



City of Statesboro Strategic Plan 2025

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who participated in and assisted with developing the Statesboro Strategic Plan 2025. This Plan is the result of a process involving City staff, stakeholders, and representatives, as well as a series of public meetings. We are extremely grateful for the support we received during the process.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following list defines acronyms and abbreviations used throughout this Strategic Plan.

Acronym	Meaning
ACS	American Community Survey
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
ATC	Aid to Construction
BUILD	Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CID	Community Improvement District
CIP	Capital Improvements Program
CPI-U	Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers

Acronym	Meaning
DCA	Georgia Department of Community Affairs
GMA	Georgia Municipal Association
GEFA	Georgia Environmental Finance Authority
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOBP	Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
GSU	Georgia Southern University
GTIB	Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank
LMIG	Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant
LIHTC	Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
LOST	Local Option Sales Tax
LRTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
M&O	Maintenance and Operations
MOST	Municipal Option Sales Tax
SPLOST	Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax
S.W.O.T.	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
TAVT	Title Ad Valorem Tax
TSPLOST	Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax
URP	Urban Redevelopment Plan

1 Introduction

1.1 What is a Strategic Plan?

Community leaders use a strategic plan to identify short-term goals and strategies that address local and community needs. The Statesboro Strategic Plan should be used as a guide for elected officials and staff to allocate resources over the next five years to meet the City's mission.

The mission of the City of Statesboro is to provide the most responsive and progressive public services so that our residents, businesses, and visitors can enjoy the highest quality of life Statesboro has to offer.

The Strategic Plan serves as a foundation for developing annual updates to the City's six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which is incorporated into the annual budget document. It incorporates an analysis of current economic and demographic conditions to guide informed decision-making. Additionally, this Plan proposes potential new revenue sources for the General Fund, which is the city's primary operating fund that supports essential services such as public safety, general government services, engineering, community development, finance, and public works.

1.2 Planning Process

This Plan was developed with input from the public, as well as from Statesboro officials and staff. A community survey gathered 270 responses, and two public meetings offered residents the opportunity to share their perspectives on public service delivery. In-depth interviews with City staff and officials provided valuable insights into current departmental projects, needs, and available funding sources. A review of existing plans further enhanced understanding of local goals and initiatives. This diverse input helped identify the most urgent needs related to public service provision and informed the development of targeted goals and strategies. Additionally, an analysis of the City's budget and tax structure, along with research into financing mechanisms, led to a set of funding alternatives that could generate new revenue sources to support city services and capital projects.



2 Economic and Demographic Overview

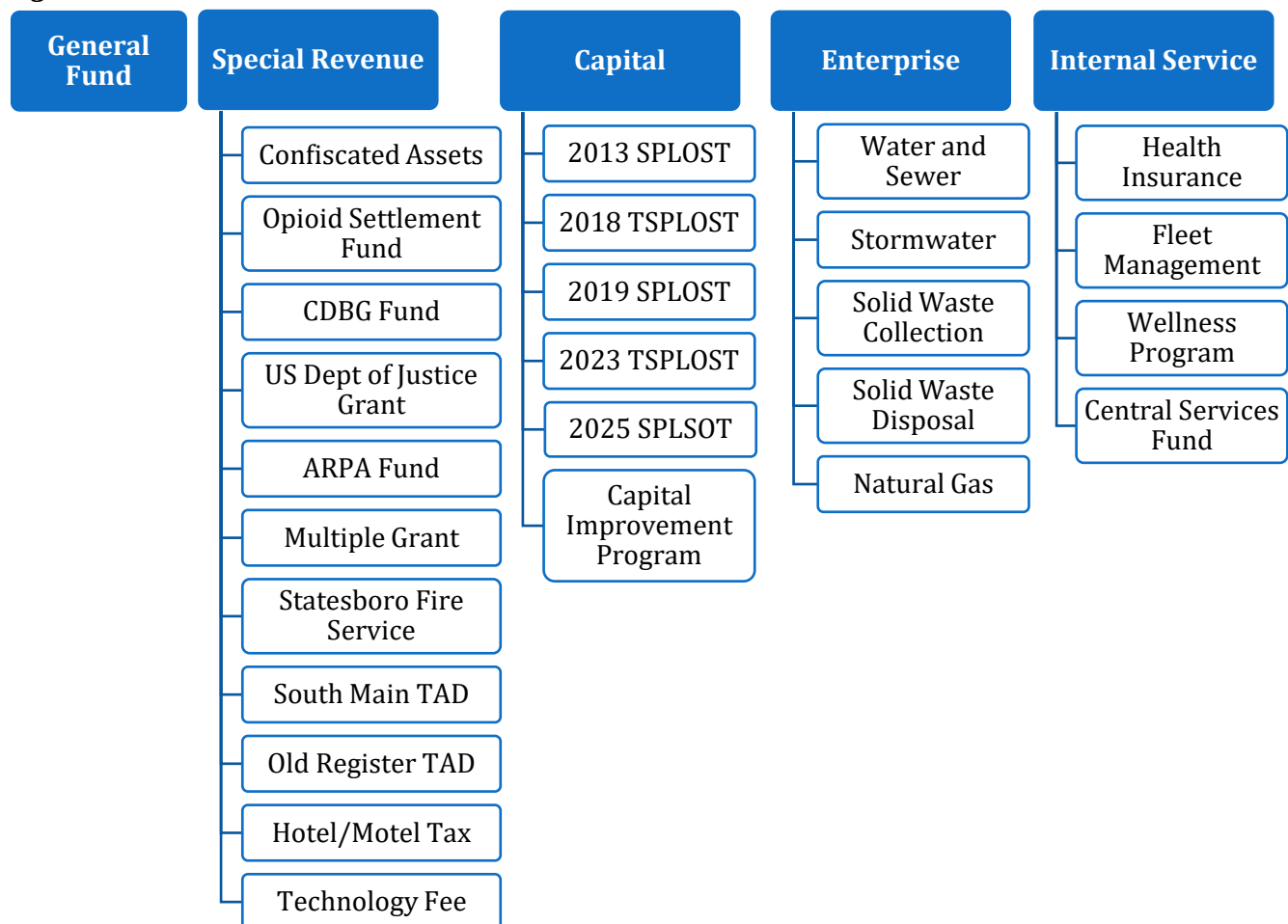
2.1 Economic Snapshot

The economic snapshot provides a foundational understanding of the City's current economic conditions. By examining these conditions, the City can better align future investments and initiatives with economic realities, ensuring that growth is inclusive, resilient, and responsive to the needs of residents and businesses.

2.1.1 Revenue Sources and Tax Base Structure

Statesboro's finance revenues are drawn from a variety of sources, each presenting its own set of opportunities and limitations. The following snapshot offers a summary analysis of the primary revenue streams that support public service delivery, along with an overview of their current status and associated impacts.

Figure 1. Revenue sources.



Source: Statesboro Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 – Accrual Basis of Budgeting.

The General Fund serves as the primary financial resource for the City's day-to-day operations and is used to account for all activities not assigned to other specific funds.

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) focuses on infrastructure upgrades and major capital projects other than those financed by the City's enterprise funds (Water and Sewer Fund, Stormwater Fund, Natural Gas Fund, Solid Waste Collection Fund, and Solid Waste Disposal Fund). CIP is comprised of funds transferred from the General Fund, federal and state grants, and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) lease pool loans.

2.1.2 Property Taxes

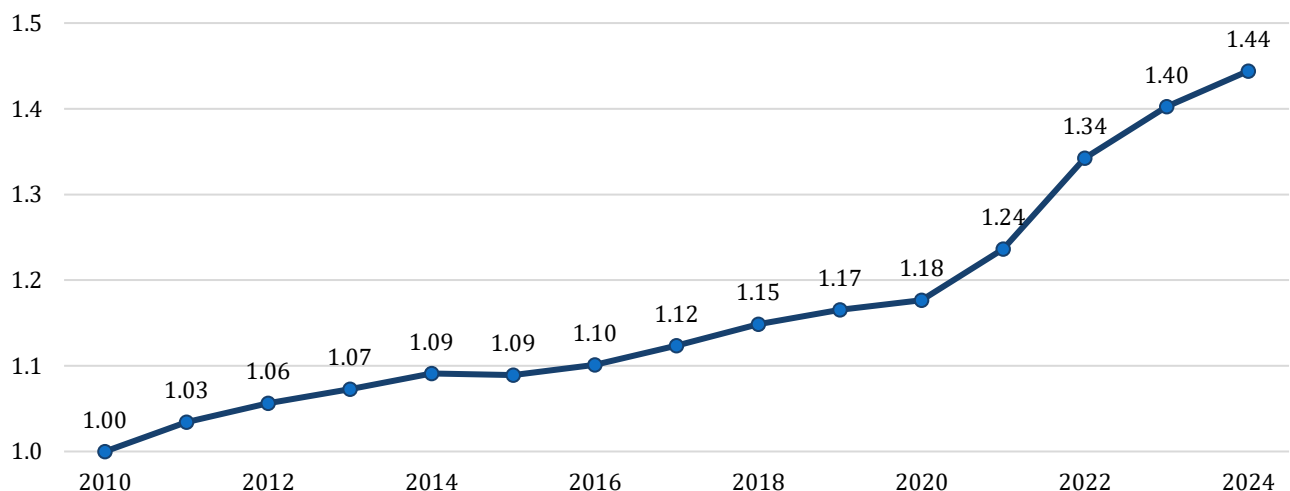
Bulloch County, including the City of Statesboro, is one of the eight counties in Georgia that does not receive revenue from a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST). LOST is a discretionary 1% sales tax authorized by local referendum and applied to the purchase, sale, rental, storage, use, or consumption of tangible personal property or related services. Since 1982, Bulloch County has had a constitutionally designated LOST that is allocated exclusively to the County Board of Education. As a result, Statesboro does not benefit from municipal LOST revenue and relies more heavily on local property taxes and user fees to fund its operations.

