriculture into additional crops; the access provided by I-16, U.S. 1, U.S. 280 and local rail and airport facilities; the proximity to Georgia's ports and larger metro areas; and the overall quality of life because of the rural environment, extraordinary natural resources, and the community's preservation of, and attention to, local heritage and culture remain positive growth and development influences. The community leadership continues to progressively invest in its infrastructure, including not only water/sewer, but broadband, downtown revitalization, administrative modernization, and recreation, among others. The community continues its growth as a regional center in many areas. Memorial Health Meadows Hospital was opened in 2011 at a time when many rural hos-

pitals were struggling, and continues to expand coverage and services. The county is the Region's third largest county by population but Vidalia is the Region's second largest city, and the county is the second largest employment center. Most current growth is concentrated in the Greater Vidalia/Lyons Area in and mostly south and west of Vidalia, and between Vidalia and Lyons. There is some growth east and south of Lyons in rural Toombs County. Commercial growth is concentrated in Vidalia along U.S. 280 East, and between U.S. 280 and Georgia 292 between Vidalia and Lyons. Industrial growth is concentrated in/near Vidalia near the Airport, and north of Lyons in the U.S. 1 corridor north to I-16. Residential growth has been scattered across the county, but has been particularly concentrated south and west of Vidalia/Lyons between Center Road and Georgia 130. There has also been some growth north of Vidalia near the Vidalia Country Club and east to Lyons.



L The Brice House **R** Partin Park

Growth momentum in Toombs County can trace its life to its location along U.S. 280 and U.S. 1; its proximity to I-16; ongoing economic and job growth; the availability of services and infrastructure; its current position as a rural retail trade/service center; its existing population and size; quality of life; and ample land availability for all uses. These same factors will continue to spur future growth particularly because of I-16; the existing economic opportunities, services, and diversity; the availability of infrastructure; the Vidalia Regional Airport; Memorial Health Meadows Hospital and other quality medical services; Southeastern Technical College; the abundant natural resources and the Altamaha River; the community's vibrant downtowns and available cultural resources; and the overall excellent quality of life. Future growth will likely continue to concentrate in the Greater Vidalia/Lyons Area, and along the U.S. 1 North corridor, as it has recently. The county's future land uses will closely resemble existing land uses. Agricultural, forestry, and conservation use will continue to predominate the landscape, and maintain the existing rural character.

Future land use maps for Toombs County, Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia are included following this description.

Toombs County

Future Land Use



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Miles

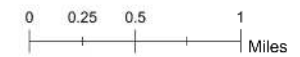
Future Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/
Communication/Utilities
- Tax Parcels
- City Limits
- County Boundary

Note: Roads are included
in the Transportation/
Communication/Utilities
land use category

City of Lyons

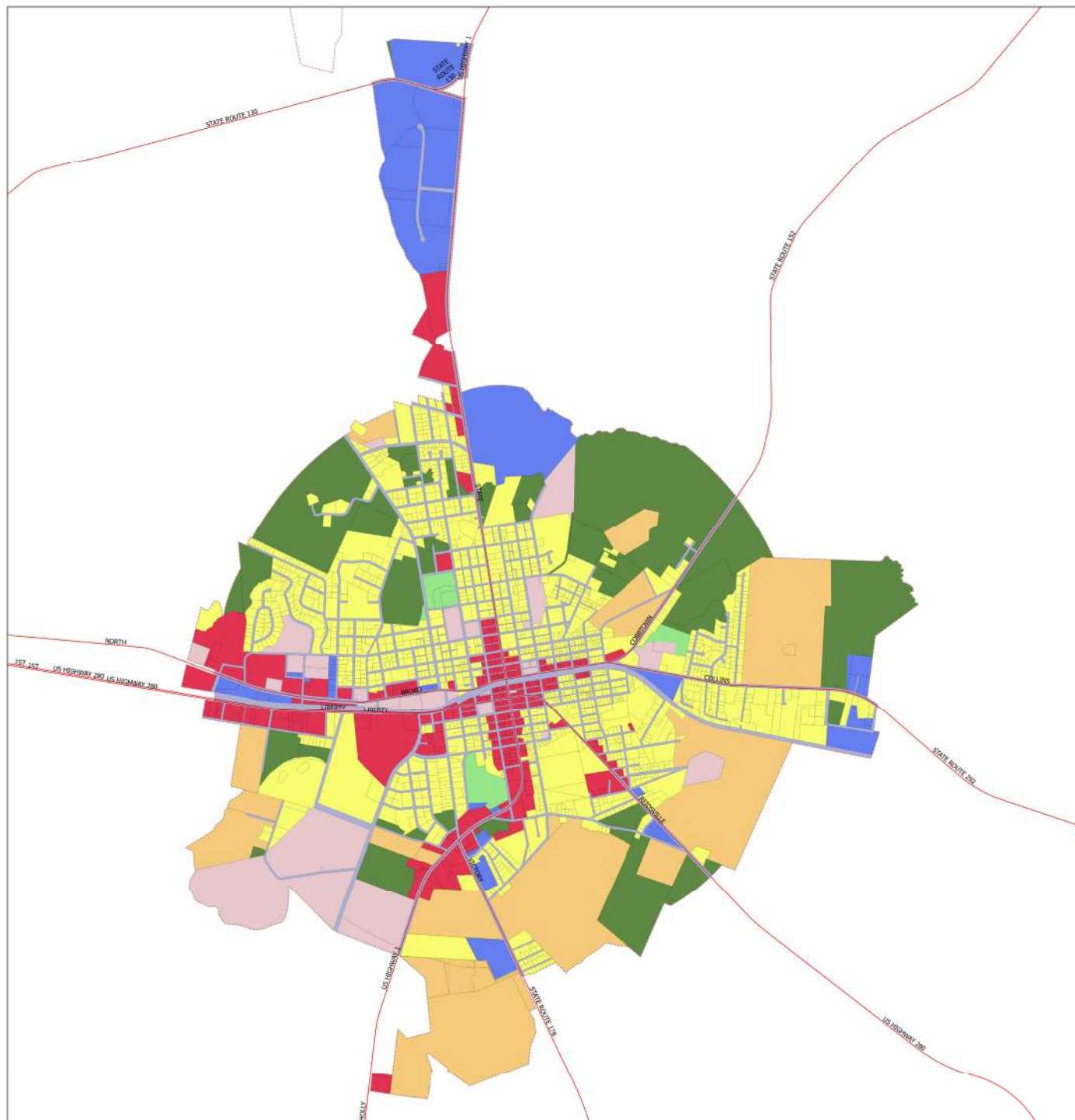
Future Land Use



Future Land Use

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

Note: Roads are included in the Transportation/Communication/Utilities land use category



