CITY OF BAINBRIDGE GEORGIA



CITY OF BAINBRIDGE, GA

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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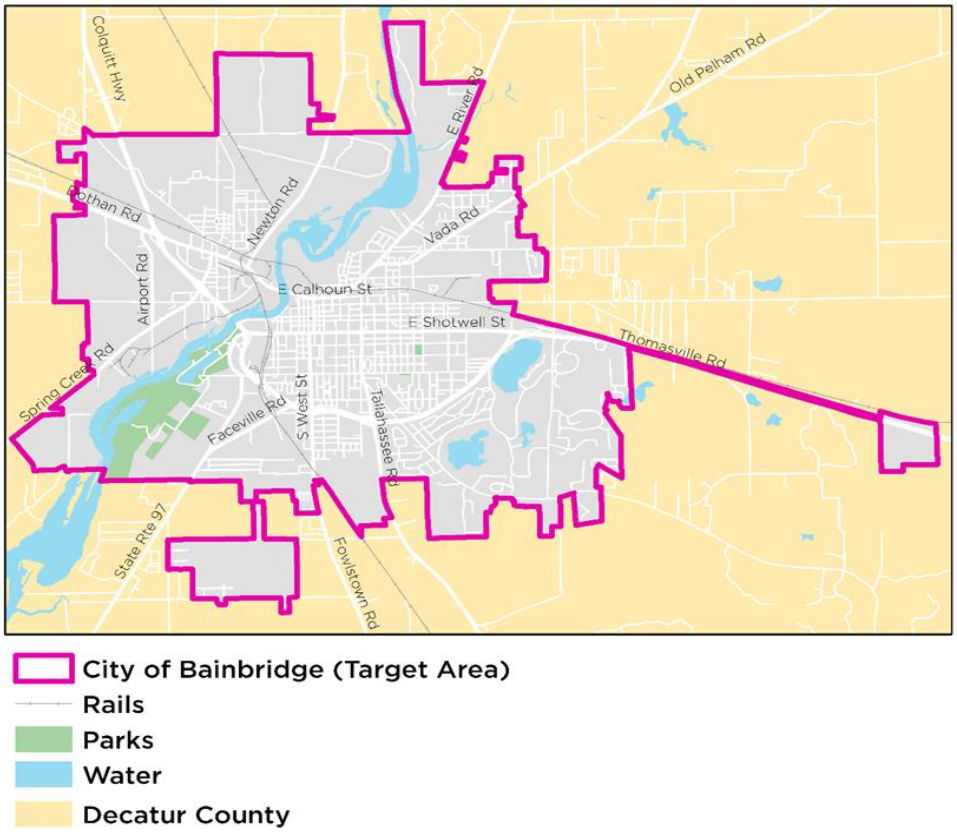
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Introduction

The City of Bainbridge, located in southwest Georgia, is the largest city in Decatur County. Bainbridge offers its residents a range of housing types, however, the city also struggles with creating new housing stock to keep pace with its population growth. This housing needs assessment is intended to help the City's policymakers make informed decisions about the number of housing units required to serve current and future Bainbridge residents.

Although maps presented later in this report indicate subareas of the city with particularly acute housing needs, this is a citywide study containing data and housing strategies targeted to the City of Bainbridge as a whole. Accordingly, this housing needs assessment uses the city boundaries to comprise its study area.

Figure 1: City Map of Bainbridge



According to the National Rural Housing Coalition, rural cities such as Bainbridge experience unique housing problems.[1] For one, rural areas are more likely to have higher and more persistent levels of poverty. Due to persistent poverty, natural disasters and other events, rural areas may have larger shares of housing in

[1] National Rural Housing Coalition. "Housing Need in Rural America." https://ruralhousingcoalition.org/overcoming-barriers-to-affordable-rural-housing/

moderately or severely substandard condition. Rural areas may also experience declining investment over long periods of time, which can restrict economic development by limiting the available housing for workers. Bainbridge experiences many of these issues and is seeking solutions to help improve the course of housing development for the future.

Data Sources

2020 Decennial Census

The analysis herein uses data from the 2020 Decennial Census as contained in redistricting data, the Demographic Profile, and the Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC). The Census's redistricting data was among the first data to be publicly released following the 2020 census. Redistricting files contained basic population counts but not detailed data for small geographies. The DHC was released in May 2023 and provides demographic and housing characteristics of local communities, including population data on age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, families and households, and data on homeownership and vacant and occupied housing.

American Community Survey (ACS)

The analysis also utilizes 2016-2020 American Community Survey estimates to provide data on age, race, sex, household size, employment, housing unit size, occupancy, and housing tenure. The American Community Survey is an ongoing statistical survey that samples a small percentage of the U.S. population every year, thus providing communities with more current population and housing data throughout the 10 years between censuses.

Public Input and Engagement

A stakeholder group met in December 2021 to provide feedback on the Baseline Housing Report covering low-income housing and housing-related programs in the city. Feedback from the city's town hall meeting in late February 2022 also provided insight on the community's preferred housing type and ideal locations for new housing. Members of the City Council and key city staff provided extensive feedback to shape and refine implementation strategies in a workshop held in March 2023 as part of an annual City Council planning retreat.

Other Sources

A variety of other data sources were consulted in the course of preparing this study. For example, Georgia Department of Labor data was used to compile a table of employment projects for the top 20 occupations and population projections were obtained from the Georgia Governor's Office of Budget and Planning.

Community and Economic Profile

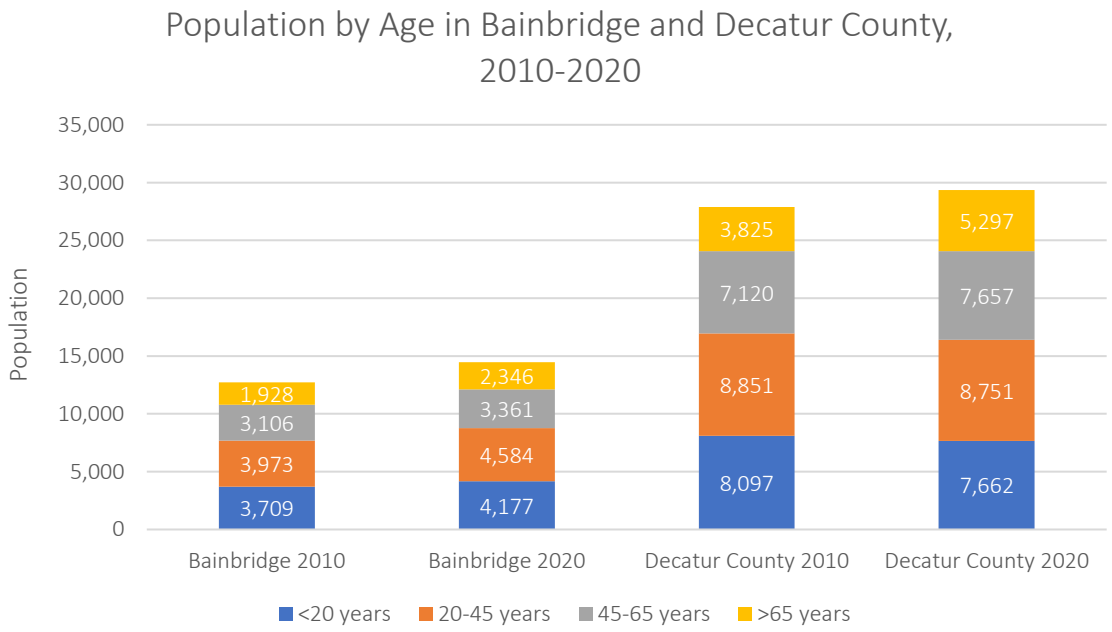
Population

According to the 2020 Census, Bainbridge's population is 14,468. Decatur County's population is estimated to be 29,367, more than twice the size of Bainbridge. Comparing 2010 and 2020, all age groups increased in number in the City of Bainbridge. In Decatur County, ages below 45 years decreased in number, while the population aged 45 and over increased.

City of Bainbridge
Total 2010 Population:
12,697

Total 2020 Population:
14,468

Figure 2. Population by Age

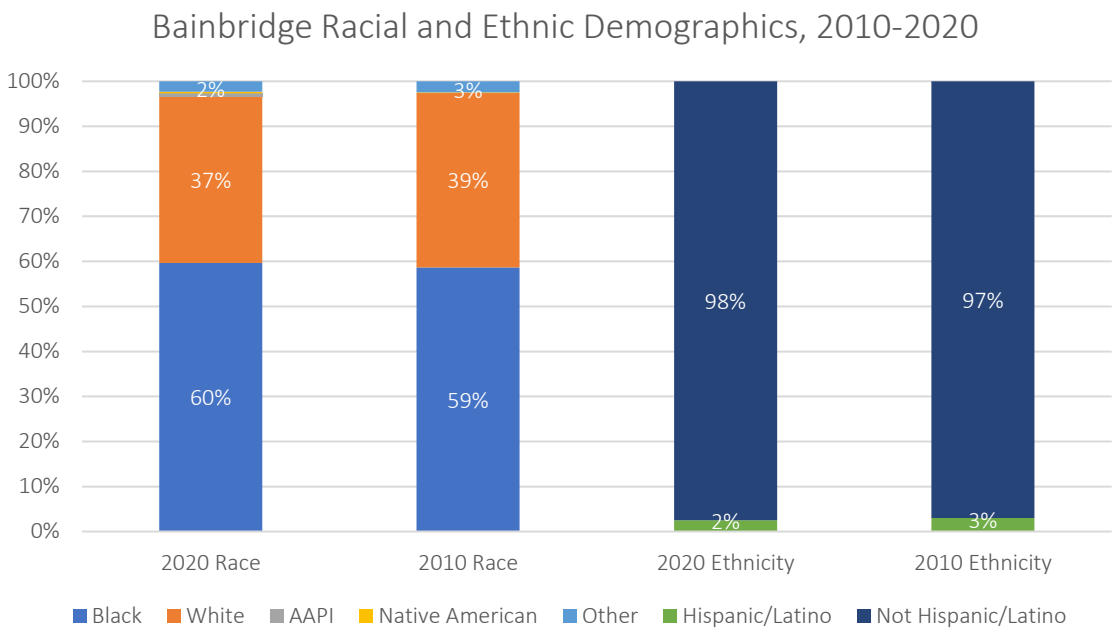


Data Source: 2010 Census; 2020 Census DHC

Population by Race and Ethnicity

Bainbridge's population is comprised primarily of Black or African American and white residents. Between 2010 and 2020, Bainbridge's Black or African American population increased slightly from 59% to 60% while its white population decreased slightly from 39% to 37%. The Hispanic population decreased slightly from 3.0% to 2.5% in the same time period. The percentage of both Asian and Native American residents increased between 2010 and 2020, up 0.8% for Asian residents and 0.3% for Native American residents.