In Fiscal Year 2024, Statesboro levied \$9 million in property taxes, which is 18.1 percent of the City's total governmental activities revenue.

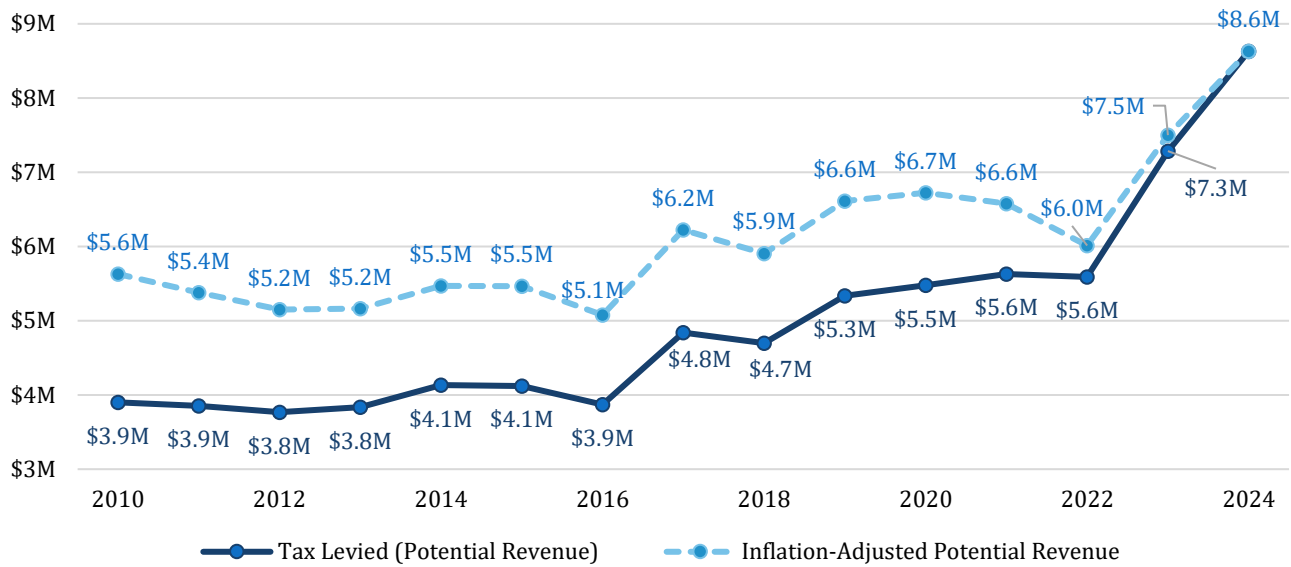
The Maintenance and Operations (M&O) tax base refers to the collection of capital assets such as land, buildings, vehicles, and equipment. Each year, Statesboro levies property taxes based on the assessed value of these assets. Property is assessed at 40 percent of its actual market value for tax purposes. However, this assessed value may be reduced through various local exemptions, such as a homestead exemption for owner-occupied residences. The types and amounts of these exemptions vary by locality.

Over the past decade, inflation has diminished the value of city tax revenues. As shown in Figure 1, the inflation index reached 1.44 in 2024 using 2010 as the base year, meaning that \$1.44 in 2024 has the same purchasing power as \$1 in 2010. Figure 2 illustrates the potential tax revenue adjusted for inflation, reflecting changes in the value of money over time. From 2017 to 2022, the City maintained the same property tax millage rate at 7.308 mills, opting not to increase it. However, in most of those years, maintaining purchasing power in line with inflation would require a millage rate exceeding 8 mills (see [Appendix A](#) for details). As the costs of materials, equipment, and services have continued to rise, the purchasing power of the City's property tax revenue has declined, limiting its ability to meet growing financial demands.

Figure 2. Inflation rate with 2010 as the base year.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for southern U.S. area.

Figure 3. Inflation-adjusted potential revenue.

Sources: Georgia Department of Revenue County Services Portal Digest Summaries (<https://sso.dor.ga.gov/>) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in South Area.

Two cities were selected for comparison to Statesboro based on their geographic location and population: Pooler and Carrollton.

Table 1. Tax base and millage rate comparison with other cities.

City	2023 Population	2024 Tax Base	2024 Millage
Statesboro	33,705	\$1,000,717,767	8.125
Pooler	27,235	\$2,909,895,468	3.780
Carrollton	27,058	\$1,475,246,925	4.082

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05, 2023, and Georgia Department of Revenue County Services Portal Digest Summaries.

Pooler is directly accessible via I-16 and lies to the east of Statesboro. While the two cities have similar populations, Pooler benefits from its location within the economic activity zone of Savannah and Chatham County, resulting in a significantly higher tax base. This broader tax base allows Pooler to maintain a much lower millage rate compared to the other four cities.

Carrollton shares several similarities with Statesboro: serving as an economic hub for the surrounding counties, hosting multiple educational institutions, and being located about 12 miles from a major highway. While the population and tax base for the two cities are similar, Carrollton has a much lower millage rate. The following table shows the benefit of the LOST in Carrollton. The total LOST collections exceed the amount of ad valorem tax revenue for the City. Removing LOST revenue would double Carrollton's millage rate, bringing it close to Statesboro's millage rate.

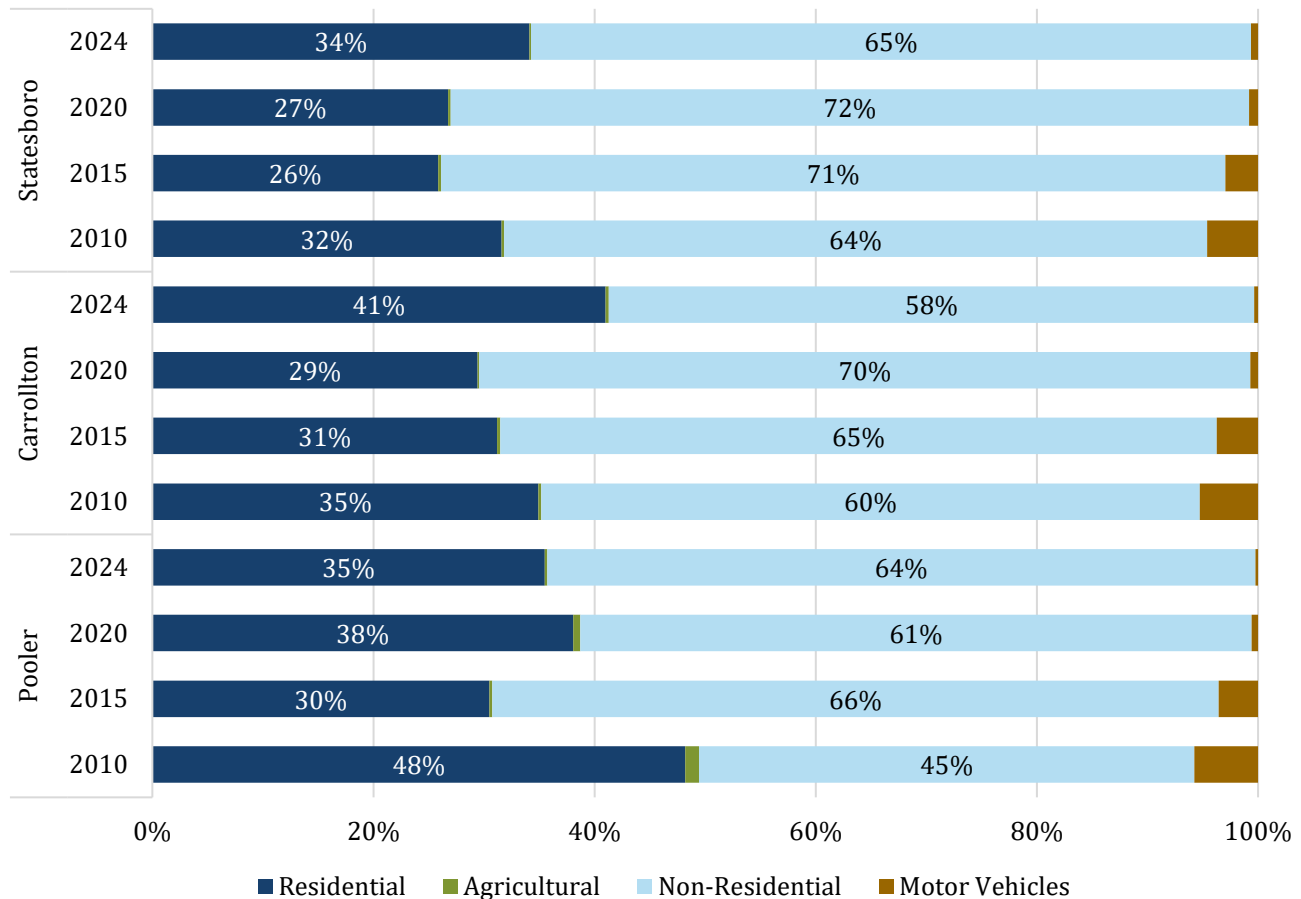
Table 2. Effect of LOST on millage rate.