City of Santa Claus Future Land Use

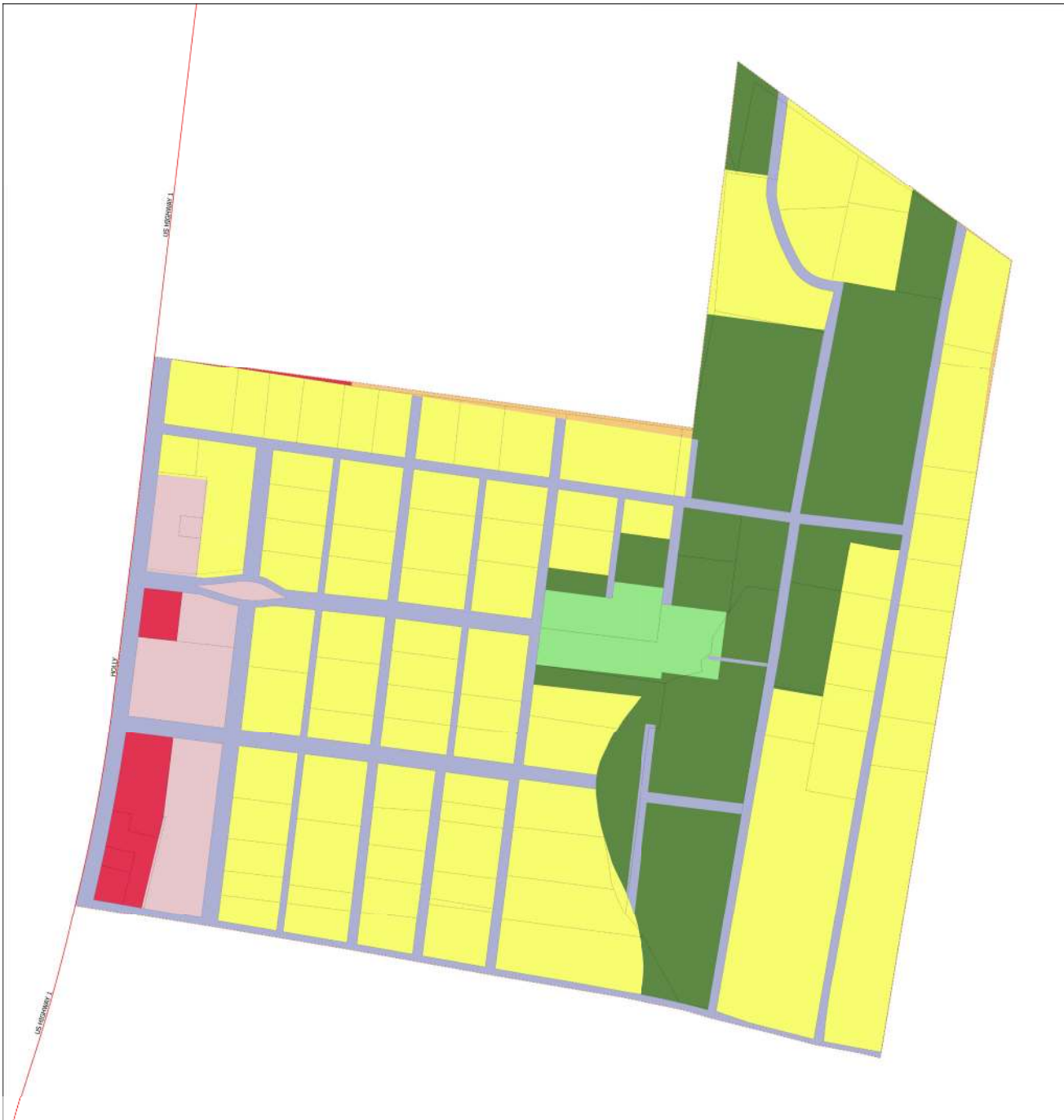


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Miles

Future Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Tax Parcels
- Santa Claus City Limits

Note: Roads are included
in the Transportation/
Communication/Utilities
land use category



City of Vidalia

Future Land Use



0 0.25 0.5 1
Miles

Future Land Use

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

Note: Roads are included
in the Transportation/
Communication/Utilities
land use category

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 Toombs 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.

TOOMBS COUNTY

Community Work Programs

Toombs 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2023	Complete the removal of all green boxes throughout the County	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023.
2023	Establish a new convenience center south of Vidalia	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023.
2022	Begin renovation of the existing courthouse or begin construction of a new courthouse	Y	2024						Action item was completed in 2024.
2023	Pursue the establishment of programs to remove dilapidated manufactured homes/housing units countywide			Y	2025				Action item is underway. The county is reviewing the legal framework for the programs.
2023	Adopt Georgia Uniform Building Codes and establish a permit system			Y	2025				Action item is underway, and will be completed in 2025. The county is investigating the permitting system.
2020	Adopt the DCA model ordinance for broadband deployment and permitting							Y	Action item was dropped. The county has decided this is no longer a priority. The county has secured funding to achieve full broadband coverage in 3 years.
2020	Seek Broadband Ready Community designation							Y	Action item was dropped. The county has decided this is no longer a priority.
2020	Construct a new EMS building	Y	2021						Action item was completed in 2021.

Toombs 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2020	Renovate the interior of the Human Resource Building	Y	2021						Action item was completed in 2021.
2023	Renovate and/or expand the County Jail	Y	2024						Action item was completed in 2024.
2021	Purchase maintenance equipment for the roads department			Y	2025				Action item is underway, and will be ongoing each year.
2020	Complete countywide GDOT transportation study	Y	2021						Action item was completed in 2021.
2024	Develop a bicycle trail/route designation along Cedar Crossing Vidalia Road from Vidalia to Grays Landing (Altamaha River)			Y	2026				Action item is underway, and will be completed in 2025. The county has completed a bicycle trail development for the Grays Landing area.
2020	Utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to pave Emanuel Circle, Victoria Circle, and Lake Drive	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023.
2020	Repair bridge aprons across the county			Y	2025				Action item is underway, and will be completed in 2025.
2021	Re-stripe approximately 115 miles of county maintained roads	Y	2022						Action item was completed in 2022.
2020	Complete TIA Band 3 Projects (Ezra Taylor Road, New Normantown Road)	Y	2022						Action item was completed in 2022.

Toombs County Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Pursue the establishment of programs to remove dilapidated manufactured homes/housing units countywide	X							X			\$50,000 (Annually)	X			
Adopt Georgia Uniform Building Codes and establish a permitting system	X							X			\$50,000	X			
Purchase maintenance equipment for the roads department						X	X	X			\$400,000	X			
Develop a bicycle trail/route designation along Cedar Crossing Vidalia Road from Vidalia to Grays Landing (Altamaha River)		X						X		GDOT, GDNR	\$500,000	X	X		
Repair bridge aprons across the county	X							X			\$100,000	X	X		
Second T-SPLOST TIA Band 1 (Old Normantown Rd., Cedar Crossing-Alston Road)	X							X		TIA (TSPLOST)	\$2.5 Million	X	X		
Pave Hammonds Chuch Road	X							X		SPLOST	\$1.75 Million	X	X		
Purchase four (4) fire trucks		X						X		SPLOST	\$450,000	X	X		
Establish two (2) fire stations		X						X		SPLOST	\$500,000	X	X		

CITY OF LYONS

Community Work Programs

City of Lyons 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	Initiation	Y/N	Status/Comments
2024	Renovate the Lyons Fire Department building					Y	2027		The action item has been postponed due to lack of funding.
2024	Construct a new soccer complex at Partin Park							Y	This action item was dropped. The new soccer complex has been relocated, and listed as a new action item in community work program.
2020	Renovate Hallmark Park	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023.
2020	Replace all lighting on the fields at Partin Park			Y	2029				Action item is in progress. Lighting on 2 fields has been replaced.
2020	Expand the capacity of the east and north sewer plants to accommodate downtown services and applicable areas of the City	Y	2022						Action item was completed in 2022.
2021	Connect the north and east wastewater treatment plants	Y	2022						Action item was completed in 2022.
2020	Complete projects listed on TIA Band 2 and Band 3 (West Oglethorpe Avenue; North Lanier Street; North Lexington Street, SR 292 & Oxley Dr.)	Y	2024						Action item was completed in 2024.
2020	Renovate the Lyons Railroad Depot			Y	2029				Action item is in progress. The city has replaced the deck.