Figure 3. Race and Ethnicity



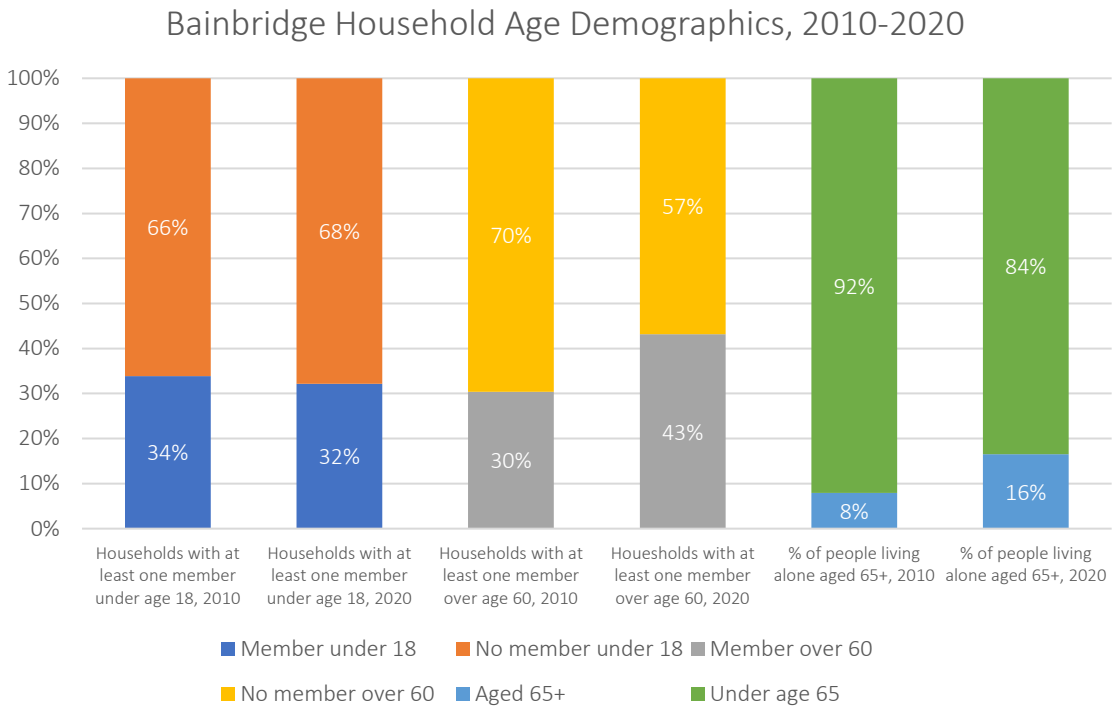
Data Source: US Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020

Looking at languages spoken at home, 97% of residents reported speaking only English at home. Most non-English speaking residents speak Spanish at home, with 2.1% of the population reporting Spanish as their primary language. Other languages spoken include Asian and Pacific Island languages at 0.7% and Other Indo-European languages at 0.2%. Of residents speaking languages other than English, 60% rated their ability to speak English as "very good."

Households

There are approximately 4,580 households in Bainbridge, a decrease from 4,762 households in 2010. However, the average household size in Bainbridge increased slightly from 2.47 persons per household in 2010 to 2.51 persons per household in 2020. These figures indicate that while the number of Bainbridge households is declining, the size of households is increasing. This coincides with Decatur County's increase from 2.55 persons per household to 2.62 within the same time period. The number of households with at least one child (or one member under age 18) decreased from 34% to 32%. Comparatively, the number of individuals living alone increased from 32% in 2010 to 34% in 2020. Households with at least one member over the age of 60 increased from 30% to 43% during this same decade. Seniors experienced the largest increase in the persons living alone, making up 17% of all people living alone.

Figure 4. Households by Age

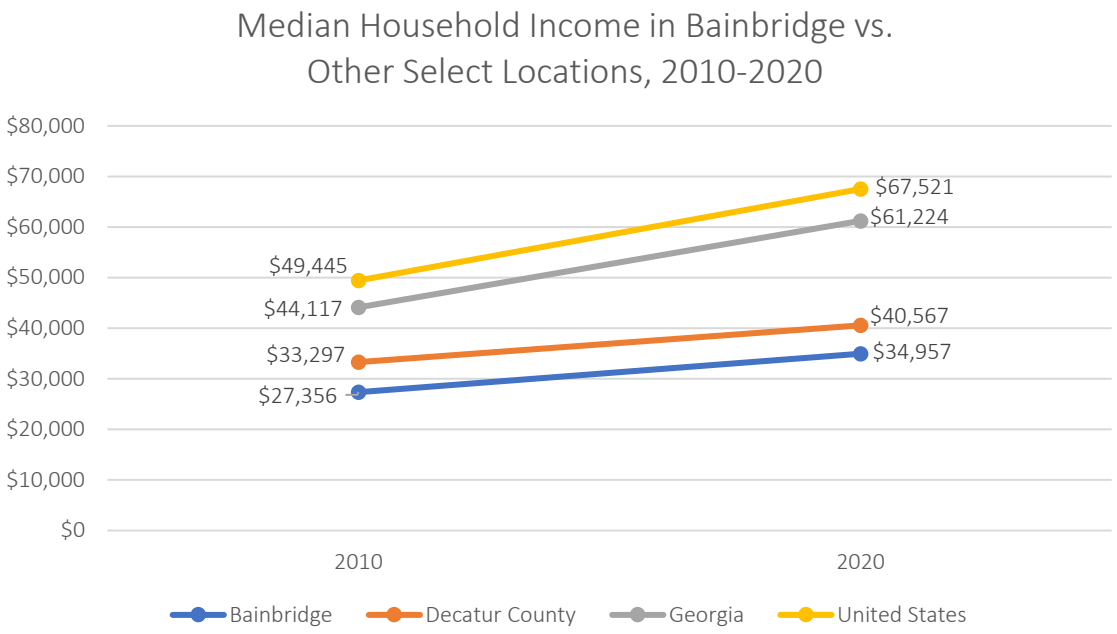


Data Source: US Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020

Income

The median household income in Bainbridge is $34,957, up from $27,356 in 2010. Comparatively, Decatur County has a higher median income of $40,567. Incomes in Bainbridge experienced a faster growth over the 2010-2020 decade, rising by 28% compared to 22% in Decatur County. These incomes are significantly lower than the median income for the state of Georgia in 2020 ($61,224), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Median Household Income

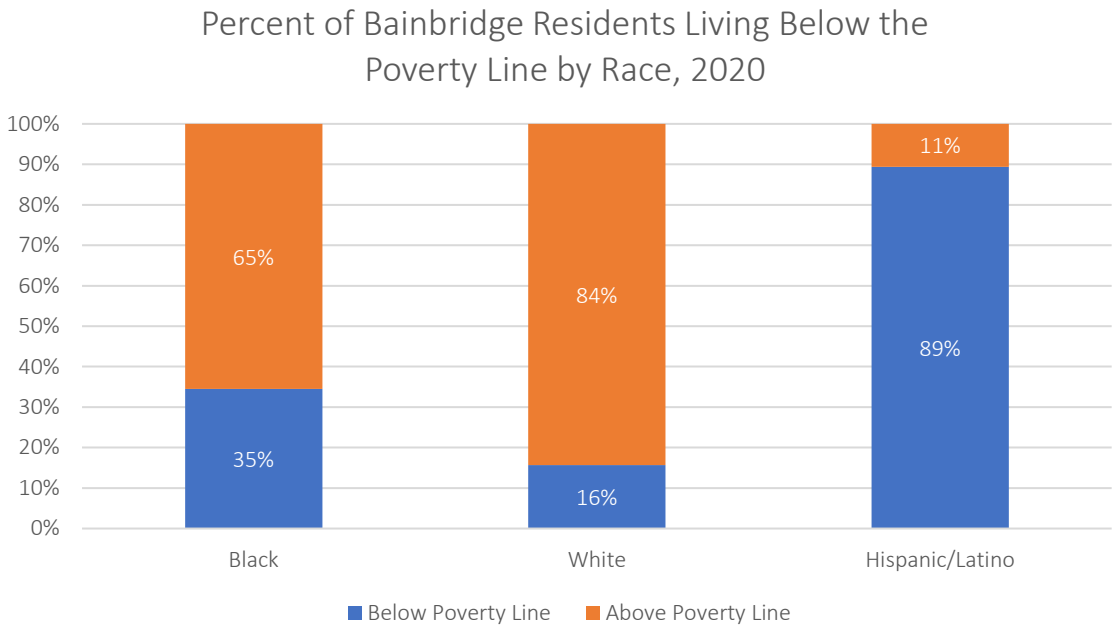


Data Source: US Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020

In 2020, the federal poverty level was $26,200 for a family of four.[2] Looking at poverty statistics for both Bainbridge and Decatur County, the County reported 24% of residents living below the poverty level in 2020, while Bainbridge reported 26%. Figure 6 shows the percentage of families living below the poverty line by race and ethnicity. Approximately 16% of white residents, 35% of Black or African American residents, and 89% of Hispanic residents live below the poverty line in Bainbridge.

[2] ASPE. "2020 Poverty Guidelines." https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2020-poverty-guidelines

Figure 6. Poverty Level



Data Source: 2016-2020 5-Year ACS Estimates

Population Projections

Historical population data for Bainbridge is available through US Census decennial census data. Since the year 2000, the population of Bainbridge has increased from 11,722 residents to 14,468 in 2020. While Bainbridge's population continues to increase each decade, the population of Decatur County has fluctuated from 28,240 in 2000, down to 27,842 in 2010 and rebounding to 29,367 in 2020. These historical figures show that Bainbridge's population has ranged from 41% to 49% of the county's total population. Similarly, household size has fluctuated in both Bainbridge and Decatur County over the past 2 decades. Bainbridge has had slightly smaller households, peaking at an average of 2.53 persons per household in 2010 and returning to 2.52 persons per household in 2020. Decatur County has historically had more persons per household, ranging from an average of 2.65 persons per household in 2000 to 2.58 in 2010 and 2.49 in 2020.

Tables 1 and 2. Historical Population and Household Size

	Decatur County	Bainbridge
2000	28,240	11,722
2010	27,842	12,697
2020	29,367	14,468

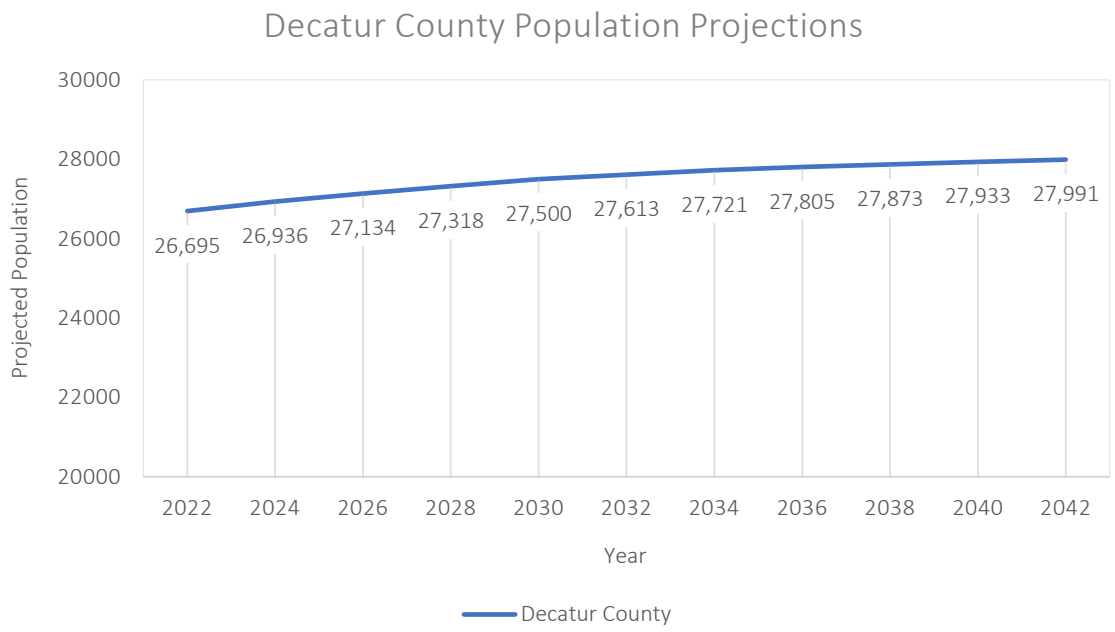
Data Source: 2000 Census; 2010 Census, P1; 2020 DHC

	Decatur County	Bainbridge
2000	2.65	2.52
2010	2.58	2.53
2020	2.49	2.52

Data Source: 2000 Census, DP; 2010 Census, SF1; 2020 DHC

Population projections are issued by the State of Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget for the state's 159 counties. Projections released in December 2021 utilized the US Census Bureau's vintage 2020 population estimates and provide projections through 2060. Figure 7 below provides Georgia's population estimates for Decatur County from 2022 to 2042. These estimates, which reflect vintage census data rather than decennial census counts, estimate that the county's population in 2022 to be 26,695, nearly 2,700 fewer residents than the census counts found in the 2020 decennial census.

