



then

# East Savannah Gateway **TRANSFORMATION PLAN**

JANUARY 2014

**Housing Authority of Savannah**  
A CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PLANNING GRANTEE



now

**1 7 3 3**

Savannah established by General James Oglethorpe as the center of the proprietary colony of Georgia. Wheaton Street marks the bend of the original Indian footpath to the barrier islands.

**1 7 5 1**

The first rice plantation was established in the East Savannah area.

**1 7 9 3**

The cotton gin was invented in Savannah, GA, contributing to significant industry growth.

**1 8 1 7**

A new law prohibited rice cultivation around the city and ordered the wetlands to be drained. This allowed Savannah to grow into previously uninhabitable areas.

**1 8 3 5**

A new law prohibited rice cultivation around the city and ordered the wetlands to be drained. This allowed Savannah to grow into previously uninhabitable areas.

**1 8 5 7**

Central of Georgia Railroad began manufacturing rail cars in Savannah.

**1 8 5 4**

Savannah extended its boundary on the southeast to incorporate all of the land east to Waters Avenue and south to Anderson Street.

**1 8 6 4**

Union General William T. Sherman captured the City of Savannah at Christmas, and preserved the city.

## MAKE HISTORY WITH US

### The Renaissance of East Savannah & The Creation of the East Savannah Gateway



**1 8 7 5**

Coastal Line Railroad established to provide streetcar transportation in the Eastside neighborhoods.

**1 8 8 7**

Mother Matilda Beasley, Georgia's first African American nun, established Saint Francis Home, an orphanage for African American girls who had lost their parents, or lacked proper care.

**1 9 0 0**

The historic Benjamin Van Clark Park Neighborhood established.

**1 9 2 4**

Romana Riley takes the position of principal at Waters Avenue School, the school that would later bear her name.

**1 9 3 8**

The Housing Authority of Savannah established to meet the needs of the low-income population of the City.

**1 9 4 0**

Gardens Homes Estates constructed (demolished in Savannah's HOPE VI).

**1 9 5 5**

Robert Hitch Village constructed.

**1 9 5 4**

Fred Wessels Homes constructed.

# East Savannah Gateway **TRANSFORMATION PLAN**

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In collaboration with:  
**Quadel Consulting Corporation**  
**The Communities Group**  
**Lord Aeck Sargent**

With support from:  
**A CNI Planning Grant from the**  
**Department of Housing and Urban Development**



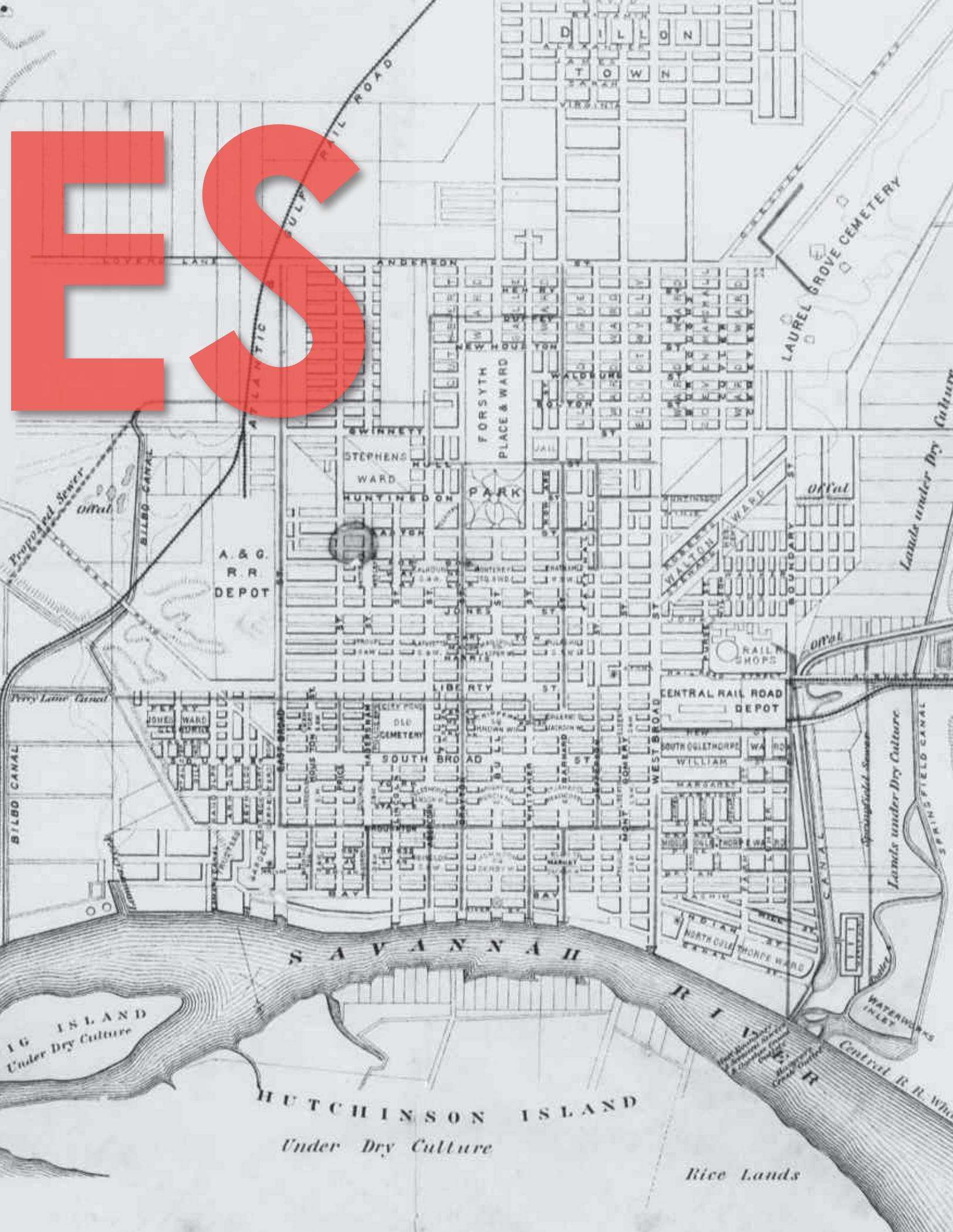
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# ES



WIG ISLAND  
Under Dry Culture

HUTCHINSON ISLAND  
Under Dry Culture

Rice Lands

LAUREL GROVE CEMETERY

A & G  
R.R. DEPOT

CENTRAL RAIL ROAD  
DEPOT

SAVANNAH

Lands under Dry Culture

Lands under Dry Culture

Office

Office

Springfield Sewer

Central R.R. Warehouse

WATERWORKS  
INLET

ATLANTIC GULF RAIL ROAD

Proposed Sewer

Perry Lane Canal

BILBO CANAL

BILBO CANAL

Office

Lands under Dry Culture

WATERWORKS  
INLET

Central R.R. Warehouse

SWINNETT

STEPHENS

WARD

HUNTINGDON

JONES

MARRIS

LIBERTY

SOUTH BROAD

PRICE

WALKER

WILSON

WYATT

YOUNG

ZIMMERMAN

PARK

WALTON

WATSON

WELLS

FORSYTH PLACE & WARD

JAIL

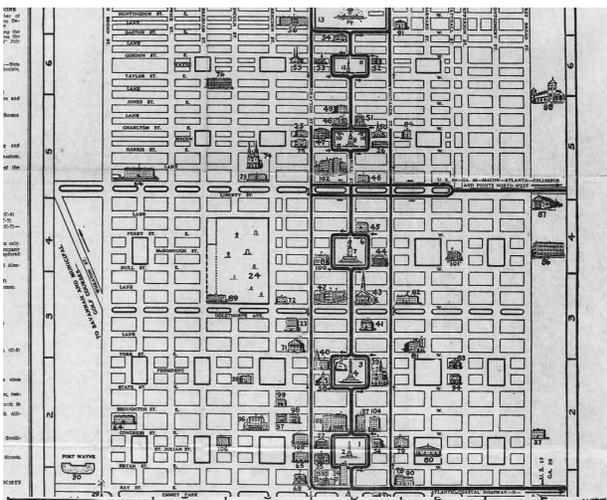
WELLS

# Executive Summary

## Savannah

In Savannah, history is always around us and a part of us. One sees it in our treasured downtown while walking down cobblestone streets lined with Spanish moss-draped oak trees. One sees it strolling through azalea-filled squares, surrounded by antebellum homes. One sees it gazing out at container ships floating down the Savannah River.

Since the 1990s, Georgia's first City, and America's first planned city, has enjoyed the benefits of an ever-growing tourist industry. Visitors flock to Savannah to get a glimpse of our beautiful squares, to stay in our bed & breakfasts and to dine in our fine restaurants. Savannah is known for its rich cultural heritage, music, art and vibrant nightlife and its walkable streets.



IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN SAVANNAH  
YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE SOUTH

## Wheaton Street

Yet on the outskirts of the charming downtown, the landscape changes dramatically. Heading east out of the historic district, the restaurants and retail establishments on East Liberty Street give way to the Wheaton Street Corridor, a long winding stretch of road that crosses over railroad tracks into East Savannah. Standing in stark contrast to the thriving downtown, Wheaton Street is noticeably desolate. Despite being situated adjacent to the historic district, this long corridor offers surprisingly little in terms of amenities and commercial businesses.

The corridor primarily serves as an avenue into East Savannah's residential neighborhoods and is comprised of a handful of local businesses and eateries, vacant tracts of land, and boarded properties. The Housing Authority of Savannah's Neighborhood Resource Center, Edgar Blackshear Homes public housing neighborhood, Spencer Elementary School and Chatham County Department of Family and Children Services are the primary points of interest along the corridor.

Yet, as is familiar in Savannah, this area is rich in history. The signature bend of Wheaton Street marks the original Native American footpath to the barrier islands, before the arrival of General James Oglethorpe and his band of settlers. This site at the corner of Waters Avenue and Wheaton Street served as a fort area during the

Revolutionary War. Rich historic rice fields still dominate a large swath of the landscape along Wheaton Street.

## **Transformation: The Emergence of the East Savannah Gateway**

What could be the catalyst to transform this corridor into a bustling thoroughfare? To re-imagine Wheaton Street as a vital gateway, inviting Savannahians and tourists alike, to venture into the untapped resources that are waiting in East Savannah? How does Savannah mobilize a long forgotten part of the city to become a regional destination and self-sustaining community?

The demolition of the Robert Hitch Village public housing neighborhood, in 2010, led the Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS), along with its partners and stakeholders to apply for and receive a FY 2011 Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in January 2012. This spurred a planning process, which has energized a community and created a connected framework of neighborhoods known as “The East Savannah Gateway” (the Gateway).

The East Savannah Gateway encompasses all the expanse of land bounded by E. President Street and the River on the North, Pennsylvania Avenue on the East; E. Henry Street on the South, and E. Broad Street/Liberty Street to the West. *(See Figure ESa- East Savannah Gateway Neighborhood)*

The East Savannah Gateway “Transformation Plan” is the culmination of a two-year collaborative effort of HAS, the City of Savannah, Chatham County, HAS public housing residents, community partners, and other stakeholders of the East Savannah Gateway. It presents both interim and long-term strategies that

address the identified needs of the people, housing and neighborhood. The Transformation Plan (Plan) is built upon a “Neighborhood by Design” model that contributes to the overall quality of life and economic health and well-being of the residents, partners, and assets within the Gateway. Our theme echoes Savannah’s history as America’s first planned City.

### **The ten guiding principles for a neighborhood by design are:**

- **Access to Quality Affordable Housing**
- **Access to Recreation and Open Spaces**
- **Access to Healthy Foods**
- **Access to Medical Services**
- **Access to Public Transit and Safe Active Transportation**
- **Access to Economic Opportunity**
- **Access to Quality Schools and Childcare**
- **Safe Neighborhood with Adequate Public Spaces and Social Interaction**
- **Enhanced Environmental Quality, i.e. air quality, noise reduction, water quality, etc. imbued with Green and Sustainable Development and Practices**
- **Long-term Financial and Social Sustainability Strategies.**

*Credit: Healthy Communities by Design*



Figure ESa- East Savannah Gateway Neighborhood

## The Gateway

The Gateway encompasses four public housing sites: the existing Fred Wessels Homes, Robert Hitch Village property (demolished in 2010), Ashley Midtown (Savannah’s highly successful HOPE VI community), and Edgar Blackshear Homes, as well as four neighboring City residential communities along the Wheaton Street Corridor. The area’s western edge borders Savannah’s historic district. The Plan addresses three critical revitalization components: neighborhood, people and housing.

The Housing Authority’s studies indicate that historically the Gateway neighborhoods, Robert Hitch Village,

Fred Wessels Homes and Edgar Blackshear Homes, in particular, fell “outside the grid” in terms of the physical connection to the historically dominant street pattern. These communities have remained outside the dynamic flow of economic activity, and outside the retail and commercial jobs and services that enhance social mobility. This marginalization is reflected in the concentration of poverty and high housing vacancy rates in the neighborhood combined with a significant need for affordable housing.

The Gateway also encompasses several performance-struggling schools. The purpose of the Transformation



effort is to see that the Gateway does not remain off the grid with social and economic development all around passing it by. The strength of the Plan derives from the Gateway's proximity to Savannah's downtown Landmark Historic District, from significant planned or on-going public and private investment, and from its neighborhood associations and community partnerships. Its success will be determined by the level of commitment and active community engagement that is developed and sustained for this Transformation Plan over time by its leadership.

## **Housing Transformation**

The Transformation Plan's initial goal is to replace the former Robert Hitch Village with a new multifamily development and to improve Fred Wessels Homes. Further, the Plan calls for enhancing Edgar Blackshear Homes and neighboring communities through in-fill development. Both Fred Wessels Homes and Edgar Blackshear Homes have been approved for the HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (RAD) funding. RAD provides 60,000 units of project-based Section 8 Rental Assistance for housing authorities to convert properties from public housing to Project-based Rental Assistance. As part of the conversion, a housing authority can borrow against the property as needed, or leverage with tax credits if capital needs are significantly beyond what can be afforded with available resources plus debt capacity.

These housing investments will dramatically improve the appearance of the northwestern part of the Gateway and the Wheaton streetscape and, by adding additional new housing units, help to reverse the trend of population loss that has stymied much needed neighborhood retail and commercial development. It will encourage a mix of incomes, bolster the tax base,

and support homeownership to stabilize real estate values in the neighborhood. A total of 776 to 876 units are projected. At Edgar Blackshear Homes, the plan features eighteen new units oriented to address Wheaton Street, adding an important element to the effort to revitalize the streetscape.

The Housing Plan expresses HAS's strong commitment to one-for-one replacement, while ensuring a mix of incomes by including market rate units, as well as an affordable rental inventory. Housing strategies further include opportunities for in-fill housing together with efforts to foster homeownership, reduce the blighting influence of vacant and boarded structures, and seek means to help current homeowners with weatherization needs. Close cooperation with existing programs administered by the City will ensure appropriate consultation and coordination.

With community partners, the Plan envisions continued exploration of steps to provide housing alternatives for the homeless and better deal with illegal rooming houses.

## **Enhanced Environmental Quality**

Plans for redevelopment also provide an opportunity for furthering Chatham County's commitment to being the "greenest County in Georgia." Chatham County adopted its "Greenest County Resolution" in 2007, committing to policies and actions to make Chatham County the greenest county. The City of Savannah has also adopted the Earth Craft standard for all residential new construction in the City.

The Housing Authority and its development team partner, The Hunt Companies and The Communities Group (Hunt-TCG), are committed to Leadership in

Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Neighborhood (ND) principles for the new housing to be developed at the Robert Hitch Village site (*See Appendix I for the completed LEED-ND Checklist*).

## Neighborhood Transformation

From the neighborhood perspective, the Plan places Wheaton Street at the center due to its location and significance to the various housing elements. The Plan also strives to bring new life and activity to Wheaton Street and is designed to make it a destination, not just a pass-through corridor. In addition to goals for Wheaton Street, the Plan capitalizes on the many reinvestment and revitalization initiatives begun or planned by others and occurring in each of the main transportation corridors of the Gateway, including President Street, Pennsylvania Avenue and Waters Avenue. These include the \$100+ million development of Savannah Gardens, bringing 550+ new multifamily and single family homes, and a private developer's plan for repurposing the historic Romana Riley School building into affordable housing for seniors. Public facilities investments include a major addition to the administrative headquarters of Chatham Area Transit (CAT) and an addition to the HAS Neighborhood Resource Center that will house the Section 8 program offices and other improvements. A new family resource center to be funded by the City is also in the planning stage. President Square is a planned private sector commercial-retail development on a site adjacent to the Robert Hitch Village site.

The Plan notes the substantial investments being made in the Gateway's public school facilities which include expenditures for HVAC systems and roofing, as well as academic technology equipment. Funding has also been programmed to replace Spencer Elementary with a new school building.

To enhance recreation facilities, the City and County are undertaking improvements to the Blackshear Basketball Complex on Wheaton Street and to Soldiers Field, respectively. The City has also initiated a parks and recreation planning effort to guide future investment. Cultural initiatives include moving the historic Mother Matilda Beasley House to the park that bears her name, installation of a public art piece at Savannah Gardens, and a proposal to build a new privately funded 1,200-seat amphitheater at Trustees Garden.

The Plan also embraces various urban farming initiatives to address the neighborhood's need for ready access to healthy food choices. Forsyth Farmers Market Collaborative has secured a grant from Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation to purchase and operate a truck to provide for delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables to the Gateway neighborhoods. The grant will cover these expenses for three years.

Many of the challenges facing the East Savannah Gateway will require long-term commitments to the implementation actions prescribed. The planning process stimulated several ideas and proposals of merit, which exceed the immediate action scope of this Plan. We have included them in our discussion to encourage continued exploration of their feasibility despite having no financial commitments for achieving them in the near term. By incorporating them into this Plan, we hope to capture the creativity that emerged from the charrettes and inspire champions to emerge who will carry these notions forward. Among these neighborhood proposals are:

- Exploring the potential for developing connection points with the historic rice fields to create educational and recreational opportunities, while securing the preservation and enhancement of this natural resource.



- Exploring the potential for creating a linear park by leveraging the existing railway line through the Gateway that connects the historic rice fields to the southeast Gateway area near Hubert Middle School.

- Support the effort by CAT to secure federal or other funding to expand the streetcar system to provide seamless connectivity between Savannah's National Landmark Historic and Central Business District and the East and West Downtown Gateways.

## People Transformation

Through its commitment to one-for-one replacement and a strong community and supportive services effort, the Transformation Plan is designed to build and sustain the economic self-sufficiency of the current residents of Fred Wessels Homes and the former residents of Robert Hitch Village, and to enhance their health and well-being. Special attention is to be focused on the improvement of educational outcomes for youth and adults beginning with early learning for the very youngest and better connecting adults with a wider range of employment and training options. In short, these are the pathways from cradle to career.

Self-sufficiency is the underlying goal for Plan components designed to better connect residents with the range of resources available. Improved linkages with job training and placement resources and avenues to entrepreneurship or apprenticeships are also featured. Our strategies also include ways to improve financial literacy and build assets through programs that counsel residents on borrowing, saving, spending, and budgeting.

Both the People Section and the Neighborhood Section of the Transformation Plan include resources

for improving educational outcomes for the children of the Gateway. In addition to the physical investments described under Neighborhood Transformation earlier, the Plan deals with efforts to improve school readiness among children preparing to enter kindergarten. The Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority (YFA) is encouraging and providing incentives to existing child care centers to apply for the Georgia Quality Rated Improvement System (QRIS). The Plan calls for collaborative work among community partners and early child care providers to ensure there is a quality early learning component in the child care services they provide. Parents are to be encouraged to participate in Early Learning College to learn how to create healthy quality development environments for their children age 0-3. This strategy reflects the fact that many low-income children do not attend a child care center of any kind and are pre-schooled at home. Parent University will be promoted for parents of school-age children through programs scheduled at Spencer Elementary, East Broad K-8 and Hubert Middle School.

A more long-term effort is envisioned to study the requirements and feasibility of establishing an early learning facility in the Gateway and develop public support for it. Such an effort would require the work of a number of child development leaders including: the Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah-Chatham County (EOA), Wesley Community Centers of Savannah, Inc., Youth Futures Authority (YFA), the Savannah Early Childhood Foundation, and partners including City and County government.

In a parallel effort, HAS is exerting leadership to foster business partnerships with the schools. During the development of the Transformation Plan, HAS and members of the Education Subcommittee conferred with

principals in several of the schools in the Gateway and learned of the need for engaged community partners. In response, HAS will become a formal business partner with each school in the Gateway. HAS completed this process with several schools since the beginning of the planning initiative, including Spencer Elementary, Hubert Middle, and East Broad K-8. HAS will also advocate on behalf of the schools and encourage other organizations and businesses involved in Choice Neighborhoods planning to do the same. Members of HAS staff will be encouraged to volunteer regularly. The goal is to have at least one member volunteering at each school each month. Schools are asked to provide a list of potential events or volunteering opportunities each month that can be posted on HAS's internal calendar so that HAS staff will be aware of the dates and times of these events. In response to the call for greater parent involvement, HAS will display notices of Parent Teacher Association meetings on the community event calendar on the HAS webpage. Parents who are residents of HAS housing will be urged and encouraged to participate in school events for which they receive credit for community service hours.

In response to the problem that many children arrive at school lacking the materials they need for class, HAS will donate \$500 per school per year for school supplies for those children and encourage other organizations to do the same.

Both physical and behavioral health needs require attention. Often-cited health conditions include chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure that may respond to better diet and lifestyle changes. For that reason, health and nutrition education plays a large part in the Plan's strategies together with improved access to care. Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health

Care will begin a school-based dental clinic in the 2014-2015 school year at East Broad K-8. A range of services and programs are also available for behavioral health issues from The Counseling Center of Union Mission, Inc. For youth, these include child and adolescent screening services, evaluation for psychotherapy and play therapy. Substance abuse and mental health services are provided to adults and adolescents. Jail diversion therapy encompasses anger management and family violence intervention. Women's Empowerment treats victims of domestic violence. Overall, these strategies can be combined and utilized to further the health and wellness of all individuals within the Gateway; thereby strengthening the fabric of the community as a whole.

## **Plan for Implementation**

The goal of creating a neighborhood by design requires an approach that is inclusive and collaborative by employing the involvement of many community stakeholders. Both the public sector and the private sector have been consulted and mobilized to develop a vision for the Gateway and to commit to action strategies that will advance the Plan's implementation. It is clear that the desired transformation will take time, sustained engagement, and significant financial investments from various sources both public and private. Community partners and stakeholders deserve transparency and accountability. For that reason the Transformation Plan will be implemented by a nonprofit public-private partnership charged specifically with the responsibility for guiding and promoting its multi-faceted elements. This entity will be the fiduciary and administrator for any grant dollars and contributions made directly for the Plan's purposes. It will also be charged with responsibility to report and monitor on progress in achieving the strategies cited in the approved plan.

The structure of the implementing community partnership utilizes the organizational design that was used so effectively to structure the Plan, with the addition of leadership functions drawn from the Task Forces. Each of the three CN focus areas – Neighborhood, People and Housing – will have a lead entity responsible for overseeing implementation of the identified strategies. The lead entity organizations will be supported by partners that have responsibility for one or more strategies as shown in the strategy matrices for Neighborhood, People and Housing in their respective sections of this Plan document. Neighborhood and Housing each has a lead entity to ensure follow-through, while negotiations are continuing to identify a lead for the People strategies. *(See Figure ESb –Organizational Structure for Implementation)*

The Housing Authority of Savannah has led the planning process as Planning Grantee, but the Plan must be carried forward by a partnership that reflects the breadth of the Plan’s contents. Resources, energy and insights must be drawn from the many who have contributed to its formulation. With this structure in place, the partnership will have a framework to make decisions, allocate resources, ensure accountability, communicate with the public, and sustain citizen and resident engagement. This Plan was built on a solid foundation of research and community consultation and it will be realized in the same way. Evidence-based

strategies will be evaluated for their effectiveness in addressing the problems and needs that the community identified in surveys, charrettes and task force meetings. The Plan’s ability to win substantial financial support will determine the pace at which improvements will be achieved. The narrative highlights eight early start activities which illustrate the breadth and depth of the community’s interest in and commitment to the Gateway. HAS will also use this Transformation Plan to underlay its request for a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Implementation Grant from HUD. Due to the intense competition for this grant program and other federal grants, the Plan’s strategies entail efforts that could be achieved at least in part, with or without an Implementation Grant. That said, it is important to stress that in this period of federal contraction, state and local sources (both public and private) are strained to meet needs such as public infrastructure and human services. However, many grant programs exist and can be tapped if our plans are sound and persuasive. Since its founding, Savannah has been a city with the long view, willing to plan thoughtfully and work to bring those plans to fruition.

With the adoption of this Plan, the community is establishing a long-term contract with the residents and stakeholders of the East Savannah Gateway to create a new future of progress and possibilities.





Figure ESb – Organizational Structure for Implementation



WESSELS

MOTHER  
MATILDA  
BEASLEY  
PARK

HUBERT  
MIDDLE

SPENCER  
ELEMENTARY

BLACKSHEAR

SAVANNAH  
GOLF CLUB

ASHLEY  
MIDTOWN

LIVE OAK ST.

CEDAR ST.

BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN  
PARK

E. GWINNET ST.

E. 34TH ST.

E. 37TH ST.

E VICTORY DRIVE

LIVE OAK

SKIDAWAY ROAD

FLORIDA AVE.

CHATHAM CRESCENT

HEDERMAN  
PARK

GRAYSON  
STADIUM

E. 39TH ST.

MCCAULEY  
PARK

E. 50TH ST.

SOLOMONS  
PARK

PARKSIDE

VICTORY  
HEIGHTS

REYNOLDS ST.

PAULSEN ST.

CEDAR ST.

# Introduction and Overview

The Housing Authority's focus on the East Savannah Gateway predates the Choice Neighborhood planning process. It began with its successful HOPE VI at Ashley Midtown and had further support in its 2010 plan for the Viability and Sustainability of its entire portfolio, which recommended the redevelopment of Hitch, and suggested in-fill development at Blackshear. The emergence of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods (CN) program and the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program offer new tools for revitalizing the Gateway. As with all its successful predecessors, the East Savannah Gateway Transformation Plan is built on a solid foundation of study, analysis, and community consultation.