City of Lyons 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	Initiation	Y/N	Status/Comments
2021	Develop a downtown passive park beside the Lyons fire station					Y	2029		The action item has been postponed due to lack of funding.
2022	Renovate the Lyons City Gym					Y	2029		The action item has been postponed due to lack of funding.
2020	Adopt the DCA model ordinance for broadband deployment and permitting			Y	2025				Action item is in progress. The city will adopt the model ordinance in 2025.
2020	Seek Broadband Ready Community Designation			Y	2027				Action item is in progress. The city will keep seeking for the designation.
2020	Complete countywide GDOT transportation study	Y	2021						Action item was completed in 2021.
2020	Conduct streets and drainage improvements in the Roosevelt Street target area			Y	2026				Action item is in progress. The city got funding for the project.
2024	Conduct streets and drainage improvements in the Pecan Place target area	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023.
2020	Conduct sanitary sewer improvements in the Roosevelt Street target area			Y	2026				Action item is in progress. The city got funding for the project.
2020	Extend water and sewer service to the Toombs Corporate Center Expansion			Y	2025				Action item is in progress. The city got funding for the project.

City of Lyons Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Expand and improve existing and future lift stations						X	X		X	ARPA/SRF	\$500,000	X	X	X	
Expand and improve existing Scada systems						X	X		X		\$350,000	X	X	X	
Expand and improve accessory processes at the north and east WWTP						X	X		X	Grant/USDA/GEFA/EPA/EPD	\$1,000,000	X	X	X	
Belview Drive Wading from Parker st to US #1 Bypass Ent.			X						X	LMIG	\$300,000	X	X	X	
Renovation of Railroad Depot and open space, including parking and passive park space	X	X	X					X	X	Grants/Arts Grant/Historic Preservation	\$500,000	X	X	X	X
Create a Downtown Passive Park on Broad Street to include an outdoor amphitheater, public restrooms, playground equipment, and a green space.	X	X	X					X	X	T MOBLE Grant/Arts Grant/Recreation Grants	\$1,000,000	X	X	X	X
Renovation of a city building at 160 SE Broad Street to lease for commercial use or business incubation.	X	X	X					X	X	Arts Grant/ Private Partner	750,000.00	X	X	X	X
Renovation of Lyons Gym located at 173 E Ogleshorpe	X	X	X					X	X	Lyons Development Authority	2,500,000	X	X	X	X
Renovation of the Lyons Welcome Center located at 124 NW Broad Street 2nd Story Renovation will be used to enhance arts and entertainment and business incubation in the County		X	X	X				X	X	Lyons Mainstreet/Welcome Center Revenues	\$1,700,000	X	X	X	X

City of Lyons Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Expand the Lyons Community Center (Calloway Center) at 268 Callaway to include expanded parking, stormwater, and interior and exterior renovations.		X	X	X					X	Recreation Grant	\$2,300,000	X	X	X	X
Construct a secondary concession area and public bathroom space at Partin Park adjacent to Field 4	X	X	X						X	Recreation Grant	\$150,000	X	X	X	X
Construct Public Bathroom space adjacent to soapbox derby ramp and playground Partin	X	X							X	Recreation Grant	\$150,000	X	X	X	
Construct return track and pit area for Soapbox derby adjacent to soap box derby track. along Miot Street at Partin			X	X					X	South East Georgia Soap Box Derby/Recreation Grant	\$750,000	X	X	X	X
Create and maintain a GIS System for Water, Sewer, Streets, and Street Sign inventory.						X	X		X		\$1,250,000	X	X	X	
Roosevelt water and sewer improvements ARPA	X	X	X							ARPA SRSF	\$750,000				
Expand and improve the Lyons Animal Control Facility.						X	X	X	X	Rachael Ray Foundation	\$250,000	X	X	X	X

City of Lyons Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Purchase Equipment to include but not limited to Track hoes, backhoes, street sweepers, and bulldozers, public works vehicles, street department vehicles, and and police patrol vehicles to improve efficiency and safety in all service departments.						X	X			SPLOST	\$750,000	X	X	X	
Improve safety at Partin Park by purchasing playground equipment and a camera system						X	X		X	Recreation Grant	\$300,000	X	X	X	X
Improve safety at Facion park by installing camera systems and purchasing playground equipment						X	X		X	NONIC REC Grants	\$300,000	X	X	X	X
Replace lighting on 2 fields at Partin Park.		X	X						X		\$1,000,000	X	X	X	
Renovate Facion Park to include four multi-use fields, a community center, public restrooms, parking and concession area,	X	X	X					X	X	NONIC/LWCF	\$3,000,000	X	X	X	X
Install field lighting at Facion Park.		X	X	X					X		\$1,700,000	X	X	X	
Work with a private partner to add workforce housing to areas in Lyons						X	X		X	Workforce Housing Grant/ Private Investor	\$3,000,000	X	X	X	X
Install Deep well and Elevated Tank North of Lyons	X	X	X							ARPA SRSF	\$2,000,000	X	X	X	

CITY OF SANTA CLAUS

Community Work Programs

City of Santa Claus 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	Initiation	Y/N	Status/Comments
2022	Establish an arts and crafts festival					Y	2027		Action item was postponed due to lack of funding.
2020	Create a new city website with an online store	Y	2021						Action item was completed in 2021.
2021	Install additional playground equipment			Y	2028				Action item is in progress. The city is replacing equipments.
2023	Resurface approximately one-half mile of City streets					Y	2027		Action item was postponed due to lack of funding.
2020	Purchase and replace seasonal decorations for the City			Y	2029				Action item is an ongoing project. The city is seeking funding to complete this action item each year.
2022	Reclaim/clean ditches along City rights-of-way	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023.
2023	Construct a birthday/party house							Y	Action item was dropped. The city decided this is no longer a priority.
2023	Improve the water system infrastructure to include fire hydrants					Y	2027		Action item was postponed due to lack of funding.
2020	Adopt the DCA model ordinance for broadband deployment and permitting							Y	Action item was dropped. The city decided this is no longer a priority.
2020	Seek Broadband Ready Community Designation							Y	Action item was dropped. The city decided this is no longer a priority.
2020	Complete countywide GDOT transportation study	Y	2024						Action item was completed in 2024.