Figure 7. County Population Projections



Data Source: 2021 Population Projections, Georgia Governor's Office of Budget and Planning

Several assumptions were used to calculate the projected population for Bainbridge. First, population projections assume that Decatur County will continue to grow annually at the rate or slope shown in Figure 7, as proposed in state population projections. One difference in the projection scenario presented below is that the county's current population of 29,367 is used as the baseline population; however, the scenario continues to utilize state's projected rate of growth to determine future populations. As shown in Table 1, Bainbridge's current population is 14,468, which is approximately 49.26% of the county's population. The population projection scenario determines the population of Bainbridge by assuming that this ratio will remain constant over the next 20 years. Bainbridge grew from 41% of the county's population in 2000 to 49% in 2020, it can be assumed that the city will continue to grow in comparison to the county.

Table 3. Population Projections

	Decatur County population projection	Bainbridge population projection
2020	29,367	14,466
2021	29,495	14529
2022	29,631	14,596
2023	29,762	14,661
2024	29,889	14,728
2025	30,026	14,791
2026	30,118	14,836
2027	30,228	14,890
2028	30,323	14,937
2029	30,433	14,991
2030	30,525	15,036
2031	30,585	15,066
2032	30,650	15,098
2033	30,705	15,125
2034	30,770	15,157
2035	30,830	15,187
2036	30,863	15,203
2037	30,897	15,220
2038	30,939	15,240
2039	30,972	15,257
2040	31,005	15,273
2041	31,046	15,293
2042	31,070	15,305

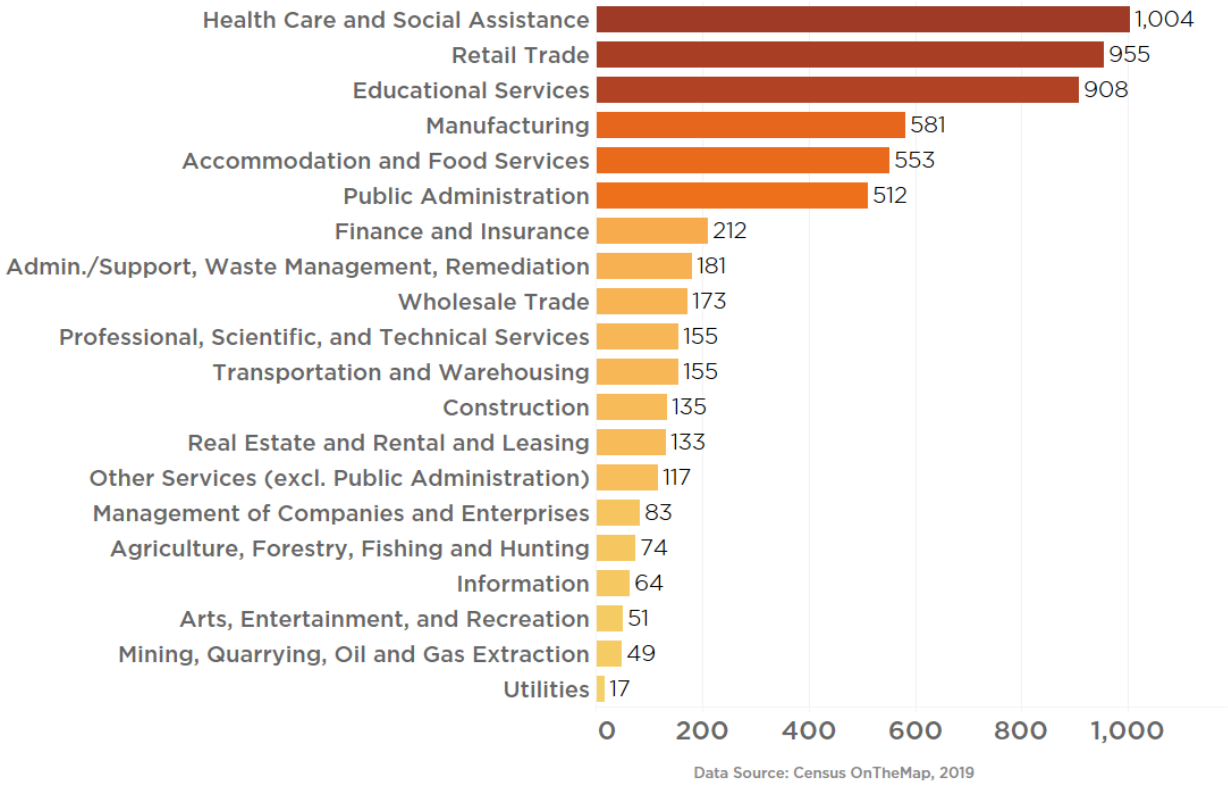
Workforce and Employment Trends

Major Industries

An estimated 6,112 jobs were based in the city of Bainbridge as of 2019, a decline of about 8.9% since 2002. Jobs in the sectors of healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and educational services make up almost half of the jobs in the city (2,867 jobs or 46.9% of all jobs). In addition to those top sectors, the manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and public administration sectors each provide more than 500 jobs (see Figure 8). Of the 6,112 jobs located in Bainbridge, an estimated 5,746 (94.0%) are workers' primary jobs,[3] indicating that some individuals working in the city hold multiple jobs.

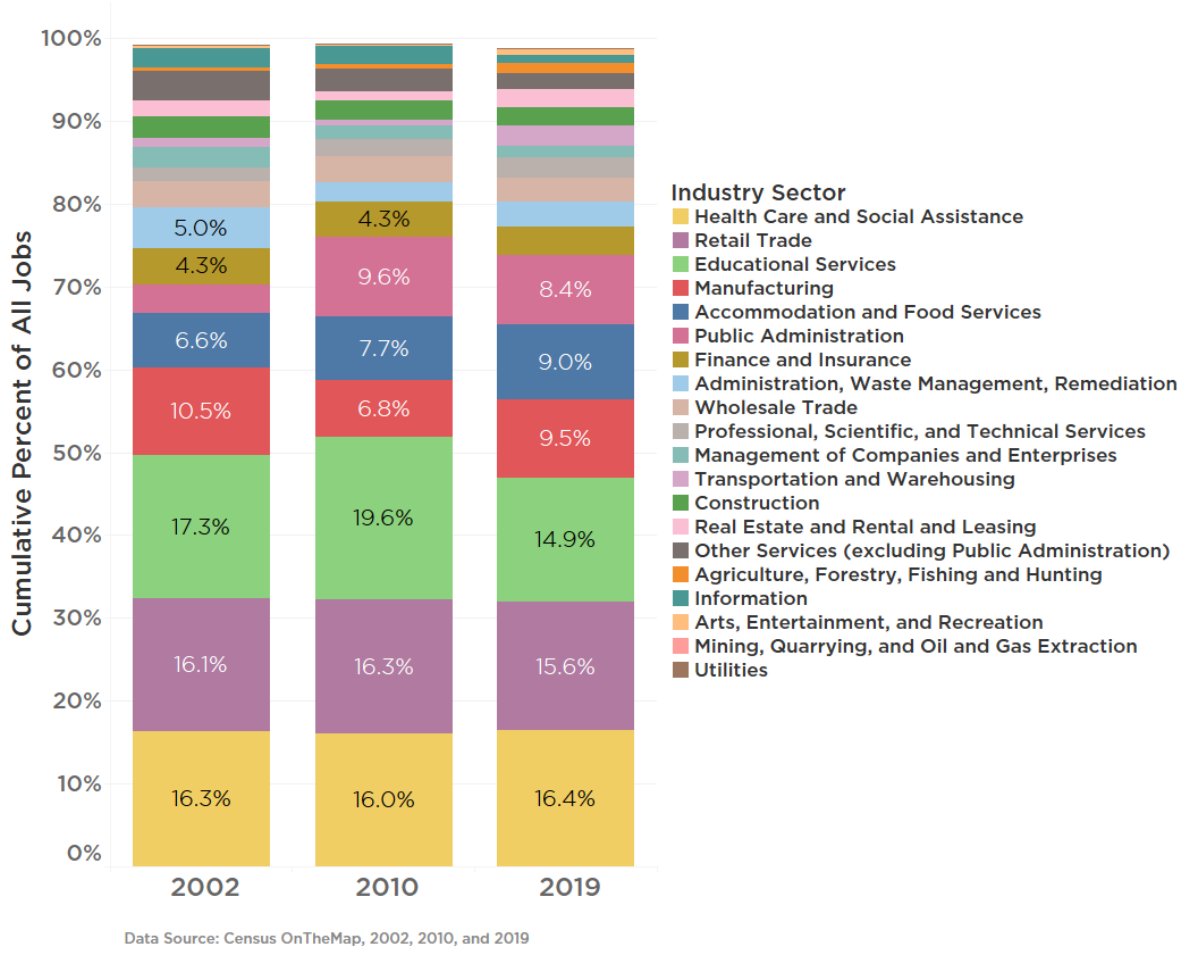
[3] A primary job is the highest paying job for an individual worker for the year. The count of primary jobs is the same as the count of workers.

Figure 8. Number of Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector (All Jobs), City of Bainbridge, 2019



Shares of the city's jobs by industry sector have remained relatively consistent in recent decades, with the healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, educational services, and manufacturing sectors providing the greatest shares of jobs. Jobs in the educational services sector decreased both in number of jobs and as a share of jobs in the city (a 4.7 percentage point decrease from 2010 to 2019; see Figure 9). The public administration, accommodation and food services, and transportation and warehousing sectors saw the greatest increases in job numbers and as shares of all jobs (4.9, 2.4 and 1.4 percentage point increases as shares of all jobs from 2002 to 2019).

Figure 9. Jobs Located in the City of Bainbridge by NAICS Industry Sector (All Jobs), 2002, 2010, and 2019