Building on past projects and planning efforts, the Housing Authority and its key partners determined that comprehensive revitalization planning, supported by a CN planning grant, was an initiative well-suited for Savannah's eastside, with its close proximity to the

City's Historic downtown and the City's long history of urban planning dating back to its original Oglethorpe plan in 1733. Nationally, Savannah is recognized as America's first planned City and it has retained this commitment to planning giving our study a wealth of guiding materials upon which to draw. These existing materials were supplemented by neighborhood-specific research. During the first 18 months of the 24-month CN planning period, a needs assessment of all physical, economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental assets in the target area was conducted in preparation of the "Transformation Plan." Resident engagement was a key component of the planning process. The Housing Authority also conducted surveys of the residents at Hitch and Wessels and the larger Gateway neighborhood. Residents were informed of key planning activities and urged to engage in the many community activities involved in building the Transformation Plan, such as Task Force meetings and design charrettes.



## A. Past and On-going Community Planning Efforts

The planning team and citizen participants reviewed each of the following sources as part of the CN planning process:

1. East Downtown Tax Allocation District Designation – City designated TAD district
2. City of Savannah Affordable Housing Study
3. Revitalization of Strathmore Estates –Savannah Gardens Site Plan
4. Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan (2012-2016)
5. Downtown Savannah Master Plan
6. Housing and Community Development Plan
7. Affordable Housing & Regulatory Reform
8. Savannah Parks & Recreation Master Plan – Review and recommendation for additions and upgrades to parks and recreational facilities
9. City’s Housing and Community Development – 2012 One-Year Action Plan
10. STEP-Up Savannah – Poverty Reduction Action Plan
11. Waters Avenue Corridor Revitalization
12. Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan (2012-2016)
13. Metropolitan Planning Commission’s Tri-Centennial Plan
14. Chatham County – Safety Net Planning Council
15. Housing Authority of Savannah’s Property Viability and Sustainability Assessment
16. Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools
17. MPC’s Unified Zoning Ordinance
18. Chatham County Bikeway Plan
19. Kids Matter, a Status Report on the Well-Being of Children in Chatham County (Youth Futures Authority)
20. Savannah/Chatham Community Indicators Database
21. Homeless in Savannah
22. Blueprint for Action - Vision 2020 (1992)
23. Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Transit Development Plan, Final Report, August 2013

These sources were used to inform and help guide the CN planning process. In order to make the most of this wealth of data, studies and resources, the Housing Authority developed an organizational framework, convened a Transformation Team, and engaged a wide range of community partners in specialized Task Forces with sub-task groups as necessary. Task Groups came together around Housing, Neighborhood, and People, the latter of which further divided into Education and Community and Supportive Services (CSS) subcommittees. The Education Subcommittee spun off a sub-group to help with the critical area of early learning. In order to capture the opinions and insights of the Gateway’s young people, the Housing Authority

and its partners formed a Youth Task Force.

(See Figure 1a – Organizational Chart)

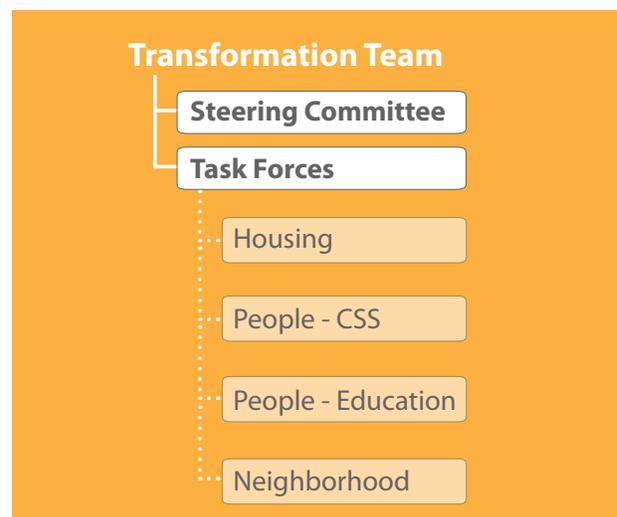


Figure 1a - Organizational Chart

## B. Principal Team Members and Key Stakeholders

Primary Team members include City of Savannah officials and staff, the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Planning Commission, East Savannah Gateway residents, community, governmental, business and faith-based organization leaders, and the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education.

## C. Resident and Community Engagement

The Planning Team worked to maintain a high level of involvement by public housing residents as well as residents of the broader Gateway neighborhood by employing a variety of methods. In addition to sharing existing sources, the Housing Authority's planning consultants developed over 65 maps illustrating the existing conditions context for the Gateway (See Appendix A). Students from the highly respected Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) were also engaged to bring a creative visual perspective to our understanding of the neighborhood. A training class was presented on how the creative design concepts developed by the German innovation firm FROG could be applied for problem solving within the context of our planning. (See Figure 1b – FROG Training Workshop)

Field trips enabled residents and community leaders to visit East Lake in Atlanta in order to underscore the power of a comprehensive transformation. The East Lake model was instructive and enabled participants to envision new possibilities for the familiar East Savannah Gateway.

The Housing Authority developed and administered two survey instruments to solicit input from residents at the targeted public housing sites in the Gateway.



Figure 1b - FROG Training Workshop

One collected data and input from the residents of Fred Wessels Homes and Blackshear Homes, including former residents of Hitch Village. The second survey elicited data and preferences from residents of the broader Gateway neighborhood and was administered and reported by students and faculty of Savannah State University. Other field surveys included efforts to identify and tally vacant and boarded houses and a business survey to gather data on commercial business operations in the neighborhood.

The key elements of the Transformation Plan began to synthesize as the Task Forces moved to develop strategies and two design charrettes were held. The first

in March, 2013 was a technical exchange involving the CN team, together with representatives of the various City departments and staff from the Metropolitan Planning Commission. Members of the public and representatives of the neighborhood associations were also invited to participate. The technical meeting examined various redevelopment opportunities and concept plans for the Wheaton Street corridor, including emerging strategies for the housing elements of the plan, constraints imposed by proximity to the flood plain, and the opportunities related to proposed commercial and mixed use development.

*(See Figure 1c – Technical Workshop Wheaton Street Framework Plan + Appendix F)*

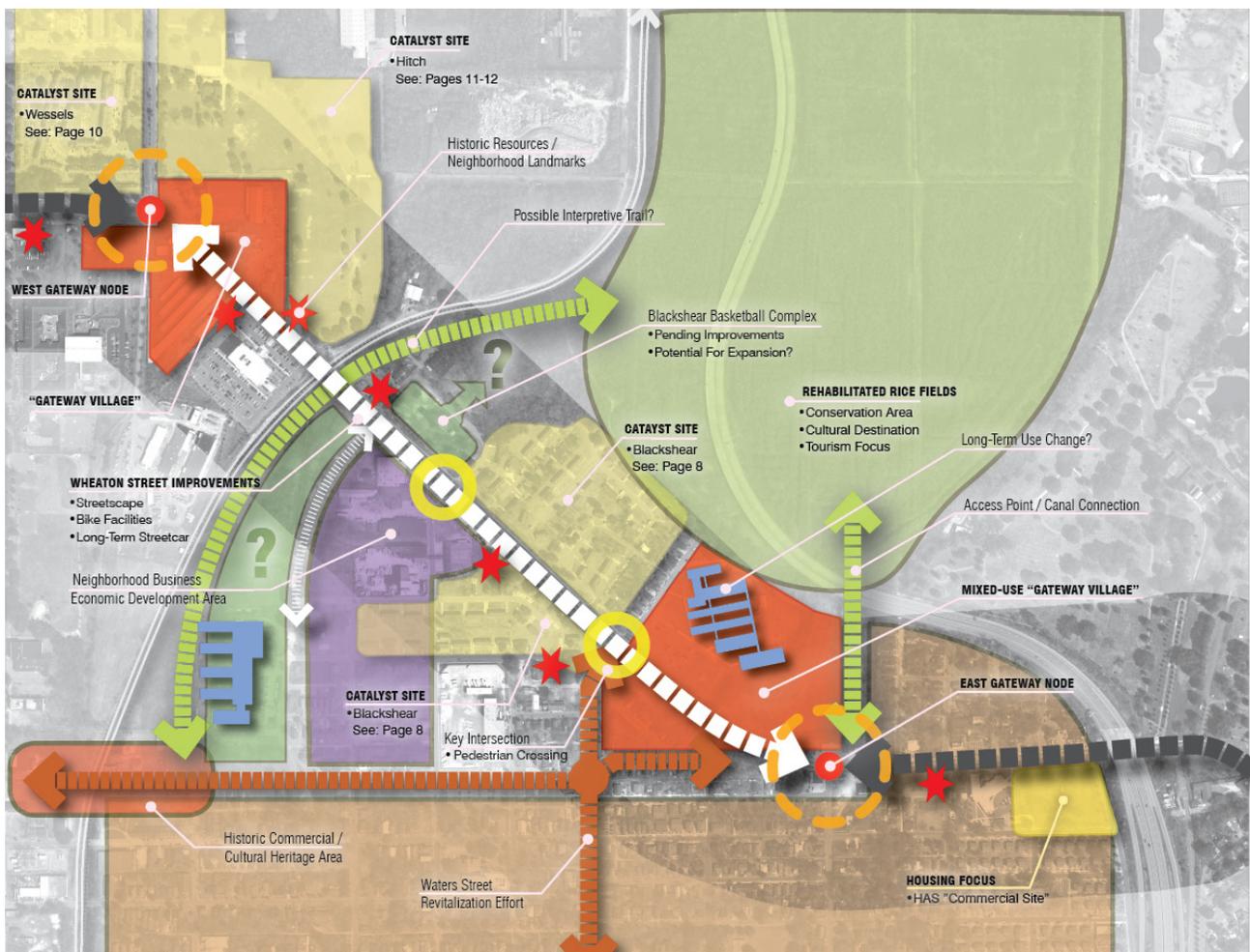


Figure 1c - Technical Workshop Wheaton Street Framework Plan, See Appendix F for full report



Figure 1d - Images from Community Workshop, See Appendix G for Report

The Housing Authority of Savannah organized a community-wide charrette in June, 2013 with more than 100 residents and members of the community. Following a brief review of activities and findings to-date, the attendees made their way through six planning stations and weighed in on various aspects of the proposed plan for the Gateway, the former site of Hitch Village, and Wheaton Street.

*(See Figure 1d – Images from Community Workshop + Appendix G)*

In addition to events sponsored by the Housing Authority, staff and leadership of the Authority attended and participated in community events sponsored by others that afforded opportunities to introduce the Choice Neighborhood Planning Process to the public. These included Town Hall meetings held by one of the Aldermen representing the Gateway and by the School district, as well as meetings at area churches and community organizations. The proposed Transformation Plan is the culmination of all these efforts by many individuals and organizations that are determined to effect positive change in the Gateway.

## D. Early Start Activities and Project Readiness

The Plan integrates many early start activities currently underway in the Gateway, including the following:

**1.** The City of Savannah is spearheading a major community revitalization project within the Gateway, “Savannah Gardens”, a multi-phase, mixed-housing community of approximately 550 new multi-family and single-family homes with over a \$100+ million dollar investment. The master developer is Community Housing Services Agency (CHSA) with Mercy Housing serving as the multi-family developer.

*(See Figure 1e – Savannah Gardens)*



Figure 1e- Savannah Gardens

**2.** The City has a \$900,000 drainage improvement project underway in the Benjamin Van Clark Park area of the Gateway neighborhood. The project is funded with Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Because it is one of the important residential areas of the Gateway, the planning team collected data on vacant and boarded homes in this neighborhood. Poor drainage negatively affects reinvestment and discourages in-fill development. This effort by the City will have a positive impact on addressing blight and forestalling disinvestment.

**3.** Chatham Area Transit (CAT) administrative offices, which are located in the East Savannah Gateway, are undergoing a \$6.1 million major renovation soon to be completed. CAT is seeking LEED-ND Gold designation for the project.

**4.** Plans are underway by a private developer to repurpose and preserve the historic Romana Riley School into affordable housing for seniors. The building honors a revered Savannah educator whose efforts include bringing the school lunch program to the Savannah school system. The project’s estimated cost is \$7M. *(See Figure 1f – Romana Riley School)*

**5.** Efforts are underway for the revitalization of the Waters Avenue Corridor, a major residential-commercial avenue partially in the East Savannah Gateway; the



Figure 1f- Romana Riley School

project is headed by the City of Savannah, which has committed \$1.5 million to install renovations to sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, surface improvements. Waters Avenue has a long history as a commercial and retail node that for many decades served as a focus of African-American-owned businesses as well as others serving this community. It lies adjacent to the Gateway and also to the historic district. (See Figure 1g – Waters Avenue Revitalization Area)



Figure 1g- Waters Avenue Revitalization Area

6. The Housing Authority has received two Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) awards from HUD, one for Fred Wessels Homes and one for Blackshear Homes. RAD allows Public Housing Authorities (PHA) to convert properties from public housing to long-term Section 8 rental assistance contracts. As part of the conversion process, PHAs can borrow against each property as needed, or leverage with tax credits if capital needs are significantly beyond what can be afforded with available resources plus debt capacity. The Housing Authority of Savannah’s plans call for substantial rehabilitation of

Hitch and Wessels through RAD assistance, bonds and tax credits (4%) with development slated for 2014.

7. HAS will be constructing a \$2 million addition to its administrative offices on Wheaton Street to relocate the Section 8 program administrative staff from 200 East Broad Street. Construction is slated to begin in 2014.

8. The Savannah Early Childhood Foundation has selected East Broad K-8 and Shuman Elementary as test sites for its program to enhance learning readiness and foster parental involvement in the education process.

## E. Planning Process

Through the efforts of the Task Force structure, including principal team members and key stakeholders, the Housing Authority led a comprehensive planning effort to identify the needs, goals, strategies described in this Plan. Residents outreach and engagement was a continual elements of this effort through each stage of the planning process, including the following major phases: (See Figure 1h – Planning Process Overview)

- Needs Assessment – the initial phase involved extensive collection of data on existing conditions; collection of stakeholder inputs; and analysis of urban design/development issues.
- Issues Identification and Strategy Development – based on the results of the needs assessment, the Task Forces identified critical community issues and initial strategies to address them in the core areas of Neighborhood, People, and Housing.
- Initial Plan Development – the Housing Authority developed an initial draft of the Plan built around identified strategies in each focus area and shared it with the community for discussion and feedback to refine the strategies to be adopted.

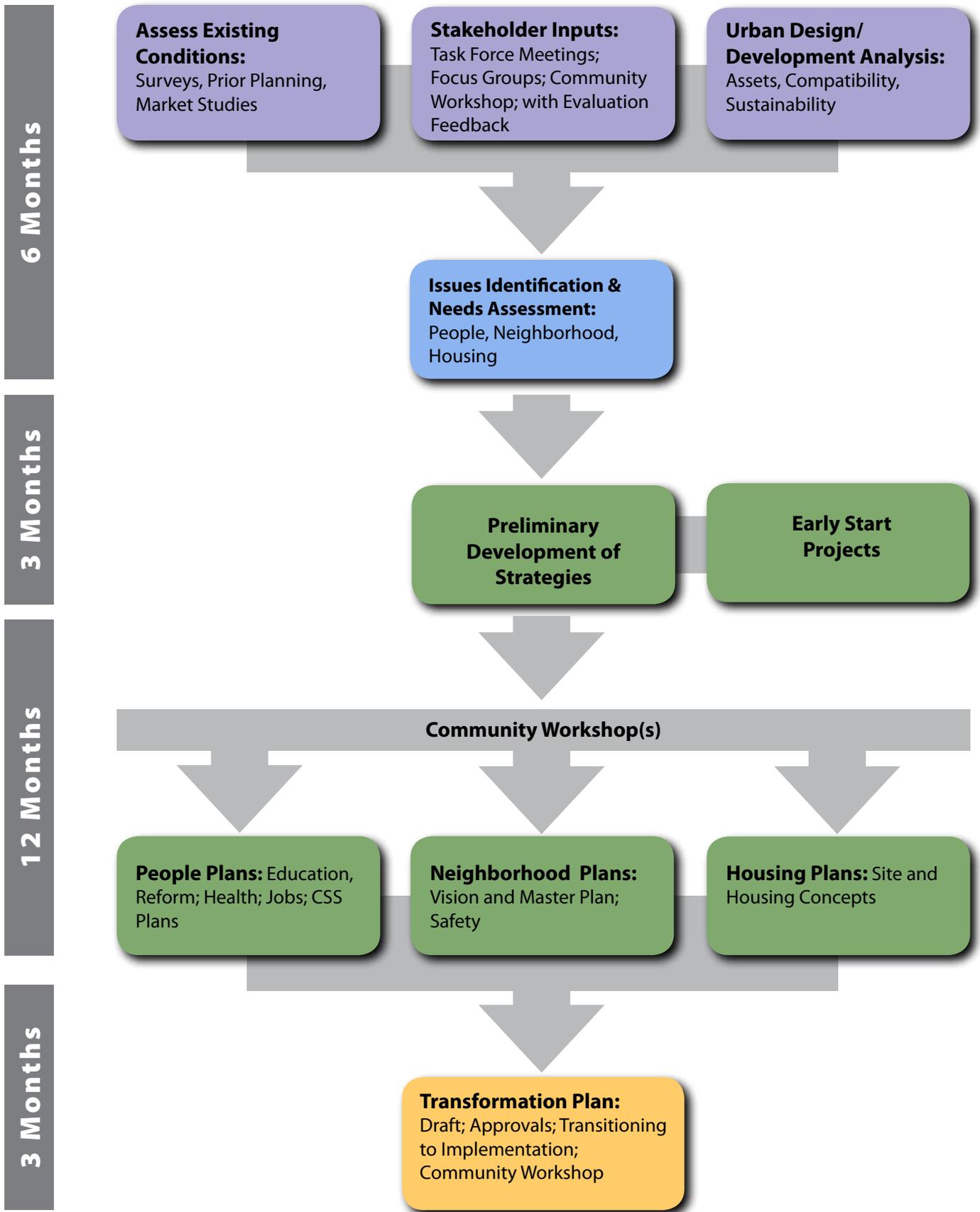


Figure 1h- Planning Process Overview

Development of the Transformation Plan – the Housing Authority and its partners developed the final Transformation Plan using feedback on the initial draft and additional information from partners and key stakeholders the community. This process also included identification of next steps and implementation activities.

## F. Data Compilation and Utilization to Attain Core Plan Goals

The Housing Authority and its partners used a wide variety of data collection tools, methods and activities during the planning process to identify and analyze critical community needs and develop the goals and strategies contained in this Plan. These data collection tools include the following:

### Survey Designs & Implementation

- Resident Survey: This survey, created by The Communities Group (TCG) and implemented by HAS staff, collected data from 203 current public housing residents. The sections of the survey and corresponding analysis focused on general information, youth, senior citizens, health care, transportation, education, employment training, and public safety.
- Neighborhood Survey: This survey was conducted by Savannah State University and gathered data from the East Savannah Gateway Neighborhood surrounding the Robert Hitch Village and Fred Wessels Homes public housing complexes. It was conducted to help analyze the needs, the problems, and the residents' perceptions of the Gateway neighborhood. In total, 200 residents from the Gateway were surveyed.

- ESG Commercial Survey: This survey was created and implemented by HAS staff. It collected data from 30 businesses in the Gateway neighborhood. The survey was designed to analyze various characteristics of businesses in the area including: number of years in the neighborhood; employment qualifications; youth employment opportunities; and business association participation among other things.
- Property Conditions Survey: This survey, developed and implemented by HAS staff, gathered data on the physical conditions of properties in the Gateway neighborhood. The survey assessed the conditions of structures as well as the parcels.
- Neighborhood Design Charrettes: Two design charrettes were held during the planning process with various community stakeholders including: neighborhood residents, professionals, school representatives, elected officials etc. The goals of these work sessions were to obtain feedback and opinions from community stakeholders on the possibilities, direction and priorities for the Gateway's transformation. They were also designed to help the community map out a vision for the Gateway that could inform the Transformation plan, and guide redevelopment/revitalization for HAS properties along Wheaton Street including Fred Wessels and the Hitch Village site.

### Newsletters & Website Development

- The Housing Authority of Savannah initiated engagement with the community and the Housing, People and Neighborhood Taskforces through the production of various newsletters, handouts, and information sharing throughout the

planning process. HAS created and will maintain a website to use as an information repository for the planning activities; and as a forum and resource for lead entities and stakeholders moving forward into implementation. The website [www.EastSavannahGateway.com](http://www.EastSavannahGateway.com) will also be used as a means for data compilation through online surveys.

### **Market & Economic Development Analysis**

- Economic Development Study: This study was conducted by Thomas Point Associates Inc. The study provided current information on the market area demographics and commercial space and outlined an economic strategy to support the Transformation Plan’s vision.
- Preliminary Market Assessment: This Market Study was conducted by Real Property Research Group. The study examined market conditions, economic conditions, and demographic characteristics, of the area and analyzed the depth of demand for various housing products including affordable rental, market rate rental, and for-sale housing.

### **Transportation and Mobility Analysis**

- Transit Access – The Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Transit Development Plan, Final Report, August 2013, was prepared by the Center for Urban Transportation Research to evaluate current services and inform the future development of transit services including Teleride. The study’s demographic profile of users of public transit enhances the baseline portrait of public transit users that emerged from our Resident Surveys including data on gender, age, income, auto ownership, frequency and purpose of travel and suggests preferred enhancements to transit services.

## **G. Impact of Transformation Plan**

In designing and developing this Transformation Plan, the Housing Authority and its partners are seeking to guide comprehensive and long lasting revitalization within the Gateway. The core objectives of the planning and implementation processes include:

- To support positive outcomes for residents and their surrounding neighborhoods, transform neighborhood housing into diverse energy-efficient, sustainable homes, and change impoverished neighborhoods into mixed-income, well-functioning, and resource-rich neighborhoods.
- To create guiding strategies to a “Neighborhood by Design” that presents viable solutions to:
  - Improve access to recreation and open spaces;
  - Increase access to healthy foods and quality medical services;
  - Enhance public transit and safe, active transportation;
  - Develop quality, affordable housing;
  - Provide economic opportunity;
  - Improve school performance and quality of childcare;
  - Ensure safe neighborhoods with adequate public spaces for social interaction;
  - Enhance environmental quality, i.e. air and water quality, and noise reduction;
  - Implement green and sustainable development and practices.





**HITCH VILLAGE/  
FRED WESSELS HOMES**

SAVANNAH  
RIVER LANDING  
(PLANNED)

MADISON RETAIL  
DEVELOPMENT SITE

FRED WESSELS  
HOMES

ROBERT M. HITCH VILLAGE  
(DEMOLISHED)

EAST BROAD  
STREET MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

MOTHER MATILDA  
BEASLEY PARK

HUBERT  
MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

EDGAR C.  
BLACKSHEAR  
HOMES

**BLACKSHEAR**

HISTORIC  
RICE FIELDS

THE SAVANNAH  
GOLF CLUB

**HILLCREST**

**EASTSIDE**

SPENCER  
ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

HILLCREST  
CEMETERY

**TWICK**

WW LAW  
LIBRARY

SHUMAN  
ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

LIVE OAK PARK

**BENJAMIN  
VAN CLARK PARK**

JULIETTE LOW  
PARK

**GORDONSTON**

**TOWN**

LIVE OAK

WINTER  
GARDEN

RANDOLPH ST

WHEATON ST

SHUMAN PKWY

E PRESIDENT STREET

E GWINNETT STREET

SAVANNAH RIVER

# Existing Character and Conditions in East Savannah Gateway

## A. Historic Perspective of Target Area with City/State/Country Comparables

East Savannah was the subject of archaeological study by the Works Progress Administration in 1939, 1941 and 1942. That work revealed the rich Native American history of a civilization dating between 500 and 1000 A.D. The much later advent of settlement by Europeans - Spanish, French and eventually English - would leave an even more lasting imprint on the history and culture of Savannah that modern-day visitors savor. Savannah also has a rich African American history told at historic sites such as the First African Baptist Church, which was founded by enslaved persons in 1773 and launched the first black Sunday school in North America; the Second African Baptist Church, founded by freedmen and constructed in 1802; the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum; the Mother Matilda Beasley House; and the King-Tisdell Cottage. Successful large scale historic preservation efforts have made Savannah a magnet for tourists whose expenditures underpin a major segment of Savannah's economy and employment.

The Gateway is the eastern entry to the Savannah National Historic Landmark District which is the City's downtown. The Eastside neighborhood, which is located within the Gateway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District. The Benjamin Van Clark neighborhood is eligible for listing as are several other neighborhoods in the area.

The treasured grid pattern of streets and parks in the historic core of the City was not extended fully east and the public housing properties of Fred Wessels, Homes, Robert Hitch Village and Edgar Blackshear Homes illustrate this disruption. Built to house black families during the then prevailing segregation, the layout of the buildings seems to underscore separation from the flow of the mainstream. A large portion of the Gateway was once rice fields in plantation ownership. The construction of dams, gates, and canals to control the fresh water tides facilitated the production of rice crops in vast low-lying acres. The work was labor intensive and made possible by the legalization of slavery in the Georgia colony in 1750. The former rice fields are noted on today's maps for their historic significance and are part of the area on the official flood plain maps that prescribe the buildable/unbuildable area of the Gateway.

From the Revolutionary War, through the Civil War, and the two world conflicts of the 20th Century the port of Savannah played an important role. During the Second World War, proximity to the river meant that East Savannah became home to war housing that in some cases later became public housing sites.

Today's Savannah River enables the City's important identity as a major seaport. While the port's operations are not located in the Gateway, port-related activities

form a major employment source for the City. The port competes with those in Charleston, SC, and Jacksonville, FL, and it is home to a number of major warehousing/distribution facilities for companies such as Home Depot, Target, IKEA, Family Dollar, Coca-Cola and others. Only a small portion of Gateway residents work in jobs related to the port. It is more common that their work is in the retail, food service, hotel, or health care fields. Lack of convenient transportation to jobs outside of the Gateway is a factor. As a consequence of the limited number of employment opportunities within the neighborhood, the Gateway is a labor exporter, adding to the challenge of building incomes through employment.