City of Santa Claus Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Establish an arts and crafts festival			X	X					X		\$3,000	X			
Install additional playground equipment			X	X					X		\$30,000	X	X		
Resurface approximately one-half mile of city streets			X						X	GDOT	\$50,000	X	X		
Purchase and replace seasonal decorations for the City						X			X		\$15,000	X			
Improve the water system infrastructure to include fire hydrants			X	X					X	CDBG, GEFA	\$400,000	X	X	X	

CITY OF VIDALIA

Community Work Programs

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2023	Complete remodeling of City Hall			Y	2027				The action is underway. City Hall was relocated to the Municipal Annex; however, the old City Hall will be renovated to accommodate the Vidalia Onion Museum and Downtown Vidalia Association.
2023	Complete installation of new tennis courts and soccer fields at the Vidalia Regional Sports Complex (Ezra Taylor Road)			Y	2026				The action is underway. Funding has now been secured through a grant from DCA. Construction is to begin in the latter part of 2024 and be completed by the end of 2025.
2023	Replace entrance signs							Y	City chose to forgo pursuit of this effort due to changing priorities.
2022	Develop and implement ordinance protecting water quality consistent with watershed assessment in Vidalia			Y	2025				City is currently in the process of a complete re-codification of its ordinances and has contracted with Municode to complete this process.
2024	Purchase (3) 2 Door Top Mount Rescue Pumper Fire Trucks			Y	2029				Equipment replacement is an ongoing project.
2024	Construct a Training Burn Center, Search, and Rescue Building					Y	2025		City chose to postpone due to budgetary and changing priorities.
2020	Replace 12 MSA SCBA (Air Packs)			Y	2029				Equipment replacement is an ongoing project.
2020	Replace 27 Veridian PPE Gear (Bunker Gear)			Y	2029				Equipment replacement is an ongoing project.
2023	Construct a new fire station with Training Room					Y	2027		City chose to postpone due to budgetary and changing priorities.
2020	Purchase administrative and patrol vehicles			Y	2029				Purchase of administrative vehicles has been dropped; however, purchase/replacement of patrol vehicles is ongoing each year as needed.

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2024	Construct a new Public Works Facility					Y	2029		City chose to postpone due to budgetary and changing priorities. This project is beyond the 2025-2029 CWP.
2020	Purchase public works equipment and vehicles including a vac truck, limb truck, portable jetter, backhoe, work trucks, etc.			Y	2029				Vehicle and equipment replacement is an ongoing project. Replacements are made as needed each year.
2020	Upgrade lift stations (pump replacement) throughout the city			Y	2025				Funding has been secured to upgrade Lift Stations 2,6, and 26. This is an ongoing project, and will be pursued each year.
2023	Upgrade the effluent sand filters and clarifiers at the Swift Creek WWTP			Y	2027				Project is in design stage / ongoing; financial and budgetary details are being considered for the project.
2024	Purchase an automatic screening system and septic waste dumpingstation at the LAS WWTP			Y	2027				Project is in design stage / ongoing; financial and budgetary details are being considered for the project.
2023	Replace lift station to include a new wet well and pump capacity increase (Barksdale Drive and Pleasure Court)			Y	2027				Project is in design stage / ongoing; financial and budgetary details are being considered for the project.
2022	Purchase a portable generators			Y	2026				Funding secured July 2024 through FEMA Hazardous Mitigation Program for generator purchase(s).
2023	Upgrade water withdrawal depths(pump lowering) at all four wells			Y	2027				Project is in design stage / ongoing; financial and budgetary details are being considered for the project.

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2022	Purchase new water meters and system	Y	2024						GEFA funds secured and all water meters have been replaced with exception of approximately 100 meters throughout the City of Vidalia. This project will be completed end of 2024.
2020	Conduct sidewalk maintenance for broken/unsafe segments			Y	2029				This item remains in the Community Work Program as an ongoing project.
2024	Install new water and sewer lines along GA Highway 130 for residential and commercial growth			Y	2027				This item remains in the Community Work Program; verbiage and cost was modified from CWP to reflect the water and sewerline needs for GA Highway 130 only.
2021	Paint murals throughout downtown representing locally recognized points of importance	Y	2024						Two murals were completed in downtown Vidalia in 2023 and 2024.
2024	Purchase and install rooftop lights around businesses downtown					Y	2026		City chose to postpone due to budgetary and changing priorities. This project is beyond the 2025-2029 CWP.
2024	Purchase and install edison lights in downtown alleys and in the Meadows Street Park area			Y	2028				This item remains in the Community Work Program; verbiage and cost was modified from 2020-2024 CWP to reflect lights along Church St, Meadows St., and Jackson St. only. Meadows St Park has been removed.
2023	Purchase an outdoor sound system for downtown			Y	2027				Project is in design stage / ongoing; financial and budgetary details are being considered for the project.

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2022	Purchase Pedestrian wayfinding signage for historic district			Y	2027				Project is in design stage / ongoing; financial and budgetary details are being considered for the project.
2020	Purchase seasonal decorations for downtown			Y	2029				This effort is considered ongoing and will be pursued each year.
2024	Install new fencing, bleachers, dugouts, lighting, and back stops for the baseball fields at the Ed Smith Complex					Y	2025		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding.
2023	Develop acquired property adjacent from Ed Smith Complex to include the construction of a sheltered batting cage, the construction of administrative offices for the recreation department, and a new parking area.					Y	2027		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding.
2022	Expand maintenance building at the EdSmith Complex					Y	2027		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding.
2020	Upgrade neighborhood parks (5 total) throughout the city with playground equipment, basketball court and other active recreation amenities			Y	2029				The action item is underway. The city has completed 2 parks, and is in process of working on other 3 parks.
2021	Construct (4) new soccer fields at theVidalia Regional Sports Complex (Ezra Taylor Road)			Y	2025				The action item is underway. The city has completed the design process and received funding.

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2024	Expand the Aquatics Facility to include slides and concession stands					Y	2028		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding
2023	Construct (2) new football fields at the Vidalia Regional Sports Complex			Y	2025				The action item is underway. The city has completed the design process and received funding.
2022	Implement a new City-wide branding	Y	2022						Branding project was completed in 2022
2023	Create new exhibits in the Vidalia Onion Museum							Y	The Vidalia Onion Museum will be relocating to the old City Hall location following renovation of this building.
2023	Expand the Vidalia Onion Museum			Y	2027				The Vidalia Onion Museum will be relocating to the old City Hall location following renovation of this building. It is currently in the design phase in conjunction with SCAD.
2022	Install new exterior doors at the Pal Theatre	Y	2023						Action item was completed in 2023
2023	Install structural beams for rigging and lighting in the Pal					Y	2026		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding
2023	Install way-finding signage throughout the city on arterial routes							Y	no longer a priority for the city anymore
2022	Purchase ice machine for the catering kitchen at the Pal	Y	2022						Action item was completed in 2022
2023	Install rigging, permanent lighting, and pigtailed at the Stage at City Park					Y	2027		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2023	Purchase property for the development of a new industrial park with gas, water, sewer, and internet							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2020	Adopt the DCA model ordinance for broadband deployment and permitting							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2020	Seek Broadband Ready Community Designation							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2024	Purchase vehicles for Code Enforcement and Administration							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2023	Hire a maintenance person for all city departments							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2024	Establish Enterprise Zones and TADS							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2022	Rehab and expand the terminal apron pavement	Y	2024						The action item was completed in 2024
2022	Construct a new hangar					Y	2027		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding
2021	Construct a non-motorized trail to planned bicycle trail/route in Toombs County			Y	2028				The action item is underway. Part of the trail as been constructed at Grays Landing.
2023	Improve drainage to include concrete ditching (West Jenkins Street to Peacock Street) (Ward Street to McIntosh Street)					Y	2028		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2023	Replace cast iron/PVC/transited waterand PVC/concrete/ terracotta sewer pipes (MLK, Jr. Ave. to Grand Street/Grand Street from NE Main Street to MLK Jr. Ave./ Epstein from NE Main Street to Fifth Avenue)					Y	2028		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding
2023	Replace cast iron/PVC/transited waterand PVC/concrete/ terracotta sewer pipes (Church Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./ Jackson Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./ Durden Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./ Mosley Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./Smith Street from E. First Street to Fifth Street)					Y	2028		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding
2020	Expand free public wi-fi in various locations throughout the city							Y	The action item was dropped. The city decided it was no longer a priority.
2020	Pursue the removal of dilapidated manufactured homes/ housing units countywide			Y	2029				The action item is ongoing. The city has removed 30 dilapidated houses in 2024. The action item will be ongoing each year, and beyond 2029.
2023	Complete projects listed on TIA Band 3 (Pete Phillips Rd., Brinson Rd., Lowery Place, Curry St., Truman St., Rudell Rd., Semco Rd., Railroad crossings Upgrades)			Y	2029				The action item is underway. The roads have been determined, and in design process, in preparation for bids.
2023	Purchase seasonal decorations for Hwy. 292 from Vidalia High School to Semco Drive					Y	2028		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding