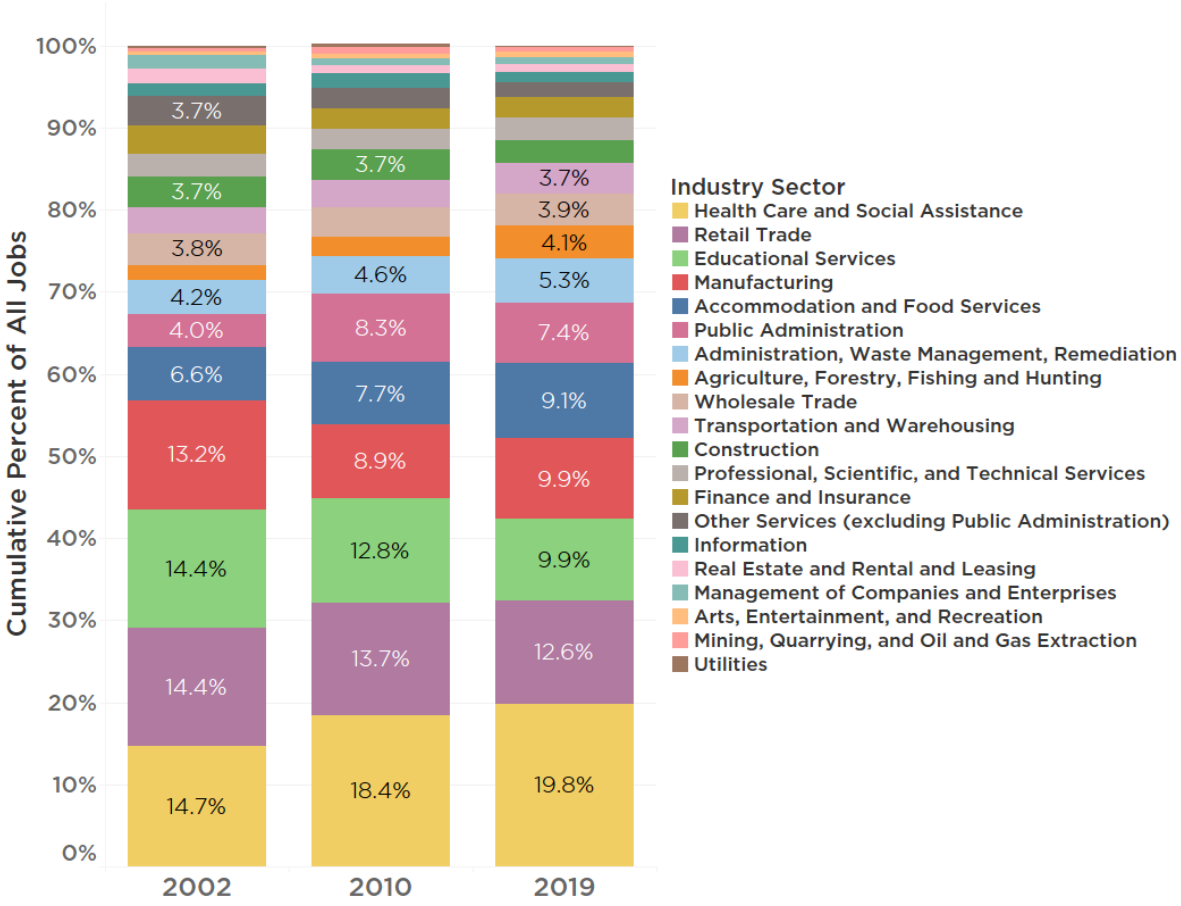


Data Source: Census OnTheMap, 2002, 2010, and 2019

The jobs held by the city's residents reflect the sectors of jobs located in the city, including healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, educational services, and manufacturing (see Figure 10). As jobs in educational services and manufacturing declined as shares of jobs located in the city from 2002 to 2019, jobs in healthcare and social assistance and public administration made up greater proportions of the city's jobs. During that time period, healthcare and social assistance and public administration saw the greatest increase in shares of jobs held by Bainbridge residents (5.1 and 3.4 percentage point increases, respectively), while educational services and manufacturing saw the greatest declines (4.5 and 3.3 percentage point declines, respectively). Other industry sectors have remained relatively constant as shares of total jobs held by Bainbridge residents, each increasing or declining as shares of jobs held by residents by less than 3 percentage points.

The differences in industry sectors of jobs located in the city and jobs held by the city's residents indicate high levels of commuting into and out of the city by workers and residents to access employment. Just 36.5% of employed city residents hold jobs based in the city of Bainbridge. Of workers whose jobs are based in Bainbridge, just 31.2% both live and work in the city.

Figure 10. Jobs Held by Bainbridge Residents by NAICS Industry Sector (All Jobs), 2002, 2010, and 2019



Data Source: Census OnTheMap, 2002. 2010, and 2019

Job Growth Trends

The Georgia Department of Labor projects that the number of jobs in the southwest Georgia region[4] will grow from 143,140 in 2018 to 149,980 in 2028, an increase of 6,840 jobs or 4.8%. The department estimates 17,860 annual job openings in the region. Occupations with the most projected growth from 2018 through 2028 include farmworkers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse workers (1,000 jobs added); personal care aides (420 jobs added); registered nurses (300 jobs added); retail sales persons (270 jobs added); and laborers and freight, stock, and material movers (250 jobs added).

Occupations with the highest projected employment in southwest Georgia for 2028 are shown in Table 4. Among these top occupations, jobs in personal care aid and farming are expected to grow at the fastest rates from 2018 to 2028 (35.7% and 21.9%, respectively). Eight of these occupations require no formal educational credential; six require a high school diploma or equivalent; two require a post-secondary non-degree award; one requires some college with no degree; and three require a bachelor's degree (see Table 4).

Table 4. Employment Projections for All Jobs and Top 20 Occupations, Southwest Georgia Local Workforce Development Area, 2018-2028

Occupations	Typical Education	2018 Base Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Total Change in Employment	% Change in Employment	Annual Openings
Total, All Occupations		**143,140**	**149,980**	**6,840**	**4.8%**	**17,860**
Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	No formal educational credential	4,580	5,580	1,000	21.9%	930
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	No formal educational credential	4,560	4,810	250	5.5%	680
Retail Salespersons	No formal educational credential	4,180	4,450	270	6.5%	660
Cashiers	No formal educational credential	4,260	4,300	40	0.9%	810

[4] The Southwest Georgia Workforce Development Area includes Decatur, Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, and Worth counties.

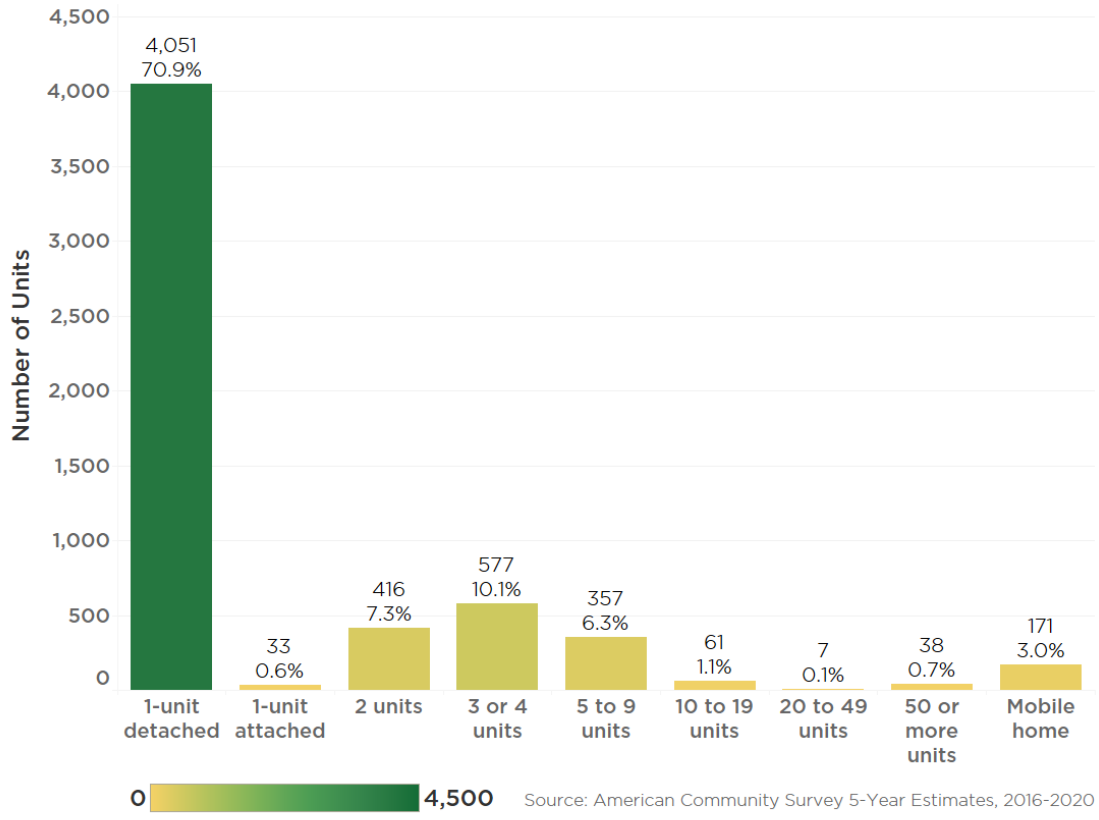
Occupations	Typical Education	2018 Base Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Total Change in Employment	% Change in Employment	Annual Openings
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	No formal educational credential	3,190	3,390	200	6.0%	600
Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	2,850	3,150	300	10.3%	190
Customer Service Representatives	High school diploma or equivalent	2,980	3,120	140	4.8%	420
Office Clerks, General	High school diploma or equivalent	2,700	2,580	-120	-4.4%	310
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary non-degree award	2,700	2,570	-130	-4.8%	290
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	High school diploma or equivalent	2,460	2,250	-210	-8.7%	240
Waiters and Waitresses	No formal educational credential	2,320	2,230	-90	-3.7%	430
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	No formal educational credential	1,940	2,100	160	8.7%	280
General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	1,880	2,010	130	7,0%	180
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	High school diploma or equivalent	1,810	1,960	150	8.2%	280
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Bachelor's degree	1,680	1,720	40	2.1%	120
Nursing Assistants	Postsecondary non-degree award	1,690	1,650	-40	-2.3%	190
Personal Care Aides	High school diploma or equivalent	1,160	1,580	420	35.7%	230
Teacher Assistants	Some college, no degree	1,490	1,500	10	0.8%	160
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	No formal educational credential	1,380	1,490	110	7.7%	170
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	High school diploma or equivalent	1,380	1,450	70	4.9%	150

Housing Profile and Market Analysis

Structure Type

The City of Bainbridge has an estimated 5,711 housing units, according to 2016-2020 American Community Survey five-year estimates. The largest share of units are single-family detached structures (70.9%), followed by triplexes and quadruplexes (10.1%), duplexes (7.3%), and units in structures with five to nine units (6.3%). About 3% of housing units are mobile homes, and 1.1% are in structures with 10 to 19 units. Units in structures with 20 or more units make up just 0.8% of all housing units, and 0.6% of units are single unit attached structures (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Number of Units by Structure Type, City of Bainbridge, 2016-2020



Single-unit structures comprise a slightly greater share of occupied housing units in the city of Bainbridge (71.0%) than in the county (67.8%). Units in structures with two or more units make up a much greater

share of occupied housing in the city (26.9%) than in the county (13.4%), and almost all of the county's occupied units in structures with two or more units are located in the city of Bainbridge (95.0%). While units in multifamily structures make up a greater share of housing in the city, mobile homes and other types of housing are more common in the county (18.9% of occupied units, compared to 2.1% in the city of Bainbridge; see Table 5).

Table 5. Occupied Housing Units by Structure Type

	City of Bainbridge		Decatur County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Occupied housing units	4,580		9,684	
1 unit	3,254	71.0%	6,562	67.8%
2-4 units	967	21.1%	989	10.2%
5 or more units	264	5.8%	307	3.2%
Other	95	2.1%	1,826	18.9%

Data Source: 2020 5-Year American Community Survey, Table S2504

Tenure

Slightly less than half of all households in Bainbridge are owner households (47.3%), a lower share than in the county overall, where about three-fifths (61.9%) of occupied units are owner-occupied (see Table 6).

Table 6. Occupied Units by Tenure

	Total Occupied Housing Units	% Owner-Occupied	% Renter-Occupied
City of Bainbridge	5,566	47.3%	52.7%
Decatur County	11,466	61.9%	38.1%

Data Source: 2020 DEC Demographic and Housing Characteristics

Single-unit housing structures make up the vast majority (96.3%) of owner-occupied units in Bainbridge. Structures with two to four units and five or more units make up small shares of owner-occupied units (1.2% and 0.3%, respectively). Other types of housing, including mobile homes, boats, and RVs, comprise 2.2% of all owner-occupied housing units in Bainbridge.

Single-unit structures make up a smaller share of owner-occupied units in the county as a whole (80.1%), while other structures make up a greater share of owner-occupied units in the county (19.3%).

Table 7. Occupied Owner Housing Units by Structure Type

	City of Bainbridge		Decatur County	
	#	%	#	%
Owner-occupied housing units	2,190		5,932	
1 unit	2,109	96.3%	4,754	80.1%
2-4 units	26	1.2%	26	0.4%
5 or more units	6	0.3%	6	0.1%
Other	49	2.2%	1,146	19.3%

Data Source: 2016-2020 5-Year American Community Survey, Table S2504

Compared to owners, renters are more evenly distributed among the different housing types in Bainbridge. Slightly more than half of renter-occupied units in Bainbridge are in structures with two or more units (50.2%). Almost half (47.9%) of renter-occupied units are single-unit structures; about two-fifths (39.4%) are in structures with two to four units; and about one tenth (10.8%) are in structures with five or more units. Single-unit structures make up a similar share of renter-occupied units in Decatur County (48.2%); however, other structures, including mobile homes, boats, and RVs, make up a much greater share of renter-occupied housing in the county (18.1%) than in the city (1.9%). Units in structures with two or more units make up a greater share of renter-occupied housing in the city (50.2%) than in the county (33.7%).