Proximity to the River carries with it both benefits and challenges. Among the low-lying areas in the Gateway is 40% of the former Robert Hitch Village public housing site, which lies within the flood plain. This condition has shaped the Transformation Plan's approach to locating many of the replacement housing units elsewhere in the Gateway. It also affects the shape of private sector development such as the proposed President Square retail complex. *(See Figure 2a - Floodplain Impacts on the Gateway)*

## **B. Demographic Profile of Target Area with City/State/Country Comparables**

The Gateway has a population of 8,846 persons and covers 1,583.7 acres with a population density of 5.5/acre. The area has 4,145 housing units. From 2000 to 2010 the Gateway lost population moving from 9,117 to 8,846. Persons under age 18 make up 26.4% of the population and persons age 65 or older 8.7%. The neighborhood has a poverty rate of 40.27 and an estimated 34.17 rate of Extremely Low Income Persons (using ACS 2009 data). Males make up 47% of the population while

females make up 53% of the population. The long-term vacancy rate in its housing of 16.99 compares with 6.5 in the surrounding County. The population of the East Savannah Gateway neighborhood is overwhelmingly African- American (69%). *(See Figure 2b - Demographic Comparison & Figure 2c - Housing Vacancy in 2010)*

The demographics of the East Savannah Gateway Area and Primary Market Area reflect the older, established neighborhoods near downtown with a higher renter percentage, low marriage rate, and lower median income. Only 19.1% of households in the East Savannah Gateway Area are married, compared to 23.8% in the Gateway and 41.0% in the County.

Renter Percentages for 2012 were estimated at 61.8% in the Gateway, 57.9% in the Gateway, and 42.8% in the County. Fewer senior households rent with renter percentage among households with householder 62+ at 34.8% in the Gateway, 36.6% in the Gateway, and 23.9% in the County. The overall median income in the Gateway is only \$21,785, compared to \$27,124 in the Primary Market Area, and \$43,065 in Chatham County. The median income of renter households is even lower at less than \$15,000 in the Gateway, compared to \$21,833 in the Primary Market Area and \$27,610 in the County. (Source: Preliminary Market Assessment of the East Savannah Gateway, Real Estate Research Group, December 2012)

## **C. Employment Profile**

The Jobs profile from 2010 Census data shows a total of 1,481 jobs in the Gateway. Of these, 24.4% were held by workers age 29 or younger, 55.6% by workers ages 30-54, and 20.1% by persons age 55 or older. Twenty-six (26.5%) of workers earned \$1,250 per month or less; 49.4% earned \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month and 24.0%

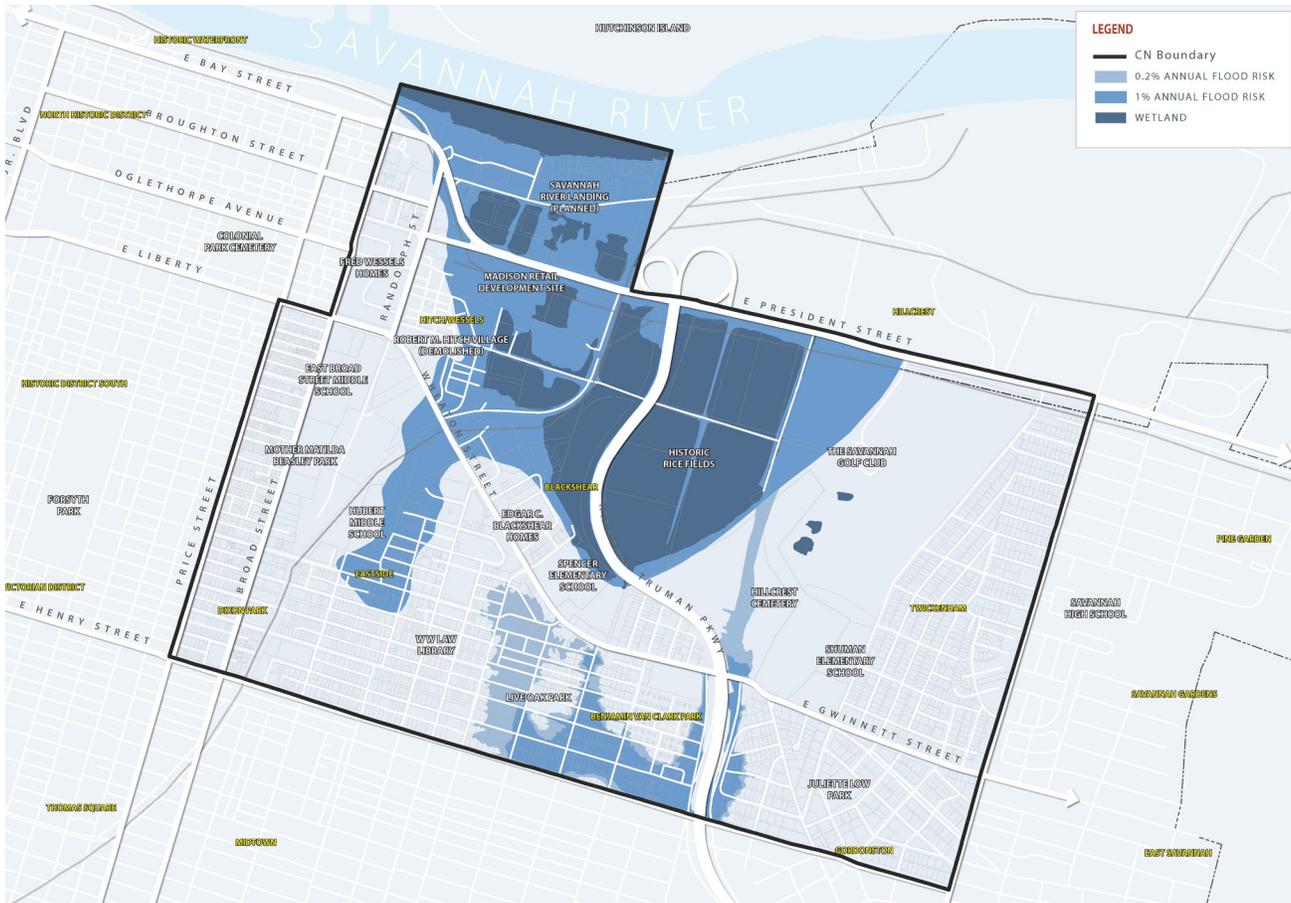


Figure 2a-Floodplain Impacts on the Gateway

	ESG / CN	CITY OF SAVANNAH	CHATHAM COUNTY	STATE OF GEORGIA
<b>Population</b>	<b>7500</b>	<b>142,022</b>	<b>271,544</b>	<b>9,919,945</b>
<b>Persons Under age 18</b>	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>25.4%</b>
<b>Persons 65 or Older</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>63.2%</b>
<b>African American</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>55.4%</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Hispano/Latino</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	<b>59.7*</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>69.7*</b>
<b>Persons Below Poverty Level</b>	<b>40.27%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>
<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	<b>16.99%</b>		<b>6.05%</b>	

\*Graduation rate for Savannah High Liberal Arts High School

Figure 2b - Demographic Comparison

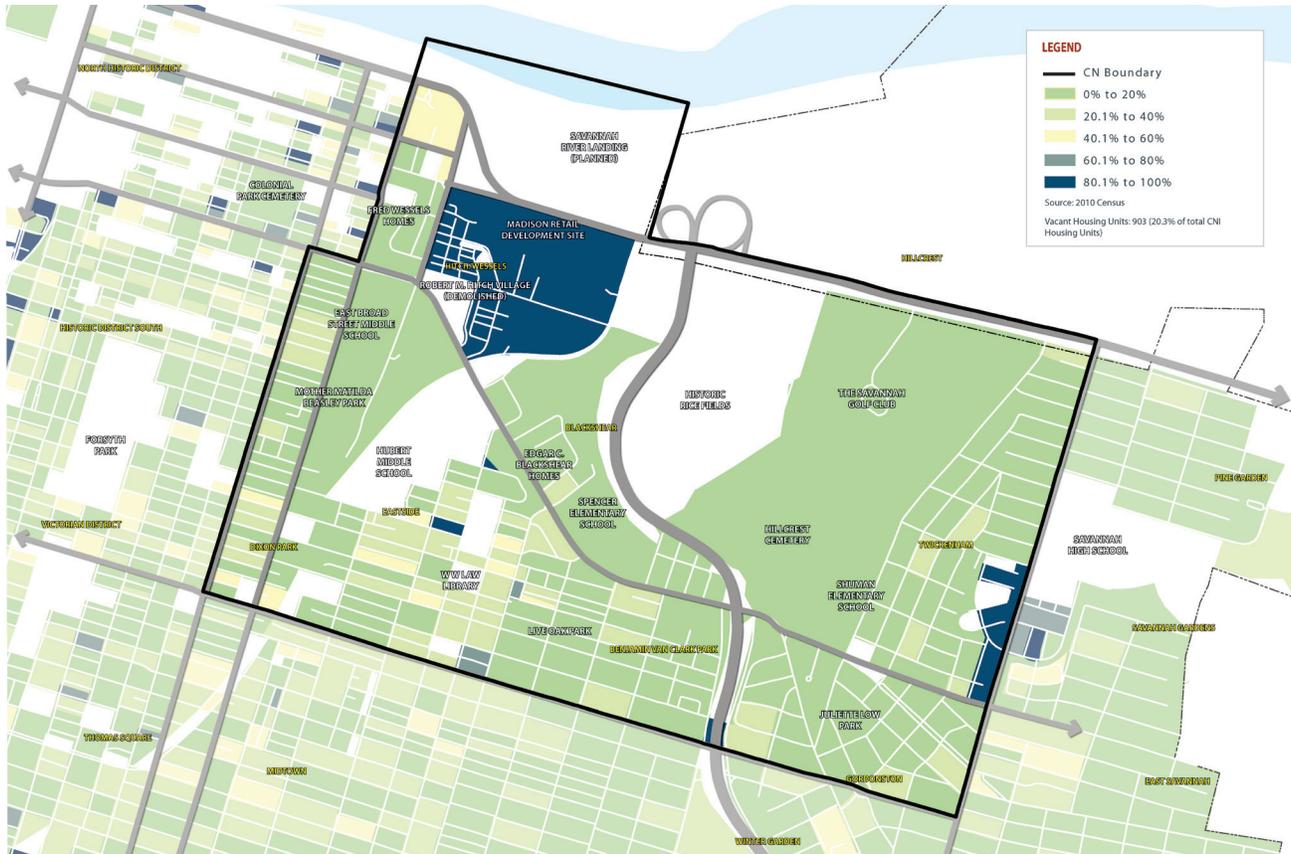


Figure 2c- Housing Vacancy in 2010

more than \$3,333 per month. Primary employment sectors are: accommodation and food service; retail trade; health care and social assistance; administrative support; waste management and remediation. Of Gateway residents who are employed, 95% work outside of the neighborhood. The Gateway is a labor exporter with 3,156 Gateway residents leaving the neighborhood to work and 1,414 non-residents employed in the neighborhood and only 67 who both live and work in the Gateway.

### D. Real Estate Market Profile

**Competitive Rental Environment** – The Gateway’s multi-family rental market is performing well with low vacancy rates. The Gateway’s rental stock includes a mixture of older market-rate communities and three

newer tax credit communities. The multi-family rental market is performing well with a stabilized vacancy rate of 3.6%. The stabilized tax credit vacancy rate was 3.2%. One Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) community opened in late 2012 and reported sixty-six of ninety-four units leased. The twenty-eight occupied units have been leased within approximately one month. The waiting list for Public Housing units through the Housing Authority of Savannah is currently more than 3,200 families. The Housing Authority opened its Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) waiting list from January 9-23, 2013 and over 11,694 applications were received during this two-week period. The waiting list had been closed since 2006 prior to this point.

The average rent among all surveyed general occupancy communities was \$544 for one-bedroom

units, \$675 for two-bedroom units and \$762 for three-bedroom units. These overall averages include older market rate communities and LIHTC units at low median income levels including 30% and 50%. The two newest communities in the market area are mixed-income communities including both LIHTC and market rate units. These communities have the highest rents in the market area including \$690 for a one-bedroom unit (Savannah Gardens), \$870 for a two-bedroom unit (Ashley Midtown), and \$975 for a three-bedroom unit. (source: Preliminary Market Assessment of the East Savannah Gateway, Real Estate Research Group, December 2012)

**Senior Rental Environment** – The Gateway’s senior rental inventory is less diverse than the general occupancy market and is limited to affordable communities. Only one of the four surveyed communities offers units without deep rental subsidies (limited market rate units). The four surveyed senior communities include a total of 356 units, of which only three units were reported vacant. The only senior units without deep rental subsidies are eleven units at The Veranda at Midtown, with one-bedroom rents of \$675 and two-bedroom rents of \$789. (source: Preliminary Market Assessment of the East Savannah Gateway, Real Estate Research Group, December 2012)

**Sale Housing Market Environment** – Forty-four units were identified as currently for-sale near the Gateway boundaries, including a wide range of bedroom sizes and price points. The asking prices ranged from \$19,500 to \$279,900. Among the forty-four homes currently for sale, fourteen were priced below \$100,000, and nineteen were priced from \$100,000 to \$200,000. The only new homes identified as planned within the market area are those at Savannah Gardens. With the

increase in sales, the number of active listings has been steadily decreasing.

The foreclosure rate in ZIP Codes 31401 and 31404 (close to the Gateway) were 0.5%, which is comparable to the City and state rates. More than 1,000 households in the Gateway would be income-eligible for an \$80,000 home, 541 households would income-eligible for a \$150,000, and 331 households eligible for a \$200,000 home. (source: Preliminary Market Assessment of the East Savannah Gateway, Real Estate Research Group, December 2012)

## E. Amenities and Services Profile

The Gateway has been identified as a food desert due to the absence of a full service grocery store. Other needs reported in surveys and charrettes included: a pharmacy, restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, health providers (including dental), recreation centers offering exercise facilities for all ages, and hiker-biker paths.

The neighborhood is served by a number of strong service providers with a presence in the neighborhood including, the Chatham County Department of Family and Children Services, HAS Neighborhood Resource Center, the Curtis V. Cooper Primary Care Health, the Savannah Baptist Center and its “Oasis” for the homeless, and the W.W. Law and Eastside Regional Community Center.

Existing recreation resources include the Blackshear Homes Basketball Complex, Soldiers Field, Live Oak Park, Mother Matilda Beasley Park, Dixon Park and Juliett Gordon Lowe Park. Cultural assets include the Mother Matilda Beasley House, the King-Tisdell Cottage and Old Fort Jackson. Fort James Jackson is a restored 19th century fort located one mile east of Savannah on the Savannah River. It is a National Historic Landmark



and the oldest standing brick fort in the U.S. state of Georgia. In addition to these existing resources, the Gateway has several potential sites of historic or cultural interest including the Historic Rice Fields, the rail right of way for hiker-biker paths, and the Savannah river, which could be better woven into the neighborhood fabric and developed as recreational or cultural attractions. At Savannah Gardens, the Gateway will soon have a public art installation.

## **F. Educational Profile**

The Gateway is served by five public schools all of which are performance-challenged, but striving to improve and making measurable strides. These are East Broad K-8 School, Shuman Elementary School, and Spencer Elementary School, which is slated to be replaced with a new school building. Hubert Middle School and Savannah High School serve older children. Adult education and job training are available to residents at HAS's Neighborhood Resource Center.

## **G. Public Transit Profile**

The Chatham Area Transit (CAT) provides five bus routes within the neighborhood. Route 31 Skidaway/Sandfly; Route 27; Waters Avenue; Route 24 serving Savannah State University and Island Towne Center; Route 12 on Henry Street; and Route 10, East Savannah, stretching from East Broad Street to Pennsylvania Avenue. This is a critical asset to the neighborhood's public housing residents since 60% report not owning an automobile.

## **H. Businesses Profile**

The Gateway has five economic corridors: President Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, Waters Avenue, East Broad Street, and Wheaton Street. Of the 214 businesses in the neighborhood, just twenty-six are members of the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce and twenty-

three of the business have more than twenty employees. Most would not be considered to be neighborhood-serving.

*Additional detail and mapping of community profile data can be found in Appendix A of this Plan.*





# Key Partnerships and the Dynamics of the Planning Process

Critical partnerships have been established and continued during the planning process to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the plan.

## A. Residents

1. Former Residents of Robert Hitch Village
2. Fred Wessels Homes
3. Benjamin Van Clark Park Neighborhood
4. Eastside Concerned Citizens Neighborhood
5. Edgar Blackshear Homes
6. Other City Neighborhoods in the Gateway
7. Gateway Youth Involvement and Leadership

## B. Planning Coordinator & Housing Coordinator

1. Quadel Consulting Group
2. The Hunt Companies - The Communities Group (TCG) Team

## C. Implementation Team / Steering Committee

1. BB&T Bank
2. Benjamin Van Clark Park Neighborhood Association
3. Central Missionary Baptist Church
4. Chatham Area Transit
5. Chatham County
6. Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council (Healthcare Collaborative)
7. CHSA Development, Inc.

8. City of Savannah
9. Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health Care
10. Eastside Concerned Citizens, Inc.
11. Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah Chatham County Area, Inc.
12. Edgar Blackshear Homes Residents Association
13. Fred Wessels Residents Association
14. Gordonston Neighborhood Association
15. Housing Authority of Savannah
16. Lutheran Services of Georgia
17. Metropolitan Planning Commission
18. Neighborhood Residents at Work, Inc. (HAS resident organization)
19. Purpose Built Communities
20. Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
21. The Savannah Bank, N.A.
22. Savannah Chatham Metropolitan Police Department
23. Savannah Chatham Public School System
24. Savannah and Fire Emergency Services
25. Savannah State University
26. Savannah Technical College
27. Second Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church
28. Step Up Savannah, Inc.
29. Trident Sustainability Group
30. Twickenham Neighborhood Association
31. United Community Bank
32. United Way of the Coastal Empire
33. Union Mission, Inc.
34. West Broad Street YMCA
35. Youth Futures Authority

## **D. Existing and Potential Leveraged Resources**

In addition to Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grant funds from HUD, many of the organizations identified above made important commitments to the development of this Plan, either through direct financial support, staff time, or in-kind contributions to support the planning effort.

These organizations have also committed even greater resources towards implementation of the Plan, as summarized in the charts that follow the discussion of the Neighborhood, People, and Housing strategies in Section 5. All committed sources and leveraged resources, including natural, financial, human resources, and physical resources have been captured, evaluated, and expressed in dollars, where applicable, to illustrate the scope of commitments to be used to assist in the successful implementation of the Plan.



4



# Key Transformation Plan Components

The Plan seeks to create a community of diverse sustainable housing and neighborhood choices in which all residents, partners and assets contribute to the overall quality of life and the economic health and well-being of the East Savannah Gateway (Gateway).

## A. NEIGHBORHOOD

### Vision:

“Savannah will be a safe, environmentally healthy and economically thriving community for all its citizens.”

This vision statement was initially adopted by the Savannah City Council under the leadership of former Mayor Dr. Otis S. Johnson and continued under current Mayor Edna B. Jackson. The Gateway consists of eight City residential neighborhoods and this vision is uniformly accepted by all.

### Goal:

To develop a “Neighborhood by Design” plan with pathways to economic opportunities, quality schools and early learning, quality healthcare, healthy foods, sustainable affordable housing, easily accessed public transportation, quality recreation and open spaces with safe and environmentally clean neighborhoods.

Our study of the Neighborhood and its primary corridor – Wheaton Street – revealed a neighborhood that has a

rich heritage but is defined by many in terms of what is missing. Residents are quick to point out the lack of a grocery store, pharmacy, public library, and community recreation center. This is particularly striking because even though amenities do exist at certain locations in the neighborhood, and recent investments along Pennsylvania Avenue are expanding that inventory, the vacuum created by the absence of activity along Wheaton Street overshadows much of anything else. For this reason, the transformation of Wheaton Street is the defining objective and driving force of the entire Gateway revitalization.

There are eight sub-neighborhoods in the study area, but only one Wheaton Street. This is why a new identity should be created around Wheaton, as a destination and the eastern gateway to the Landmark District. The Wheaton Street Corridor will unify the disparate parts of the near East Side and will be a safe, environmentally healthy and economically thriving community for all its residents.

### Situating the Gateway

The recommendations included in this Transformation Plan build on earlier efforts. In particular, the City of Savannah and Chatham County undertook a major effort in 2006 to plan for the future, resulting in the development of the Chatham County - Savannah Tri-centennial Plan. The Tri-centennial Plan looked at the

City and region three hundred years after its founding, and asked Savannahians to create a vision for how it should grow to 2033. They responded with a mandate to “chart a bold new course” while respecting and building on the past.

The Tri-centennial Plan consists primarily of two major documents that shape growth and development in the City:

- The Comprehensive Plan, most recently updated in December 2012
- On-going updates of the City and County zoning ordinance

Many goals of the Tri-centennial Plan are proposed to be implemented through the New Zoning Ordinances (NewZO) process. The NewZO is an effort to rewrite the over half-century old zoning ordinances for the City of Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County. In some cases, zoning districts have been created to specifically reflect the character of existing urban neighborhoods.

The Tri-centennial Plan envisions the next generation of expansions to the Oglethorpe Plan. These “Downtown Expansion” areas extend out from the historic district including an eastward expansion to the CSX rail line on the east side. A “Downtown-Expansion” zoning district is proposed in the NewZO for many areas designated as such in the Comprehensive Plan. This district is being developed to encourage the Oglethorpe pattern of streets, squares and lots up to Randolph Street. The land division pattern between Randolph and the railway is less regular but still preserves the essential features of small blocks with intermittent squares outlined by connecting and trust streets and service and through streets following the Oglethorpe model.

The Downtown Expansion area in the Gateway neighborhood is encumbered by an extensive floodplain which impacts the design of future development including the street grid. However, it does convey the bond the Choice Neighborhood has with the Historic Landmark District, and how urban development policy in Savannah, now that the Historic Landmark District has matured, is directed at its flanks.

Among its major findings, the Tri-centennial Plan cited the following needs:

- The need to expand the City’s successful streetscape improvement programs.
- The need for more public involvement in community planning and development review process.
- The need to expand pedestrian and transit friendly environments.
- The need to reinforce downtown Savannah as the economic, cultural, and governmental hub of the region.
- The need for connectivity, compatibility, and reciprocity (mutual reinforcement) of the development of downtown expansion areas with established downtown development.
- The need to promote affordable housing in all areas by removing development barriers and providing appropriate incentives.

These needs, along with findings from the community needs assessment described earlier, have been factored into the CN planning process and have influenced the resulting goals and strategies, as detailed further in the following section.

## Emerging Priorities

The Choice Neighborhood planning process involved over 250 individuals in a multitude of meetings, conversations and debates on the state of the Gateway today, and priorities for its rebirth in the future. Several topics emerged as major themes, as discussed below.

### Access to Healthy Food

Like many low-income neighborhoods classed as “food deserts,” the Gateway lacks a full-service grocery store, and residents have commented on the need to improve access to healthy food. While adequate market demand has been insufficient to attract a new grocery store (due to declining population), the CN housing program combined with new housing at Savannah Gardens will enhance its feasibility – a point not lost on the developers of President Square, where over 300,000 square feet of new retail is proposed. Full service groceries are not the only way to boost nutritional options for the neighborhood. Agriculture

and horticulture have figured prominently in the area’s past and community-based agriculture and local food is experiencing a resurgence throughout the City.

The Savannah Urban Garden’s Alliance (SUGA) is spearheading the urban gardening movement in Savannah along with Healthy Savannah, Harambee House, and the City of Savannah. SUGA has already sponsored the Growing Edge Community Garden on the west side of the City working with the West Broad YMCA; and the Starfish Community Garden at East Broad and Gwinnett Street is adjacent to the study area. Additional sites are being sought to expand these programs using vacant lots owned by the Housing Authority of Savannah and the City. The City’s Real Property Services office oversees the City’s Community Garden Initiative, which makes publicly owned land available to community groups for community garden sites. Second Ebenezer Baptist Church with expertise from Harambee House is currently using a portion of the Hitch Village site for urban farming. (See Figure 4a - Savannah Existing Food System).

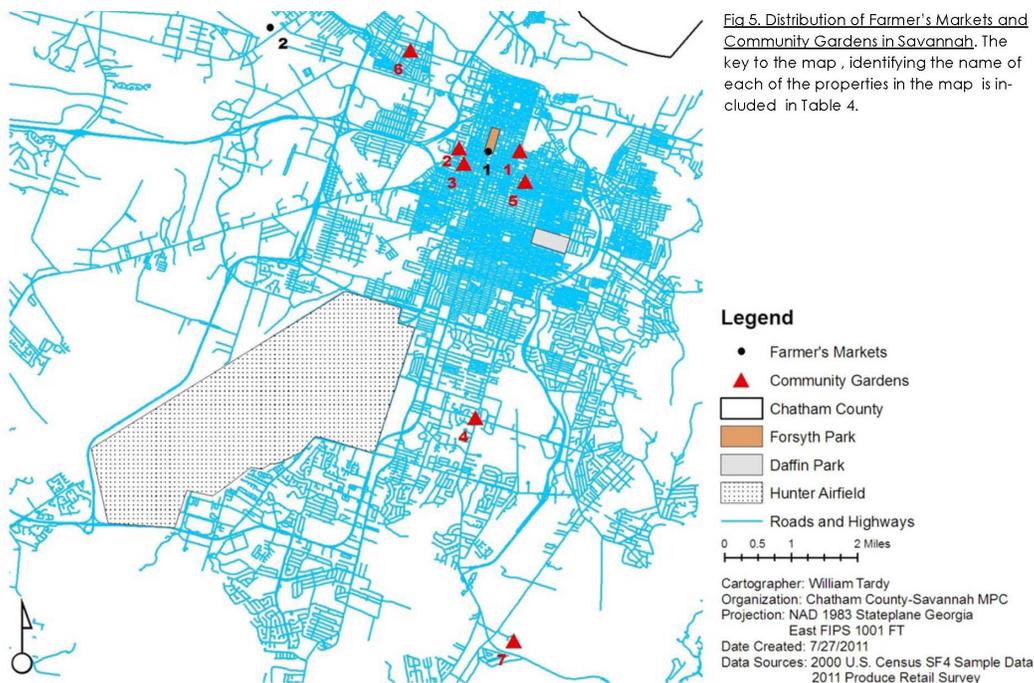


Figure 4a- Savannah Existing Food System

Other potential sites within the Gateway are being studied including lots owned by the County.

The Forsyth Farmers Market Collaborative has received a \$90,000 grant from the Gulfstream Corporation to fund the acquisition and operation of a mobile vending service to provide convenient access to fresh produce to residents of East Savannah for a three year period. Two sites within the Gateway are being considered for the mobile vending: East Broad K-8 and W.W. Law Regional Center.