City of Vidalia 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	Initiation Year	Y/N	Status/Comments
2022	Add decorative lighting from Highway 280 at Durden and Jackson down 3rd or 4th street; from Jackson and 280 down to 3rd or 4th street; from Church & 280 to 3rd or 4th, etc.					Y	2028		The action item has been postponed. The city is seeking for funding
2024	Extend sidewalks along Highway 297 to J. R. Trippe from intersection of Highway 292 & McIntosh St.; Aimwell from Rhodus to Hall Way; Adams from 9th Street to Bob Sharpe.					Y	2028		The city is working to secure funding through local/state opportunities
2024	Improve street surface and drainage in the 4th Avenue, Poe Street and Dickerson Drive					Y	2028		Item remains on the Community Work Program while funding sources are researched and considered. To be coordinated with City Engineer.
2023	Purchase a new microfilm machine for use in the library							Y	Action item was dropped. The city decided this is no longer a priority.
2023	Purchase a digital converter for document digitization by the library							Y	Action item was dropped. The city decided this is no longer a priority.
2022	Rehab airport runway					Y	2028		Item remains on the Community Work Program while funding sources are researched and considered. To be coordinated with Airport Engineer.
2023	Remove solids at LAS WWTP			Y	2025				Action item is underway. Project will be completed in 2025
2020	TAP project connecting East 5th Street, East 3rd Street, and others to Sally D. Meadows Elementary School			Y	2029				Project is ongoing with GDOT
2023	TIA projects – pending band assignment and vote			Y	2029				Project is ongoing with GDOT

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Complete remodeling of City Hall	X	X	X						X	SPLOST	\$600,000	X			X
Complete installation of new tennis courts and soccer fields at the Vidalia Regional Sports Complex (Ezra Taylor Road)	X	X							X	LWCF (DNR)	\$2.7 Million	X	X		
Develop and implement ordinance protecting water quality consistent with watershed assessment in Vidalia	X								X		\$2,000	X			
Purchase (3) 2 Door Top Mount Rescue Pumper Fire Trucks						X			X	SPLOST AFG	\$1,100,000	X	X	X	
Construct a Training Burn Center, Search, and Rescue Building		X	X						X	SPLOST	\$75,000	X	X		
Replace 5 MSA SCBA (Air Packs)						X			X	SPLOST	\$9,000 (Annually)	X			
Replace 20 Veridian PPE Gear (Bunker Gear)						X			X	SPLOST	\$12,000 (Annually)	X			
Construct a new fire station with training room			X	X					X	SPLOST	\$400,000	X			
Purchase patrol vehicles						X			X	SPLOST	\$80,000 (Annually)	X			
Construct a new Public Works Facility							X		X		\$2.5 Million	X			X
Purchase public works equipment and vehicles including a vac truck, limb truck, portable jetter, backhoe, work trucks, etc.						X			X	GEMA, FEMA	\$3.2 Million	X	X	X	

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Upgrade lift stations (pump replacement) throughout the city						X			X	SPLOST, GEFA	\$50,000 (Annually)	X	X		
Upgrade the effluent sand filters and clarifiers at the Swift Creek WWTP	X	X							X	USDA, GEFA	\$3.25 Million	X	X	X	
Purchase an automatic screening system and septic waste dumping station at the LAS WWTP		X	X						X	USDA, GEFA	\$250,000	X	X	X	
Replace lift station to include a new wet well and pump capacity increase (Barksdale Drive and Pleasure Court)		X	X						X	USDA, GEFA	\$650,000	X	X	X	
Purchase a portable generators	X	X							X	FEMA, GEMA	\$250,000	X	X	X	
Upgrade water withdrawal depths (pump lowering) at all four wells		X	X						X		\$65,000	X			
Conduct sidewalk maintenance for broken/unsafe segments						X			X	GDOT, LMIG	\$150,000 (Annually)	X	X	X	
Install new water and sewer lines along GA Highway 130 for residential and commercial growth	X	X	X						X	GEFA, ARPA, DCA, CDBG, SPLOST	\$10 Million	X	X	X	
Purchase and install rooftop lights around businesses downtown		X	X						X		\$85,000	X			X
Purchase and install edison lights in downtown alleys along Church St., Jackson St., Meadows St., and Meadows Park area				X					X		\$10,000	X			
Purchase an outdoor sound system for downtown			X						X		\$50,000	X			
Purchase pedestrian wayfinding signage for historic district			X						X		\$40,000	X			X

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Purchase seasonal decorations for downtown						X			X		\$20,000 (Annually)	X			
Install new fencing, bleachers, dugouts, lighting, and back stops for the baseball fields at the Ed Smith Complex	X	X							X	LWCF (DNR)	\$1 Million	X	X		
Develop acquired property adjacent from Ed Smith Complex to include the construction of a sheltered batting cage, the construction of administrative offices for the recreation department, and a new parking area.			X						X	SPLOST	\$200,000	X			
Expand maintenance building at the EdSmith Complex			X	X					X		\$40,000	X			
Upgrade neighborhood parks (5 total) throughout the city with playground equipment, basketball court and other active recreation amenities			X	X	X				X	Land and water conservation fund	\$250,000	X	X	X	
Construct (4) new soccer fields at the Vidalia Regional Sports Complex (Ezra Taylor Road)	X								X		\$500,000	X	X	X	
Expand the Aquatics Facility to include slides and concession stands				X	X				X		\$400,000	X			
Construct (2) new football fields at the Vidalia Regional Sports Complex	X								X		\$250,000	X			
Expand the Vidalia Onion Museum		X	X						X		\$100,000	X	X		X
Install structural beams for rigging and lighting in the Pal		X							X		\$250,000	X	X		X
Install rigging, permanent lighting, and pigtails at the Stage at City Park			X	X					X		\$200,000	X			
Construct a new hangar			X						X		\$1,000,000	X	X	X	
Construct a non-motorized trail to planned bicycle trail/route in Toombs County			X	X					X		\$250,000	X	X	X	