	Statesboro	Carrollton
Ad Valorem Tax	\$8,631,191	\$6,095,000
Annual LOST	\$0	\$6,750,000
Annual Property Tax + LOST	\$8,631,191	\$12,845,000
Millage Rate	8.625	4.082
Effective Millage Rate	8.625	8.707

Sources: Carrollton 2024-2025 Operating Budget, and Georgia Department of Revenue County Services Portal Digest Summaries.

In all three cities, residential and non-residential properties together make up over 90 percent of the total M&O tax base. While the share of residential properties declined from 2010 to 2020, it has been on a rise since 2020. The decline in the motor vehicle share since 2010 is due to the implementation of the Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) in Georgia. Under this system, instead of paying an annual tax based on the vehicle's value, owners pay a one-time tax when the ownership is transferred or when the vehicle is first registered in Georgia.

Figure 4. Tax base comparison in Statesboro, Pooler, and Carrollton in 2010, 2015, 2020, and 2024.

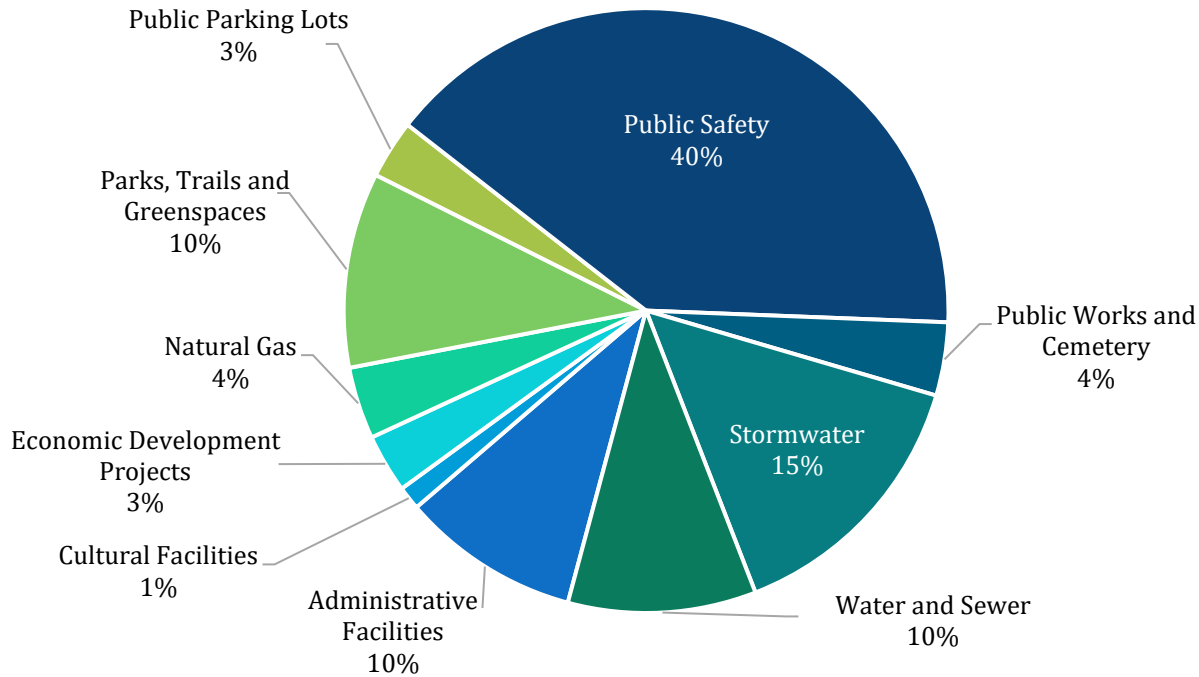


Source: Georgia Department of Revenue County Services Portal Digest Summaries.

2.1.3 SPLOST

The 1% Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) has served as a key funding source for capital projects in Statesboro since 1989. It also helps alleviate pressure on the General Fund by freeing up more of its revenue to support various city services that SPLOST, under state law, is not permitted to finance. A portion of the 2019 SPLOST was used to finance the City/County joint Solid Waste Disposal Fund.

Statesboro is projected to receive \$31.9 million in revenue from the 2025 SPLOST, which will help fund projects related to public safety; water and sewer systems; natural gas infrastructure; administrative and cultural facilities; parks, trails, and greenspaces; public works and cemeteries; stormwater management; public parking lots; and economic development.

Figure 5. 2025 SPLOST funding project allocation.

Source: City of Statesboro SPLOST webpage 2025 SPLOST Project List.

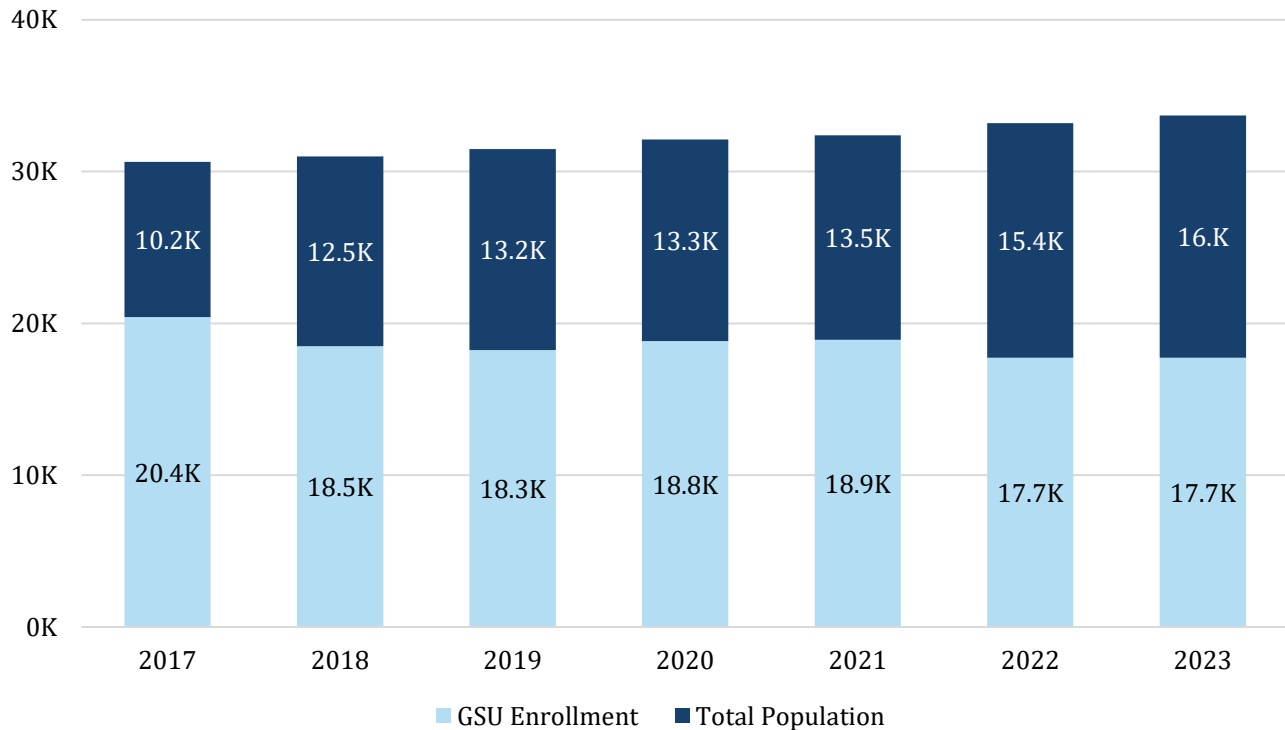
In the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2024-2029, Statesboro estimates that approximately 28 percent of funding will come from SPLOST sources, including the 2013 SPLOST, 2018 TSPLOST, 2019 SPLOST, 2023 TSPLOST, and the projected 2025 SPLOST. SPLOST serves as the primary funding source for transportation improvement (such as sidewalks, intersection upgrades, street maintenance, and streetscape projects), as well as for police equipment and sewer infrastructure enhancements.

2.2 Demographics

The dynamics of Statesboro's population trends and projections provide essential information in the decision-making process for certain plans and projects. According to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the total population for Statesboro was estimated at 33,705, representing a 19 percent increase since the 2010 Decennial Census. Students from Georgia Southern University make up over half of the population in Statesboro.