### **Quality Recreation Space, Cultural Resources & Amenities**

Both the neighborhood survey and the survey of the residents of Hitch and Wessels spotlighted the lack of recreation services. While the City provides programs and services for youngsters and adults at the Eastside Regional Center, its location on Goebel Avenue is separated from most of the Wheaton Corridor by the Truman Parkway. Services and programs are also offered at the W.W. Law Regional Center and Eastside Regional Center, but these existing resources are intensely utilized and lack excess capacity. Several entities are considering how to expand recreation services in the neighborhood including the Coastal YMCA, the West Broad Street YMCA, the City of Savannah, and the Boys and Girls Club. In addition to these efforts, a proposal has emerged to enhance the Trustees Garden area with the addition of a privately financed amphitheater with 1,200 seats that would be able to host concerts and other cultural events.

As near term strategies, Chatham County has committed to develop a new football field and recreation area on the Soldiers Field property west of Hubert Middle School. The projected cost for land acquisition and

developing the field is approximately \$1.1 million with funding allocated by Special Local Option Sales Tax Revenue (SPLOST VI) in 2013 and to be completed in 2015 – 2020. The City of Savannah has committed to providing funding for ongoing operations of the new area, in an amount of \$188,000. The City has also targeted the Blackshear Basketball Complex located on Wheaton Street for up to \$200,000 in improvements, including resurfacing the basketball courts and providing new hoops, with funding allocated in SPLOST VI and completion targeted for 2014.

While highly important, youth-directed recreation is not the only need. Services and amenities for adults and seniors are essential to support health and wellness, combat chronic disease, and promote positive social interaction. The City's Leisure Services Bureau is in the process of updating its Citywide Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide its future investments, with completion of the update anticipated in 2014. The timing of this update is fortunate since the various developments planned and underway for the Wheaton Corridor will increase the number of households living here and needing to be served. *(See Figure 4b – Recreation and Entertainment)*

Chatham County has allocated \$500,000 in the SPLOST VI referendum toward the relocation of the Mother Matilda Beasley House to Mother Matilda Beasley Park off East Broad Street adjacent to East Broad K-8. The house will be used as a cultural center/meeting space. Preservation of this important cultural asset honors the memory of a courageous woman who quietly defied the legal prohibitions of her day to educate African American children. Mother Beasley was the first African American nun in Georgia.

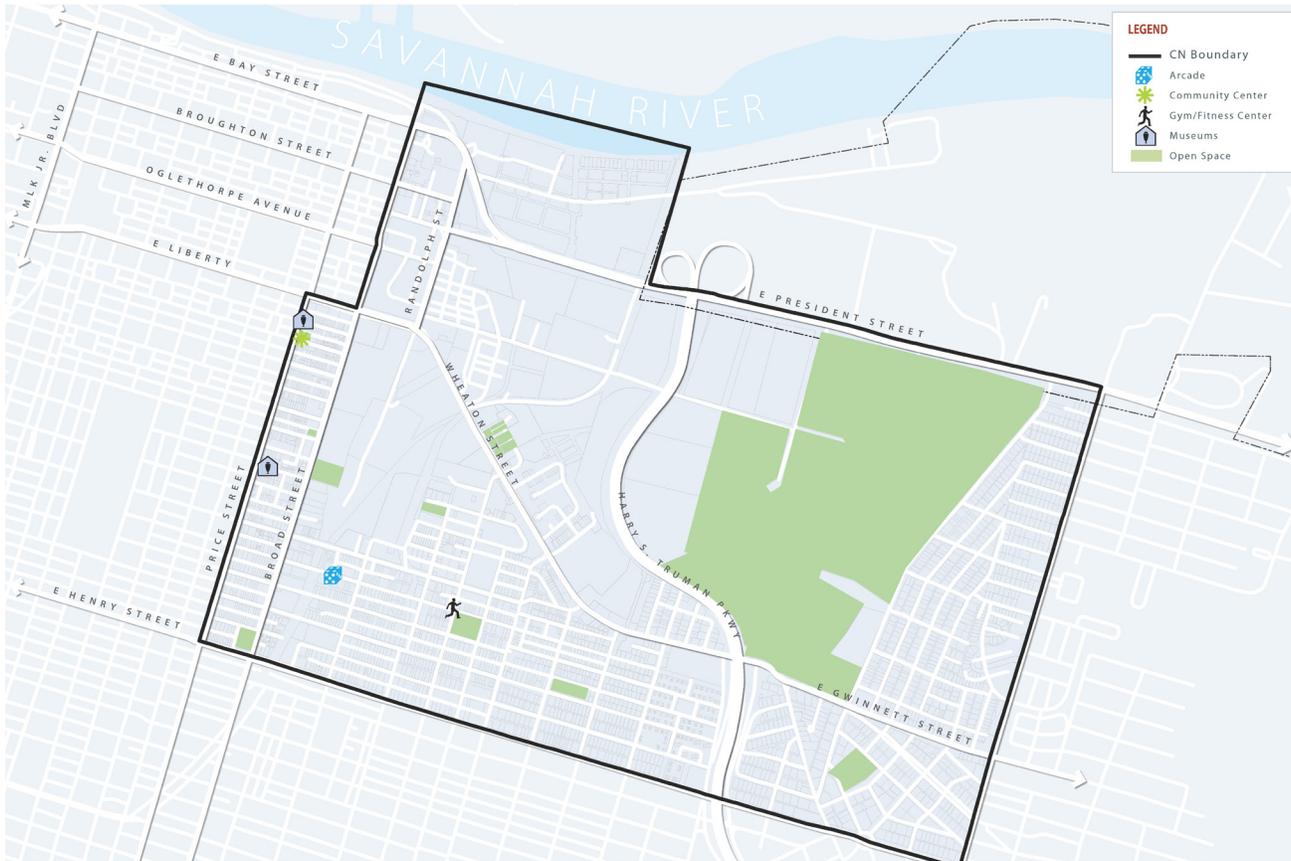


Figure 4b- Recreation and Entertainment

### Investing in Schools

The Education Special Local Option Sales Tax Revenue (ESPLOST) referendum is making possible significant improvements in the schools in the Gateway. These investments fall into three categories and address various important needs.

- A total of \$18.5 million has been allocated for design and construction of a new Spencer Elementary School building;
- \$3.2 million will be spent for academic technology equipment, security upgrades and roofing at Hubert Middle School;
- \$3.0 million is allocated for academic technology upgrades, and HVAC equipment at Shuman Elementary; and

- \$288,159 is allocated for HVAC work at East Broad K-8. (SCCPSS ESPLOST 2 Budget Report, October 2013)

In addition, the Savannah Chatham County Public Schools System will be investing \$1.1 million in technology improvements for all five public schools in the Gateway over the period 2013-2018.

### Safe and Secure

Feeling safe and secure is an important aspect of a livable and desirable neighborhood. Low income neighborhoods tend to be victimized by all types of criminal activity, and this has been the case with the Gateway in the past. Fortunately, the most recent data point to a significant decrease in crime in Savannah.

Studies indicate that perpetrators are often the formerly incarcerated who return to the community. In the United States, 53% of arrested males and 39% of arrested females are re-incarcerated (2003). (See Figure 4c – Gateway 2012 Crime Data)

Better policing has reduced crime in the Gateway over the last three years, and steps must be taken to sustain this trend. To this end, the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department intends to apply for the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program grant in 2014. If awarded, it would allow expansion of a program designed to reduce recidivism through active intervention. The new housing communities within the Gateway are targeted for this crime prevention program to include the identification of “at risk”

households to receive wrap-around services through the Savannah Impact Program. In addition, aggressive code enforcement in areas plagued by vacant and abandoned properties will support safer neighborhood initiatives in the Gateway.

Over the last forty years HAS public housing neighborhood associations have not been recognized as City of Savannah neighborhood associations. A direct result of the CN Planning process has been to identify the dearth of information and services provided to public housing residents due to this omission. The City of Savannah is reviewing the option of including public housing neighborhood associations in its programming for city neighborhood associations. This programming includes monthly updates on



Figure 4c-Gateway 2012 Crime Data

crime statistics and fire/emergency services by both the Savannah Metropolitan Police Department and the Savannah-Chatham Fire Department. Other City departments will also provide periodic updates on City of Savannah program initiatives. City of Savannah neighborhoods have been collaborating with Savannah Metropolitan Police Department by using an on-line neighborhood watch software called “iWatch.” Public housing neighborhoods will have access to this software through the police department beginning in 2014. The software is accessible via computer or smart phone.

HAS is also considering a new housing policy to better cope with juvenile first offenders with the assistance of the Savannah Impact Program and other support service agencies. The objective of the proposed change would be to prevent entire families from losing their housing and becoming homeless.

### **Economic Development**

As highlighted earlier, one of the top priorities for Gateway stakeholders is attracting new retail, especially fresh food grocers and pharmacies, to the neighborhood. The development of the President Square shopping complex will address much of this need. However, retailers make location decisions based on rooftops and the number of households in a target retail area. Therefore, the viability of new quality retail depends in large part on the successful transformation of Hitch Village as well as other neighborhood catalyst sites, with steadily rising household incomes as a measure of that transformation.

The compiled business inventory for the Gateway lists 214 establishments with most located on East Broad Street, Pennsylvania Avenue and Wheaton Street. Twenty-six are members of the Savannah Area Chamber

of Commerce, and most would not be considered as neighborhood-serving businesses. There is a real need to create a business network for the Gateway to empower existing businesses by connecting them with greater resources and encouraging new entrepreneurs to invest and locate in the neighborhood. The Savannah Entrepreneurial Center has been identified as the central location for small business training and networking in the Gateway, although its scope is City-wide. The Center will be offering more training and support for entrepreneurs, including minority- and women-owned businesses, by way of classes and workshops. The Center will also be maximizing partnerships with other business owners through joint training/mentoring programs, as well as providing a venue for incubator space to support new business start-up.

### **Mobility**

Good transportation is an essential element in better linking the residents of public housing with employment and community services and amenities. The Resident Survey indicated that 64% of respondents reported having no automobile; and of those using public transportation 66% rely primarily on Chatham Area Transit (CAT), pointing to the need for comprehensive transit coverage. *(See Figure 4d – Gateway Existing Bus Network).* Several projects that would increase mobility and accessibility are either in the works or proposed as part of various revitalization efforts along the major corridors within the Gateway, including expanded bike facilities, new streetscapes, streetcar transit, and road improvements.

For example, CAT intends to apply for a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) V discretionary grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2014 to further its development

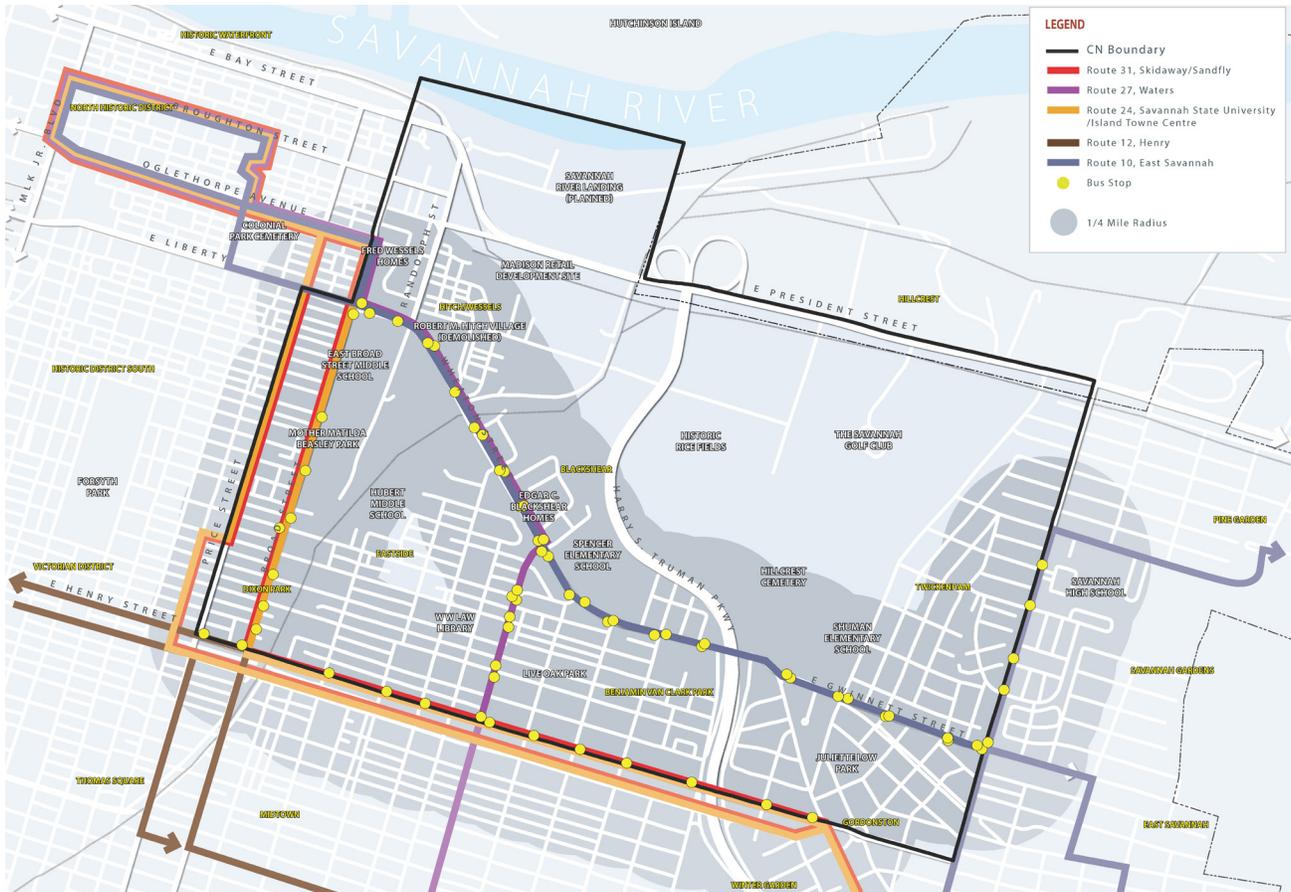


Figure 4d-Gateway Existing Bus Network

of a modern streetcar system. Phase I will provide seamless connectivity between Savannah’s National Landmark Historic and Central Business District and the East and West Downtown Gateways. This 4.9 mile loop would diversify the existing Riverfront Streetcar service beyond primarily a tourist attraction into a more robust transit option expanding the bus network. The proposed alignment along Randolph and Liberty turn Hitch Village and Fred Wessels Homes into transit-oriented development sites, benefiting both residents and project feasibility. A future phase of the streetcar system would extend down Wheaton Street and Waters Avenue. The ability of the Wheaton corridor transformation to affect the viability of the Waters line underscores the mobility linkage between Wheaton and the greater Gateway. The total Phase I cost is

\$59,450,000. CAT has approached the City of Savannah for partial funding of this project which will be decided in CY2014. The design proposal reinforces the goal of reconnecting the Wessels/Hitch area with the City street pattern.

*(See Figure 4e – CAT Phase 1 Streetcar Expansion Plan)*

**A Collection of Corridors:**

The Gateway is anchored by a collection of major East-West and North-South corridors, discussed further in the following section. *(See Figure 4f – Gateway Corridors)*

**President Street**

Within the Gateway, President Street is the most important vehicular link between Downtown Savannah and the eastern islands. It is also the northern terminus

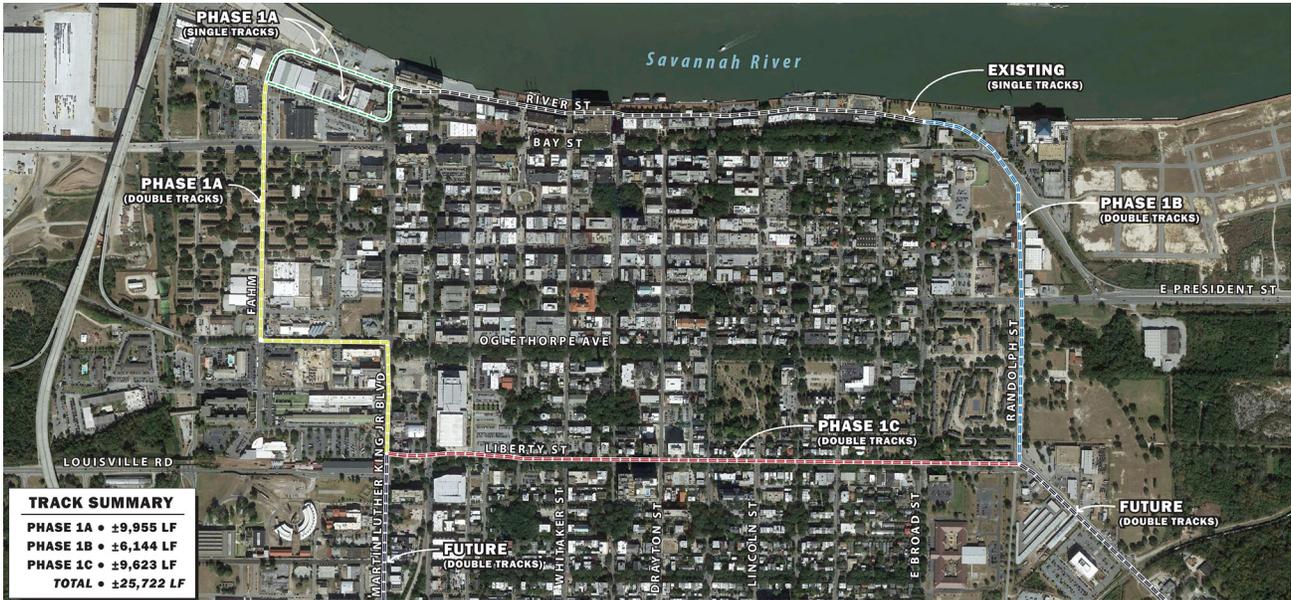


Figure 4e- CAT Phase 1 Streetcar Expansion Plan

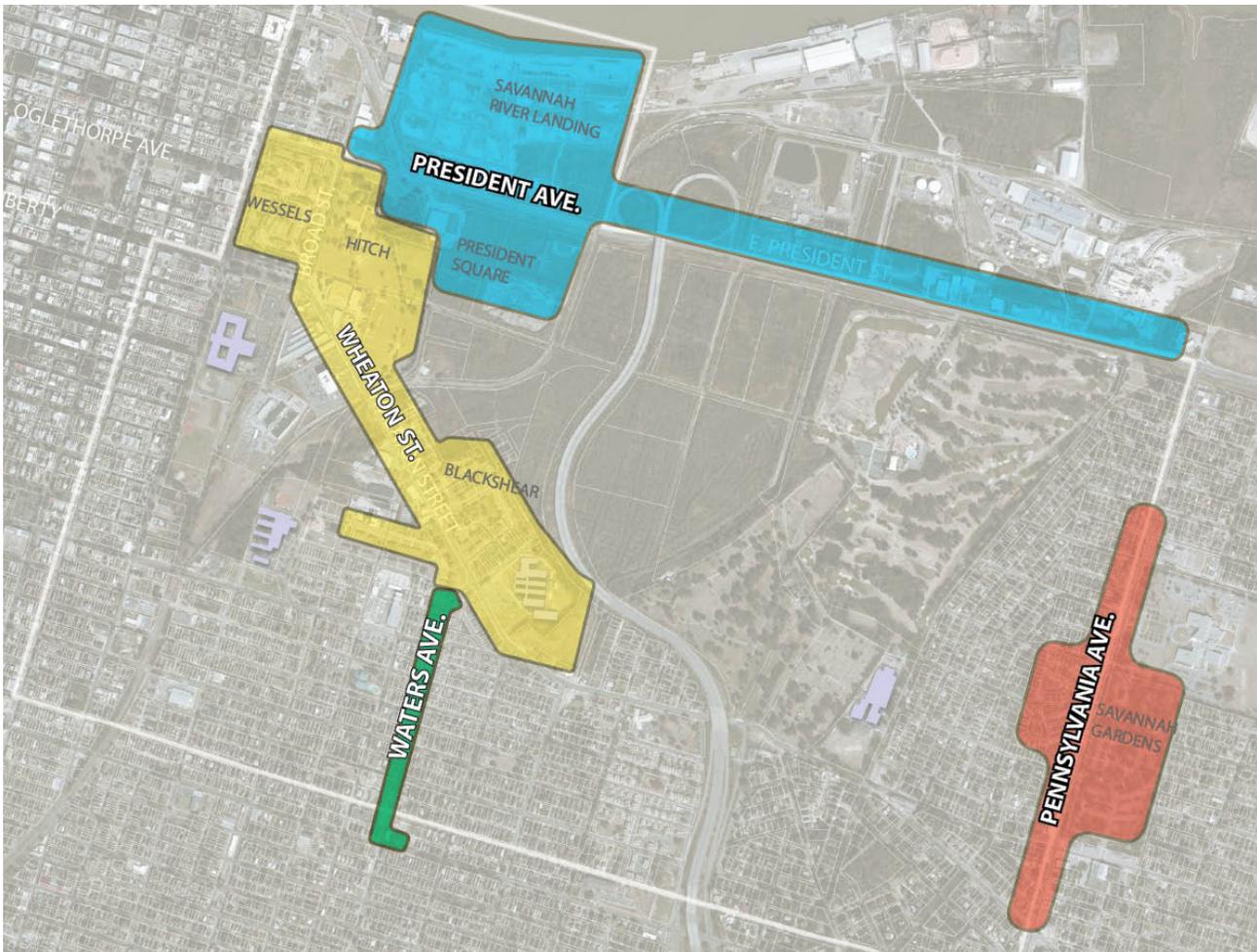


Figure 4f- Gateway Corridors

of Truman Parkway, which is the high-capacity eastern bypass around the center City. These two conditions make for high traffic volumes on President Street, but also for good retail exposure to potential consumers.

In 2007 the City of Savannah and the Metropolitan Planning Commission jointly undertook a study to evaluate the future of President Street in the context of two major development projects capitalizing on the success of downtown – Savannah River Landing, a mixed-use Traditional Neighborhood Development patterned after the urban structure of the Oglethorpe Plan, and President Square, a suburban-style retail center. The study sought to create a multimodal strategy for accommodating existing traffic while broadening access in the future, without compromising the potential for urban design improvement to the street.

As a result of the study, the City of Savannah has committed to making up to \$1.5 million in improvements to President Street from 2015 – 2020, including upgrading it into a six-lane landscaped boulevard with bike facilities with the potential to convert the outermost lanes into future parking. These improvements will clearly link the street to other signature Savannah boulevards such as Oglethorpe, Liberty and Victory Drive. Additional improvements are being made to sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting along the street. Because these improvements strive to balance land use and transportation, it can be thought of as one component in a larger economic development plan for the corridor. Additional redevelopment is almost guaranteed to flow from these public and private investments.

A local developer has already been working on a retail

center development for a land assembly immediately adjacent to Robert Hitch Village primarily to the north. While this would bring welcomed retail development to the Gateway, it also creates challenges for the redevelopment of the Robert Hitch Village site, since the retail center site, President Square, would be raised significantly, creating a wall on the eastern side of the Robert Hitch Village site.

President Square would bring over \$70 million in development and construction jobs, as well as many permanent and part-time jobs. It is still not known when this project will break ground, however, the City has identified funding to remove fill material from part of the site. Currently, the developer of President Square is working on plans for mitigating the impact of its on-site land fill through improvements to flood gates to handle greater amounts of storm water drainage. HAS hopes to have plans ready for an on-site first phase 9% low-income housing tax credit application for the Hitch site in the first round of 2014 competition, followed by a second phase the following year. Given that the Hitch site would be directly impacted by the site mitigation plan for President Square, the development plan for Hitch and the timing of financing applications must be cognizant of this neighboring commercial development. *(See Figure 4g – Presidents Square Proposed Masterplan)*

## **Pennsylvania Avenue**

Pennsylvania Avenue is the primary commercial corridor in the eastern half of the Gateway. Uniting the individual neighborhoods of Twickenham, Gordonston, East Savannah and Avondale, it was a product of WW II-era production at the Southeastern Shipyards and the associated worker's housing that relied on it for access. The avenue was previously too disconnected, local streets prior to the shipyard construction in 1942;



Figure 4g- Presidents Square Proposed Masterplan

but became one major thoroughfare after Strathmore Homes linked the northern and southern halves the following year.

After the war, Tattnell Homes, originally constructed for families of shipyard workers, became veterans housing under the control of HAS. It was highly desirable, but its temporary nature made for ongoing maintenance issues. It was sold to a private investment company in 1954 because of escalating repair costs. The new owners renamed it Savannah Gardens; and as desegregation took effect it diversified over time into an interracial community. It was partially demolished in 1993 as a result of bankruptcy, with the remaining portion renamed Strathmore Estates and marginally improved. With the adjacent 1993 Savannah High School, the City-led transformation of the old Savannah Gardens is a major economic catalyst for the revitalization of Pennsylvania Avenue. In 2008 demolition of Strathmore Estates began, and by the close of 2012 the first three

phases of a new Savannah Gardens were complete. A final phase is scheduled for completion in 2014. With the adjacent 1993 Savannah High School, the City-led transformation of the old Savannah Gardens is a major economic catalyst for the revitalization of Pennsylvania Avenue. Sidewalk improvements, historic designation of the Pine Gardens neighborhood, and potential retail development at Gwinnett Street add to the momentum of this East Side renaissance. As part of this overall effort, Indigo Sky Studios is completing a significant public art project in Savannah Gardens with \$65,000 in funding from the City of Savannah, Meadowlark Studios, Emergent Structures, and the Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation. The project is anticipated to be completed 2014.

Additionally, the City has set aside \$7.25 million of SPLOST VI revenue to fund the development of a new Neighborhood Resource Center. The center will be built adjacent to the Savannah Gardens community

along Pennsylvania Avenue in the footprint of the now demolished Pennsylvania Avenue School; the school first opened in 1945 and was officially closed by the Board of Education in 1992. Although the plans for the center are in the early stages it is expected to house a variety of features, such as health care services, incubator space for small business owners, recording studios and computer labs for young people, as well as senior services.

### **Waters Avenue**

Waters Avenue is the primary north-south corridor in the Gateway, rivaling Abercorn Street in its length and penetration into the southern extension of the City. It links the Gateway to other destinations such as Daffin Park, Grayson Stadium, and the Memorial Hospital / Medical Arts district. Despite its length and prominence, it is a classic walk-able neighborhood street lined with quintessential Savannah architecture and small corner stores. The planning for the revitalization of the Waters Avenue corridor is still underway by the City of Savannah. Like Wheaton Street, Waters Avenue serves as one of the central roadways through the Gateway and was once home to a bustling business center. This revitalization project will bring large investments, both residential and commercial, which could spur a great deal of economic development.