Table 8. Occupied Renter Housing Units by Structure Type

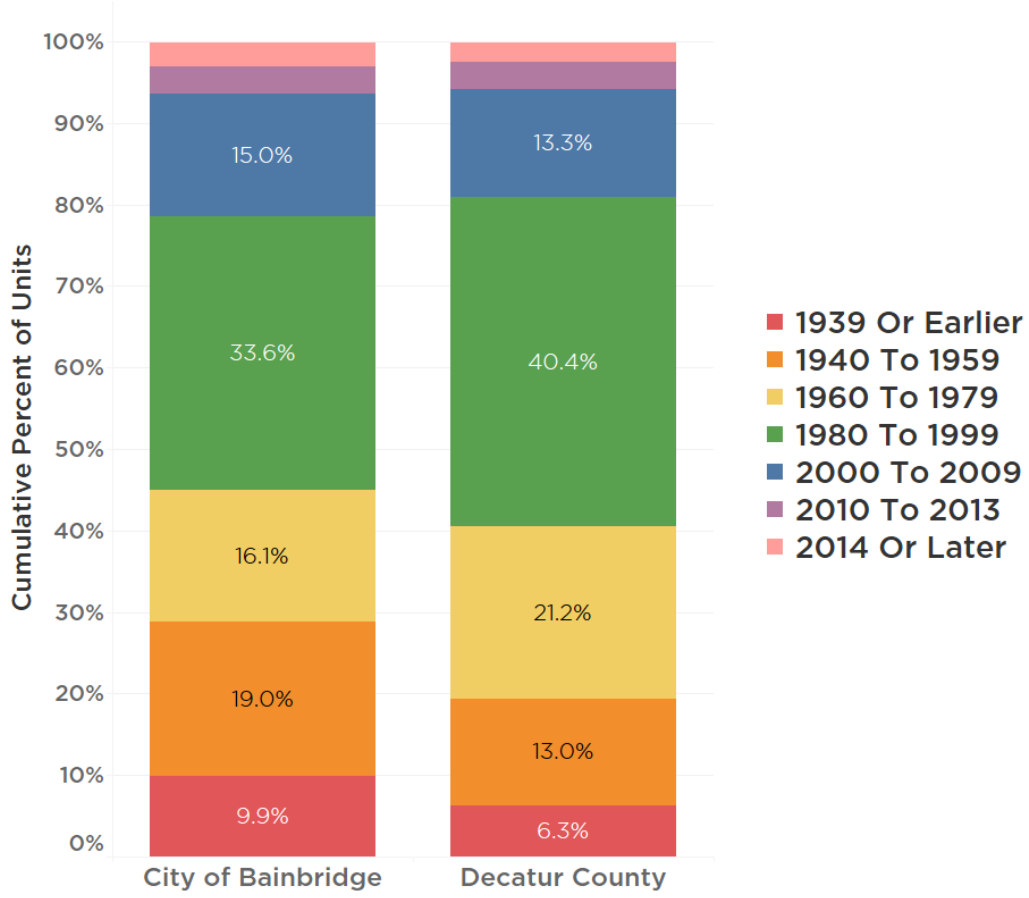
	City of Bainbridge		Decatur County	
	#	%	#	%
Renter-occupied housing units	2,390		3,752	
1 unit	1,145	47.9%	1,808	48.2%
2-4 units	941	39.4%	963	25.7%
5 or more units	258	10.8%	301	8.0%
Other	46	1.9%	680	18.1%

Data Source: 2016-2020 5-Year American Community Survey, Table S2504

Structure Age

Slightly more than half of occupied housing units in Bainbridge were built in 1980 and later (54.9%), and about 45% of occupied units were built prior to 1980. About one-fifth of units were built in 2000 or later (21.3%), and just 6.3% were built in 2010 or later. Relative to Decatur County, the city of Bainbridge has higher shares of units built prior to 1980 and in 2000 or later (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Year structure built for occupied housing units, City of Bainbridge and Decatur County, 2016-2020



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

Most owner-occupied units in the city were built from 1980 to 1999 (32.9%), 1940 to 1959 (23.9%), and 1960 to 1979 (19.4%). In all, about three-fourths of owner-occupied units in the city of Bainbridge (76.1%) were built from 1940 through 1999. Relative to Decatur County as a whole, Bainbridge has larger shares of owner-occupied units built prior to 1960 and from 2000 to 2009. Notably, the American Community Survey five-year estimates for 2016-2020 indicate that no owner-occupied units were built from 2010 through 2020 (see Table 9).

Table 9. Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Year Structure Built

Owner-occupied Housing Units	City of Bainbridge (#)	City of Bainbridge (%)	Decatur County (#)	Decatur County (%)
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT				
2014 or later	0	0	58	1.0
2010 to 2013	0	0	85	1.4
2000 to 2009	312	14.2	767	12.9
1980 to 1999	721	32.9	2,426	40.9
1960 to 1979	424	19.4	1,470	24.8
1940 to 1959	523	23.9	792	13.4
1939 or earlier	210	9.6	334	5.6

Data Source: 2016-2020 5-Year ACS Estimates, S2504

The largest shares of renter-occupied units in both Bainbridge and Decatur County were built from 1980 to 1999 (34.3% and 39.6%, respectively). Relative to owner-occupied units, greater shares of renter-occupied units in both the city and county were built in 2010 or later (12.1% in the city and 11.1% in the county), and smaller shares of renter-occupied units were built prior to 1980 (37.9% in the city and 35.4% in the county; see Table 10).

Table 10. Renter-Occupied Housing Units by Year Structure Built

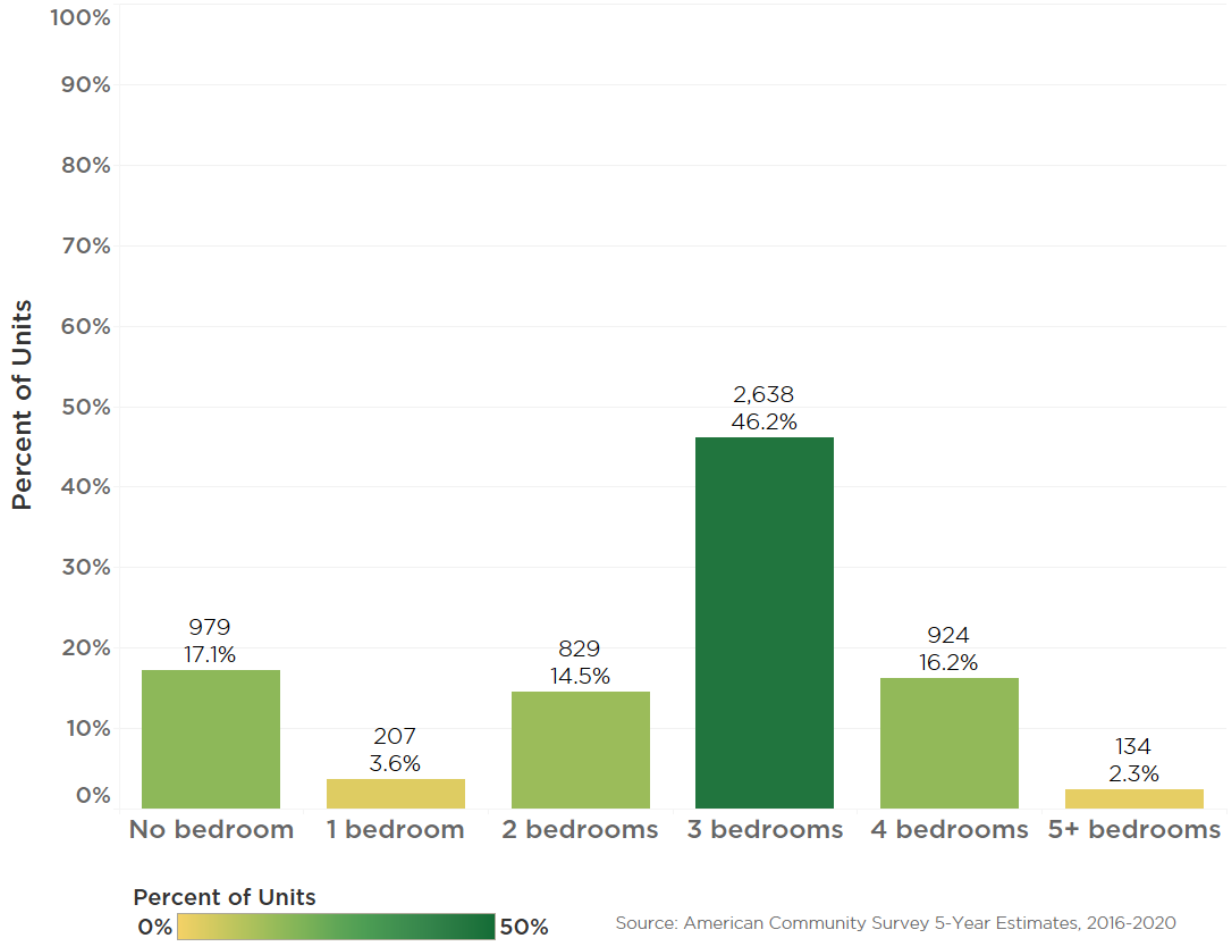
Renter-occupied Housing Units	City of Bainbridge (#)	City of Bainbridge (%)	Decatur County (#)	Decatur County (%)
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT				
2014 or later	134	5.6	177	4.7
2010 to 2013	156	6.5	238	6.3
2000 to 2009	373	15.6	525	14
1980 to 1999	820	34.3	1,485	39.6
1960 to 1979	315	13.2	579	15.4
1940 to 1959	347	14.5	471	12.6
1939 or earlier	245	10.3	277	7.4

Data Source: 2016-2020 5-Year ACS Estimates, S2504

Unit Size

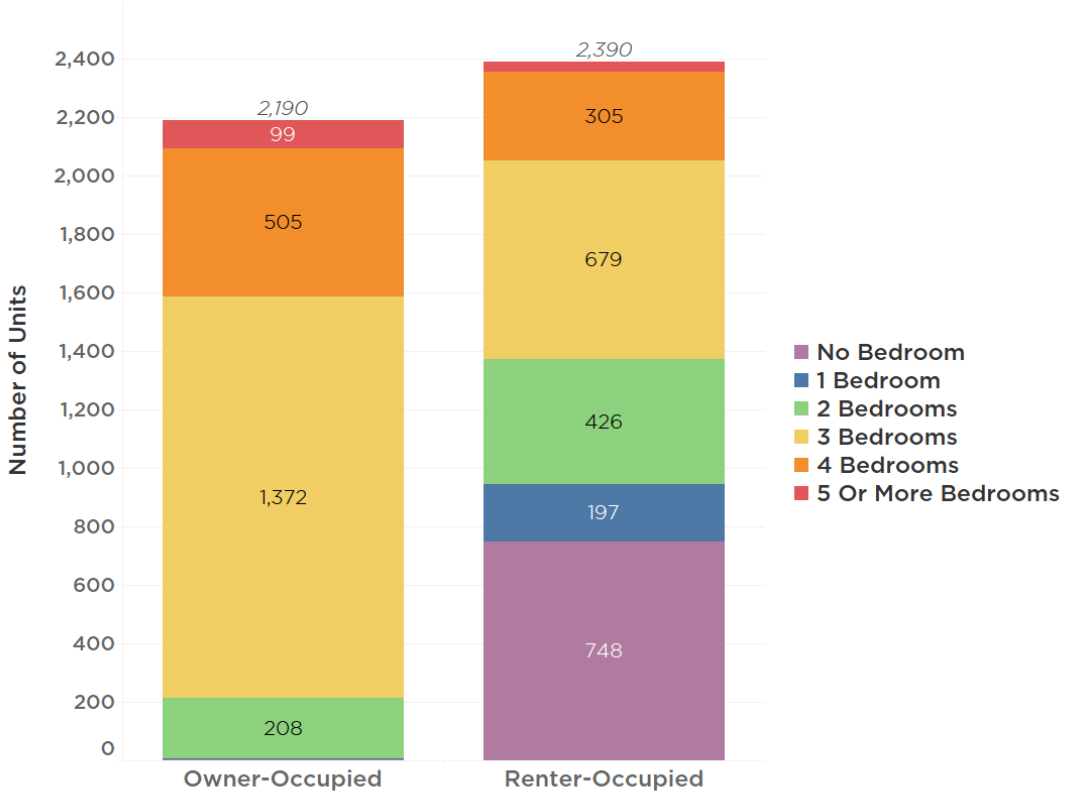
Three-bedroom units comprise almost half of the city's housing stock (46.2%). Units with no bedrooms (17.1% of all units), four bedrooms (16.2%), and two bedrooms (14.5%) are the next most common. Units with one bedroom or five or more bedrooms each make up less than 4% of the city's housing units (3.6% and 2.3%, respectively; see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Units by Number of Bedrooms, City of Bainbridge, 2016-2020