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Improve drainage to include concrete ditching (West Jenkins Street to Peacock Street) (Ward Street to McIntosh Street)				X	X				X		\$3,500,000	X	X	X	
Replace cast iron/PVC/transited waterand PVC/concrete/terracotta sewer pipes (MLK, Jr. Ave. to Grand Street/Grand Street from NE Main Street to MLK Jr. Ave./ Epstein from NE Main Street to Fifth Avenue)				X	X				X	GEFA, ARPA, CDBG	\$3,500,000	X	X	X	
Replace cast iron/PVC/transited waterand PVC/concrete/terracotta sewer pipes (Church Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./ Jackson Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./ Durden Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./ Mosley Street from E. First Street to Pinecrest Dr./Smith Street from E. First Street to Fifth Street)				X	X				X	GEFA, ARPA, CDBG	\$5,000,000	X	X	X	
Pursue the removal of dilapidated manufactured homes/housing units countywide						X			X		\$50,000 (Annually)	X			
Complete projects listed on TIA Band 3 (Pete Phillips Rd., Brinson Rd., Lowery Place, Curry St., Truman St., Rudell Rd., Semco Rd., Railroad crossings upgrades)						X			X		\$1,003,366	X	X	X	
Purchase seasonal decorations for Hwy. 292 from Vidalia High School to Semco Drive				X					X		\$30,000	X			
Add decorative lighting from Highway 280 at Durden and Jackson down 3rd or 4th street; from Jackson and 280 down to 3rd or 4th street; from Church & 280 to 3rd or 4th, etc.				X					X		\$1,000,000	X	X	X	
Extend sidewalks along Highway 297 to J. R. Trippe from intersection of Highway 292 & McIntosh St.; Aimwell from Rhodus to Hall Way;Adams from 9th Street to Bob Sharpe.				X					X	GDOT	\$2,000,000	X	X		

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Improve street surface and drainage in the 4th Avenue, Poe Street and Dickerson Drive				X					X	CDBG	\$750,000	X	X	X	
Rehab airport runway				X					X		\$2,000,000	X	X	X	
Remove solids at the LAS WWTP	X								X	GEFA	\$750,000	X	X	X	
TAP project connecting East 5th Street, East 3rd Street, and others to Sally D. Meadows Elementary School						X			X	GDOT	\$3,000,000	X	X	X	
TIA projects – pending band assignment and vote						X			X	GDOT TIA	\$27,000,000	X	X	X	
Upgrade/replace current downtown landscaping	X								X		\$100,000	X	X		
Purchase/install planters along downtown sidewalks. Assess and update downtown tree canopy		X							X		\$10,000	X			
Create greenspace/parking deck near RAD/Entrepreneurial Center	X								X		\$5 million	X	X		
Paint murals throughout downtown representing locally recognized points of importance						X			X		\$40,000	X			X
Pave the entrance to Vidalia Animal Control		X							X		\$40,000	X			
CAP Projects (Liftstation 2,6, & 26)	X								X	GEFA	\$1,910,000	X	X		
Generator(s) for wells/liftstations	X								X	FEMA, HMPG	\$810,000	X	X	X	
Sidewalk replacement program						X			X	LMIG, SPLOST, CDBG	\$5,000 (Annually)	X	X		
Water/sewer lines replacement program						X			X	GEFA, SPLOST, CDBG	\$1,000,000 (Annually)	X	X		
Hwy 292 expansion utility upgrades	X	X								GDOT, GEFA	\$14 million	X	X		
Road maintenance						X			X	GDOT, LMIG	\$240,000 (Annually)	X	X		

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Drain and rehab 7th St. pond				X					X	FEMA, CDBG	\$1,000,000	X	X	X	
McSwain St Dam Road							X		X		\$10,000	X			X
TIA Band 3 projects				X					X	TIA	\$1,000,000	X	X		
Hwy 280 to Hannah Circle drainage basin					X				X	FEMA, CDGB	\$2,000,000	X	X	X	
Morris St to 4th Ave drainage basin				X					X	FEMA, CDGB	\$250,000	X	X	X	
Extend sidewalks to include school routes on Hwy 297 and Hwy 292 (1.25 miles)							X		X	GDOT	\$200,000	X	X		
Replant zone 7 at the LAS WWTP	X								X		\$225,000	X			
Converting tennis courts to pickleball courts	X								X		\$12,000 per court	X			
Construct new basketball gym					X				X	GMA	\$4,000,000	X			X
Renovate Rev H W Miller Park		X							X	LWCF, CDBG	\$28,000	X	X		
Renovate Gaynelle Davis Park			X						X	LWCF, CDBG	\$28,000	X	X		
Dixon building renovations				X					X	SPLOST	\$50,000	X			
Install lighting at Vidalia Aquatics Facility		X							X	SPLOST	\$5,000	X			
Construct sheltered area at Vidalia Aquatics Facility		X							X	SPLOST	\$5,000	X			
Purchase replacement deck furniture for Vidalia Aquatics Facility	X								X	SPLOST	\$2,000	X			
Install lighting at Ed Smith Recreational Complex walking trail	X								X	LWCF (DNR)	\$40,000	X	X		
Install lighting at Ed Smith Recreational Complex parking lot		X							X	LWCF (DNR)	\$40,000	X	X		
Replace/upgrade 2 vehicles at recreation department	X								X	SPLOST	\$70,000	X			

City of Vidalia Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program
Community Work Program 2025 - 2029

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Each Year	Beyond 2029	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Replace/install new scoreboards on each field		X							X	SPLOST	\$50,000	X			
Replace airfield lighting (runway, PAPI, REIL, MALSR)		X							X		\$986,000	X	X		
Install AWOS			X						X		\$162,341	X	X		
Construct 6 unit T-hangar building	X								X		\$1.7 million	X	X		
Rehabilitate 14/32				X					X		\$1,935,131	X	X		
Construct 120/100 corporate hangar	X								X		\$2.8 million	X	X		
Replace fuel farm			X						X		\$750,000	X	X		
Expand terminal apron					X				X		\$2 million	X	X		
Construct Fire/ARFF station					X				X		\$4 million	X	X		
Replace 1 fire truck E-one 2-door rescue pumper	X								X	SPLOST	\$522,000	X			
Replace patrol vehicles						X			X	SPLOST	\$80,000 (Annually)	X			
Purchase rubberized material to install in the shooting range lanes	X								X		\$5,000	X			
Purchase/replace portable radios, X26P taser, cameras for CID						X			X	SPLOST	\$18,000 (Annually)	X			
Radar units for patrol vehicles						X			X	SPLOST	\$19,000 (Annually)	X			
Replace/upgrade light poles in the historic downtown area		X	X							SPLOST	\$20,000	X			
Replace site furnishings (benches, planters) in the history downtown area		X	X							SPLOST	\$30,000	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
Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan
“One Toombs: A Legacy of Leadership”

Want an improved place to live, work, recreate, and do business in Toombs County?

The local governments of Toombs County and the cities of Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia are in the initial stages of a process to develop a new joint comprehensive plan in accordance with state law.

The joint comprehensive plan is a guide to making Toombs County and its municipalities improved places to live, work, recreate, and do business for all concerned. It 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 meets state requirements, but also truly expresses 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 Toombs County and the cities of Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia better places to live and work.

PUBLIC HEARING DATE AND TIME:

Tuesday, February 13, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

LOCATION OF PUBLIC HEARING:

**Partin Park/Lyons Recreation Department, Durden Cabin,
168 Miot St, Lyons, 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 the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 912-367-3648 or aweaver@hogarc.org. All persons with a disability or otherwise needing assistance should contact the Toombs County Commissioner’s Office, 100 Courthouse Sq, Ste 21, Lyons, GA 30436, or call 912-526-8575.