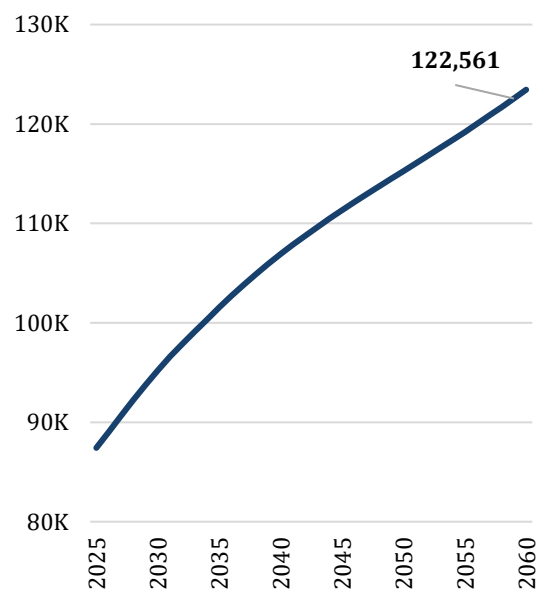
Figure 6. Statesboro population from 2017 to 2023.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05, 2017-2023, and Georgia Southern University Statesboro Campus Student Enrollment.

The Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) uses the Cohort-Component Projection Method, incorporating fertility, mortality, migration, and group quarters, to project population. Although the data is not available on the city level, it is projected that Bulloch County may experience an 11 percent increase in population by 2030 and 43 percent by 2060. With major developments in the region, it is projected that coastal Georgia will experience a 30 percent increase, reaching over one million, in population by 2060. While this projection method is widely accepted and grounded in historical data, it assumes continuity in past trends and demographic behavior. As such, it may not fully capture recent or emerging factors that could accelerate or decelerate population growth. For Statesboro, these include the regional economic transformation driven by the Hyundai Metaplant and its suppliers, changes in college enrollment, and residential development. These dynamics may result in faster-than-anticipated growth, placing added pressure and needs for housing, infrastructure, and public services in Statesboro.

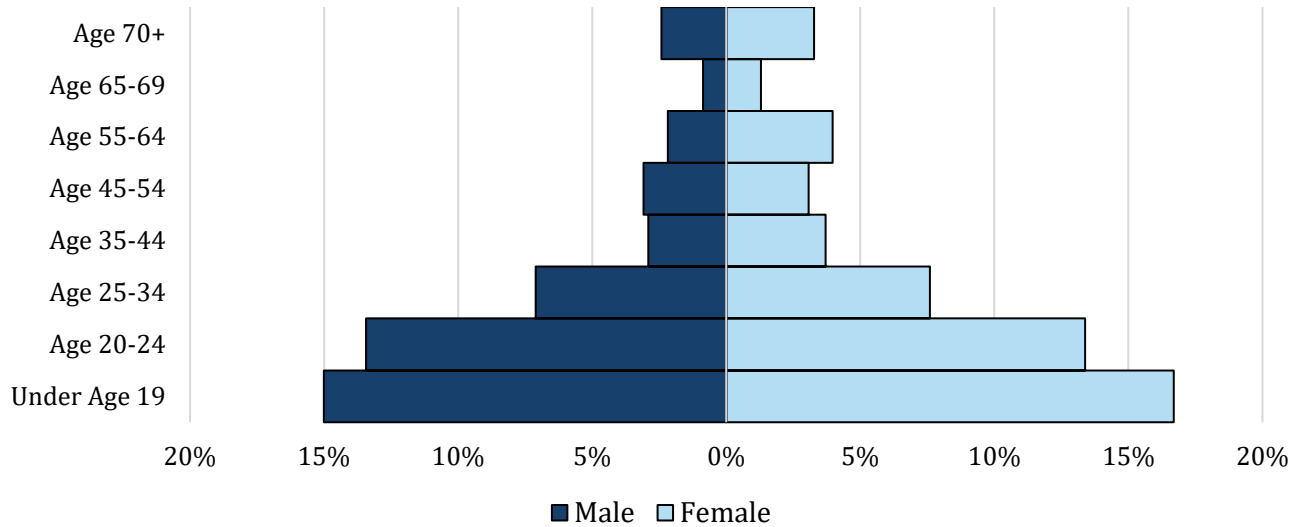
Figure 7. Population projection of Bulloch County.



Source: Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. "County Residential Population 2024 Long-Term Population Projects."

The median age in Statesboro is 22 according to ACS. This is much younger than the state and national median age of 37, which can be attributed to the student population.

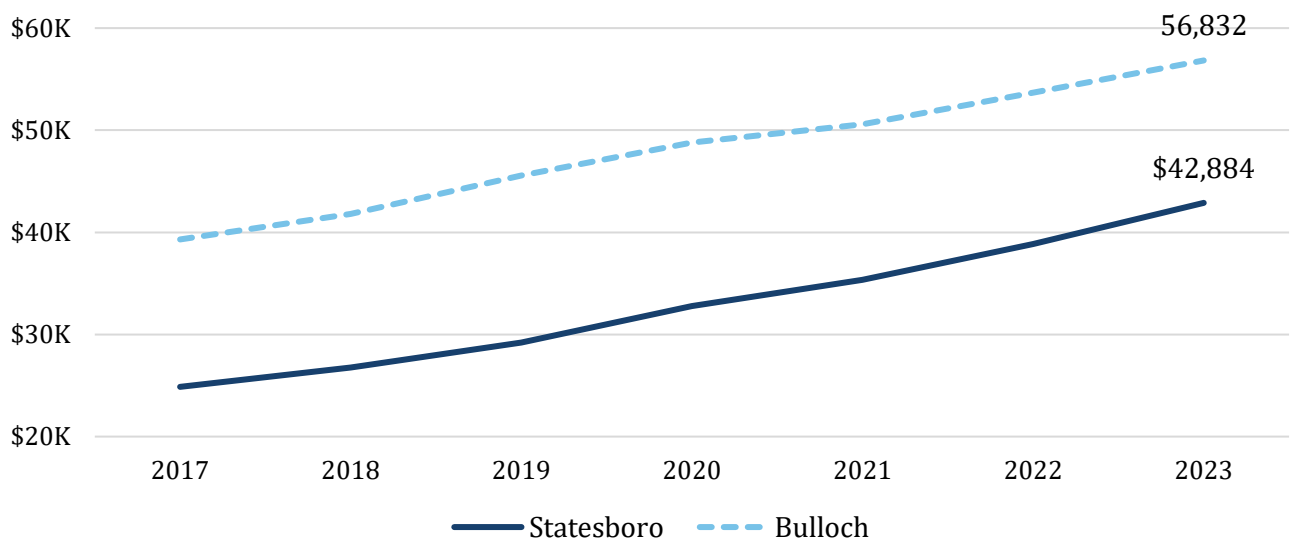
Figure 8. Population pyramid.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "Age and Sex." American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. Table S0101. 2023.

The median household income in Statesboro is \$42,884, which is significantly lower than Bulloch County's \$56,832 and Georgia's \$74,664. Since 2017, the median household income in both the City and the County has risen at a similar pace.

Figure 9. Median household income.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 inflation Adjusted Dollars)." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1901, 2017-2023.

3 Related Plans and Studies

This section outlines past plans developed to address a range of community needs, including transportation infrastructure and parks. While the recommendations from these plans should continue to guide the annual budgeting process, updates may be necessary due to evolving local and regional conditions, shifting priorities, or the age of the plans. Additionally, financial constraints have limited the city's capacity to fully implement them. The section also details the purpose of each plan and, where available, includes estimated costs for the proposed projects.

3.1 Comprehensive Plan

Statesboro updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2024, outlining a vision that states: "The City of Statesboro prides itself on being an inclusive community with family values that endeavors to ensure that all residents are able to enjoy a variety of lifestyles, while striving to maintain a safe, sustainable community based on smart growth principles." The plan sets forth community goals and a five-year work program focused on the following key areas:

- Economic development
- Historic and natural resources
- Transportation
- Infrastructure and utilities
- Planning and land use

Goals identified in the comprehensive plan include:

1. Increase pedestrian/bicycle safety and access to all portions of Statesboro.
2. Create greater vehicular and non-vehicular interconnectivity between streets and developments to reduce dependency on existing major highways.
3. Manage the long-term maintenance of City streets while improving access along major thoroughfares.
4. Promote new employment options, including higher-paying administrative and professional services, high-tech and medical positions.
5. Obtain a greater number and variety of retail establishments to locate within the municipal limits.
6. Focus retail recruitment effort to character areas along major thoroughfares as identified in the future development map.
7. Create an environment to retain vocational and higher education graduates.
8. Cultivate a K-12 talent pipeline for local job opportunities.
9. Provide safe, clean, and affordable housing choices to Statesboro residents of varying income levels.
10. Remove deteriorated structures throughout Statesboro.
11. Increase homeownership and rental opportunities while encouraging different types of housing including single-family, townhouses, apartments, and cottage courts throughout Statesboro.