Recognizing the unique character and potential of Waters Avenue, the City has committed to streetscape improvements and marked the corridor for potential long-term streetcar transit. New housing associated with the Ashley Midtown HOPE VI has stabilized the north end, and a planned adaptive reuse of the Romana Riley School into senior apartments will improve and activate the East Anderson / East Henry commercial node. Continued investment in rehabilitation and small

business development is key to transforming the larger Gateway, which Waters Avenue bi-sects. The City Council allocated \$249,000 towards a design contract for the Waters Avenue Revitalization project, which includes bricked sidewalks, new crosswalks, additional lighting and surface improvements. The City has budgeted \$1.5 million in SPLOST IV for completion of the project.

### **Destination Wheaton Street**

This section will touch on prior studies for Wheaton and tee up the potential for transformative catalyst projects, including the HUD-assisted sites.

### **Neighborhood Gateways**

The output of the interactive team charrette in March, 2013 manifested the Wheaton Street Framework Plan recognizing Wheaton Street as the fundamental catalyst for the Gateway. The framework plan revealed that the Wheaton Street corridor serves two major roles; one, as a nexus between the Historic District and East Savannah Neighborhoods; two, as the central spine to unify the Gateway and its components. These two roles have the opportunity to be defined as two distinct gateway nodes on Wheaton Street. It must be noted that the ideas presented below are long term goals that will take years of continued planning and coordination well beyond the Choice Neighborhood activities. However, they do speak to the immense urban development potential of the Gateway.

The **East Savannah Node** sits at the junction of East Liberty Street, Randolph Street, and Wheaton Street. This confluence has the opportunity to become a Transit-Oriented Gateway and a City-wide destination as it sits in a prime position to address the Historic District and introduce the Gateway Neighborhood. The properties around the node are viable candidates

for redevelopment that one can envision at higher densities to help clearly delineate this as a destination.

Supplementary to this notion is the most recent Savannah Streetcar expansion plan which calls for the location of the East Savannah Node to become a transit hub, given that it proposes streetcar lines from Randolph Street and East Liberty Street as a first phase implementation and Wheaton Street in future implementation. This project is grant-dependent but, if funded, sets a fertile stage for a Transit-Oriented Development that can be established using CAT's Transit Oriented Development (T.O.D.) Guidelines currently under preparation.

CAT defines the best practices of T.O.D. as a development that "focuses on creating walk-able, compact, higher intensity mixed use development with housing, jobs, shopping, and community services within a ½ mile radius of transit nodes". These goals are based on three principles: getting the land use right, mobility, and community design. All are meant to encourage non-vehicular modes of transportation as an alternate way to get places.

This opportunity within the parameters of T.O.D. allows for the potential development of programmatic elements for the residents of Savannah, neighbors in the Gateway, and visitors of the City. The desires for amenities such as public libraries, plazas, entertainment, cultural centers, and local business will help establish the Gateway as a new anchor for the City through transit and development.

The **Wheaton Village Node** location on Wheaton Street between Waters Avenue and Cedar Street rightfully sits centrally within the study area and has the ability to

connect the established neighborhoods, the improving neighborhoods, and the environmental amenities of the Gateway. It naturally serves as a candidate for a mixed-use neighborhood center that can become the destination for the residents of the Gateway. In contrast to the East Savannah Node, this hub would reflect the scale and density of the surrounding areas within a finer grain of design that illustrates the needs of a community and the pace of a village. Existing vacant land and potential land for acquisition on the North side of Wheaton Street combine to form the perfect location to establish this neighborhood node with shops, services, local restaurants, small plazas for farmer's markets and events, community centers and a gateway to potential recreation/preservation areas to the north. Further connectivity to the rest of the neighborhood is reinforced by the streetcar extension proposal, bike lane proposal on Wheaton Street, and the Waters Avenue capital improvements. The Wheaton Village node creates a linkage between the community, economy, and environment helping to exemplify the tradition of tight-knit and distinguished neighborhoods in the City of Savannah.

Given that the properties making up the node are in private ownership, implementation of this long range vision will require study and evaluation by the Housing Authority, the City and other key planning stakeholders, as well as the emergence of significant private sector interest and investment.

### **Creating a Great Street**

The reinforcement of the two Wheaton Street nodes is a

*"The importance of Wheaton Street in the history of Savannah was stressed in 1952 when its very existence as a route was threatened by construction of the new Fred Wessels public housing project. In a letter to the Savannah and Chatham County Historic Sites & Monument Committee, Dr. Antonio J. Waring, Jr. outlined its value,*

*"Indian Street, Wheaton Street and Skidaway Road were all that remained of the main Indian path leading [to] the south bank of [the] Savannah River and giving access to the sea islands."" p.5*

**WHEN THE MEADOWS BECAME VAN CLARK  
Historic Benjamin Van Clark Neighborhood  
Trolleys to Today  
Luciana M. Spracher, 2004**

key to defining the Gateway. Subsequently, establishing Wheaton Street as a "Great Street" is of paramount importance to achieving that goal. The physical right-of-way is a vital point of conception for redefining the street's look and the ambiance it evokes. The current state of Wheaton Street leaves much to be desired but has ample room for revitalization. Several exercises that took place during the design charrette in June, 2013 solidified the need and want for "Great Street" essentials; street trees and bike lanes. These simple measures, along with the streetcar proposal, can go a long way in emphasizing Wheaton as a great multi-modal street. A consistency in design and character will help create the cohesion required to craft a firm pedestrian connection between two major nodes.

In conjunction with capital improvements comes the need for better street frontage to help define the street

edge. The Housing Authority has the ability to set the precedent on Wheaton St through the strategic infill and rethinking of Blackshear which lies adjacent to the street edge throughout a large portion of Wheaton Street. By facing buildings towards and embracing the street, Blackshear can influence and encourage the desired form of future developments along Wheaton Street. These design priorities will be factored into the detailed redevelopment planning for Blackshear based on the final concepts for the site, discussed further in Section 4.C – Housing.

### **Linking North and South**

The tactical connection between the east and west delineates a clear picture of the assembly and bond between the areas to the North and to the South of the Wheaton Street Corridor. While the largest land area within the Gateway, the historic rice fields that adjoin the east of the Hitch site, should not be developed on, it is also one of the most unique opportunities that the neighborhood contains. This land is made up of the historic rice fields and drainage canals that have now become a habitat for many animals and help ameliorate the area's ability to handle large storms. Within this land lies the opportunity for conservation and recreation. Following the path of many states of converting wetlands into didactic destinations with boardwalks and interpretive signage creates a significant asset and education opportunity for the neighborhood while securing the preservation and enhancement of the area's natural assets.

Like great cities that blend the urban with the natural, the points of intersection between the Gateway wetlands and the Corridor nodes once again reinforce connectivity between community, economy, and environment. These contact points can be turned into

educational and recreation facilities that embody the symbiotic relationship between the developed and natural aspects of the Gateway. Furthermore, as the historic rice fields act as part of the constitutional grid of the neighborhood, so does the existing railway line that almost runs perpendicularly to Wheaton Street. This force sets the stage for a potential physical pedestrian connection between the conservation area and the Southeast Gateway area of Hubert Middle School through the form of a linear park.

Input from the community participants at the design charrette in June, 2013 indicated a clear desire for such pedestrian/cyclist amenities, along with supplementary assets such as picnic areas, planted noise barriers from the railway, and connections to other proposed bikeways such as those on Paulsen Street and Wheaton Street. Further strengthening the linear park idea would be its ability to connect to other potential commercial areas within the Gateway. To the southeast at the intersection of East Gwinnett Street and the Railway, a potential gateway to the linear park, lays a unique area of history, preservation and potential development that could become one of many commercial nodes connected to the larger picture of the East Savannah Neighborhood. These steps would not only enhance mobility and recreation options for residents, but support efforts to bring others to the Gateway that might be interested in historic or cultural attractions such as the wetland rice fields, the Trustee's Garden area, or the Savannah river.

Similar to the Wheaton Village node, the potential for leveraging the role of the rice fields and the railway line as recreational and cultural amenities within the Gateway remains a conceptual, albeit very exciting possibility as part of the larger vision for revitalization. The City of Savannah, Chatham County, the Coastal

Heritage Society and other partners will pursue as a strategy exploring the idea of creating a linear park through the rice fields as part of a broader conservation and recreation strategy for the area. This exploration will include further refining the concepts, determining the budgetary requirements and identifying a champion to carry the ideas forward, as well as considering applying for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF) grant funds from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the 2014 grant cycle.

## Creating the Gateway

### Community Visioning and Values

The synthesis of data gathered from the workshops and the Neighborhood Task Force reveals that most parties involved believe a common set of elements will create a cohesive and complete neighborhood.

These elements include:

- **Transportation Access:** Stronger bus connectivity, support for the extension of the streetcar, and proper bicycle facilities.
- **Community Facilities and Education:** Community centers, outdoor and indoor recreation and learning centers, career resources and job training.
- **Commercial Assets and Services:** A complete grocery store, health and wellness services, and retail areas within the Gateway.
- **A Human Scale Neighborhood:** Walk-able retail and neighborhood centers, low to mid rise buildings with proper street frontage, pedestrian friendly and inviting streets.

Residents of the Gateway imagine the economic rebirth of a previously vibrant, financially viable corridor



that had commerce, retail and residential within close proximity and where neighborhood residents could live near their work. While this is the vision for Wheaton Street, there are multiple opportunities to extend this vision into the larger area and leverage the concentrated revitalization on Wheaton into a broader program for the entire Choice Neighborhood. Clearly, there is widespread interest in the needs and potential of the Gateway as evidenced by significant financial commitments from both the public and private sectors. Led by the proposed housing redevelopments and an array of additional quality of life enhancements, the Gateway is poised to reverse its loss of population and invite a mix of incomes capable of supporting a strong retail and commercial base.

The specific Gateway Neighborhood-level activities highlighted in this Transformation Plan are summarized in the following chart.

Goal	Strategy	Lead Agency	Leverage Resources	Timeframe
1. Improve access to healthy food within the Gateway	1a. Promote the development of a farmers market/pavilion within the Gateway and regular mobile vending of fresh produce from local sources	Forsyth Farmers Market Collaborative	\$90,000 (Gulfstream Aerospace)	2014-2017
	1b. Collaborate with local urban gardening organizations to initiate an urban gardening plan in the Gateway by providing excess lots that are not buildable to groups for planting	HAS Savannah Urban Garden Alliance (SUGA) Harambee House	None Required	2014-ongoing
2. Increase the number and variety of recreation assets and services available to Gateway residents	2a. Complete improvements to the Blackshear Basketball Complex	City of Savannah-Parks & Recreation Services Department	\$200,000	2014
	2b. Update the Citywide Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide new recreational investments in the Gateway	City of Savannah-Leisure Services Bureau	To be determined	2013-2014
	2c. Relocate the Mother Matilda Beasley house to park	Chatham County	\$500,000 (SPLOST VI)	2015-2020
	2d. Renovate Soldier Field by creating a second football field and a new recreation area ( includes land acquisition) Operating expenses	Chatham County City of Savannah, Dept. of Leisure Services	• \$1.1 million (SPLOST VI) • \$188,000	2015-2020 2014-2015
	2e. Galvanize resources to create a linear park incorporating the historic rice fields in the Gateway	City of Savannah Chatham County Coastal Heritage Society	To be determined (potential funding from GA Department of Natural Resources)	2014-ongoing
3. Provide upgrades to school technology, modifications and replacement of buildings for Gateway schools	3a. Complete academic technology improvements scheduled for the five schools in the Gateway	SCCPSS	\$1.1 million (ESPLOST II)	2013-2018
	3b. Complete additions and modification for the five schools in the Gateway	SCCPSS	\$6.4 million (ESPLOST II)	2013-2018
	3c. Replace the Spencer Elementary school building	SCCPSS	\$18.5 million (ESPLOST II)	2013-2018
4. Continue the downward trend of Part I and Part II crimes in the Gateway as the population increases	4a. Review the potential to integrate regular updates by both the Savannah Metropolitan Police Department and the Savannah Fire Department on crime and fire/emergency statistics as well as public issues pertinent to the community at public housing neighborhood monthly meetings	City of Savannah	None Required	2014-ongoing

Goal	Strategy	Lead Agency	Leverage Resources	Timeframe
	4b. Explore the creation of a policy to avoid the termination of a family's lease when a youth member of the household commits a first offense	Housing Authority of Savannah	None Required	2014-ongoing
	4c. Broaden community enforcement techniques to pro-actively address households identified at "high risk" of termination in the new housing target area within the Gateway	Savannah Metropolitan Police Department Savannah Impact Program	To be determined (potential funding through the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovations Grant)	2014
	4d. Promote and incorporate access to the free "i Watch" online suspicious behavior reporting tool used by other City of Savannah neighborhoods in public housing neighborhoods within the Gateway	City of Savannah	None Required	2014-ongoing
5. Improve connectivity of Gateway residents to Downtown Savannah, jobs and amenities	5a. Expand the streetcar line from River Street to the Gateway- Phase 4 of an overall Transportation Development Plan.	Chatham Area Transit	To be determined (potential funding from the City of Savannah and the TIGER grant)	2014
6. Continue improvements to the major corridors within the Gateway	6a. Complete President Street renovations	City of Savannah	\$5 million (SPLOST VI)	2015-2020
	6b. Complete the President Square retail development project	Madison Retail	\$70 million	To be determined
	6c. Complete a public art project in Savannah Gardens	Indigo Sky Studios	\$ 65,000 (City of Savannah, Gulfstream Aerospace, Emergent Structures & Meadowlark Studios)	2012 - 2014
	6d. Develop a Neighborhood Resource Center on Pennsylvania Avenue	City of Savannah	\$7.25 million (SPLOST VI)	2015-2020
	6e. Prepare a streetscape design plan for Waters Avenue	City of Savannah	\$250,000 (City of Savannah) \$1.5 million (City of Savannah)	2013-2014
	6f. Complete infrastructure improvements along Waters Avenue, including repairs to sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting , surface improvements	City of Savannah		2015-2020

## B. PEOPLE

### Introduction:

While the Neighborhood and Housing components of the Transformation Plan will help to revitalize the built environment, improve amenities, and enhance the appearance and livability of the Gateway, the People component addresses the economic and social health and wellbeing of its residents.

### Vision:

Diverse and sustainable community choices contribute to the overall measurable improvement in the quality of life, and economic health and well-being of all residents in the East Savannah Gateway.

### Goal:

To create successful outcomes for children and their families through increased opportunities for quality education, expanded access to employment, training, health services, recreational and youth services.

### Community Needs Assessment

The Housing Authority and its partners conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to identify and analyze the needs of public housing residents and the broader community using the following methods:

**Taskforce Meetings:** The People Taskforce, which was divided into two sub-committees that focused on education and community supportive services, met on a monthly basis. These meetings allowed various community stakeholders to give their input into the development of the Plan. The People Task Force worked collaboratively with Savannah State University, program management consultants and resident leaders to create a needs assessment survey instrument.

**Surveys:** Surveys of former Hitch Village residents and current residents of Fred Wessels Homes were conducted to obtain baseline data on resident needs. A total of 330 questionnaires were distributed and 206 households completed surveys for a completion rate of 62 percent. With the help of Savannah State University, over 200 residents in the East Savannah Gateway public housing communities were surveyed along with over 200 residents from the larger Gateway neighborhood. Over 100 youth from the community were also surveyed. The needs assessment establishes important baseline metrics and has aided the planning process in setting priorities and selecting appropriate strategies.

**Youth Advisory Board (YAB):** As part of the CN Planning activities a Youth Taskforce was developed and charged with establishing the Youth Advisory Board. The Gateway Youth Advisory Board was created in May of 2013. The YAB consisted of young people who lived, attend school, and/or were consistently involved in activities that took place in the Gateway community. The YAB met bi-weekly and helped in the development of the Transformation Plan by providing insight into community issues and needs from their perspective. Another goal of the YAB was to encourage Gateway youth to become leaders within their community. The YAB participated in leadership workshops, training activities and learning events, all designed to prepare them as future community leaders. HAS partnered with the Dream Campaign, a local nonprofit organization that focuses on youth leadership development. The Dream Campaign played a key role in organizing YAB activities and training.

**Neighborhood Charrette:** The Housing Authority of Savannah organized a community-wide charrette in June, 2013 with more than 100 residents and mem-

bers of the community. Following a brief review of activities and findings to-date, the attendees made their way through six planning stations and weighed in on various aspects of the proposed plan for the Gateway, the former site of Hitch Village, and Wheaton Street.

**Asset Mapping:** Data on neighborhood demographics, indicators, assets, and challenges were also collected from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and consultants portrayed these data on over 65 maps of the Gateway.

### Resident Needs

The data gathered from the various methods outlined above helped the planning team to identify the key needs that the Plan addresses. These needs are outlined below:

#### Affordable Early Learning Centers for Ages

**0-4:** The data collected regarding the childcare facilities in the ESG shows that the vast majority are small family run operations with limited capacity and resources. This information, paired with data from local educators regarding kindergarten readiness, highlighted the difference between early learning and child care. In the HAS Resident Survey, 43% of respondents said that they had a child under the age of five. However, 80% of respondents stated that their child did not attend a formal daycare center and 56% of respondents indicated that the primary reason that these youth were not enrolled in daycare was because of the cost. One of the top reasons why the respondents were not working or in job training was because they lacked childcare. In the Neighborhood Survey, 48% of respondents indicated that lack of childcare was a problem. Lack of childcare was also indicated as one of the top missing amenities pinpointed in the Neighborhood Charrette held in June, 2013.

Further study, research and discussions with educators indicated that too many children in the Gateway enter kindergarten without mastery of the basic skills that enable learning. These include social skills such as emotional control, fine motor skills such as correctly holding a pencil or scissors, and other basic skills including the ability to recognize colors, numbers and letters. It became clear that merely insuring access to day care would not fully address the need to prepare children for entering kindergarten and that child care and early learning are not equivalent. The Gateway needs child care that encompasses a strong early learning program designed to ensure kindergarten readiness and that program must be affordable and accessible to the lowest income families.

#### Employment and Career Training:

60% of people in the Resident Survey indicated that they did not have a job. The vast majority of the Gateway has an unemployment rate of 15% and higher. Many of those who are employed work in industries that pay low wages or are employed part-time.

#### Primary and Secondary Educational Needs:

When HAS first applied for the Choice Neighborhood Planning grant, four of the five schools located in the area were on the County School Board's "needs improvement" list. Since that time there have been improvements in performance scores, but more progress is needed. The most recent 2013 data measuring school performance under the State of Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) show improvement, but schools in the Gateway continue to score below State norms in all measures including reading and math.

#### Health Care Services Needs:

The Gateway has only one source of primary care. The Resident Survey

indicated that two out of five households used the emergency room when sick. Among children one in five children have a disability; one in four have learning disability; one in five have an emotional disorder; and one in five have a speech impairment; nearly two out of three were being treated for asthma. One in four households reported a lack of health insurance. A lack of service providers was also cited. Both physical and behavioral health needs require attention.

Our study of existing needs and resources indicates that the array of available services mirrors many of the needs identified. However the linkage between community resources and individuals and households needs to be strengthened through individualized needs assessment, information and referral, and coaching and counseling similar to a case management approach.

## Education

As a sub-group of the People Taskforce, the Education Subcommittee met on a monthly basis to develop strategies that will address student performance and continue to improve the educational outcomes of the students residing in the Gateway community. One of the initial outcomes of the Education Subcommittee was the development of the Gateway education pipeline logic model. *(See Figure 4h – Gateway Cradle-to-Career Pipeline)*

The model provides a visual representation of the educational path that public housing youth travel as they matriculate through the schools in the Gateway as well as the learning institutions at each stop along the way. The model helped the Subcommittee not only to better visualize the specific path that each youth is on but also the various organizations that provide assistance to students, families and schools in the Gateway. Through this

*“One of the primary problems facing the educational system is that education is undervalued. Students begin school without adequate preparation at home, do not have strong community or parent support to remain in school, and leave school before they are prepared for further education or the workplace.” P. 19*

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visual representation the taskforce was able to identify gaps in services that could be addressed through the CN implementation phase.

Other early learning small group meetings were held with the Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA), Wesley Community Center, and the Savannah Early Learning Foundation. The group discussed the possibility of creating an early learning center in the Gateway, where EOA and Wesley would provide care for children ages 0-4. Both programs would prepare youngsters to transition into public school Pre-K program. Savannah Early Learning Foundation might be able to support the initiative. However, further research and discussion is planned to explore cost, facility needs, etc.

Additional outreach was conducted to engage neighborhood school principals. Small group meetings with school principals in the Gateway were held in February, 2013 to gain more insight regarding the specific needs of each school and elicit ideas regarding how community stakeholders can help students be successful. As a result of the meetings, the following suggestions were provided:

- Use Parent University model to create parent training program that addresses the unique needs of

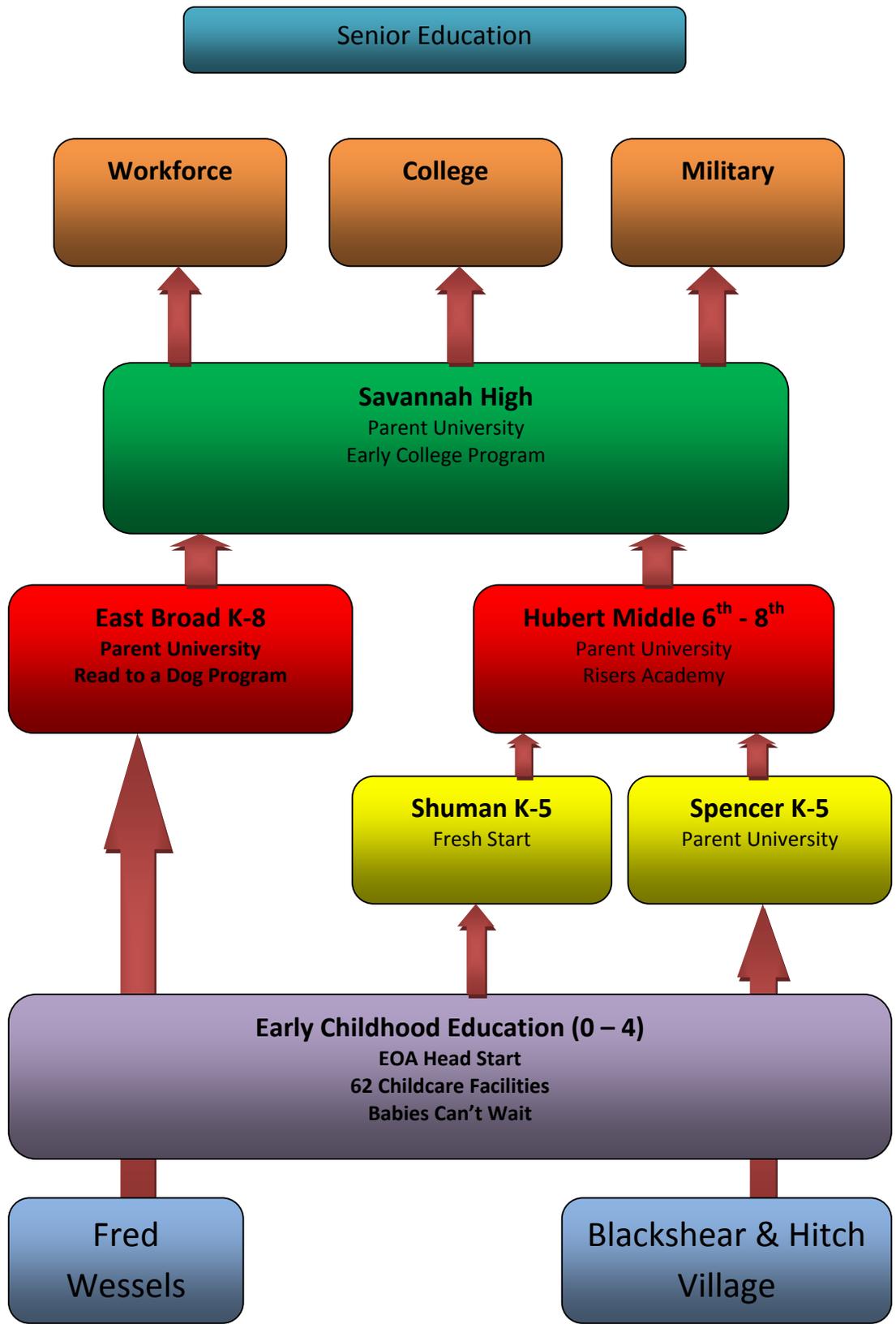


Figure 4h - Gateway Cradle-to-Career Pipeline

parenting youth in transition (from elementary to middle to high school)

- Recruit/appeal to business partners and encourage long term commitment and adoption of neighborhood schools. Encourage businesses to commit to donating “Human Capital” to serve as mentors for youth
- Focus efforts on children age 0-3

As a result of these meetings, the task force has begun outreach to other partners to assist in meeting the identified needs.

One area of focus of the discussions was the need for an early learning facility in the Gateway. Although data gathered by the Early Childhood Learning Foundation show that there are 62 childcare facilities in the Gateway, only 3 are Head Start centers. This has led to a significant percentage of children in the Gateway entering kindergarten ill-equipped with the skills that Chatham County kindergarten teachers have designated as most critical for student success. Task force members have discussed ways to increase Head Start funding locally and discussed the need to require degrees for Head Start teachers and encourage licensed day care facilities to participate in Georgia’s Quality Rated Improvement System (QRIS).

Youth Futures Authority (YFA) of Savannah has taken the lead on an exciting new mini-grant program, YFA Cares, which will provide grants to up to five ESG licensed childcare providers to motivate them to apply for the QRIS and become a rated facility. The process of becoming QRIS certified will help to improve the services of these providers in several ways. Quality enhancements include increased parental/guardian involvement and outreach, increased developmental screening activi-

ties, enhanced classroom interactions, and enhanced classroom environments. These improvements will ultimately translate into more children entering kindergarten with the skills to be successful. This will also increase the accessibility to quality early learning opportunities for families living in the Gateway. In a related effort, Live Oak Public Libraries has agreed to expand its “Book Drop” program to five daycare centers in the Gateway. YFA will assist in identifying the five centers as part of the Georgia Grade Level Reading Initiative. The importance of initiatives to address the development of young readers cannot be overstated.