You May Also Take the Online Survey to Share Your Input: <https://bit.ly/3u59wde>

All comments submitted through the online survey will be anonymous, confidential, and will factor into the shaping of priorities.





HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION

331 West Parker Street, Baxley, Georgia 31513
Phone: (912) 367-3648
Fax: (912) 367-3640

5405 Oak Street, Eastman, Georgia 31023
Phone: (478) 374-4771
Fax: (478) 374-0703

NEWS RELEASE

PUBLIC INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN DROP-IN SESSION ON TOOMBS COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DATE: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 5:00 – 6:00 PM

LOCATION: The Dahlia Event Center, 200 SW Main St., Vidalia, GA

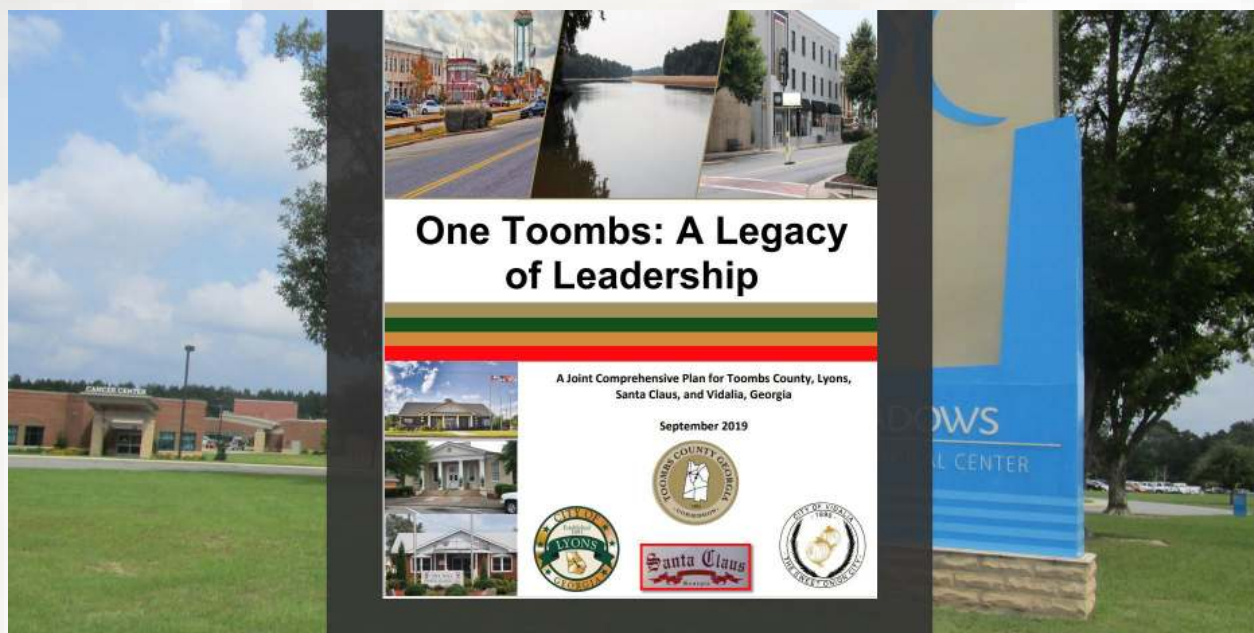
Are you concerned about the future of Toombs County, Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia? Do you have thoughtful ideas on what needs to be done to make the community a better place? What do you consider to be pressing needs and issues in the community?

The local governments of Toombs County, the Toombs County Board of Commissioners, and the municipalities of Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia, are in the process of updating their comprehensive plan required by state law. The current joint comprehensive plan dates from 2019 and is the principal guide to the long-term growth and development of Toombs 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 Dahlia Event Center, 200 SW Main St., in the City of Vidalia from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26, 2024. 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 about community. Do your part in making Toombs County an even better place to live, work, and play.





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.

To encourage local governments' engagement in comprehensive planning, Georgia incentivizes it by allowing cities and counties with DCA-approved comprehensive plans access to a special package of financial resources to aid in implementing their plans. This includes Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), water and sewer loans from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), economic development funding from the OneGeorgia Authority, and a variety of other programs from DCA and partner agencies (a detailed list is available in the "Fact



TOOMBS COUNTY 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TIMETABLE

Date/Time	Subject	Location
Wednesday, 06/24/24, 10:00AM	Kick-Off Meeting Introduction and Overview/Vision Statement	Yulee Municipal Annex, 301 E. First St. Yulee, GA
Thursday, 07/04/24, 7:00PM	1 st Steering Committee Meeting: Overview 2024 Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives/ Draft Land Policy Review	Yulee Municipal Annex, 301 E. First St. Yulee, GA
Thursday, 07/25/24, 7:00PM	2 nd Steering Committee Meeting: Review Goals, Policies, Economic Development	Yulee Municipal Annex, 301 E. First St. Yulee, GA
Monday, 08/26/24, 7:00PM	3 rd Steering Committee Meeting: Review Goals, Policies, Economic Development	Yulee Municipal Annex, 301 E. First St. Yulee, GA
Monday, 09/02/24, 7:00PM	4 th Steering Committee Meeting: Review Goals, Policies, Economic Development	Yulee Municipal Annex, 301 E. First St. Yulee, GA
2024	Community Work Response Update (with individual feedback)	It and presentation will be conducted by meeting
April-May	Drafting Plan	2024
2025	Final Comprehensive Plan	Yulee Municipal Annex, 301 E. First St. Yulee, GA
2025	Final Public Hearing	2025

[Download the Toombs County Comprehensive Plan Kick-Off Meeting here!](#)

[Download the Toombs County 2nd Steering Meeting here](#)

[Download the Toombs County 3rd Steering Meeting here](#)

[Download the Toombs County 4th Steering Meeting here](#)



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?



Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan

Welcome to the Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan Survey!

Toombs County and its municipalities are seeking your input on how we can build a better future for our community. Your feedback will be used to shape this plan. All comments will be anonymous.

Please share this survey and website with others to help us create a plan that truly represents our community's goals. To learn more and see the input we have gathered so far, visit: <https://bit.ly/47FEmqH> Thank you for your participation!!!

1. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Toombs County?

2. If you live in or moved to Toombs County from somewhere else, what was the main reason for your choice?

- ☐ Employment opportunity
- ☐ Family connections
- ☐ I grew up here
- ☐ Affordability
- ☐ Rural character
- ☐ Quality of local amenities
- ☐ Local educational systems
- ☐ Access to area attractions
- ☐ Local amenities

Other (please specify)

3. Do you think your community has enough... ?

	Not Enough	An Adequate Amount	Too Much	Not Sure
Downtown Renovations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entertainment Options	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal Services (salon, barber shop, pet sitting, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Childcare	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supermarkets	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grocery Stores/Retail Stores/Boutiques	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restaurants/Coffee Shops	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hotels/Motels	☐	☐	☐	☐
Medical Services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Biking/Walking Trails/Greenways	☐	☐	☐	☐
Outdoor Activity Facilities (fishing, boating, hunting, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sports Facilities (playground, swimming pool, athletic facilities, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public Transit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youth Programs/Activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Senior Programs/Activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public Enagement in Community Decision Making Efforts/Open Government	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments regarding the issues listed above?