Owner-occupied units tend to be larger than renter occupied units, consisting primarily of three- and four-bedroom units (62.6% and 23.1% of owner-occupied units, or 1,372 and 505 units, respectively). In contrast, almost 60% of renter-occupied units have two bedrooms or less (1,371 units), and more than 30% have no bedrooms (748 units). Slightly more than 40% of renter-occupied units have three or more bedrooms (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Number of Bedrooms by Tenure, City of Bainbridge, 2016-2020



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

Occupancy Levels

The proportion of units that are vacant to the number of total housing units in both Bainbridge and Decatur County is 12.0% (see Table 11). About 4.4% of all units in Bainbridge and 4.9% of units in the county are vacant for reasons other than being for rent; rented but not occupied; for sale; sold but not occupied; for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use; or for migrant workers (see Table 12). An estimated 2.6% of homeowner units in Bainbridge are vacant for sale, while approximately 7.1% of rental units are vacant for rent.

Table 11. Housing Occupancy

	City of Bainbridge	Decatur County
HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Total housing units	6,327	13,036
Vacant housing units	761	1,570
Percent vacant units	12.0%	12.0%
Homeowner vacancy rate (vacant for sale)	2.6%	1.4%
Rental vacancy rate (vacant for rent)	7.1%	6.8%

Data Source: 2020 Census DHC

Table 12. Vacancy Status

	City of Bainbridge	Decatur County
VACANCY STATUS		
Total vacant units	761	1,570
For rent	209	297
Rented, not occupied	13	37
For sale only	68	98
Sold, not occupied	38	146
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	110	304
For migrant workers	43	48
Other vacant	280	640

Data Source: 2020 Census DHC

Community Infrastructure

Through its ongoing Comprehensive Plan planning process, the City of Bainbridge has identified some weaknesses in its existing local infrastructure. Bainbridge's Comprehensive Plan, completed in 2010, identified several community facility issues, including:

- Few forms of alternative transportation available in the city,
- A need for sidewalk and bicycle connectivity improvements, and
- Lack of access to parks and recreation.

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan update identified six additional public infrastructure needs:

- A need to address drainage problems in the city,
- Improved conditions of the city streets,
- GIS mapping of utilities and cemeteries completed,
- Updates to the city's Utilities Master Plan,
- Upgrades and/or replacement at the Bainbridge Wastewater Treatment Plant, and

- A plan to expand the fiber optic network needs to be developed.

During the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update, students from the Bainbridge High School 11th Grade Civics/Student Government Class noted clean streets as the city's strength. However, weaknesses included "pot holes," and "road construction (very slow)."[5]

[5] City of Bainbridge, GA. (2020) "Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan Update 2020," p. 14-15

Subsidized Housing Programs & Related Services

Bainbridge has had several cycles of subsidized multifamily housing built in the city. The city's housing stock is largely an older stock, with over 30% of its residential structures built before 1960. Between 1958 and 1960, the city received its first wave of subsidized multifamily housing, with the construction of its large housing authority developments, including King-West Home and Hutto-McIver Homes.

In the early 1980s, the city experienced another wave of multifamily housing, subsidized through funding from USDA Rural Housing. Several low-income housing developments were built at that time, including the Brierwood Apartments (I and II), Harvest Homes, Landmark Apartments, Landmark Manor and the Riverdell Apartments.

A third wave of subsidized multifamily units was built in the early 2000s through the state of Georgia's LIHTC program. The program saw the creation of the Courtes de Emerald Apartments (I and II), Pine Ridge Estates, Ridgefield Place and The Rivers apartments. Since the late 2010s, new multifamily housing in Bainbridge has primarily been unsubsidized, market-rate housing.

Multifamily Housing Inventory

USDA Rural Multifamily Housing

Housing created through USDA Rural Multifamily funding provides 256 affordable rental units in Bainbridge, including 132 units serving families and 124 units serving seniors.

Brierwood Apartments I
920 Palmetto Street
34 family units

Brierwood Apartments II
1605 Miluli Avenue
18 senior units

Landmark Apartments
1605 Miluli Avenue
38 family units

Landmark Manor Apartments
710 Gordon Avenue
60 family units

Riverdell Apartments
810 Gordon Avenue
50 senior units

Selman Place
509 Gordon Avenue
56 senior units

Housing Authority of the City of Bainbridge

Publicly supported housing, subsidized through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), requires renters to pay 30% of their gross monthly income as rent. Residents must earn very low or low incomes (e.g., less than 30% of the area median income) to qualify for publicly supported housing.

King-West Homes
1732 Bethel Road
74 family units

Hutto-McIver Homes
851 M. L. King Jr. Drive
74 family units

Scattered Site Properties
148 family units at five scattered properties throughout Bainbridge
Housing Assistance Program
1 property-based voucher

Georgia Department of Community Affairs Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Properties

Georgia's Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, provides a significant tax credit to developers building affordable multifamily rental housing.

Courtes de Emerald Apartments
1500 S. Washington Street
28 rental units, of which 22 are income restricted

Courtes de Emerald Apartments II
1530 S. Washington Street
32 rental units, including 22 income restricted units

Pine Ridge Estates
108 Hubert Dollar Drive
40 income restricted rental units

Ridgefield Place
100 Parkview Drive
43 income restricted units

The Rivers
1105 Lake Drive
114 income restricted rental units

Housing for Seasonal Workers

Harvest Home Apartments
211 W. Alice Street
22 family units

Housing-Related Services

In addition to multi-family housing resources, the City of Bainbridge is served by several agencies and organizations that assist residents with acquiring and maintaining their housing.

Disaster Assistance

The American Red Cross of Southwest Georgia

The American Red Cross of Southwest Georgia serves 24 counties in southwest Georgia, including Decatur County. The organization provides residents with disaster assistance, including the costs of temporary housing relocation.

Down Payment Assistance

Georgia Dream Homeownership Program

The Georgia Dream Homeownership Program provides assistance statewide with down payment assistance and affordable mortgage financing.

Emergency and Transitional Housing

Still Waters

Still Waters is a faith-based, temporary residential program offered by the Friends with Jesus Ministries. The program provides 12 transitional beds for women with children.

Housing and Services for Persons Experiencing Domestic Violence

Halcyon Home for Battered Women

Based in Thomasville, GA, the Halcyon Home for Battered Women provides emergency shelter for female victims of domestic violence and their children. The shelter serves clients from Thomas, Grady, Decatur, Seminole, and Mitchell counties in southwest Georgia.

Housing for Persons with Disabilities

Gibb Bainbridge Apartments, 810 Gordon Avenue

Operated by Goodwill of Big Bend, the Gibb Bainbridge Apartments provide 19 accessible rental units for persons with disabilities.

Housing for Persons in Recovery

Harvest House of Hope

Harvest House of Hope is a faith-based residential program for women in recovery from substance abuse. The program allows residents to live on-site for 6-12 months if they remain sober.

Housing for Veterans

90Works

The 90Works program, with its closest office in Albany, GA, offers temporary housing support for veterans in crisis in Bainbridge. Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, if eligible, are assigned a case manager who assists them with finding and securing housing. Once housed, the 90Works program provides rent assistance, security deposit, utility assistance, home goods, groceries, and assistance with finding employment. 90Works case management and services are available for 90 days through this program.

Legal Assistance

Georgia Legal Services

The Georgia Legal Services office in Albany, GA serves Bainbridge residents. The agency provides pro-bono legal services to low-income Bainbridge renters, covering such issues as Section 8, public housing, eviction from a privately-owned rental unit, dispossession, and court resources. Seniors who lease their housing and need legal assistance may also call the Georgia Senior Legal Hotline, regardless of income.

Rent and Utility Assistance

The Neighborhood Service Center

The Decatur County Community Action Council, serving the public through the Neighborhood Service Center, provides annual utility assistance (LIHEAP) primarily to seniors and homebound individuals. The public may also apply for LIHEAP assistance if remaining funds are available. The service center also provides rental or other housing cost assistance in some crisis situations where funding is available.

The Salvation Army of Bainbridge

The Salvation Army of Bainbridge offers rent and utility assistance through funds from the GA DCA Rental Assistance Program. The Salvation Army also provides food and clothing vouchers, as well as some assistance with the costs of medications.

Residential Visual Survey

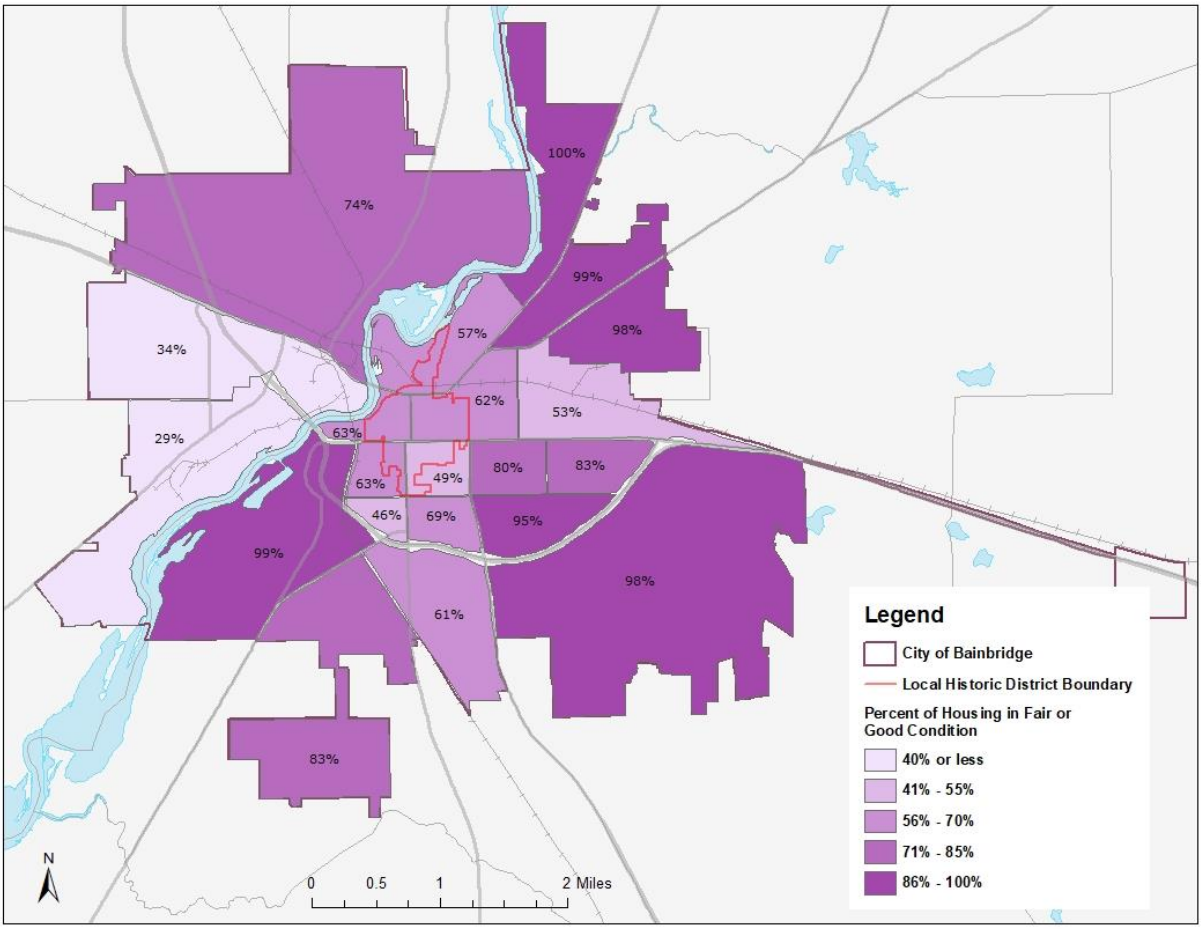
Mosaic Community Planning staff conducted a visual survey of Bainbridge's housing stock from February 22-24, 2022. To conduct the visual survey, Bainbridge was divided into 21 sections separated by the city's major roads and the Flint River. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: to establish a baseline of housing condition types and to identify concentrations of housing in poor condition throughout the city. Three housing condition types discussed below include housing in "good or fair" condition, deteriorating housing, and dilapidated housing.