Another key partnership that has come about as a result of the planning process is with the Savannah Early Childhood Foundation (SECF). The SECF’s mission is to secure funding, deploy financial resources and track and measure outcomes for services dedicated to enhancing the well-being of children and their parents in impoverished areas of the Savannah community from birth through age five. SECF is the primary funder of Parent University, which is a community collaborative that supports families. This initiative encourages parent involvement and participation in the education of Savannah’s children and youth. Parents are equipped with more knowledge and skills to successfully advocate for their child’s education. Parent University’s main objective is to maximize student learning by creating a strong bridge between the community and the school through enabling “parents” to teach each other; training “informed parents” to work together with schools to create paths for student success; and providing support, guidance and nurturing to assure the realization of family success. Parent University is in its second year of operation at East Broad K-8, which is one of the schools located in the Gateway. The program has been very successful and has expanded its reach to in-

clude Shuman Elementary, which is also in the Gateway neighborhood. Parent University's goal is to ultimately have a program at every school in the Gateway.

The Wesley Community Centers of Savannah (WCCS), which oversees two early childhood learning centers in Savannah, has also been an essential partner throughout the entire planning process. WCCS is nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (N.A.E.Y.C.) which is the highest ranking professional organization that promotes excellence in early childhood education. In November of 2012 WCCS presented a formal proposal for the potential development of an early childhood learning center within the Gateway. If developed, this would be the only N.A.E.Y.C accredited early learning center in the area. Coupled with the other activities mentioned this addition would greatly increase accessibility to quality early childhood learning opportunities for families in the Gateway. However, the success of this particular proposal is contingent upon attaining other funding resources.

As mentioned above, schools in the Gateway have shown significant improvement in areas such as truancy and CRCT reading scores, however there are still major challenges that the schools face in regard to improving student performance. To help build the capacity of the Gateway schools and help them in their efforts in educating students, HAS began the process of becoming formal business partners with the five Gateway schools. HAS staff met with the principals of East Broad K-8, Hubert Middle School and Spencer Elementary to get a better understanding of how HAS could best serve the schools as an official business partner. As a result of these meetings, the three principals identified several common areas by which business partners could be

most effective. These areas include:

- Getting the word out to other local businesses to become official business partners with Gateway schools.
- Recruiting local volunteers to spend time in the schools and show students that the community cares about their success.
- Helping with supplies for students who come to school without proper materials.

In order to address these issues HAS will complete the business partner application posted on the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System website. HAS will also advocate on behalf of the Gateway schools and encourage other businesses, non-profits, and social organizations to also become formal business partners each. HAS will begin this advocacy with the various organizations that have participated in the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant activities.

Secondly, members of HAS staff will be encouraged to volunteer at each school regularly. Our goal is to have at least one member volunteering at each school each month. To help us better organize our volunteering initiative, each school will provide a list of potential events and/or volunteering opportunities that will take place throughout the year or on a monthly basis. These opportunities will be placed on HAS internal calendar as well as HAS website so that HAS staff and others in the community will be aware of the dates and times of these events.

Finally, HAS understands that the student's ability to complete assignments is hindered tremendously when they come to school without adequate materials and supplies (i.e. writing utensils, paper, notebooks, etc.). This also places an extra burden on the staff to provide

these supplies. To help address this problem HAS will contribute \$500 per school year to each of the schools listed above for student materials and supplies.

Partners such as the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System and the Youth Futures Authority will be valuable resources for data on educational achievement. Metrics such as those reflected below will also be tracked by individual family by our case management team.

- Number and percent of children enrolled in an early learning program
- Number and percent of children enrolled in neighborhood schools
- High School graduation/completion rate
- Number and percent of students at or above grade level according to State mathematics and reading or language arts assessments in at least the grades required by the ESEA (3rd through 8th and once in high school)\*

## Health

Stakeholders such as the University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension, Coastal Health District, and the African American Health and Information Resource Center will provide access to prevention programs including:

- Diabetes Prevention
- Healthy Food Preparation
- Cancer Prevention
- Walk Georgia

To help increase the access to health for the children in the Gateway, Curtis V. Cooper health clinic will be establishing a school based dental clinic at East Broad K-8 beginning with the 2014-15 school year.

Expanded Food and Nutrition Programs and other seminars in the areas identified above will be offered in

small group sessions throughout the Gateway. University of Georgia Cooperative Extension will offer seminars to HAS residents on a quarterly basis. Other providers will be tapped for programs at various points throughout the year; these include: the Coastal Health District, the African American Health and Information Resources Center; and Lutheran Services of Georgia. Primary healthcare services are currently provided by Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health Care, Inc., in the Gateway. A range of services and programs are available for behavioral health issues from The Counseling Center of Union Mission. For youth these include child and adolescent screening services, evaluation for psychotherapy and play therapy. Substance abuse and mental health services are provided to adults and adolescents. Jail diversion therapy encompasses anger management and family violence intervention. Women's Empowerment treats victims of domestic violence. Those areas to be tracked will include:

- Number and percent of residents who have a place where they regularly go other than an emergency room when they are sick or need advice about their health
- Number and percent of residents who have health insurance
- Number and percent of residents, including children, with hypertension, asthma, obesity, diabetes

## Economic Self Sufficiency

Partnerships with the Chatham County Human Resources Department, Economic Opportunity Authority, and Georgia Department of Labor will continue to facilitate Employment Training Workshops quarterly. Representatives from community organizations host employment workshops at HAS Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) that cover resume preparation, dressing for success, interviewing skills, and effective job search

strategies. In addition, through the HOPE VI endowment program, many Gateway residents are eligible to receive funding for employment training.

The People Task Force continues to build upon current partnerships and collaborations to increase the number of partner agencies that will offer employment opportunities and training to residents of the Gateway. These efforts will be directed at increasing the number of well-paying jobs within the Gateway and increasing the number of these jobs available to Gateway residents to reverse the current net outflow of workers to areas outside of the Gateway (See Figure 4i- Employment Inflow-Outflow).

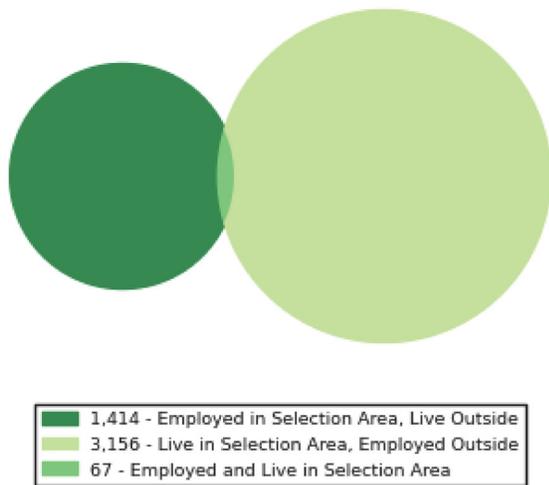
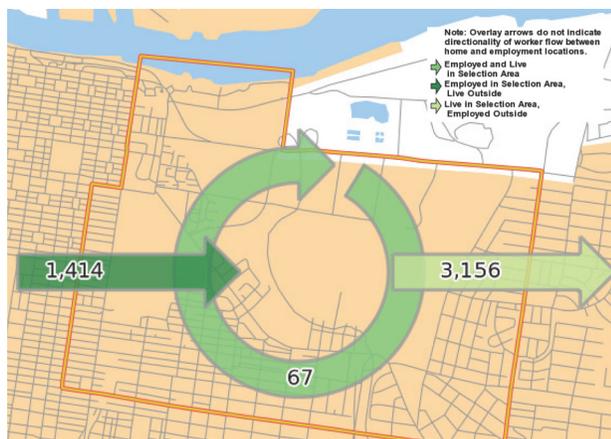


Figure 4i- Employment Inflow/Outflow - 2010

Goodwill Industries, Chatham Apprentice Program, Coastal Workforce Services, Culinary Arts Program at Grace’s Kitchen all currently provide short term employment skills training for under-employed community members. Those programs will be utilized to provide solid skills training and connectivity to available employment. Large employers such as Gulf Stream and Georgia Port Authority will be approached in an effort to create specialized training modules and/or apprenticeship opportunities that would connect residents to higher wage earning positions.

The CN planning process has helped to strengthen HAS’s partnership with the Savannah Entrepreneurial Center. The center hosts bi-annual Entrepreneurship Workshops to encourage participants to create small businesses. The Savannah Entrepreneurial Center, Wells Fargo Bank, and the Small Business Assistance Corporation work together to provide information about business plans, financing, and marketing. HAS Resource Center also serves as a referral source to the Entrepreneurial Center. Key areas related to resident economic self-sufficiency to be tracked will include:

- Number of households at or below the poverty line
- Number/percent of adult residents that are employed
- Number of adults enrolled in job training or other workforce development programs
- Number of new business owners
- Number of new jobs generated by new businesses

### Financial Access/Asset Building

Financial Education and Asset Building will be key components of the CHOICE case management strategy that will be employed in the Gateway. The University of Georgia’s Cooperative Extension and Consumer Credit Counseling Services, Inc., currently provide financial

education/budgeting seminars several times a year for Housing Authority of Savannah residents. Consumer Credit Counseling Service, in partnership with Bank On Savannah, Step Up Savannah, the United Way, City of Savannah and the FINRA Foundation also sponsor free Financial Education and Credit Repair interactive workshops at several locations. This existing resource will be used to help residents gain the knowledge needed to create real plans for debt reduction and wealth building.

Financial Education and Credit Counseling sessions are also hosted regularly and are open to all citizens. These community based sessions help individuals improve their knowledge and skills related to earning, spending, budgeting, saving, and borrowing. It can also help families understand and make informed choices from among the full range of options offered by financial institutions. Members of Step Up's Financial Education Network provide financial counseling, coaching, and classes on topics such as how to improve credit, manage money, and establish a savings schedule. Step Up is an important partner in our fight to create opportunities for wealth building and self-sufficiency attainment. Through strong collaborative relationships with the aforementioned partners, they provide vital financial services at community centers in high-poverty census tracts, through the Center for Working Families network, and at employment sites for low-wage workers.

Bank On Savannah is another Step Up Savannah initiative that seeks to help "unbanked" families access traditional financial services to convert their wages into wealth, with an initial focus on connecting qualified households to appropriate bank accounts. Bank On is a joint effort of Step Up's Banking Taskforce, the FDIC and the City of Savannah. Utilization of current programs

like Bank On Savannah will ensure that the metrics listed below are addressed.

- Number/percent enrolled in an IDA or other savings program
- Number/percent who have a bank account

## Relocation and Right of Return Policy

The Housing Authority has developed a Relocation Housing Plan for residents of the Robert Hitch Village whose units have been demolished and received approval from HUD. All new units will be fully compliant with any special needs the residents may have. Each resident has been classified as displaced, following the demolition of the site, as defined under the HUD Handbook 1378. The Relocation Plan was developed through numerous meetings and consultations with residents in advance of their relocation. Since the demolition, residents have received communications designed to ensure they are aware and involved in the planning for replacement housing. As the physical plans and designs for the redevelopment of Hitch are developed additional opportunities for involvement will be offered. See Appendix H for a complete description of the plan. It is anticipated that some level of demolition will be required to rehabilitate Wessels. Once the full scope of the demolition is determined, HAS will develop a formal relocation plan that addresses the relocation and tracking of residents under RAD's one-for-one replacement, and right-to-return provisions.

## Supportive Services Plan

The Community and Supportive Services Plan (CSS) Plan will be designed to effectively address the needs of low income families living in two target communities within the Gateway. The CSS Plan provides a framework for the design and provision of appropriate programs

and services for the 100 public housing families living in Robert Hitch Village at the time of its demolition in 2010 as well as approximately 250 households that currently reside in the adjacent Fred Wessels Home public housing community.

Through individualized service plans, these residents will be provided with the necessary tools and guidance to place them on the path of self-sufficiency. Building on the guiding principles of HOPE VI, the CSS plan will focus on four main areas:

- Services to help residents move toward self-sufficiency
- Services designed to meet the special needs of individual families
- Linkage to relocation with informed choice
- Community building

### **Individual Needs Assessment**

Recognizing the tremendous barriers that are faced by these residents, an initial needs-assessment tool will be used to gain proper perspective on the needs of those living in the communities prior to the development of service plans.

In addition to the development of a needs assessment tool, it will be necessary to develop, implement and deliver a training module for the newly hired caseworkers along with formative and ongoing support during the case management process to assure completeness of the needs assessment and an appropriate service plan for each relocated household. This ongoing support includes daily quality control for the first month of field work and quarterly quality control thereafter.

### **Organization and Implementation**

The assessment and services outlined above, with a focus on education, job skills and employment training, will be provided through a third party contractor. A contract between HAS and The United Way of the Coastal Empire, Inc., for tracking software will be executed to appropriately track progress and goals. Early start efforts have included the surveying of residents in the areas of Education, Transportation, Employment, Employment Skills Training, Healthcare/Mental Health, Public Safety, Youth/Recreation Programs, and Counseling Services. Within all of these areas, there will be a focus on community building, empowering residents to work together to provide mutual support, achieve common ends, and build capacity.

### **Supportive Service Partners**

The Housing Authority of Savannah has strong collaborative relationships with service providers in Savannah-Chatham County. Through these partnerships, HAS residents have greater access to education, employment, skills training, transportation, childcare, health and other family supporting programs.

#### **Education Partners/Providers:**

African American Health and Information Resource Center, Armstrong Atlantic State University, Bright from the Start, Economic Opportunity Authority, Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, Savannah Early Learning Foundation, Savannah State University, Savannah Technical College, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, and Wesley Community Center.

**Employment/Training Partners:**

America's Second Harvest of the Coastal Empire, Chatham Apprenticeship Program through Step Up Savannah, Coastal Workforce Services, Georgia Department of Labor, Goodwill Industries of the Coastal Empire, St. Mary's Community Center, Savannah Technical College, and Union Mission, Inc.

**Transportation Partners:**

Chatham Area Transit, United Way of the Coastal Empire, and Savannah Baptist Center.

**Health Partners:**

Curtis V. Cooper, Coastal Health District, Good Samaritan, J. C. Lewis Primary Healthcare, and St. Mary's Community Health Mission.

**Behavioral Health:**

Access Mental Health, American Work, Coastal Counseling, Durden Counseling, Georgia Regional, Mobile Crisis Service, Recovery Place Community Services, Savannah Counseling Services, and Union Mission.

**Financial Access/Asset Building:**

Bank On Savannah, City of Savannah, Consumer Credit Counseling Services, Economic Opportunity Authority, Neighborhood Improvement Association, and the University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension.

**Tracking**

The Housing Authority of Savannah has joined a community collaborative that is using Efforts to Outcome (ETO) case management software to provide greater efficiency in tracking human service delivery. The ETO system allows public agencies to monitor the way they provide wraparound services in order to maximize impact on the communities and more efficiently assist

participants in meeting their self-sufficiency goal. The current community partnership allows agencies to purchase access to the program through the United Way of the Coastal Empire's license. HAS joins other agencies including: Savannah Technical College, St. Mary's Community Center, Salvation Army, Youth Futures Authority and other organizations that wish to use a common performance management system to manage services provided and measure participants outcomes.

ETO also allows partner agencies to share information, with proper permission, about families that are being served by multiple agencies. Although in its infancy at HAS, ETO is being used by the ROSS Service Coordinator's Program and HOPE VI Endowment Program to track the progress of residents enrolled in those self-sufficiency programs. The CHOICE case management system, if provided by HAS, will also utilize ETO to track participant progress in the areas of education, employment, asset building, health/wellness, transportation and safety. If the Authority chooses to outsource the human service delivery, the contractor will be required to provide a tracking strategy that would include the use of case management software.

**Information Centers and HAS Neighborhood Resource Center**

The Housing Authority works diligently, through strong collaborative relationships within the community, to provide residents with a variety of opportunities to assist them in achieving their self-sufficiency goals. HAS will be establishing Information Centers in various areas of the Gateway where community residents will receive information and resources to increase their skills and employability. HAS's commitment to aiding such achievement, led to the construction of the Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) which opened on Novem-

ber 14, 2003 and currently houses staff members that provide direct services to residents. HAS currently has three grant-funded Community Supportive Services Coordinators on staff, one position funded through a Public Housing FSS grant, one through a ROSS Service Coordinator grant and the other through the HOPE VI Endowment Program. All of the aforementioned grant programs seek to provide service coordination through the leveraging of housing assistance, to help residents reach their self-sufficiency goals. The NRC serves as a bustling hub of activity, where community residents are able to participate in a number of training activities to increase their skills and employability. Currently, programs housed at the center include:

- Adult Education Program – In Partnership with Savannah Technical College Monday – Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. This program is open to all community members. However, HAS staff conducts targeted recruitment of HAS self-sufficiency program participants.
- Quarterly Employment Training Workshops – Representatives from community organizations host employment workshops at the NRC that cover resume preparation, dressing for success, interviewing skills, and effective job search strategies. Chatham County Human Resources Department, Economic Opportunity Authority, and Georgia Department of Labor have all facilitated sessions.
- Entrepreneurship Workshops – Bi-annual sessions are held to encourage participants to create small businesses. The Savannah Entrepreneurial Center, Wells Fargo Bank, and the Small Business Assistance Corporation work together to provide information about business plans, financing, and marketing.
- Homeownership Workshops & Tours – Homebuyers workshops are held annually in an effort to excite participants about the possibility of homeownership.

ship. HAS Homeownership Specialist, along with representatives from the Economic Opportunity Authority's Home Buyer's Program, Neighborhood Improvement Association, University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension and Wells Fargo Bank host sessions that enable residents to receive a homebuyers certifications, information on financing, budgeting, working with realtors and the importance of credit.

Other programs offered by the Housing Authority include:

- HOPE VI Endowment Program provides funding for childcare; employment training; education expenses; transportation; and job training and placement Services, the latter of which are provided in, partnership with the Department of Labor, Savannah Technical College, and other employment services.
- Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) provides Public Housing and Section 8 residents with the opportunity to work toward self-sufficiency over a five year period, while accruing escrow funds tied to earned income. Upon successful completion of the program, escrow funds can be used for a down payment on a home, tuition, etc.
- ROSS Service Coordinators Program serves public housing residents residing in East Savannah and provides 3 years for residents to work towards self-sufficiency goals. The program links residents to employment, training, health, education, and youth programs and uses community partners as resources in helping residents attain self-sufficiency.
- HAS Executive Director represents HAS on the Coastal Workforce Investment Board. Her participation on the Board provides a direct link to information regarding employment and training services that are available to adults and youth in our community.



HAS recognizes that its efforts to aid consumers in gaining and maintaining employment may be thwarted if services are not provided to stabilize the entire family. The following services are currently provided through existing self-sufficiency programs and will also be provided to residents of the Gateway subject to an award of Choice Neighborhood Implementation funding:

- Case Management
- Assess and Refer services
- Access to food, clothes, and furniture through resident organization
- Transportation to schools, medical appointments
- Adult Education and Post-Secondary Education
- Afterschool Program
- Employment Training and Placement
- Equal Opportunity Authority Head Start programs
- Basic Computer Training
- Parenting classes
- Life Skills training in partnership with Georgia Extension Services
- Services to elderly
- Door to Door employment and training recruitment
- Homeownership Counseling

Additionally, there are also a wide range of esteemed partners and service providers already established and serving within the Gateway. *(see Appendix J)*

The specific Gateway People-level activities highlighted in this Transformation Plan are summarized in the following chart.

Goal/ Metrics	Strategy	Lead Agency	Partners	Resources Leveraged	Time frame
<p>1. Individuals and families are Physically &amp; Mentally Healthy</p> <p>Reduce non-emergency use of hospital emergency rooms by 1/3</p> <p>100% of residents report having a medical home</p> <p>Increase children's health care coverage from 91% to 100%</p> <p>Children receive basic dental services regardless of income</p>	1a. Host and coordinate small group seminars for HAS ESG residents to increase access to preventive health care programs and insurance	HAS	- U. of Georgia Cooperative Extension -Coastal Health District	To be determined	2014-2016
	1b. Support Local Nonprofits to help low income families Apply for SNAP benefits	Step Up Savannah	- African American Health & Information Resources Center  - Lutheran Services of Georgia	\$109,000/year (SNAP Access grant)	Annual
	1c. Provide a school-based dental clinic at East Broad K-8	Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health Care	- Savannah Chatham Public Schools System (SCCPSS)	To be obtained	Beginning in 2014 school year
<p>2. Safer and more stable families through parent education; anger management group; kinship care group; fatherhood initiative</p> <p>Improve self-assessed psychological health (stress level) by 5% annually</p>	2a. Link HAS ESG residents to behavioral health resources at no cost to participants	HAS/ Case Management Provider	- Lutheran Services of Georgia  - The Counseling Center of Union Mission  - Recovery Place Community Services	To be determined	2014-2015
<p>3. Site residents achieve measurable self-sufficiency gains as tracked in ETO or equivalent</p> <p>Number of residents who no longer require public assistance</p> <p>Number of residents who no longer require SNAP assistance</p> <p>Number of residents achieving home ownership</p>	3a. Contract with United Way to use ETO tracking software	HAS	- United Way  - Lutheran Services of Georgia	\$1000/year plus technical assistance	2014-2017
<p>4. Increased employment opportunities and training for HAS residents</p> <p>Number of individuals who move to full-time employment</p>	4a. Leverage existing short term employment skills training to assist unemployed and under-employed residents in securing employment and education opportunities	Step Up Savannah	- Savannah Tech - West Broad St. YMCA - Goodwill Industries - Area Employers - Lutheran Services of Georgia	\$200,000 (Chatham County CAP Program grant)	To be determined

Goal/ Metrics	Strategy	Lead Agency	Partners	Resources Leveraged	Time frame
Number of individuals who earn a skill certification  Number of individuals who gain and retain new employment for at least six months	4b. Approach area employers to provide support for low wage workers and connect residents to higher paying jobs	Step Up Savannah	N/A	\$2000/per participant	2014-2016
	4c. Provide employment services; help with applications, resumes, interview attire, transportation to interviews, bus passes in 1st month of employment; GED test fees; occupational skills registration and fees	Step Up Savannah	N/A	\$75,000/year grant	Annually, beginning In 2014
5. Improved financial education and asset building.  Number of individuals who participate in workshops;  Number of individuals and families who access counseling and coaching.  Number of individuals/households with bank accounts	5a. Sponsor financial education and credit repair workshops to help HAS ESG residents develop debt management and wealth building strategies	Consumer Credit Counseling	- Bank On Savannah - FINRA Foundation - Cooperative Extension FACS - FDIC - Step Up's Banking Task Force - Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA)	80 households @ \$1,200 per session	Annually, beginning In 2014
	5b. Help un-banked families access traditional services through appropriate bank accounts	Step Up Savannah	N/A	\$15,000 (annual funding from area banks)	To be determined
	5c. Leverage Savannah Chatham Asset Development Coalition Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program Network to increase access to Free tax prep and earned income tax credits	Neighborhood Improvement Association	N/A	\$75,000 (Internal Revenue Service grant)	To be determined
6.Children enter Kindergarten ready to learn.  Children entering East Broad K-8, Spencer and Shuman Elementary schools are increasingly prepared to learn as shown by initial testing each year.  A fiscally and program-matically sound proposal is presented for ESPLOST funding  Number of QRIS rated early learning facilities	6a. Promote healthy, quality development environments for children birth - 3 years old by teaching parents how to create these environments through their participation in the Early Learning College	Savannah Early Childhood Foundation	- SCCPSS  - Parent University Program	To be obtained	To be determined
	6b. Work collaboratively with Community partners and early Childcare providers to improve the quality of care being provided to children 0-5 years	Savannah Early Childhood Foundation	- Youth Futures Authority	To be obtained	On-going
	6c. Develop a plan to establish an early learning facility in the ESG and build community support	To be determined	- EOA - Wesley Community Center - HAS - City of Savannah - Savannah Early Childhood Foundation	To be determined (ESPLOST allocation)	2014-2019

Goals/ Metrics	Strategy	Lead Agency	Partners	Resources Leveraged	Time frame
	6d. Encourage and provide incentives for existing child care facilities to apply for the GA Quality Rated Improvement System (QRIS)	Youth Futures Authority	N/A	\$2,500 (QRIS grant pool)	2014-2017
7. Improved School Performance in the ESG  Reduced Truancy and absenteeism  Increased percentage of students earning math and reading scores at grade level	7a. Create a Parent University training program to support youth in transition from elementary through high school at Hubert Middle School	Parent University	- SCCPSS - Youth Futures Authority	To be determined	2014 school year and annually
8. Increased number of students obtaining GEDs and/or High School diplomas  Number of students obtaining a diploma or GED each year	8a. Provide satellite GED class for adult learners seeking high school equivalency and dual enrollment programs	Savannah Technical College	HAS	To be determined	To be determined
9. Increased research and policy development to improve outcomes for low income families	9a. Research and advance public policy strategies to improve conditions for low income families	Step Up Savannah	- Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation - Georgia Legal Services	\$80,000	2014
10. Increased capacity of residents and nonprofits  Evidence of increased civic engagement  Increased use of performance measurement techniques to determine program outcomes and efficiency	10a. Train neighborhood leaders in the Gateway to be stronger organizers and advocate for their communities	Step Up Savannah	N/A	\$150,000	2014-2017

## C. HOUSING

### Vision:

A transformed East Savannah Gateway that incorporates high quality, stable and sustainable housing in combination with supportive services for all residents.

### Goal:

To create high quality, sustainable, diverse, affordable housing opportunities for the residents of the East Savannah Gateway and to develop in ways that strengthen the community through effective and efficient use of public and private resources.

### Assessment:

The CN planning process assessed existing housing conditions with a dual focus on both the multi-family assisted housing (Fred Wessels and Blackshear Homes), and the privately owned housing in the neighborhood. Staff of HAS surveyed much of the neighborhood housing to note the conditions of single-family and small multi-family private housing (<20 units). HAS public housing properties in the Gateway area were previously assessed through a twenty-year physical needs assessment. A Housing Taskforce, comprised of neighborhood residents, community leaders, government officials, and other community stakeholders, was organized early in the planning process. The members of the Housing Taskforce helped to inform the planning team about specific housing needs in the community and helped in the development of strategies to address these problems.