12. Protect the quality of drinking water sources from the effects of new and existing development.
13. Protect and promote the reuse of remaining historic properties in Statesboro and emphasize the City's historic heritage.
14. Eliminate drainage problems within Statesboro.
15. Provide additional public park space and recreational opportunities for all ages.
16. Ensure the effective provision of infrastructure services to the City's growing population.

3.2 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Statesboro's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), included in the City's annual operating budget, identifies the community's capital improvement needs over the next six years, estimates associated revenue sources and expenditures, and serves as a strategic planning tool for addressing those needs within the City's financial capacity. The CIP is reviewed and updated annually to reflect emerging priorities and funding opportunities. Capital improvements are defined as fixed assets with a minimum cost of \$15,000 and having a useful life of at least two years. Funding sources outlined in the 2024-2029 CIP include:

- Operating income
- Aid to Construction (ATC) Fees for Wastewater Treatment Plant
- SPLOST/TSPLOST
- General Fund Capital Improvements Program
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Grant
- GDOT Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG)
- Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) Loan
- Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Lease Pool
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds
- Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB) Grant
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Loan, bond, and other financing mechanisms

3.3 Urban Redevelopment Plan

The 2021 Statesboro Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) outlines a comprehensive strategy to revitalize the City's downtown core and four adjacent neighborhoods over a ten-year period. The Plan addresses deteriorating housing, blight, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic challenges, particularly high poverty and unemployment rates. It integrates existing redevelopment efforts like the Downtown master Plan and the Blue Mile Corridor, aiming to stimulate economic growth, improve public facilities, and expand affordable housing. Key initiatives include property acquisition, housing rehabilitation, infrastructure upgrades, and park improvements, supported by partnerships with local organizations and funding from federal, state, and local sources. The URP aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan and emphasizes

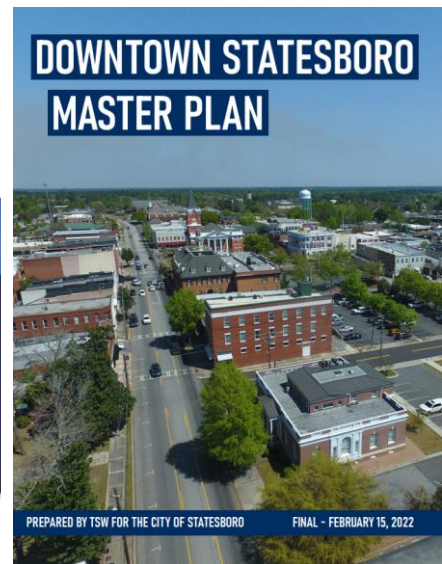
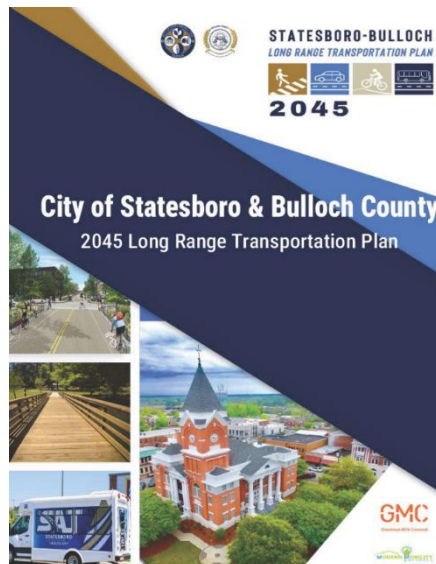
community involvement, private sector participation, and sustainable development to transform Statesboro's core into a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient area.

3.4 Long Range Transportation Plan

The 2045 Statesboro-Bulloch Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) outlines current and anticipated transportation challenges across the multi-modal transportation system, including roadways, bridges, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, freight, rail, and airports. The LRTP also presents a prioritized list of projects for future implementation. Additionally, the LRTP identifies a variety of funding sources, such as the Georgia Department of Transportation (Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant, and State Transportation Improvement Program), SPLOST, TSPLOST, and federal funding (Transportation Alternatives Program, Federal Transit Administration, and Highway Safety Improvement Program etc.).

3.5 Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Statesboro Master Plan, adopted in February 2022, outlines a strategic vision to revitalize Downtown Statesboro. Developed with extensive community input, the plan focuses on improving walkability, enhancing public spaces, encouraging mixed-use development, promoting recreational opportunities, and updating zoning regulations. Key initiatives include streetscape upgrades, redevelopment of underutilized sites, and the creation of funding tools like Tax Allocation Districts (TADs). The Plan aims to transform the downtown into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and economically dynamic district that serves residents, students, businesses, and visitors alike.



4 Community Priorities

Public input for the strategic planning process was gathered through multiple avenues, including direct public engagement and a comprehensive online public opinion survey.

4.1 Public Meetings

Two strategic planning public meetings were held in Statesboro on April 23 and May 21, 2025. At the first meeting, attendees were invited to identify Statesboro's needs and opportunities through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis. This was followed by a voting session to prioritize key issues. In the second meeting, participants collaborated to develop potential strategic initiatives focused on the top six priority topics: infrastructure, public safety, housing, communication with residents and businesses, cross-jurisdictional collaboration, and public services and facilities.

4.2 Online Survey

The 270 respondents who completed the Strategic Plan Public Survey were not selected through a random sampling of Statesboro residents; instead, they participated voluntarily after learning about the survey through public meetings, local news coverage, the City's website, email distribution, or similar channels. Despite the non-random selection, respondents reflected a diverse cross-section of the community in terms of age, location of residence, and family status.

Figure 10. Public Survey age group distribution.

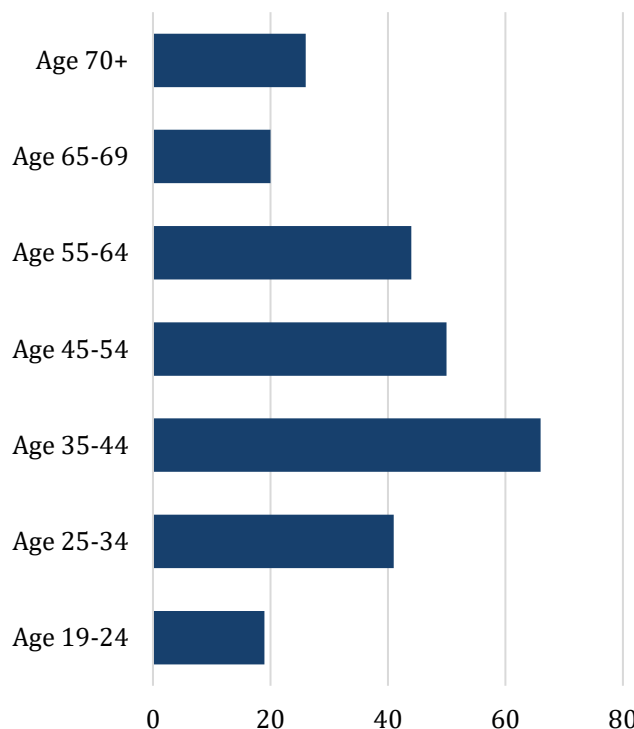
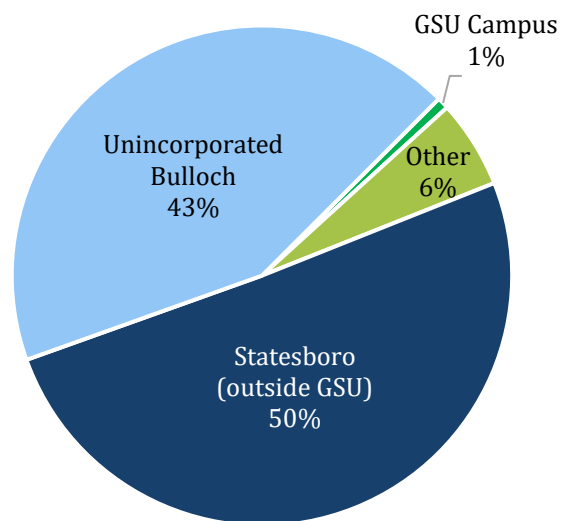


Figure 11. Public Survey location of residence.



While the survey results do not perfectly reflect the overall age distribution of the population, they do offer a relatively balanced range of perspectives from the working-age population, spanning multiple generations. Additionally, 45 percent of respondents indicated that they live in a household with children living in the home and 15 percent of respondents are living in a household with someone 65 years or older. About half of the respondents are year-round residents of Statesboro, while 43 percent reside in

unincorporated Bulloch County. The majority of respondents are living or working in Statesboro because of proximity to friends and family, and Georgia Southern University (GSU).

Overall, the responses indicate that participants generally have a positive perception of the quality of life in Statesboro and are drawn to its small-town atmosphere. However, they also voiced concerns related to housing, community growth, and infrastructure.

Figure 12. Positive attributes of Statesboro.



Figure 13. Community concerns.