4. What types of housing does your community need more of?

- ☐ Multifamily Housing/Apartments/Townhouse
- ☐ Single-family Housing
- ☐ Duplexes
- ☐ Tiny Houses
- ☐ Rental Units
- ☐ Senior Housing/Assisted Facilities
- ☐ Accessory Dwelling Units
- ☐ Mobile Homes/Manufactured Homes
- ☐ Affordable Housing in General, Density Doesn't Matter
- ☐ High-end Housing
- ☐ Address Blighted Housing

Any other housing related issues you want to talk about?

5. Do you have internet access at home?

6. How much new growth should the County encourage?

Where should any new growth be primarily concentrated? What kind of growth and development would it be? Any additional comments on economic development?

7. Please rank the following economic development priorities for Toombs County

- Grow commercial businesses (dining, retail, services, etc.)
- Grow manufacturing, technology, industrial businesses (goods production, warehousing, etc.)
- Grow agricultural industries (farming, forestry, etc.)
- Skill training of local labor force
- Add affordable workforce housing and amenities to attract employers and employees
- Improve community facilities (water/sewer, roads, etc.) to attract employers and employees

8. Please rate your satisfaction level with the following services

	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Water Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sewer Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Road Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Road Drainage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of Public Service Building (Courthouses, Senior Centers, Health Departments, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Law Enforcement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fire Protection/Emergency Services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schools/Educational System	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parks and Recreation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments you want to make about community services and facilities?

9. Please tell us your favorite things, and least favorite things about your community, and any other thoughts you may want to share with us:

Your favorite things
about your
community/Strengths
or assets of your
community

Your least favorite
things about your
community/weaknesses
or greatest needs of
your community

Any other comments?

10. What is your age range?

11. I am submitting comments primarily as a:

Other (please specify)

FINAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan

The local governments of Toombs County including the Cities of Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia 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 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 Toombs County and the Cities of Lyons, Santa Claus, and Vidalia; 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 29, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.**

LOCATION OF PUBLIC HEARING: **Vidalia Municipal Annex Courtroom,
302 East First Street, Vidalia, GA 30474**

All persons with a disability or otherwise needing assistance should contact the Toombs County Commissioner's Office, 100 Courthouse Sq, Ste 21, Lyons, GA 30436, or call 912-526-8575.

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 the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 912-367-3648 or aweaver@hogarc.org.

**TOOMBS COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING
VIDALIA MUNICIPAL ANNEX
302 EAST FIRST STREET, VIDALIA, GA**

January 24, 2024

10:00AM

AGENDA

1. Introduction

- **Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan**
- **Role of the Steering Committee**
- **Proposed Timetable for Plan Development**
- **Agreements Needed**

2. SWOT & Vision Exercise

- **Economic Development**
- **Housing**
- **Community Facilities and Services**
- **Land Use**
- **Natural and Cultural Resources**
- **Public Services/Intergovernmental Coordination**

Adjourn

Next Meeting:

- **Draft Community Vision/SWOT Analysis Review**
- **Plan Title Input**
- **Needs and Opportunities Input**
- **Goals/Policies Input**

TOOMBS COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

4th STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Vidalia Municipal Annex

302 E 1st St, Vidalia, Georgia

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

AGENDA

1. Plan Title
2. Revised Economic Development Review
3. Survey Results Report
4. Continue SWOT & VISION Exercise
5. Input on Needs and Opportunities
6. Plan Title Discussion

Adjourn

Upcoming Events:

Initial Public Hearing

Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 5:00PM

Partin Park, Durden Cabin

168 Miot St, Lyons, GA 30436

Next Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 2:00PM

Vidalia Municipal Annex, Courtroom

302 First St., Vidalia, Georgia

- Input on Goals/Policies
- Economic Development

Community Drop-In Session

Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 5:00PM

The Dahlia Event Center

200 SW Main St., Vidalia, GA

**TOOMBS COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
3rd STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
Vidalia Municipal Annex, 302 E First St,
Vidalia, GA
Tuesday, March 26, 2024**

AGENDA

- 1. Brief Review of Previous Meeting**
- 2. Survey Results Report**
- 3. Input on Needs and Opportunities**
- 4. Input on Community Vision**
- 5. Input on Community Goals and Long-Term Policies**
- 6. Economic Development Discussion/Update**

Adjourn

Upcoming Events:

Community Drop-in Session

Monday, March 26, 2024, 5:00PM
The Dahlia Event Center,
200 SW Main St., Vidalia

Next Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 2:00PM
Vidalia Municipal Annex,
302 E First St, Vidalia, GA

- Input on Land Use
- Input on Broadband

Community Work Programs Update

We'll reach out to each jurisdiction to set up time, date and location

Plan Drafting Phase

May to July

Final Steering Committee Meeting, Final Public Hearing -- TBD

TOOMBS COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

4th STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Vidalia Municipal Annex

302 E 1st St, Vidalia, Georgia

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

AGENDA

- 1. Plan Title**
- 2. Revised Economic Development Section Review**
- 3. Broadband Update**
- 4. Land Use Update**
 - **Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria**
 - **Altamaha Regional Water Plan**
 - **Input on Land Use Maps**

Adjourn

Upcoming Events:

Community Work Programs Update

We'll reach out to each jurisdiction to set up time, date and location

Plan Drafting Phase

May to July

Final Steering Committee Meeting, Final Public Hearing -- TBD

Stakeholders Invited to Participate in Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan Preparation Process

- Toombs County Board of Commissioners
- City of Lyons
- City of Santa Claus
- City of Vidalia
- Toombs County Development Authority
- Greater Vidalia Chamber
- Greater Vidalia Chamber Public Policy Council
- Greater Vidalia Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
- Vidalia Police Department
- Lyons Police Department
- Southeastern Technical College
- Vidalia City Schools
- SECCA Board
- Family Connection
- Downtown Vidalia Association
- Lyons Better Hometown
- Lyons Main Street
- Altamaha EMC
- The Dahlia Event Center
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes
- Mount Vernon Bank
- Ohoopee Regional Library System
- Vidalia Housing Authority
- The Advance Newspaper

Active Participants in Toombs County Local Plan Coordination Committee Meeting and Plan Preparation

Toombs County Board of Commissioners

John Jones, County Manager

City of Lyons

Jason Hall, City Manager

City of Santa Claus

Donita Bowen, Mayor

City of Vidalia

Doug Roper, Mayor

William Bedingfield, City Manager

Josh Bech, City Manager

Patricia Glover, Finance Director

Kellie Murray, City Clerk

Ochoopee Regional Library System

Cameron Asbell, Director

Vidalia Housing Authority

Josh Beck, Executive Director

Greater Vidalia Chamber

Michele Johnson, President

Toombs County Development Authority

Michele Johnson, Executive Director

Greater Vidalia Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

Mandy Britt, Director

Stanley Farms

R.T. Stanley

Southeastern Technical College

Barry Dotson, VP

SECCA Board

Amy Gillies, CTAE Director

Family Connection

Paige Williamson, Director

Downtown Vidalia Association

Tonya Parker, Director

Lyons Main Street

Daphne Walker, Director

Altamaha EMC

Will NeSmith

The Dahlia Event Center

Amanda Higgins, owner

Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Mary Moon, Director

Mount Vernon Bank

Conner Thigpen, VP

The Advance Newspaper

Makaylee Randolph

Brown Implement

Trent Williams, owner

Private Citizens

Connie f Williams

ONE TOOMBS

**Building on
Collaboration**

TOOMBS COUNTY

Joint Comprehensive Plan

August, 2024