Housing in Good or Fair Condition

Housing in good or fair condition was identified as structures which appear to have:

- a sound foundation
- windows and doors present on all visible sides, which appear to be in working condition
- no indication of roof issues
- the appearance of routine care and maintenance of the structure and grounds
- only minor repair issues, indicating minimally deferred maintenance, not neglected

Figure 15. Housing in Good or Fair Condition



Data Source: Bainbridge Visual Survey Results

Housing in good or fair condition exists throughout the City of Bainbridge. Several sections of the city are almost entirely composed of housing in good condition. Sections with the greatest percentage of housing good or fair condition include northeast Bainbridge along Vada and East River Roads, southwest Bainbridge between Old Quincy Road and Cheney Griffin Park, and southeast Bainbridge south of E. College Street, including the Lake Douglas neighborhood.

Housing west of Old Quincy Road primarily consists of single family and multifamily subsidized housing developments built between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. These residential developments include Ridgefield Place, Pine Ridge Estates, The Tropics and Gibb Bainbridge Village. New duplexes are currently being built along Old Quincy Road. Housing in northeast Bainbridge along Vada Road and East River Road is primarily single family, market rate housing spanning from the 1950s onward. Similarly, the housing south of E. College Street and in the Lake Douglas neighborhood dates from the 1950s to the 1990s. These latter

areas contain housing which is universally in good condition, except for isolated structures which show signs of fire or roof damage.

Older sections of the city contain lower shares of housing in good condition. The local historic district, which spans from E. College Street northward to the Flint River, covers several residential areas where the percentage of housing in good or fair condition ranges from 49% to 63%. Housing found between West and Scott Streets south of Shotwell St. had the lowest share of housing in good condition (49%), followed by adjoining neighborhoods north of Albany Road, just outside of the historic district (57%). Housing west of Broad Street and between Bruton and West Streets south of Shotwell Street had the highest shares of housing in good condition (63%) within the historic district. Outside of the historic district, housing in good condition ranged from 46% to 69% in sections along Tallahassee Hwy. East of Scott Street, a large share of housing is in good condition immediately south of Shotwell Street (80-83%), but this condition declines severely north of Shotwell Street (53%). The northern areas of west Bainbridge also have a drastically larger share of housing in good condition (74%) than west Bainbridge housing south of Dothan Road (29-34%).

Housing with Deteriorating conditions

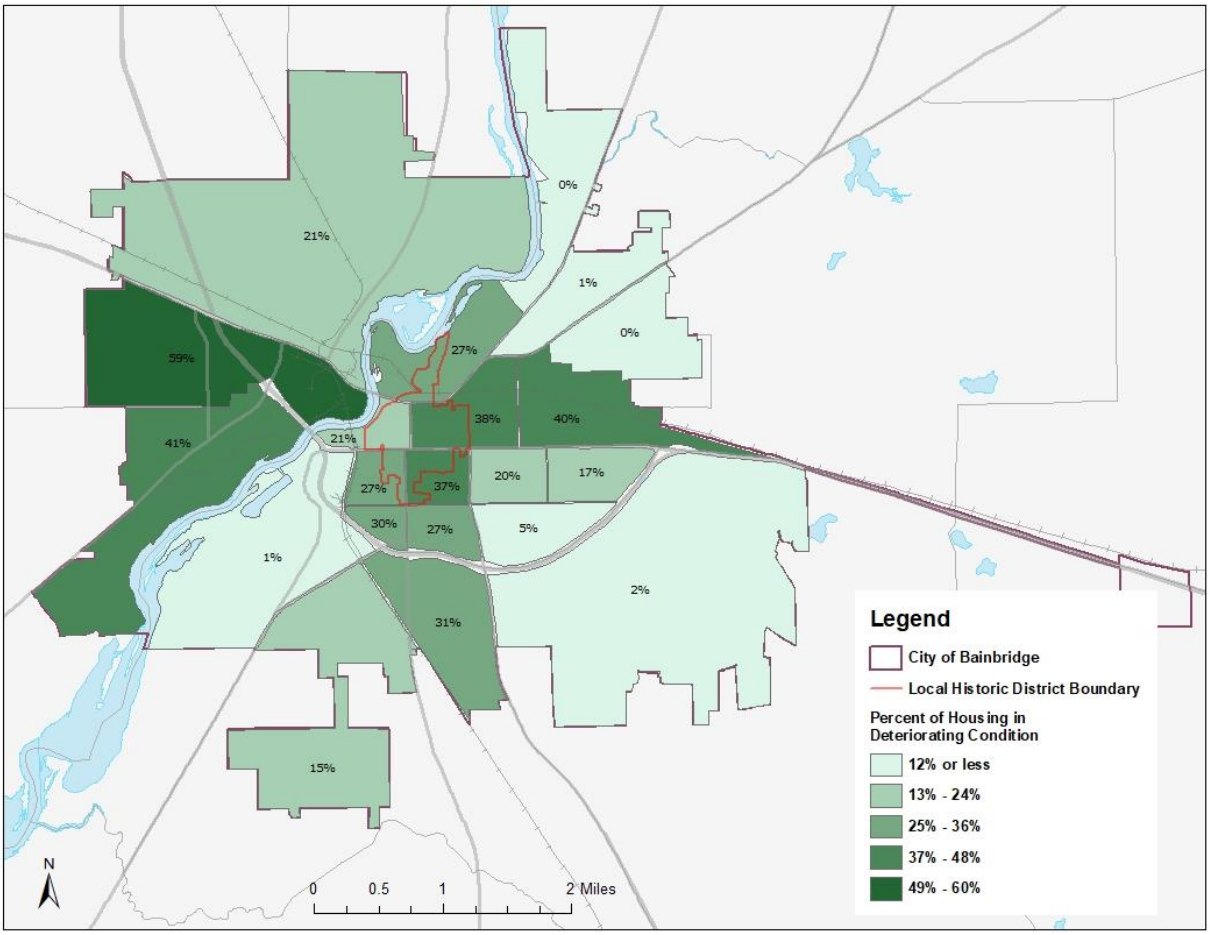
Housing considered to be in "deteriorating condition" is housing which continues to be habitable but shows signs of disinvestment or neglect. Structures classified as being in deteriorating condition have one or more of the following issues:

- Roof deterioration, including sagging, dips, patches, discoloration, or visible holes
- Dented or damaged exterior vents
- Loose vinyl siding, or siding with holes
- Aging, peeling wood siding
- Leaning or falling window shutters
- Cracked, damaged or broken windows
- Torn screens
- Graffiti

The visual inspection did not include the following features as a deteriorating condition: siding which needs pressure washing or other cosmetic issues.



Figure 16. Housing in Deteriorating Condition



While deteriorated housing occurs in nearly every section of the city, the greatest share of housing in deteriorating condition is found west of the Flint River. Around 59% of residential structures north of Butler Ferry Road, including residential neighborhoods along Church Street and Dothan Road are deteriorating. Similarly, 41% of all housing units along Spring Creek Road show signs of deterioration. East of downtown, housing north of Shotwell Street has high levels of deterioration (38-40%) as does housing south of Shotwell Street between West and Scott Streets (37%).

Housing in Dilapidated Condition

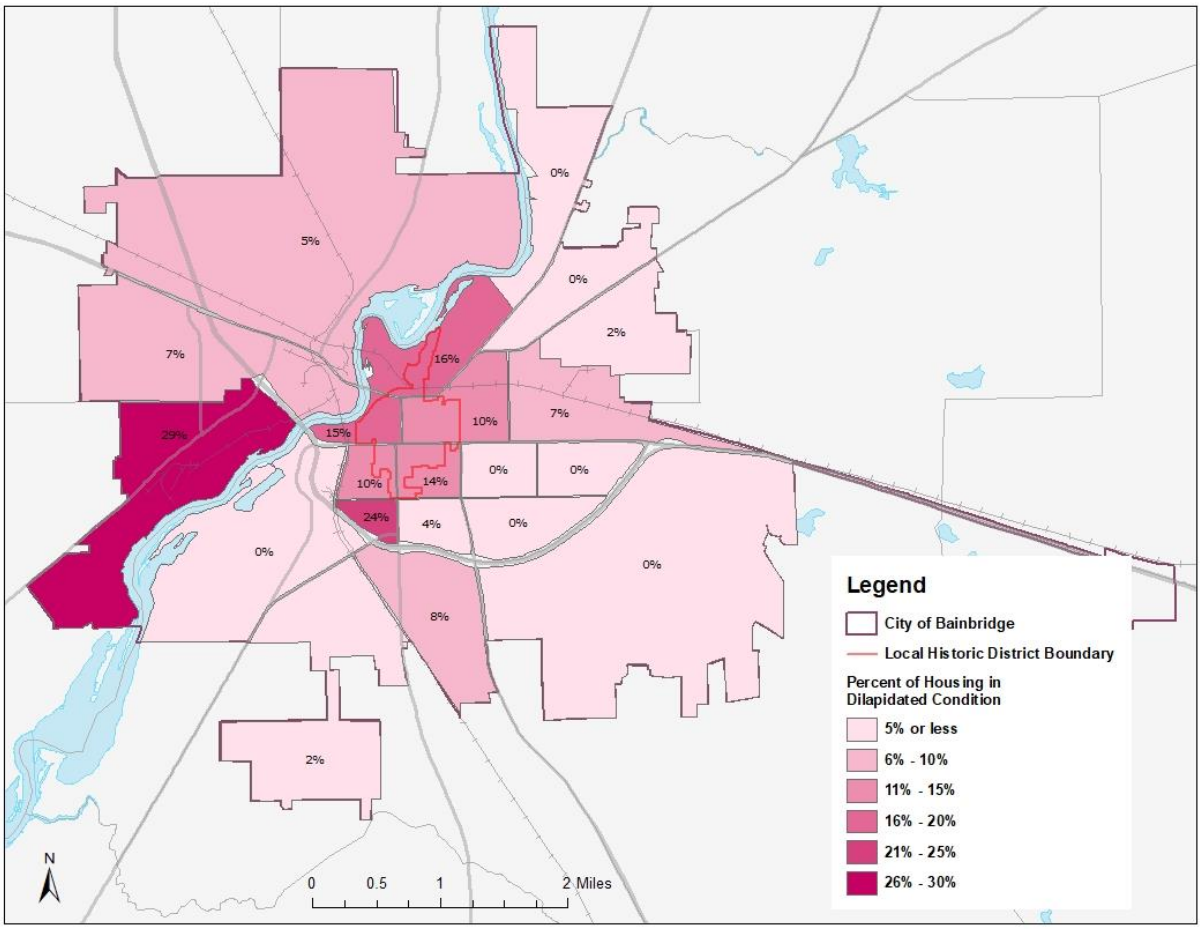
Housing considered to be in "dilapidated condition" has both aesthetic and structural issues which indicate unsafe or unsecured conditions and may demonstrate that the structure is uninhabitable. Structures in dilapidated condition may have:

- Tarped roofs or large areas with missing roof tiles
- One or more missing windows or exterior doors
- Missing exterior vinyl or wood paneling

- All or several exterior/entry stairs that are missing
- Walls which are leaning or falling
- Other signs of abandonment, such as boarded windows or doors

Housing in dilapidated condition is highly likely to also contain one or more deteriorating conditions.