In addition to gathering general community opinions, the survey included questions specifically targeting City services and priority areas. Among these, public safety (fire and police services) received the highest satisfaction rating, averaging 3.9 out of 5. Utilities and garbage collection followed closely with an average score of 3.65. On the lower end, zoning, land use, and bike lanes received the least favorable ratings, averaging 2.85.

The following areas were prioritized by participants according to their level of importance:

1. Fire and police services
2. Zoning
3. Street maintenance
4. Traffic signal maintenance, pedestrian safety, parks, recruit and retain businesses, water, and sewer
5. Stormwater, street maintenance and construction, and City administration
6. Street lights, garbage collection, and code enforcement
7. Online information and services
8. Trails
9. Bike lanes and public transportation
10. Building permits

To explore public perceptions of the relationship between municipal funding and City services, participants were asked to identify priority areas for additional investment and to indicate their willingness to pay more for enhanced services. Roadway improvements, including pavement upgrades, traffic signals, and signage, emerged as the top priority, followed by parks and green spaces, business incentives, and police services. Approximately 38 percent of respondents expressed a willingness to contribute more financially for improved services, while 26 were unwilling and 36 percent remained uncertain.

A final insight from the survey responses highlights a particularly important city service that significantly shapes how the community perceives and engages with the City: Communications. The majority of respondents reported receiving information through Grice Connect and the City's official Facebook page. Additional sources mentioned include the City's website and the Statesboro Herald.

5 S.W.O.T Analysis

A S.W.O.T. analysis is a valuable approach for assessing critical factors and gaining deeper insight into relevant issues, which supports the development of effective strategies. Its primary goals are to leverage strengths, address weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate potential threats.

Analysis of the local economy, public finances, respondent input, and other relevant sources reveals several recurring themes. While these themes and their related challenges and opportunities are not unique to Statesboro, understanding their local relevance is essential. The themes outlined below are not ranked in any particular order, nor are they exhaustive, but they serve as a useful framework for organizing insights that inform strategic planning. Identifying and examining these themes helps categorize key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that merit consideration.

- Quality of life
- Economic success
- Communication
- Public services
- Recreation opportunities
- Transportation
- Utility

5.1 Strengths

Safety

Statesboro benefits from a relatively low crime rate and proactive public safety initiatives, which contribute to a strong sense of security among residents and visitors. The presence of responsive law enforcement and emergency preparedness programs enhances overall quality of life. A safe environment not only support residential stability but also attracts businesses, students, and families looking for a secure place to live and work.

Sense of Community

A defining strength of Statesboro is its strong sense of community. Residents often describe the City as welcoming, supportive, and tightly knit. This is reflected in active civic engagement and local events that foster connection and pride. Such a cohesive social fabric encourages collaboration, resilience, and a shared vision for the city's future, making it easier to mobilize around community goals and initiatives.

Right Start Meetings

These weekly informal sessions offer a one-stop opportunity for business operators and developers to meet representatives from development-related City departments to ask questions, clarify requirements, and align development plans with City processes.

Location

Statesboro's geographic location offers several strategic advantages. Situated within driving distance of Savannah and other regional hubs, it provides access to larger markets, transportation networks, and cultural amenities while maintaining a more affordable and relaxed lifestyle. Its location also supports economic development opportunities, particularly in logistics, education, and tourism, and makes it an attractive option for both residents and investors.

5.2 Weaknesses

Infrastructure

Statesboro faces ongoing challenges with aging or insufficient infrastructure, such as roads, sidewalks, drainage systems, and public facilities. Limited capacity or outdated systems can hinder mobility, safety, and the city's ability to support new development. Infrastructure gaps may also deter investment and strain existing neighborhoods, especially during periods of rapid growth or inclement weather.

Utility

Utility services such as water, sewer, electricity, and broadband may not be fully equipped to meet current and future demand in all areas. Aging utility assets and limited capacity for expansion can delay development projects and reduce the City's competitiveness. Addressing these issues requires coordinated planning and investment to ensure reliable and scalable service delivery.

Housing

A shortage of diverse and affordable housing options is a growing concern. Limited availability of workforce housing, student accommodations, and mixed-income developments can create barriers for residents and workers alike. This imbalance may contribute to rising housing costs, longer commutes, and difficulty attracting or retaining talent, particularly in key sectors like education, healthcare, and public services.

Underutilized Buildings

Numerous vacant or underutilized commercial properties represent missed opportunities for economic growth and revitalization. These spaces often require significant investment to repurpose or redevelop, and may be hindered by zoning, environmental, or ownership challenges. Without strategic intervention, they can contribute to blight, reduce property values, and limit the vibrancy of key corridors or downtown areas.

5.3 Opportunities

Conservation

Statesboro has the opportunity to strengthen its environmental stewardship through land conservation, green infrastructure, and sustainable development practices. Preserving natural resources such as wetlands, forests, and waterways not only enhances quality of life but also supports tourism, recreation, and resilience to climate-related challenges. Conservation efforts can also attract environmentally conscious residents and businesses, positioning the City as a forward-thinking, sustainable community.

Higher Education Institutions

The presence of institutions like Georgia Southern University offers a significant advantage in terms of talent development, research partnerships, and cultural enrichment. These institutions serve as economic engines, drawing students, faculty, and visitors while fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Strengthening collaboration between the City and its academic partners can lead to workforce development initiatives, business incubation, and community engagement programs that benefit the broader region.

Annexation

Strategic annexation presents a pathway for Statesboro to guide growth, expand its tax base, and improve service delivery. By incorporating adjacent areas, the City can better manage land use, infrastructure planning, and zoning consistency. Annexation also allows for more cohesive regional development and can

help address housing, transportation, and utility challenges in a coordinated manner. With proper planning, it can be a powerful tool for shaping the City's long-term future.

5.4 Threats

Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration

Statesboro's ability to effectively manage growth and deliver services can be hindered by fragmented coordination between City, County, and other regional entities. Differences in priorities, regulations, or resource allocation across jurisdictions may lead to inefficiencies, delays, or conflicting development outcomes. Without strong intergovernmental collaboration, opportunities for shared infrastructure, economic development, and emergency response may be missed, weakening the City's overall resilience and competitiveness.

School Capacity

As the population grows, local schools may face increasing pressure on facilities, staffing, and resources. Overcrowded classrooms, aging infrastructure, and limited funding can negatively impact educational outcomes and community satisfaction. If school capacity does not keep pace with residential development, it may deter families from moving to the area or strain existing neighborhoods, ultimately affecting long-term growth and quality of life.

Development and Growth

While growth presents opportunities, unmanaged or rapid development can strain infrastructure, disrupt community character, and outpace planning efforts. Lack of long-term vision may lead to sprawl, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation. Balancing growth with sustainability and community values is essential to avoid unintended consequences that could undermine public trust and livability.

External Influences on Public Safety

Public safety in Statesboro can be affected by factors beyond the City's direct control, such as regional crime trends, drug trafficking routes, or economic instability. These external influences may increase demands on law enforcement and emergency services, requiring additional resources and coordination. Moreover, public perception of safety shaped by media, social trends, and isolated incidents can impact tourism, investment, and community morale even if local crime rates remain stable.



6 Strategic Initiatives

Building on the insights gained from the S.W.O.T. analysis, it becomes clear that Statesboro's path forward must be guided by intentional, well-aligned strategies. By leveraging its strengths, addressing internal challenges, seizing emerging opportunities, and mitigating external threats, the City can position itself for suitable and inclusive growth. The following strategic initiatives are designed to respond directly to the themes identified in the S.W.O.T. analysis, providing a roadmap for action that supports long-term community resilience, economic vitality, and quality of life.

6.1 Infrastructure

In any thriving community, the balance between growth and infrastructure is critical to sustaining a high quality of life. As Statesboro expands and grows, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that development is thoughtfully managed and that essential infrastructure keeps pace. The overarching goal is to ensure that growth and infrastructure are maintained properly to safeguard public safety and enhance overall well-being of residents. By prioritizing strategic planning and responsible investment, Statesboro can foster environments that are both vibrant and resilient.

- Adjust traffic lights to improve overall traffic flow.
- Install electric vehicle fast chargers in public spaces to encourage carbon reduction.
- Connect neighborhoods with pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Expand Fair Road Park to include ADA-friendly opportunities.
- Assess policy options for establishing impact fees to fund future development needs.

Collaboration opportunities

- Public Utilities Department*
- Public Works and Engineering Department*
- Downtown Statesboro Development Authority
- Greener Boro Commission

This initiative may be funded from a combination of federal, state, and local government revenues. This includes general tax allocations as well as targeted funding mechanisms such as TSPLOST, which can be leveraged for infrastructure projects that align with transportation and community development goals. Exploring grants, public-private partnerships, and non-profit contributions may also enhance financial sustainability for these efforts.

6.2 Public Safety

Promoting community well-being requires a proactive approach to public safety and mental health. To build a safer and more resilient environment, it is essential to increase police reporting, enhance fire safety education, and expand access to mental health resources. These efforts not only help prevent emergencies and reduce harm but also foster trust, awareness, and support within the community. By prioritizing these areas, local leaders can ensure that residents feel protected, informed, and empowered to seek help when needed.