The Housing Taskforce considered all levels of need within the Gateway through the utilization of the Housing Continuum model, developed by former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros. This Housing Continuum was

adopted as the primary framework for developing strategies to address the housing needs in the East Savannah Gateway. The continuum is stratified into seven areas which include: homelessness shelters and transitional housing; supportive housing; public housing; assisted housing; rental housing; first-time home buyer; and long-term homeownership. Public and private investments are bifurcated along the stair-step design of the continuum to highlight the importance of each form of investment as it relates to each step. (See Figure 4j – The Housing Continuum)

HAS also completed an environmental report for all of its public housing properties, including Hitch, Wessels and Blackshear, that covers the following areas: Historic Preservation; Floodplains; National Wetlands; Coastal Zone Management; Sole Source Aquifers; Endangered Species; Wild & Scenic Rivers; Clean Air Act; Farmland Protection; Hazards – Explosives; Noise; Clear Zones; Toxics; Environmental Justice; Flood Insurance; Coastal Barrier Island; Clearzone Notification; Water Quality, Solid Waste; and Fish and Wildlife. A copy of this study can be found at:

<https://www.box.com/s/vgnd61klv4yqftrwryok>

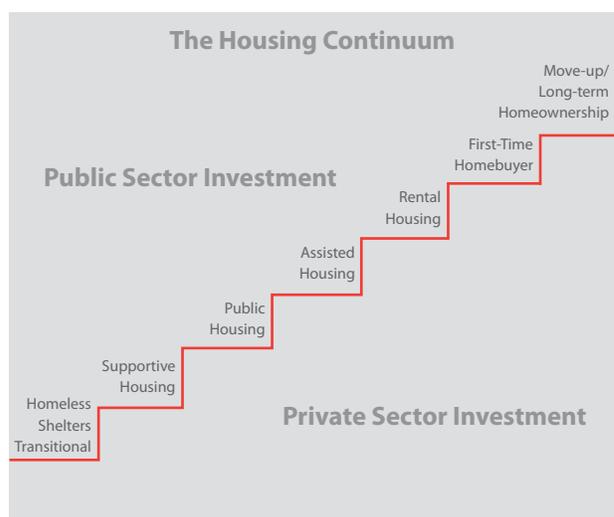


Figure 4j-The Housing Continuum

## The Need for Affordable Housing

The Housing Taskforce identified a number of housing related issues that are pervasive throughout the Gateway community including homelessness, lack of homeowners and high rates of illegal rooming houses. Most of the named problems however are rooted in the lack of affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities in the area. The demand for rental housing, and more specifically affordable rental housing, has grown considerably in the last several decades. In many places around the U.S, this increased demand has outpaced the supply of new multi-family rental units. The foreclosure crisis has further compounded the supply problem and rental markets are tightening resulting in steady declines in vacancy rates. Savannah has not been spared from this trend.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), Chatham County has the second highest required hourly wage necessary to afford a two-bedroom apartment in the State of Georgia. A renter who earns the mean wage for the Savannah MSA would have to work 51 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. For low wage renters the situation is even more troubling. A minimum wage earner in Savannah would have to work an astounding 92 hours a week to afford the same two-bedroom apartment. This lack of affordable rental housing has led to a proliferation of illegal rooming houses throughout the City, and specifically in the Gateway. During Housing Taskforce meetings, community residents, representatives from the City of Savannah's Development Services Department, Property Maintenance Department and Department of Community Planning & Development frequently brought this issue to the forefront of discussions. Although this form of housing provides shelter for many low-income resi-

dents who could otherwise not find homes, many of the structures are not safe due to building code violations.

Furthermore, once an illegal rooming house is found and the owner refuses to meet the requirements to bring it into legal status, these houses are shut down, displacing residents and increasing the levels of instability in their lives. According to data provided by the City's Development Services Department there are over 150 illegal rooming houses in the City and a significant portion of them are located either within the Gateway boundaries or in close proximity.

Due to the high demand for low-cost rental housing and the difficulty in detecting and shutting down these illegal rooming houses, it is likely that the problem will persist. Therefore, one way to address this issue is the creation of more affordable housing in communities that are desirable and safe for residents.

Finally, another issue identified by the Housing Taskforce which is intrinsically connected to a dearth of affordable housing in the area is the numbers of homeless individuals and families living in and around the Gateway neighborhood. Savannah has had a persistent problem with homelessness over the last several decades. According to the Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless, in 2012 there were 5,541 individuals (including 762 children) that experienced homelessness in Chatham County. While there are myriad reasons that push people into the homelessness category (e.g., domestic violence; substance abuse; mental illness), in Savannah, most people are homeless as a result of some type of economic distress. Therefore, increasing the supply of affordable housing in the Gateway is the primary strategy of the Housing component of the Transformation Plan.

## Existing Multi-family Assisted Housing and Public Housing

Despite the overall lack of affordable rental housing, there are several affordable housing communities that help meet at least some of the demand in the area. The redevelopment of the Hitch Village coupled with off-site development will help to increase these numbers and provide a wide range of rental housing options. The

Gateway neighborhood includes six major multi-family sites in varying stages of development. Added together, these sites include over 1/3 of all the housing units in the study area (38%). Two of these sites are the subject of the Choice Neighborhood planning process, and two others are involved in active revitalization strategies and implementation efforts. These sites include: *(Figure 4k – Housing Market and Conditions)*

East Savannah Gateway Overview of Multi-Family Housing			East Savannah Gateway Overview of All Housing		
Development	Units	Acres	Group	Units	Percent
Ashley Midtown	212	20.0	Assisted MultiFamily	1,444	38%
Veranda	100	5.0	Private SF units-Occupied	1,134	27%
Blacshear Homes	100	19.4	Vacant Lots	359	9%
Savannah Gardens	439*	45.0	Boarded up Units	251	6%
Hitch Village	337	22.6	Small MF (2-6 Units)	250	6%
Wessels Homes	250	16.9	Vacant Units	707	17%
Totals	1,444	123.9	Totals	4,145	100%

*\*76 yet to be constructed*

*\*To be verified*

Figure 4k - Housing Market and Conditions

**Ashley Midtown:** Savannah’s HOPE VI community replaced the former Garden Homes public housing site, with multiple phases of development, including 206 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units of affordable rental units. There are 57 homeownership units.

**The Veranda at Midtown:** This is a senior development on the former Stubbs Tower public housing site, constructed in 2007. It includes 84 1-bedroom units and 16 2-bedroom units for active senior living; 11 units are market rate and 89 are Project Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) units.

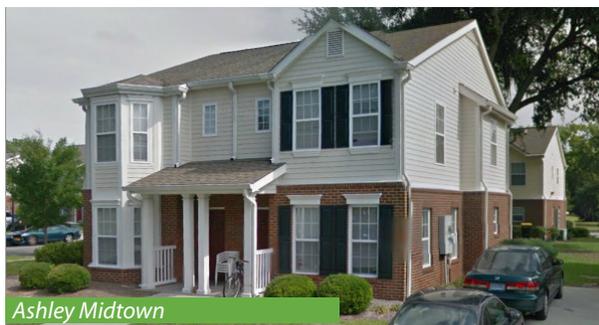
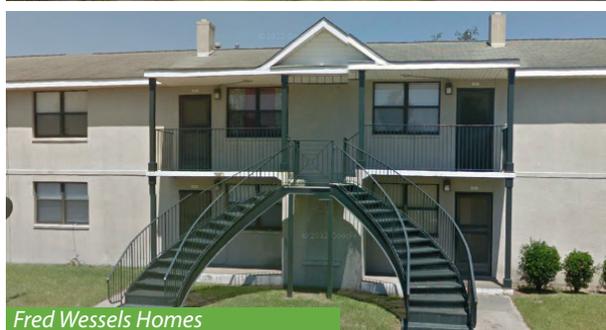
**Edgar G. Blacshear:** This public housing development was placed in service in 1984, and includes 100 low-density, single story duplexes, with ample off-street and on-street parking.

**Savannah Gardens:** This development is sponsored by the City of Savannah, and developed by CHSA along with Mercy Housing Southeast. It includes the redevelopment of the former Strathmore Estates, a 45-acre site, with five phases of multi-family rental and single-family homeownership, and a total of more than 550 units upon completion, with a total development value of \$100+ million.

**Fred Wessels Homes:** This site includes 250 units on a dense site, with limited off-street parking. It was constructed in 1954, and is distressed in numerous regards. The Housing Authority successfully applied for competitive federal stimulus grant funding to install central air conditioning and heating systems, and make other energy conservation improvements. In 2010, the Authority received a \$1.75 million grant for upgrades at this site.

**Robert M. Hitch Village:** This 337-unit development opened in 1955 and was demolished by HAS in 2010 with federal stimulus funds. This site, together with Fred Wessels Homes, is the primary target of the CN planning effort in the area of housing. Conditions at Hitch prior to demolition included: over-concentration of poverty; high density; limited off-street parking; major potential flooding impact from being in the 100-year flood plain; and distressed conditions of the housing stock itself.

Due to their proximity to downtown Savannah, the Hitch and Wessels sites are located in proximity to numerous existing amenities (See Figure 4I – Amenities Within a Mile of Hitch Site). All of the listed amenities are within one mile of the center of the Hitch site. Other areas within the Gateway area have far fewer nearby amenities.



Category of Amenity	Business Name	Address	Distance (in miles)
1. Fresh Food Retail	Kroger	311 E. Gwinnett St.	0.80
1. Pharmacy	CVS	119 Bull St.	0.72
2. Bank	First Citizens	13 E. York St.	0.79
3. Educational	Spencer Elementary	Wheaton St.	0.70
	SCAD	227 MLK Jr. Blvd	0.99
4. Police	Metro Police Dept.	201 Habersham St.	0.46
5. Restaurant	Cha Bella	102 E. Broad St.	0.34
1. Government Office	Div. of Family and Childrens Services	Wheaton St.	0.13
2. Park	Emmer Park	E. River & Broad	0.55
3. Clinic	Curtis Cooper Primary Healthcare	106 E. Broad St.	0.35
4. Hair Care	Atmospheres Salon	513 E. Oglethorpe	0.33
5. Dry Cleaner	David's Dry Cleaners	640 E. President	0.29
6. Health Club	Pilates of Savannah	1 E. Broughton St.	0.76
7. Convenience Store	Uptown Market	209 E. Broad St.	0.27
	Shiv Discount	44 Abercorn St.	0.66
	Parker's Market	222 Drayton St.	0.63

Figure 4l- Amenities Within a Mile of Hitch Site

## Rental Housing Strategies

### Robert Hitch Village Revitalization Plans

The central housing strategy that will be implemented to address the need of affordable rental housing will be the redevelopment of the former Robert Hitch Village public housing site into a mixed-income; mixed-use community including as many as 387 homes, creating a vibrant neighborhood that will transform not only the targeted public housing units, but the surrounding Wheaton Street Corridor. Based on current planning, the on-site unit mix will include 219 replacement units, and the balance as tax credit only (106) and market rate (53). Although the units have been demolished, this site presents substantial development challenges, since forty percent of the site is located in a 100-year flood plain. In the technical charrette conducted in March, 2013 by the CN planning team, two alternatives for this site were discussed, with one that minimizes residential development within the flood plain area.

Yet another option could involve a land swap with an adjacent landowner for property owned by HAS on the west side of Savannah, near the port. Including both on-site and off-site redevelopment, HAS intends to replace all 337 of the deep subsidy units that were originally at this location.

HAS procured a development partner, The Hunt Group (Hunt) and The Communities Group (TCG), to provide inputs to the planning process from the developer's perspective. Hunt-TCG will continue working with the community and the CN partners to refine plans for this site—which needs to integrate closely with neighboring developments (Fred Wessels Homes, President Square, and the Wheaton Street Corridor).

*(See Figure 4m – Hitch Density and Development Study)*



NOTE: THIS DRAWING IS CONCEPTUAL. FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY.

Figure 4m- Hitch Density and Development Study

The Hitch Village site is bordered on two sides by the Savannah National Historic Landmark District, which both enhances the site location, and provides context for the physical planning.

The Hitch Village Site was analyzed for its suitability for compliance with the LEED Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) program. The site consists of 25.4 acres of land, of which, approximately 12 acres are planned for residential development. LEED ND has a large focus and prerequisites based on the site's location and proximity to connectivity, goods and services, and density. LEED ND is tailored toward the specific challenges faced when redeveloping an urban infill project. As a result, in-fill projects similar to Hitch Village typically have no issues meeting the prerequisites on those two factors alone.

Based on the preliminary site and redevelopment plan analysis, the Hitch Village site appears to meet all LEED ND prerequisites. Additionally, the project scores 47 points (40 required for certification) and has 35 potential points based on specific site and unit design. This places the Hitch Village redevelopment at Basic certification, well within the Silver certification range (50-59 Points) and within reach of Gold certification (60-79 Points). *(See Appendix I for a completed preliminary LEED ND scorecard)*

## **Housing Types, Need and Market Demand in the Gateway**

Real Property Research Group (RPRG) completed a full market study *(See Appendix B)* looking at rental and homeownership across the income level, rent level and sales price range. Rental demand is calculated at 361 units over the next five years. Their study indicates that significant income-qualified renter households exist

among the 30% to 80% income levels in the CN Area—for assisted housing, as well as in the 80-100% of Area Median Income (AMI) levels to support market rate, general occupancy, rental housing.

Given the proximity to downtown, market rate rental is an option, with the primary target being young professionals working in the downtown, which is easily within walking distance of the Robert Hitch Village and Fred Wessels Homes sites. Market data supports the inclusion of market rate units during the middle or later stages of redevelopment, to benefit from community awareness of the initial phases. RPRG recommends garden and townhouse products, with the larger sites lending themselves to garden style buildings (2-3 stories), with townhomes being appropriate for smaller infill areas. Two bedroom units should comprise the majority, with some one-bedroom units for single person households and some 3-bedroom units for larger households with children. Any 60% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and market rate units should be comprised primarily of one- and two-bedroom units, as market rate renters are more likely to be younger one- and two-person renter households.

## **Early Start Projects**

Both Wessels and Blackshear have been approved for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (RAD) funding. RAD provides 60,000 units of project-based Section 8 Rental Assistance for housing authorities to convert properties from public housing to Project-based Rental Assistance. The program has allowed the planning team to move forward with two early start housing projects. These initiatives will be crucial in the planning team's efforts to increase the availability of affordable rental housing.

**Fred Wessels Homes:** Fred Wessels Homes is adjacent to the Robert Hitch Village site, and also abuts the historic downtown area of Savannah. HAS recently made energy performance upgrades, and installed central air conditioning at this site, and thus the strategy predominately calls for further rehabilitation. However, limited demolition and rehabilitation can help address some of the site deficiencies, such as the lack of off-street parking, and the need to reconnect the property to the historic downtown street grid. This alternative proposes

selected demolition of 44 units, followed by their replacement with new construction replacement units, and a potential future phase of 33 additional units. The suggested plan proposes an extension of E. Perry Street to connect through the Fred Wessels Homes site. Also, greater density is proposed along E. Oglethorpe Avenue Extension, which may also continue into the adjacent Robert Hitch Village site. (See Figure 4n – Wessels RAD Strategy Study)



Figure 4n- Wessels RAD Strategy Study

An additional property under HAS control is the commercial site adjacent to the Authority's headquarters on Wheaton Street, which is estimated to accommodate as many as 100 units. Wheaton Village is a concept that includes assembly of parcels in and around Wheaton Street, to accommodate upwards of 88 units, with some of these lots currently under HAS control, as well as some owned by the City of Savannah, and Chatham County. Still other units may be developed on an in-fill basis in the neighborhood, both by HAS, as well as by Coastal Empire Habitat for Humanity.

See Matrix of Housing Goals and Strategies, with identification of Lead Entity and Leverage Resources, included at end of this section.

**Edgar C. Blackshear Homes:** This property is sited on both sides of Wheaton Street, which is the central corridor of the Gateway. In the planning charrettes, the design for this site evolved to provide for limited demolition along Wheaton Street to accommodate development of units that are oriented to this major thoroughfare and establish the tone for the redevelopment of Wheaton Street. The Plan includes preservation of 82 units, and demolition and replacement of 18 units. The site plan will also accommodate an additional 40 units on the site as a future phase that will potentially assist with de-concentration of the Robert Hitch Village site.

*(See Figure 4o – Blackshear Infill Strategy)*



Figure 4o- Blackshear Infill Strategy

The Housing Authority of Savannah has already relocated all of the families who were living at the Robert Hitch Village site, and maintains active communication with them—many of whom live at other HAS properties.

## Enhancing Homeownership Opportunities

Another area the Housing Taskforce felt should be addressed by the Plan is the need for a higher percentage of homeowners in the Gateway. Homeownership brings a number of benefits to communities and serves as the primary wealth building mechanism for many families. In regards to the housing development that will take place on the Hitch site and other off-site locations, the RPRG market study recommends delaying development of for-sale homes to the latter phases of the redevelopment plan, due to the number of homes currently for sale, low overall prices, and the significant number of for-sale units still planned at Savannah Gardens. Single story ranch style homes or two-story craftsman-style homes would both fit within the neighborhood, although one-story units would not be compatible with the buildings in the historic district adjacent to Hitch and Wessels. Despite these recommendations HAS, along with other partners, will utilize existing programs to help increase the accessibility of homeownership opportunities for residents in the Gateway neighborhood.

HAS's homeownership program allows Housing Choice Voucher holders to convert their rental vouchers to homeownership vouchers. Since its inception in 2004, HAS's homeownership program has served over 200 applicants and has helped 65 Housing Choice Voucher holders get into their own homes. As a direct result of the planning process, the Coastal Empire Habitat for Humanity has agreed to target the Gateway for future home construction and renovation development op-

portunities. If affordable land and favorable financing is available, the organization can construct up to five new homes per year over the 2015 to 2019 period. In addition, Habitat has agreed to expand its program to include repairs and rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes of non-Habitat families. In this expanded program, Habitat for Humanity Savannah will train and dispatch construction volunteers to qualified homeowners to assist in the improvement of their homes.

These initiatives, coupled with the homeowner units being developed at Savannah Gardens, will not only help to enhance the homeownership opportunities in the Gateway but will also improve the quality in the neighborhood as well.

## Supporting the Homeless

As mentioned previously, many individuals and families in Savannah are struggling with homelessness. The Housing Taskforce considered the many contributing factors that lead to the issues of homelessness and chronic homelessness as well as how to address these needs of the two very different populations. HUD defines "homeless" as a person sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., the streets), or living in a homeless emergency shelter. A chronically homeless person is either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or (2) an individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Supportive housing, which provides a combination of housing and services intended as a cost-effective means to help people live more stable, productive lives, is one avenue to meet the needs of the chronically homeless. HAS currently provides transitional and tem-

Name of Organization	Services Provided
<b>Inner City Night Shelter</b>	Provides counseling, shelter, case management and supportive services which promoted various levels of positive behavior change, self-sufficiency and independent living
<b>Union Mission</b>	Their care programs address shelter, long and short-term housing, healthcare, behavioral counseling, substance abuse, job and life skills training and employment assistance
<b>Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA)</b>	Provides community-based services which empower citizens to attain economic independence and a higher quality of life
<b>Salvation Army</b>	The emergency shelter and transitional housing programs provide lodging, meals, personal hygiene items, clothing, employment assistance and casework services with in-depth assessment of circumstances that led to homelessness.
<b>Baptist Center Oasis</b>	Offers showers, laundry & locker storage to homeless people

Figure 4p-Organizations Serving the Homeless Population

porary housing for referred homeless veterans through its Veterans Affairs and Supportive Housing (VASH) program. This voucher program can be expanded with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). A number of organizations serve the homeless population in the Gateway by providing assistance through shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing. (Figure 4o – Organizations Serving the Homeless Population)

The following are strategies to be implemented to address the issue of homelessness in the Gateway:

- Construction of infill housing for the homeless through the refurbishment of shipping containers as low cost materials. Trident Sustainability Group, a member of the Housing Taskforce, provided architectural design renderings of this type of retrofitted housing and how it can be utilized in the Gateway.
- HAS will establish a waiting list preference so that a portion of public housing units may be used for temporary housing for homeless families, with a referral.

In addition to the housing-related strategies above, the planning team will evaluate potential social service strategies to complement housing support targeted towards the homeless as the implementation effort develops:

- Social Impact Bonds are a potential source for obtaining more funding for homelessness prevention advocacy organizations. A Social Impact Bond is a contract with the public sector in which a commitment is made to pay for improved social outcomes that result in public sector savings.
- Increase contributions of clothing, food, hygiene items, gift cards, monetary contributions, office supplies, cleaning supplies, etc. to existing homeless service providers and linking these providers to avoid duplication of services.
- Secure grant funding from private foundations and/or local, state, and federal grant programs for existing service providers.

## Long-Term Housing Strategies

### Strategies to Address Vacant Lots and Boarded up Units

There are large numbers of vacant lots, boarded up houses and homes in various conditions ranging from excellent to distressed. In total, there are 44 identified vacant lots in the Gateway neighborhood. A significant portion of these lots are owned by the City of Savannah and Chatham County. These parcels will be prime locations for the development of off-site housing. Certainly the planned upgrades to all of the multi-family housing in the neighborhood will have a positive spillover in the entire Gateway area, and will work to change perceptions of the area by both residents and those outside the neighborhood.

As a result of the CN planning process, HAS and the Land Bank Authority (LBA) have discussed strategies that would target the Gateway neighborhood for land acquisition for the purpose of affordable home development. The LBA has agreed to provide HAS with information on their activities in the Gateway and to collaborate on projects where possible.

Additional strategies will be employed to address vacant lots, boarded up units and distressed occupied units. However, these will be long-term strategies that will require continued planning and coordination in the future. These strategies include:

- In-fill development as part of the de-concentration of the large multi-family sites, with acquisition and new development, primarily with homeownership;
- Working with local non-profits to target areas within the Gateway that have concentrations of vacant lots and boarded up housing;
- Strict code enforcement to require owners to ad-

dress boarded up units;

- Tax incentives for those purchasing and putting units back into service;
- Low-interest loans for owners to put units back into service, or purchasers to acquire and rehab (such as HUD's Section 203k loan program);
- Working with area residents to identify the most problematic lots/structures to target them;
- Sponsor home makeover or most improved porch contests;
- Provide small grants for community pride projects;
- Block beautification projects—house signs; street signage; summer youth programs for grass cutting and yard maintenance; improved unit address numbering;
- Targeted block clean-up;
- Establishment of a tool lending library;
- City projects, such as improved lighting and historical markers.

### Occupied and For-Sale Homes

Despite the lack of homeownership in the Gateway, the Housing Taskforce did not overlook the needs of those who do own homes and rental units in the area. Strategies to be pursued to help homeowners and renters in the area to upgrade their properties will include:

- Tax abatement for upgrades for a set number of years;
- Homeowner Loan Improvement program;
- Loans for landlords to upgrade their properties, with agreements that protect the tenants;
- Targeting HAS assistance to purchasers of homes in the area as well as holding open house tours of for-sale properties in the neighborhood;

- Organizing the compliant landlords and working with them to help solve the problem of non-compliant landlords;
- Establishing goals for increasing homeownership rate in the neighborhood, and tracking by area;
- Providing recognition for Realtors based on their achievements in selling homes in the neighborhood;
- Providing weatherization services, which meet the requirements of the Department of the Interior's standards, for the older homes in the neighborhood—for example, in Census Tract 11, over 60% of the homes are 70+ years old and likely in need of weatherization.

### **Illegal Rooming Houses**

Several long-term strategies have been discussed in the Housing taskforce meetings which can serve as an alternative approach to addressing the illegal rooming house issue outside of the development of more affordable housing, including:

- Rezoning certain areas to accommodate rooming housing, preventing the unnecessary displacement of low-income residents.
- Providing owners of rooming houses that have building code violations an extended grace period to come into compliance with building code ordinances.

To further study this issue, it has been recommended that a specific taskforce be established, to include HAS, the City of Savannah, MPC, Code Enforcement, and social support organizations.

### **City of Savannah Housing Initiatives**

The City of Savannah's Department of Housing has played a key role in the entire planning process. Like HAS, the City Department of Housing operates a wide range of programs that assist homeowners in making repairs to their homes through grants and loans. The City also has programs that provide down payment assistance to potential homeowners. These programs will continue to have a significant impact on the Gateway community in the years to come. Based on previous spending levels, the City's Department of Housing projects that it will stimulate over \$4.3 million in housing activity in the Gateway community during 2014.

*(See Figure 4q – Proposed Off Site Housing Activity)*

### **Fair Housing**

In 1994, Savannah-Chatham Fair Housing Council, Inc. (SCFHC) was established to address impediments to fair housing in the Savannah-Chatham area. The Council seeks to create a community in which housing is accessible and available to all persons free from all bias and compliant with the Fair Housing Act.

From its inception, SCFHC has worked to educate housing providers to make them aware of their responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act as well as to provide that same level of awareness to those who are seeking housing. SCFHC has been instrumental in receiving, investigating, and effectively resolving fair housing complaints through training, education, and other fair housing activities.

As a CN partner, SCFHC will bring the same level of commitment and assistance in developing a Fair Housing Plan that will be utilized in the Gateway. Additionally, they will offer training sessions for staff and residents and will address resident concerns that warrant the Council's assistance.

Program Type & Name*	# Units Per Year	\$ CDBG Per Year	\$ HOME Per Year	\$ Vol Labor Per Year	\$ Other Per Year	\$ Total Per Year
<b>Owner Occupied Home Repairs</b>						
Grant, Loan and/or Volunteer Projects	10	\$ 50,000		\$ 30,000		\$ 80,000
Federal Home Loan Bank Forgivable Loan Projects	10				\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
<b>DreamMaker Down Payment Assistance</b>						
Savannah Gardens	10		\$ 400,000		\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,500,000
Other Infill and Existing Home Sales	5		\$ 75,000		\$ 475,000	\$ 550,000
<b>Infill House Construction Financing</b>						
Savannah Gardens	10		\$ 600,000		\$ 900,000	\$ 1,500,000
Other Infill	2				\$ 270,000	\$ 270,000
<b>Rental Property Repair Assistance</b>						
Housing Code Violation Loans/Grants	25	\$ 125,000			\$ 125,000	\$ 250,000
<b>Vacant Property Land Banking</b>						
Property Acquisition	5				\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Demolition	3				\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	80	\$ 175,000	\$ 1,075,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 3,090,000	\$ 4,370,000

\*This is a proposed activity list that is dependent upon federal and other funding availability at least at 2013 levels, market demand, and available property with clear title.

Figure 4q - Proposed Off Site Housing Activity List

In September 2010, the City of Savannah developed an analysis of impediments to fair housing in Savannah, entitled: “Improving Access: An Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing in Savannah.” Key policy recommendations from the study include the following:

- Develop a consistently funded local, non-federal source of funds for affordable housing, since without such a fund the Task Force clearly documented worsening conditions for Savannah’s low and moderate-income households. A \$50 million fund is recommended, based on City, County, United Way, and private foundation revenues.
- Implement the recommendations of the Affordable Housing and Regulatory Reform Task Force, including: expand support for the Chatham County – Savannah Land Bank Authority, provide project-

based Section 8 certificates/vouchers to new affordable rental housing developments; zoning ordinance revisions with smart growth principles and incentives; inclusionary zoning; reductions in tax assessments on deed restricted or non-profit owned affordable housing; advance land acquisition for affordable housing, new rental housing repair programs, strengthening nonprofit housing suppliers and correcting problems and limitations in eminent domain law.

- Consider adopting building regulations to make all new homes ADA compliant.
- Devise architectural solutions to making Savannah’s historic housing stock accessible to persons with physical disabilities.
- Fund additional fair housing counseling services explicitly targeted at poor Hispanic residents.

The study, and the full set of policy recommendations contained therein, can be found at:

<https://www.box.com/s/h1wcmnem44i1753fi3h1>

## Other Investment and Revitalization Activity

### Savannah Gardens

Savannah Gardens, nestled in 44 acres of prime real estate on the eastern boundary of the Gateway is the City's newest, and one of its largest ever, planned communities. Savannah Gardens is on track to become an EarthCraft Coastal Community certified development for its "green" site and building design. The City has also designated Savannah Gardens and adjacent portions of Pennsylvania Avenue as an Enterprise Zone. This site is also eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This, along with all the new families moving into Savannah Gardens, is expected to be a huge incentive to attract new businesses along the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor. With the nearly \$100 million investment taking place at and adjoining Savannah Gardens, there is great anticipation that as the economy begins to rebound, this will have a positive effect for the Gateway as a whole.

The development of the Savannah Gardens community is broken up into four separate phases. In Phase I, 115 multifamily units were developed; in Phase II, forty senior units were built; in Phase III, 94 multi-family units were built; and, finally, in Phase IV, 114 multi-family units were built. Along with the development of 363 multi-family units, Savannah Gardens will also include 116 affordable for-sale single family homes. Thus, the Savannah Gardens development helps to advance the two sections of the housing continuum for the Gateway—rental housing and first-time home-ownership. As is typical of a major revitalization effort such as Sa-

vannah Gardens, homeownership is a late stage component, since it is first necessary to remove blight, demonstrate change, and then attract buyers. Should a CN Implementation grant be achieved, funds could be used to achieve affordable homeownership through the use of silent second mortgages, which reduce the debt needing to be serviced by the homeowners, while preserving the market value of the units.

### With or Without Choice Neighborhoods

Site control and much of the funding needed to carry out the above-mentioned plans is already in place, including the RAD project-based Section 8 commitments, and equity available non-competitively through bonds and 4% tax credits that are received automatically with the bonds. Redevelopment of the Hitch site can be accomplished with infrastructure funding from the City (SPLOST) and two or more phases of 9% tax credits. This is the approach that was used by the Authority in the redevelopment of the Fellwood site on the west side of downtown (Sustainable Fellwood). This would result in redevelopment of 100 units at Blackshear, 238 units at Wessels, and 337 replacement units at Hitch, for a total of 675 units, plus an additional 100 to 200 units spread among Blackshear, Wessels, Hitch and the "Commercial Site" adjacent to the Authority's offices, for a total of 775 to 875 units. [At least 400 of these units would be expected to be new construction.]

Redevelopment of this magnitude without a major capital grant, such as Choice Neighborhoods, would be slower and more difficult, but not impossible. The addition of a CN Implementation Grant would accelerate the process and increase the reach of the revitalization, resulting in still more affordable rental and homeownership units, spread more thoroughly throughout the

area, and provide a greater catalytic effect in support of transforming the Gateway.

(See Figure 4r – Conceptual Gateway Budget).

The level of amenities provided through the revitalization at Hitch will also be significantly increased with the benefit of CN Implementation funds.

**East Savannah Gateway**

Savannah, GA

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative

**Development Program and Estimated Budget**

Units	Blackshear	Wessels	Hitch	In-Fill	Totals
Total	145	308	387	35	875
Rental	100	238	337	0	675
Ownership	0	0	40	35	75
Additional Units	45	70	10	0	125

Sources	Blackshear	Wessels	Hitch	In-Fill	Totals
Debt	\$ 2,762,034	\$ 4,653,700	\$ 4,346,571	\$ 3,803,250	\$ 15,565,555
Owner Take-Back	\$ 2,432,657	\$ 7,470,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,902,657
LIHTC Equity	\$ 2,737,941	\$ 8,060,866	\$ 34,566,792	\$ -	\$ 45,365,599
State Credits	\$ 915,853	\$ 2,879,773	\$ 13,263,997	\$ -	\$ 17,059,623
Capital Funds/RHF	\$ -	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 7,000,000
Other	\$ -	\$ 1,205,500	\$ 7,000,000	\$ 1,815,843	\$ 10,021,343
Total	\$ 8,848,485	\$ 25,269,839	\$ 64,177,360	\$ 6,619,093	\$ 104,914,776

Uses	Blackshear	Wessels	Hitch	In-Fill	Totals
Acquisition	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 7,470,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,470,000
Hard Cost	\$ 4,134,666	\$ 12,583,838	\$ 39,680,000	\$ 4,870,232	\$ 61,268,736
Extra. Infrastructure	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,000,000	\$ -	\$ 7,000,000
Soft Cost	\$ 950,973	\$ 2,894,283	\$ 9,126,400	\$ 885,500	\$ 13,857,156
Developer Fee	\$ 762,846	\$ 2,321,718	\$ 8,370,960	\$ 863,360	\$ 12,318,884
Total	\$ 8,848,485	\$ 25,269,839	\$ 64,177,360	\$ 6,619,092	\$ 104,914,776

Notes: Blackshear and Wessels have RAD Funding Commitments, with 4% tax credit applications planned for 2014. Development at the Hitch Site is estimated to begin in 2014 with application for the first phase of tax credit financing.

Figure 4r - Conceptual Gateway Budget

Goal	Strategy	Lead Agency	Leveraged Resources	Timeframe
1. Redevelop Robert Hitch Village	1a. Develop 337 units as new construction replacement units, both on-site and off-site, and leverage 150+/- work force and market rate units on site.	Housing Lead & CNI Planning Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$5 million – Capital Funds/RHF (committed)</li> <li>• \$6.75 million – City SPLOST funding for infrastructure (to be allocated)</li> <li>• \$52 million—Federal and State tax credits + debt (to be obtained)</li> </ul>	2014-2019
	1b. Evaluate options for areas of the Hitch Site that fall within the floodplain, including creation of a park, gardens, and edible landscaping.	HAS, Housing Lead	Included in the above resources	2013-2014
	1c. Identify and evaluate parcels for off-site redevelopment, including the commercial parcel adjacent to HAS Office; Bartow; portion of Blackshear site; in-fill; other(s).	CN Planning Team	Included in the above resources	2013-2014 & ongoing
2. Rehabilitate Fred Wessels Homes	2a. Replace the selective demolition of 45+/-units with new construction replacement units.	Housing Lead	<b>\$6.4 million - Total</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$1.67 million – RAD Vouchers (obtained)</li> <li>• \$2.90 million – LIHTC Equity (4%) (non-competitive)</li> <li>• \$1.04 million – State Credits (non-competitive)</li> <li>• \$360,000 – Capital Funds/RHF</li> <li>• \$433,980 – Transfer from Blackshear/Stillwell</li> </ul>	2014-2015
	2b. Prioritize the selective demolition of existing units to address site deficiencies, including the lack of off-street parking and reconnecting the site to the street grid.	Housing Lead	N/A	2013
	2c. Rehabilitate 206 units on the existing Wessels site.	Housing Lead	<b>\$11.4 million - Total</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$2.97 million – RAD Vouchers (committed)</li> <li>• \$5.16 million – LIHTC Equity (4%) (non-competitive)</li> <li>• \$1.84 million – State Credits (non-competitive)</li> <li>• \$640,000 – Capital Funds/RHF</li> <li>• \$770,000 – Transfer from Blackshear/Stillwell</li> </ul>	2014-2015
	2d. Explore the potential for development of an additional 77+/- units as a future phase.	Housing Lead	<b>\$5 million</b> – pending 2015 9% LIHTC application	2014

Goal	Strategy	Lead Agency	Leveraged Resources	Timeframe
3. Rehabilitate Blackshear Homes	3a. Prioritize on-site infill housing as part of the demolition and replacement of 20 units along Wheaton Street, including the addition of site amenities and landscaping that are integrated into the broader vision for revitalization of the Wheaton Street corridor.	Housing Lead	<b>\$1.15 million - Total</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$497,166 – RAD vouchers (committed)</li> <li>• \$492,829 – LIHTC Equity (4%) (non-competitive)</li> </ul> \$164,854 – State Credits (non-competitive)	2013-2015
	3b. Renovate and preserve 80 units on the Blackshear site	Housing Lead	<b>\$5.26 million - Total</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$2.26 million – RAD vouchers (committed)</li> <li>• \$2.24 million – LIHTC Equity (4%) (non-competitive)</li> <li>• \$750,999 – State Credits (non-competitive)</li> </ul>	2013-2015
	3c. Explore the potential for development of an additional 40+/- units as a future phase and potentially part of de-concentration of the Robert Hitch Village site	Housing Lead	\$6.4 million; pending 2015 9% LIHTC application	2014-2015
4. Reduce vacant lots, boarded-up units and distressed units	4a. Target areas within the ESG with concentrations of vacant lots and boarded up housing, including 3 units to be demolished and 5 units to be acquired to support the redevelopment of affordable housing	Savannah – Chatham Land Bank Authority (acquisition); City of Savannah - Housing Department (development)	\$120,000	2014
	4b. Continue code enforcement efforts in the ESG and review how code enforcement could be strengthened to further persuade owners to address distressed units	City of Savannah – Property Maintenance Department	Included in the City Housing Department budget	2014
	4c. Provide tax incentives for individuals purchasing and putting units back into service—pursue establishment of a new Enterprise Zone for Waters Avenue Target Area to provide property tax abatements for up to 10 years for real estate improvement and/or job creation	City of Savannah—Pennsylvania Avenue Enterprise Zone	To be determined	2014-2015
	4d. Explore support from local lenders and others to support establishment of a community development corporation (CDC) in the ESG and creation of a fund to provide low-interest loans for owners to put units back into service, or purchasers to acquire and rehabilitate vacant properties	HAS to identify “champion” for this effort	To be determined	2014
	4e. Conduct outreach with ESG residents to identify the most problematic lots/structures in need of attention, and to promote awareness of the City’s owner-occupied repair grant program	Local neighborhood associations	To be determined	2014-2015

Goal	Strategy	Lead Agency	Leveraged Resources	Timeframe
	4f. Explore organization framework and vehicle(s) for promoting and supporting local upgrade efforts, such as: home make-over or most improved porch contests; community pride projects; block beautification projects (house signs, street signage, banners); tool lending library; others	HAS to identify "champion" for this effort	To be determined	2014-2015
	4g. Develop 25 in-fill ownership units in the target area, 5 per year for five years	Coastal Enterprise Habitat For Humanity	\$3.0 million, debt, sweat equity, sites, down payment assistance	2014-2018
5. Assist homeowners and renters to improve their properties	5a. Determine how existing tax abatements or other to-be-established financial incentives, such as creation of an Enterprise Zone for Waters Avenue Target Area (4c above), could support housing upgrades	HAS & City of Savannah	To be determined	2014
	5b. Provide low-interest loans for owners to put units back into service, or purchasers to acquire and rehabilitate vacant properties, including 10 Grant, Loan and/or Volunteer Rehab Projects and 10 Federal Home Loan Bank Forgivable Loan Projects	City of Savannah – Housing Department (Owner-occupied Home Repair Program)	\$180,000	2014
	5c. DreamMaker Down Payment Assistance, with down payment and gap financing assistance to low to moderate income households purchasing newly constructed homes in the CN area	City of Savannah	\$2.05 million	2014
	5d. Provide in-fill home construction financing to be sold to qualified low- to moderate-income home buyers in the CN area: Savannah Gardens – 10 units; other infill or existing home sales – 2 units	City of Savannah	\$1.77 million	2014
	5e. Provide housing code violation loans/grants through the Rental Property Repair Assistance Program to target 25 units	City of Savannah—Housing Department	\$250,000	2014
	5f. Explore support from local lenders for creation of a Homeowner Loan Improvement Program	HAS & Community Housing Services Agency (CHSA)	To be determined	2014
	5g. Explore support for loan funds for landlords to upgrade their properties, with agreements that protect the tenants (from rapid rent increases)	HAS & Community Housing Services Agency (CHSA)	To be determined	2014
	5h. Encourage HAS Section 8 purchasers to consider acquiring homes in the area as well as holding open house tours of for-sale properties in the neighborhood	HAS	To be determined	Ongoing

Goal	Strategy	Lead Agency	Leveraged Resources	Timeframe
	5i. Organize the “good landlords” and work with them to help address the problem of “bad landlords”	HAS, new CDC	N/A	2014-2015
	5j. Establish goals for increasing homeownership rate in the neighborhood, and tracking by area	HAS, new CDC	N/A	2014
	5k. Provide recognition of Realtors based on their sales of homes in the neighborhood	HAS, new CDC	N/A	Ongoing
	5l. Work with the Economic Opportunity Authority to focus existing weatherization resources for the older homes in the neighborhood (e.g., in CT 11, over 60% of the homes are 70+ years old), and develop additional resources as needed	HAS, Economic Opportunity Authority	To be determined	2014-2015
6. Increase housing opportunities for homeless families	6a. Develop a plan for the construction of infill housing for the homeless, such as through the refurbishment of shipping containers as low cost materials	Trident Sustainability Group	To be determined	2014
	6b. Establish a waiting list preference so that a percentage of public housing units may be used for temporary housing for homeless families, with a referral	HAS	To be determined	2014
7. Address the incidence of illegal rooming houses	7a. Study the potential of rezoning certain areas to accommodate rooming housing, preventing the displacement of low-income residents.	HAS, MPC	N/A	2014
	7b. Provide owners of rooming houses with building code violations a period to come into compliance with building code ordinances	City of Savannah – Property Maintenance Department	N/A	2014



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# Measuring Success

The ongoing tracking and measurement of the success and impact of the goals and strategies described in this document is a critical element of the Plan. Performance measurement is vital to determining the impact of the transformation process and improvements in the lives and well-being of residents in the targeted public housing sites and the broader Gateway neighborhood. As part of the overall implementation effort, the Housing Authority and its partners will collaborate to collect and evaluate performance results as the recommended strategies are put into effect and results emerge.

## A. Performance Metrics and Baseline Data

The performance metrics to be used in measuring the success of the transformation effort are a direct outgrowth of the comprehensive needs assessment completed during the CN planning process. A core set of metrics have been identified for each of the People, Housing, and Neighborhood dimensions of the Gateway. These metrics were selected based on the key needs revealed through resident feedback, technical studies, research, previous planning efforts, and inputs from core stakeholders and planning participants. The following includes a sample of the metrics to be tracked.

### Neighborhood

#### Demographics

- Total population (source: US Census)

- Population density (source: US Census)
- Household density (source: US Census)
- Median age (source: US Census)
- Median household income (source: US Census)
- Retail spending potential (source: US Census)
- Total number of housing units (source: US Census)
- Housing occupancy rate (source: US Census)
- Assessed housing value (source: US Census)
- Percentage of vacant housing units (source: US Census)
- Percentage of owner occupied housing units (source: US Census)
- Percentage of renter occupied housing units (source: US Census)

#### Housing/Building Conditions

- Number of vacant parcels (source: field survey)
- Number of unoccupied properties (source: field survey)
- Number of boarded up units (source: field survey)
- Number of partially boarded up units (source: field survey)
- Number of properties exhibiting minor distress (source: field survey)
- Number of properties exhibiting moderate distress (source: field survey)
- Number of properties exhibiting major distress (source: field survey)

## Employment

- Unemployment rate (source: US Census)
- Employees living in the Gateway (source: US Census)
- Average number of employees per household (source: US Census)
- Number of jobs available within the Gateway (source: US Census)
- Jobs by earnings (e.g. \$1,250 per month or less; \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month, etc.) (source: US Census)
- Number of employees who live outside the Gateway (source: US Census)
- Number of Gateway residents with jobs located outside of the neighborhood (source: US Census)
- Number of Gateway residents with jobs located inside the neighborhood (source: US Census)

## Public safety

- Number of Part 1 Person Crimes in the Gateway (source: Savannah Police Department)
- Number of Part 1 Property Crimes in the Gateway (source: Savannah Police Department)
- Number of Part 2 Crimes in the Gateway (source: Savannah Police Department)

## People

### Children and Youth

- Percentage of children under five years old enrolled in an accredited childcare/early learning facility (source: resident survey; Savannah-Chatham County Public School System [SCCPSS])
- Number and percent of children entering kindergarten ready to learn (source: SCCPSS)
- Percentage of household youth participating in youth/recreation programs (source: resident survey; City's Leisure Services Department; SCCPSS)

- Number and percent of students at or above grade level according to state mathematics and reading or language arts assessments in at least the grades required by ESEA (3rd through 8th and once in high school) (source: SCCPSS)
- Rate of high school graduation (source: SCCPSS)

### Healthcare

- Percentage of residents accessing general health care from a private doctor, clinic, or medical home (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Percentage of residents reporting an overall level of physical health of either excellent or good (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Percentage of residents reporting an overall level of either excellent or good psychological health (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Percentage of residents reporting an overall weight of either excellent or good with respect to being healthy (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Number of visits by children and youth to a healthcare provider for preventive medical care within the past 12 months (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Percentage of children with health insurance (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Percentage of adults with health insurance (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)
- Percentage of residents, including children, with specific health conditions - hypertension, asthma, obesity, diabetes (source: Resident Survey; Community Indicator Coalition)

## Transportation

- Percentage of residents reporting use of public transportation (source: Resident Survey; Chatham Area Transit)
- Percentage of residents who use public transportation to get to work or services (source: Resident Survey; Chatham Area Transit)

## Employment and Career Training

- Average income (as percentage of Median) of public housing residents in development (source: Resident Survey)
- Average income (as percentage of Median) of otherwise subsidized residents in neighborhood (source: Resident Survey)
- Average income (as percentage of Median) of market-rate residents in the neighborhood (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of household adults With Part-Time Employment (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage Of Household adults with full-time employment (source: Resident Survey)percentage of households whose primary monthly source of income is from wages/earned income (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of household adults enrolled in school or in a job training program (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents enrolled in job training programs involving computer training, vocational training, and GDD/adult literacy classes (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents with a high school diploma, G.E.D., or higher degree (source: Resident Survey)

## Public Safety

- Percentage of residents who indicate crime occurs in their neighborhood either frequently or occasionally (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents reporting a decrease in crime (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents reporting crime related to drug dealing and domestic violence (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents who report feeling safe walking through their neighborhood (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents reporting the need for increased security told by police and/or neighborhood watch (source: Resident Survey)

## Financial Self-Sufficiency

- Percentage of residents enrolled in an IDA or other savings program (source: Resident Survey)
- Percentage of residents who have a bank account (source: Resident Survey)

## Housing

- Number of replacement public housing units (source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of non-public housing, subsidized units (on/off-site, including homeownership; source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of units rehabilitated (excluding acquisition with rehab; source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of newly constructed on-site units (including acquisition with rehab; source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of newly constructed off-site units (including acquisition with rehab; source: Hunt/TCG)

- Number of market-rate units constructed (no income restrictions; source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of other units--PBS8 (source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of homeownership units (source: Hunt/TCG)
- Density of on-site development (source: Hunt/TCG)
- Percent of very low income households in the development (30% of median or below; (source: Hunt/TCG)
- Number of new construction units with accessibility features (source: Hunt/TCG):
  - o Mobility-Impaired (wheelchair)
  - o Hearing-Impaired
  - o Sight-Impaired
  - o Visitability

## **B. Performance Tracking and Reporting**

The Housing Authority and its partners will apply a collaborative approach to the performance tracking and reporting process throughout implementation. The Housing Authority will take the lead role in leading an annual update and review of the core performance metrics discussed above. Data for each metric will be compared to the previous year, along with original baseline data, to evaluate the impact of transformation strategies over time. This process will involve many of the same data collection methods used to establish the original baseline. These include surveys of public housing residents and residents of the broader Gateway neighborhood; updates to technical studies, including the housing market and economic development studies; asset mapping; and community meetings with residents and key stakeholders, among others.

As part of this effort, the lead entity responsible for each strategy will also be expected to report on the status of their efforts on a regular basis. This review will be used

to determine whether the selected strategies are being implemented as intended, whether dollars are being spent on time, if services are being provided, etc. to ensure accountability among the implementation team. Such updates will also be used to determine whether any strategies require adjustment or midcourse correction to ensure that critical resident and community needs are being addressed. While priority will be placed on tracking the baseline metrics associated with this plan in order to evaluate performance over time, the Housing Authority and its partners will continue to take a broad approach to identifying and using additional data and metrics that shed light on the impact of implementation.

The Housing Authority will also take a lead role in tracking and reporting on the status of public housing residents throughout the implementation period. At a minimum, this will include tracking residents throughout the relocation process as needed. In the event CN implementation funding is obtained, the Housing Authority will be in a position to offer in-depth case management services through the development and tracking of individual CSS plans for each resident in the areas of education, employment, asset building, health/wellness, transportation and safety, as described People section of this Plan. The Housing Authority will expand its use of the Efforts to Outcome (ETO) software to record and report on the status of resident progress against the goals and objectives in their CSS plans. Absent this funding, the Housing Authority and its partners will rely on existing data collection tools.



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# Implementation

The goal of creating a neighborhood by design requires an approach that is inclusive and collaborative by employing the involvement of many community stakeholders. Both the public sector and the private sector have been consulted and mobilized to develop a vision for the Gateway and to commit to action strategies that will advance the Plan's implementation. Every effort has been made to increase understanding and awareness of the ongoing initiatives of others that impact this Plan and to take those measures into account. It is clear that the desired transformation will take time, sustained engagement, coordination, and significant financial investments from various sources both public and private. Community partners and stakeholders deserve transparency and accountability. For that reason the Transformation Plan will be implemented by a nonprofit public-private partnership charged specifically with the responsibility for guiding and promoting its multi-faceted elements.

The structure of the envisioned partnership echoes and builds upon the network of Task Forces that was used so productively in developing the Plan. The Task Forces were composed of community representatives and stakeholders with a particular interest in People-serving assets and needs, Neighborhood assets, issues and concerns, or Housing issues and concerns. When it became clear that the People-related issues broke into two distinct areas – Cradle to Career education

concerns and community and supportive services, two task forces were formed with a further sub-set focusing on early learning and kindergarten readiness. Among the benefits that arose from the Task Force system were better data analysis and interpretation and increased awareness of the important entities and organizations already working to solve community challenges. Eventually, the Task Force system helped to identify much of the leadership needed to move forward with the Plan (*see Figure 6a – Organizational Structure for Implementation*).

Now Neighborhood and Housing each has a lead entity to ensure follow-through, while discussions are continuing with community partners to identify the most suitable lead entity to coordinate implementation of the proposed People strategies.

**Neighborhood** – the City of Savannah and HAS – Given that infrastructure improvements play such an important role in the Neighborhood strategies, the City is in an ideal position to serve as Co-Lead with HAS for this area of the Transformation. This will be particularly clear in connection with the redevelopment of the former Hitch Village site. One of the City's critical partners is the Savannah Chatham Public School System, which will be making significant investments in the schools of the Gateway. The City of Savannah has proven itself an exceptional partner working with HAS



Figure 6a –Organizational Structure for Implementation

on previous redevelopment efforts including Ashley Midtown and Sustainable Fellwood.

**People** – the United Way of the Coastal Empire – the United Way has been named the Lead for People-serving elements of the Plan due to its unique breadth of scope in the human and community services arena. In addition to providing the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) software being employed by HAS and other local providers, United Way shares HAS's commitment to measuring the effectiveness of programs and services. The Transformation Plan will benefit from United Way's extensive network and standing in the community.

**Housing** – Hunt/TCG has teamed to contract with HAS to carry out the redevelopment of Hitch Village. Hunt Companies, founded in 1947, is a developer, investor, and manager of real estate assets and provides a broad range of services to public and private investor clients. Together Hunt and its affiliates have \$24.8 billion in assets under management. TCG brings to its leadership responsibilities extensive knowledge of the Gateway drawn from its experience as a member of the Transformation Planning Team and the consulting team which generated the Property Viability and Sustainability Study and Plan for HAS in 2009-2010. TCG is a national leader in both Choice Neighborhood and its predecessor HOPE VI program and in the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, which Hunt/TCG and HAS will use to revitalize Fred Wessels Homes and Edgar Blackshear Homes.

A functioning public-private partnership must be defined by more than common values and good intentions. Work has been initiated to clarify roles and responsibilities of all parties sharing in this new organization. Other steps will include detailing its

decision-making and monitoring processes, reporting obligations, and its governance. Not all of these critical areas have been defined as yet.

The public-private partnership will be the fiduciary and administrator for any grant dollars and contributions made directly for the Plan's purposes. It will also be charged with responsibility to report and monitor progress in achieving the strategies cited in the approved plan. This Transformation Plan was built on a solid foundation of research and community consultation and it will be realized in the same way. Evidence-based strategies will be regularly evaluated for their effectiveness in addressing the problems and needs that the community identified in surveys, charrettes and task force meetings. Work continues in several areas to identify and refine the appropriate metrics. As experience continually informs the transformation process, strategic and tactical adjustments will be made just as occurred during the planning process.

Community engagement is a foundational value for this Transformation Plan and steps will be taken to ensure transparency and accountability by actively reporting progress to the community by a variety of means including newsletters, flyers, forums, the website and other means. Community support requires a sense of progress and visible improvement. It will be important to reliably share our milestones with our stakeholders. The quality of the relationships among both public and private community partners has served the planning process well and the proposed structure is intended to build upon the openness of those relationships.

Understandably, the Plan's ability to win substantial financial support will determine the pace at which improvements will be achieved. This Plan's narrative highlights several early start activities which illustrate



the breadth and depth of the community's interest and commitment to the Gateway. The Housing Authority of Savannah will also use this Transformation Plan to underlay its request for a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant from HUD. Due to the intense competition for this grant program and other federal grants, the Plan's strategies entail efforts that could be achieved at least in part, with or without an Implementation Grant.

Given the above, it is important to stress that in this period of federal contraction, state and local sources, both public and private are already strained to meet needs such as public infrastructure and human services. Bold new initiatives will be required to reflect innovation, creative use of resources, and energetic fund raising. With the adoption of this Plan the community is establishing a long term contract with the residents and stakeholders in the East Savannah Gateway to create a new future of progress and possibilities.