1. Emergency Response and Infrastructure

- Install dark sky street lighting to improve pedestrian safety while being eco-friendly.
- Improve intersection safety for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- Expand fire safety education and preparedness programs.

2. Community Engagement and Prevention

- Continue and expand youth development programs to provide positive alternatives and mentorship.
- Host public safety forums and town halls to build trust and transparency.

3. Mental Health and Social Services

- Increase access to mental health resources, including establishing a local crisis intervention and mental health response team.
- Train first responders in trauma-informed care and de-escalation techniques.
- Partner with local organizations to provide substance abuse prevention and recovery services.

4. Education and Workforce Development

- Enhance workforce education and job training programs to increase economic stability.
- Collaborate with schools to integrate safety awareness and conflict resolution.

Collaboration opportunities

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • Police Department* | • Schools |
| • Bulloch County Alcohol & Drug Council | • Open Hearts Community Mission |
| • Statesboro Youth Commission | • Churches |
| • One Boro Commission | • Homeowners Associations |

Implementing these initiatives require sustainable funding, which can be sourced from a combination of federal, state, and local government allocations. Specific mechanisms such as TSPLOST, and public safety grants can provide targeted financial support. Additionally, partnerships with nonprofit organizations and private sector stakeholders can help supplement public funding and ensure long-term program viability.

6.3 Housing

Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is a cornerstone of a healthy and thriving community. As housing costs continue to rise, it is essential to implement strategic initiatives that address both the immediate and long-term needs of residents. The following initiatives aim to expand housing options, preserve existing units, and ensure equitable access for all income levels. By leveraging policy reform, financial tools and community partnerships, these strategies are designed to create sustainable housing solutions that support economic mobility, reduce displacement, and enhance overall quality of life.

1. Policy and Zoning

- Evaluate the feasibility of restricting short-term rentals through ordinances.

2. Financial Incentives and Funding

- Leverage federal and state grants, such as Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), and Rural Workforce Housing Initiatives.
- Establish a grant coordinator/specialist position to facilitate the application and administration of grant opportunities.

3. Rehabilitation and Quality of Housing

- Invest in the rehabilitation of aging housing stock to maintain affordability and livability.
- Strengthen homeowners associations to operate within the framework of the zoning ordinance, enforce compliance, and properly maintain properties.

Collaboration opportunities

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Planning and Development Department* | • Georgia Southern University |
| • Statesboro Housing Authority* | • Georgia Department of Community Affairs |
| • Habitat for Humanity of Bulloch County | • Georgia Department of Transportation |
| • Mayoral Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness and Housing Instability | • Homes for Heroes |

Securing diverse and sustainable funding is essential to the success of the affordable housing strategy. By leveraging a combination of federal, state, and local sources, alongside innovative financing tools and public-private partnerships, communities can create a robust foundation for long-term housing affordability. Together, these funding avenues empower Statesboro to implement impactful and scalable solutions that meet the housing needs of all residents.

6.4 Communication with Residents and Businesses

Clear, consistent, and inclusive communication is the foundation of a strong relationship between a city government and its residents. As Statesboro becomes more diverse and digitally connected, it is essential for City leadership to adopt modern, accessible, and responsive communication strategies. This strategic initiative aims to enhance how the city shares information, gathers feedback, and engages with the public across multiple platforms. By fostering open dialogue and transparency, Statesboro can build trust, encourage civic participation, and ensure that all residents and businesses feel informed, heard, and empowered to contribute to the community's future.

- Upgrade the City website for better usability and mobile access.
- Establish a team dedicated to website development and maintenance.
- Utilize different platforms and outlets for coordinated communications, such as City website, social media, text and email alert system, etc.
- Utilize Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to disperse information, increase transparency and awareness, and engage the public.
- Educate the public about the roles of each department and promote awareness of city services.

Collaboration opportunities

- City Public Affairs Manager*
- City departments
- Local media outlets

6.5 Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration

In today's interconnected landscape, effective communication and collaboration are essential for responsive and efficient city governance. As Statesboro grows and challenges become more complex, the City must foster strong internal coordination and build meaningful partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared challenges and achieve common goals.

- Develop a communication and coordination framework between the City and the County to standardize communication protocols and frequency.
- Establish working groups and task forces between Statesboro and Bulloch County.
- Engage a third-party neutral meeting facilitator for cross-jurisdictional workshops and meetings.

Collaboration opportunities

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| • City leadership* | • Leadership from other municipalities in Bulloch County |
| • Georgia Southern University | • Neighboring counties |
| • County leadership | • Coastal Regional Commission |

6.6 Public Services and Facilities

To meet the evolving needs of the growing and diverse community, it is important to modernize and enhance public services and facilities. A commitment to equity, sustainability, and operational excellence is reflected in this effort. Infrastructure improvements will be made to ensure that safe, efficient, and responsive public services are provided to all residents.

1. Transportation and Connectivity

- Improve bicycle infrastructure to encourage alternative modes of transportation and reduce car dependency.
- Expand trails and greenways to connect neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas to promote recreation and accessibility.
- Support mobility for low-income households through expanded transit services and employer-sponsored transportation.

2. Greenspace and Environmental Health

- Enhance public green spaces and recreational trails to support physical and mental health, and elevate community livability.
- Establish a dedicated leadership role to oversee greenspace stewardship and develop community-based environmental education programs.
- Proactively protect and conserve wetlands to reduce flooding risks, preserve biodiversity, and support regional climate resilience strategies.

3. Strategic Land Use and Revitalization

- Revitalize and repurpose vacant and underutilized properties to support public infrastructure and community services
- Guide redevelopment projects by principles of equitable access, sustainability, and alignment with long-term community needs.
- Implement proactive strategies to address and reduce blight.

Collaboration opportunities

- Public Works and Engineering Department*
- Greener Boro Commission
- Downtown Statesboro Development Authority

A diverse range of funding sources can be explored to support this strategic initiative. Federal programs, such as Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Other state-level grants and regional planning efforts can offer complementary resources, while local funding mechanisms, such as utility fees, bond measures, Blight Tax, and capital improvement plans ensure ongoing investment and community ownership. Additionally, public-private partnerships can bring innovation and flexibility to targeted projects. By leveraging a multi-layered funding strategy, this initiative will be well positioned to deliver long-term, equitable, and sustainable improvements across the community.

7 Financing Alternatives

7.1 TSPLOST

Bulloch County and Statesboro are jointly authorized to implement a Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) to fund critical transportation improvements. This authority stems from legislation originally passed in 2016 and expanded in 2017, which allows counties already collecting SPLOST to also adopt a transportation-specific sales tax.

7.1.1 Authorized Uses

Under this framework, a TSPLOST can be enacted for a period of up to five years, pending voter approval through a referendum. The revenue generated must be used for transportation-related projects, including:

- Road, street, and bridge construction or improvements
- Sidewalks and bicycle paths
- Maintenance, renovations, and land acquisition
- Debt service for existing or new transportation infrastructure

TSPLOST offers a flexible and locally controlled funding mechanism to address both current and future transportation needs. It enables communities like Statesboro and Bulloch County to invest in infrastructure without relying solely on state or federal funding, while also allowing for strategic planning and debt retirement related to transportation projects.

7.1.2 Process

To establish a TSPLOST, the following steps must be followed:

1. Joint Planning Meeting

The Bulloch County Board of Commissioners and the Statesboro City Council must hold a joint meeting to discuss potential transportation projects and determine the proposed tax rate.

2. Intergovernmental Agreement

Following the joint planning meeting, an intergovernmental agreement may be drafted to formalize the agreement to levy the TSPLOST. With an intergovernmental agreement, the tax rate can be up to 1%. It is otherwise capped at 0.75% and must be set in increments of 0.05%.

The agreement must include:

- A detailed list of transportation projects
- Estimated costs and funding priorities
- A commitment that at least 30 percent of revenues support projects aligned with GDOT Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan
- Procedure for distributing funds to Statesboro
- Accounting, record-keeping, and audit protocols

3. Referendum

Based on the proposed projects, costs, tax rate, and duration (up to five years), the County calls for a public referendum to approve the TSPLOST. The vote must occur during a scheduled election.

4. Tax Collection Timeline

If approved, the tax begins on the first day of the next calendar quarter that starts at least 80 days after the referendum. Collections end when either the approved time period expires or the revenue target is met.

5. Renewal and Limitations

A new TSPLOST can be approved while an existing one is active but cannot begin until the current tax ends. The same process must be followed for renewal. The tax applies to most items subject to state sales tax, including food, but excludes certain items like motor fuel and vehicle purchase or leases.

7.1.3 Estimated Revenue

According to the City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, the City received over \$5.6 million from the 2023 TSPLOST in fiscal year 2024. The 2025 SPLOST is anticipated to generate approximately \$138 million in revenue for Bulloch County over a five-year period, with Statesboro projected to receive about \$31.9 million of that total.

7.2 MOST

Although not currently utilized by Statesboro, the Municipal Option Sales Tax (MOST) is a potential revenue source authorized under Georgia law (Title 48, Chapter 8, Article 4: *Water and Sewer Projects and Cost Tax*). The MOST can be levied at a rate of up to 1% for a period of up to four years, and may be used to fund:

- Capital improvements to water, sewer, and stormwater systems
- Maintenance and operational costs
- Debt service, including principal and interest on General Obligation bonds issued for these projects.

The tax applies to most goods and services subject to the state sales tax, with a few exceptions. It also includes:

- Prepaid local motor fuel taxes
- Sales of food, food ingredients, and alcoholic beverages
- Sales of natural or artificial gas used in electricity production
- Lodging and accommodations subject to Georgia's excise tax.

Importantly, the combined total of all local sales and excise taxes in the City cannot exceed 14%.

7.2.1 Criteria

To qualify, a city must meet certain criteria, most notably, having an average wastewater flow of at least 85 million gallons per day. While Statesboro may not currently meet this threshold, the statute remains a viable option for future consideration as infrastructure demands grow.

The law includes several technical and procedural requirements that should be carefully reviewed by the City's water and sewer administration. Although some provisions may appear complex, they do not present insurmountable barriers. Legal consultation is recommended to ensure compliance and to fully understand the scope and limitations of the MOST framework.

7.2.2 Process

To initiate a MOST for water and sewer infrastructure, the City must first pass a resolution and submit it to Bulloch County, requesting a referendum to impose the tax. If the County declines to participate, the City may proceed independently, subject to voter approval, to implement the tax within city limits. If approved by referendum, the MOST can begin on the first day of the next calendar quarter that starts more than 80 days after the vote.

7.3 Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)

A Community Improvement District (CID) is a defined geographic area where nonresidential property owners voluntarily agree to impose a special tax on themselves to fund enhanced services or infrastructure beyond what the City typically provides. While CIDs do not reduce the City's responsibility to deliver standard services, they allow business communities to invest in higher levels of service tailored to their specific needs.

Currently, there are no CIDs in Statesboro. To establish one, the Georgia General Assembly must first pass a local enabling act that applies countywide. Once enabled, a CID can be created with:

- Written consent from owners representing at least 75 percent of the taxable value of nonresidential property within the proposed district
- Approval from a majority of all property owners in the area
- A resolution from the City consenting to the CID's formation

Residential, agricultural, and forestry properties can be included within CID boundaries for continuity but are not subject to the CID tax.

Upon formation, a Board of Directors, elected by nonresidential property owners, manages the district's affairs, budgets, and expenditures. The County Tax Commissioner collects the CID tax and remits it directly to the Board. The City also appoints a representative to the Board to ensure coordination.

CIDs in Georgia often focus on transportation improvements, public safety, beautification, and infrastructure upgrades, but projects must be approved by the City. The CID tax rate is set by the Board and may not exceed 25 mills (2.5%) of the assessed property value. While CIDs are authorized to issue bonds, such debt is not considered an obligation of the City, County, or State.

7.4 Development Impact Fees

As communities grow, the demand for public facilities, such as parks, fire stations, police services, and other infrastructure, also increases. Local governments must then decide whether to stretch existing resources across a larger population, potentially lowering the level of service, or to expand facilities to maintain current service standards.

Development Impact Fees offer a solution by ensuring that new growth contributes its fair share towards the cost of expanding public infrastructure. Rather than relying solely on property taxes, which grow slowly

and are largely supported by the existing tax base, impact fees are assessed at the time of new development, typically when building permits are issued.

Authorized under the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act, this tool allows cities like Statesboro to fund capital improvements needed to serve new residents and businesses without burdening current taxpayers. These fees help maintain consistent levels of service across the community as it grows, promoting fairness and fiscal sustainability.

7.4.1 Process

To implement a Development Impact Fee program, the City must first determine the “fair share” contribution that new development should make to maintain or achieve the City’s desired level of service for public facilities. This involves identifying the infrastructure needed to support growth and ensuring that new residents and businesses are served at the same standard as existing ones.

These needs are documented in a Capital Improvement Element (CIE), which must be reviewed and approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and then adopted by the City. Following this, the City must enact an Impact Fee Ordinance to formally establish the fee structure and administrative procedures.

If the City determines that the full impact fee would be too burdensome for encouraging growth, it has the flexibility to adopt a reduced fee, sharing the cost between new development and the existing tax base.

The City can choose from a wide range of eligible public facility categories, including:

- Water supply and distribution system
- Wastewater collection and treatment
- Roads, streets, bridges, and related infrastructure
- Stormwater and flood control systems
- Parks, open space, and recreational facilities
- Public safety facilities (police, fire, EMS)
- Libraries and related facilities

Importantly, impact fees can complement other funding sources such as SPLOST, TSPLOST, and MOST, creating a comprehensive strategy for financing future infrastructure needs.

While it is not possible to estimate revenue from impact fees without a detailed analysis of growth projections and service standards, the key benefit is clear: impact fees shift the cost of new infrastructure from existing taxpayers to the new development that creates demand. However, because infrastructure often needs to be built in advance of growth, interim financing may be necessary until impact fee revenues are collected.

7.5 Grant Opportunities

The City has actively pursued various grants to support development initiatives. The following programs align with the City’s goal of expanding affordable housing, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering economic growth in both urban and rural contexts.

7.5.1 Community HOME Improvement Program (CHIP)

CHIP funds can be used to rehabilitate substandard housing and assist low- to moderate-income homebuyers in the City. This program supports the City’s efforts to preserve housing stock and improve quality of life in historically underserved areas.

7.5.2 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), CDBG can be used for infrastructure upgrades, housing rehabilitation, and public facilities improvement, especially in low-income Census tracts near downtown and surrounding rural areas.

7.5.3 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

LIHTC is a key tool for financing affordable rental housing in Statesboro, particularly for developments near Georgia Southern University and in areas with growing workforce demand. This program can attract private investment to support mixed-income and senior housing projects.

7.5.4 Rural Workforce Housing Initiatives

Rural workforce housing funds can help address the housing needs of essential workers in healthcare, education, and manufacturing. These funds support new construction and rehabilitation in areas outside the city core.

7.5.5 Transportation Alternative Program (TAP)

TAP funding can enhance pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the City, particularly around the Blue Mile corridor, Georgia Southern University, and local schools. These improvements promote walkability, safety, and access to jobs and services.

7.5.6 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant

GUILD grants can support major infrastructure projects, such as road improvements, transit access, and freight mobility. These investments are critical for connecting residential areas with industrial parks and commercial centers.

7.5.7 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

LWCF can be used to expand and improve public parks and recreational facilities in Statesboro, including greenways, trails, and sports complexes. These amenities enhance community health and attract families and young professionals to the area.

Appendix A: Tax Base Analysis

The table below presents tax digest data from 2010 to 2024, highlighting the effects of inflation on the City's purchasing power. Figures for Net M&O Digest, Millage, and Tax Levied were sourced from the Georgia Department of Revenue's County Services Portal Digest Summaries. Inflation rate data is based on the Consumer Price Index for All urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the southern U.S., published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, with 2024 set as the base year. The Potential Revenue column reflects inflation-adjusted revenue, calculated by applying the inflation rate to the actual tax levied. The Millage Needed to Match Inflation column shows the hypothetical millage rate required to maintain purchasing power in the face of inflation.

Table 3. Historic tax digest records 2010-2024 and impact of inflation.

Year	Net M&O Digest	Millage	Tax Levied	Inflation Rate	Potential Revenue (inflation-adjusted in 2024 dollars)	Millage Needed to Match Inflation
2010	\$613,263,797	6.358	\$3,899,131	1.44	\$5,630,621	
2011	\$606,125,908	6.358	\$3,853,749	1.40	\$5,379,767	
2012	\$592,673,218	6.358	\$3,768,216	1.37	\$5,151,408	
2013	\$603,227,738	6.358	\$3,835,322	1.35	\$5,162,691	
2014	\$650,006,521	6.358	\$4,132,741	1.32	\$5,470,605	
2015	\$648,354,245	6.358	\$4,122,236	1.33	\$5,466,302	
2016	\$608,849,414	6.358	\$3,871,065	1.31	\$5,077,092	
2017	\$662,454,612	7.308	\$4,841,218	1.29	\$6,222,108	9.393
2018	\$642,829,516	7.308	\$4,697,798	1.26	\$5,906,421	9.679
2019	\$729,872,083	7.308	\$5,333,905	1.24	\$6,610,109	8.525
2020	\$749,651,476	7.308	\$5,478,453	1.23	\$6,724,418	8.300
2021	\$770,512,579	7.308	\$5,630,906	1.17	\$6,577,685	8.075
2022	\$764,785,399	7.308	\$5,589,052	1.08	\$6,013,078	8.136
2023	\$896,637,473	8.125	\$7,285,179	1.03	\$7,500,597	
2024	\$1,000,717,767	8.625	\$8,631,191	1.00	\$8,631,191	

Data Source: Georgia Department of Revenue County Services Portal Digest Summaries (<https://sso.dor.ga.gov/>) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for South U.S. area.