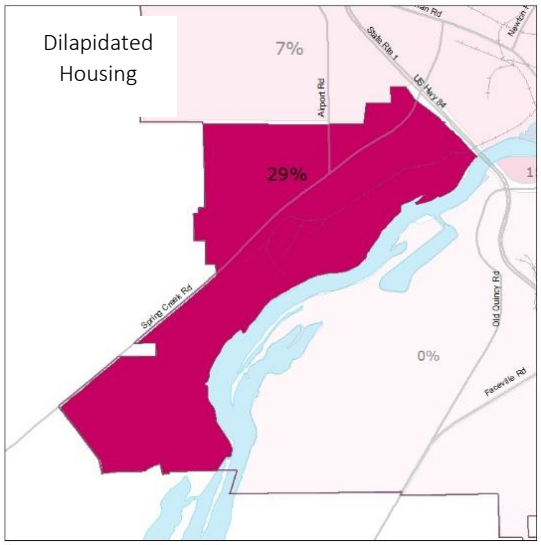
Figure 17. Housing in Dilapidated Condition

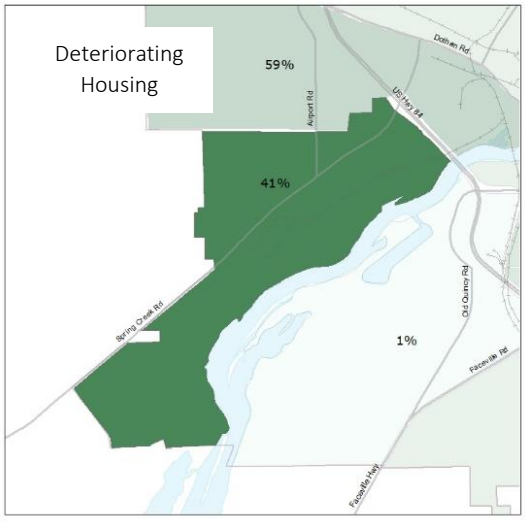


Dilapidated residential structures make up 29% of housing units in those neighborhoods along Spring Creek Road, south of Highway 84. South of downtown, housing between Highway 84 and West College Street also has a high rate of dilapidation (24%). The city's historic district and its surrounding blocks also have high shares of dilapidated structures. Adjoining neighborhoods north of Albany Road have a high rate of dilapidation (16%), which is primarily concentrated south of Maple Avenue. Dilapidated conditions also appear in 15% of the housing units west of downtown Bainbridge.

Concentrations of Housing in Deteriorating or Dilapidated Condition

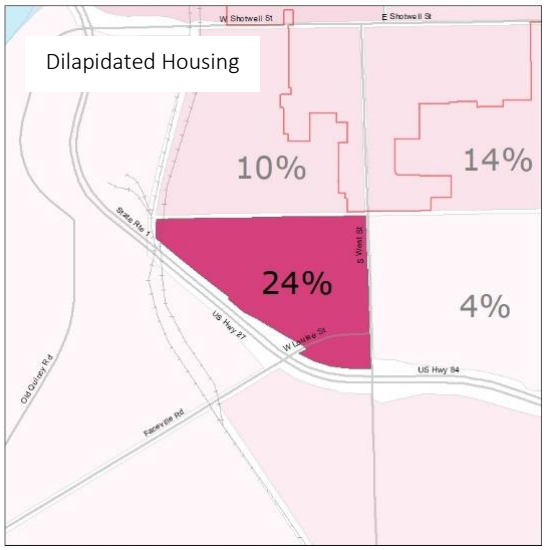
Several sections of the city contain notable concentrations of deteriorating or dilapidated housing. Many areas with a prevalence of these conditions contain fewer than 100 housing units. For example, some areas discussed below contain as few as 34 housing units. However, these areas are defined by the frequency and severity of deterioration or dilapidation. Despite topographical gradations which elevate many residential areas 30-50 feet above the Flint River, housing closest to certain portions of the river is more likely to show signs of deteriorating or dilapidated condition.





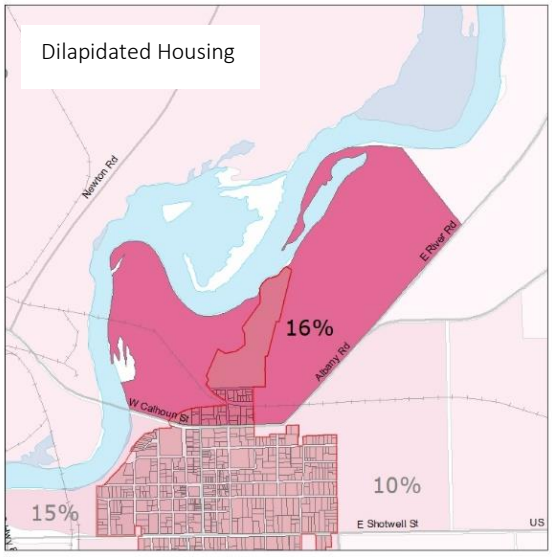
West Bainbridge, Spring Creek Road

The largely industrial area of West Bainbridge, which includes portions of Spring Creek and Airport Roads, contains some of the city's largest shares of deteriorating and dilapidated housing. Previously known as the town of Diffee, the area once provided workforce housing for local mill workers. These neighborhoods were divided during the late 1950s and early 1960s by the construction of the US-84 bypass. Approximately 70% of this section's residential structures appear to be in either deteriorating or dilapidated condition.



Southwest Bainbridge, West College Street and S. West Street

The area south of West College Street and west of S. West Street is primarily residential and contains fewer than 100 housing units. Of the area's housing, more than half of all units (55%) show signs of neglect, with 31% in deteriorating condition and 24% in dilapidated condition. This neighborhood, too, was divided by the construction of the US-84 bypass through Faceville Road in the late 1950s and early 1960s.



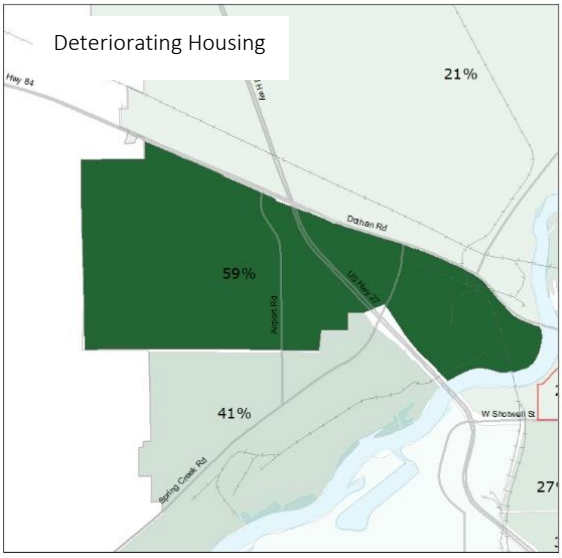
Central Bainbridge north of W. Calhoun Street/Albany Road

North of Albany Road, the city has adjoining neighborhoods abutting the Flint River that together contain more than 100 housing units. The westernmost neighborhood, south of Maple Avenue, is called Eureka Heights. This area in particular once provided workforce housing for employees of the railroad and manufacturing industries and was primarily composed of shotgun houses. Currently, 44% of the housing units in these two neighborhoods show signs of deterioration or dilapidation, with 16% of all units being considered dilapidated. The was discussed in the 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan, noting the longstanding nature of vacant and dilapidated units[6]

Residential structures north of Maple Avenue are primarily in good condition (77%), with 20% in deteriorating condition and 3% in dilapidated condition. In Eureka Heights, however, there is a significantly larger share of housing units in deteriorating or dilapidated condition (69%). Approximately 31% of the units are in good

[6] City of Bainbridge, GA. "2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan." p. 17

condition, 37% are in deteriorating condition and 32% are in dilapidated condition. The City of Bainbridge has invested in multiple demolitions to remove dilapidated units in the neighborhood.



West Bainbridge, south of Dothan Road

This industrial and residential area west of the Flint River once provided workforce housing for employees in the railroad and manufacturing industries, particularly near the railroad tracks. Currently, the area has fewer than 100 housing units. Around 59% of these units are in deteriorating condition, with 7% in dilapidated condition.

Housing Needs

Over the past 20 years, the City of Bainbridge has experienced an upward growth trend in the number of households living in the city. Overall, the number of households has increased from 4,444 in 2000 to 5,566 in 2020. Throughout the two decades, the city gained around 313 households between 2000 and 2010, and gained around 809 households between 2010 and 2020. Comparatively, Decatur County gained approximately 10 households between 2000 and 2010, and gained around 1,076 households between 2010 and 2020.

Table 13. Historical Household Data

	Decatur County	Bainbridge
2000	10,380	4,444
2010	10,390	4,757
2020	11,466	5,566

Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census, DP1; 2010 Decennial Census, H3; 2020 Decennial Census DHC

Table 14. Historical Housing Unit Data

	Decatur County	Bainbridge
2000	11,968	4,994
2010	12,125	5,495
2020	13,036	6,327

Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census, DP1; 2010 Decennial Census, H3; 2020 Decennial Census DHC

Conversely, the city and county report having significantly larger shares of housing units than households. Bainbridge is reported to have 6,327 housing units, of which 761 (12%) are vacant and off the market. The remaining 188 vacant units leave a tight housing market, particularly for homebuyers experiencing a 2% vacancy rate, but also for renters (6% vacancy). Decatur County has 1,527 vacant units off the market, or 12% of all housing units. The loss of population and vacant for-sale or for-rent homes in the latter decade may be attributed to the impacts of Hurricane Michael in 2018, which devastated many households and had particularly harsh results for lower income households and households without flood insurance.

Looking to the future, the city's projected housing need assumes that Bainbridge's 2020 average household size of 2.51 persons per household will remain constant. The projected housing need has been identified in Table 15 below. The city will need to build or rehabilitate at least 821 housing units to meet the projected housing need of 5,815 units in 2022. A total of 1,104 new or rehabilitated units will be required to meet the city's housing need of 6,098 units by 2042.

Table 15. Housing Need Projections

	2022	2026	2030	2034	2038	2042
Bainbridge Projected Population	14,596	14,836	15,036	15,157	15,240	15,305
Projected Total Housing Need (in units)	5,815	5,911	5,990	6,039	6,072	6,098

Implementation Strategies

Based on the analysis of data and public input, this section outlines eight housing goals to guide the City in both addressing needs of its current housing stock and ensuring the City's housing stock can meet the needs of Bainbridge residents in the future. Following the discussion of housing goals, Table 16 proposes a set of implementation measures tied to each goal and coupled to suggested responsible parties and other partners who may be helpful in pursuing the named strategies. Based on a workshop and prioritization session with City Council members, Table 16 is followed by a more thorough discussion of high priority actions. Comprising a subset of the full list of implementation strategies contained in the report, these action items represent areas with a high degree of consensus among Council Members, and a good likelihood of early success as the City begins taking a more concerted approach to addressing housing needs in Bainbridge.

Goal 1: Develop New Affordable Infill Housing

A primary need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment conducted during this planning process was for the development of new affordable infill housing, including senior housing and housing for seasonal workers.

Periodically, the state and/or federal government create opportunities for cities and counties to support affordable housing development and retention. Bainbridge should pursue and implement a funding source or combination of sources, as it/they become available. Georgia's non-entitlement CDBG program funds, for example, may be used to support infrastructure development associated with affordable housing development.

Bainbridge can also take actions to encourage and facilitate developers' LIHTC applications, including making connections with developers at LIHTC open houses or other events; letting developers know about available sites; and reviewing the state's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) each year to see how the city is scoring in terms of community factors, such as access to public transportation, grocery stores, and investments in public facilities and infrastructure.

The City can also explore the potential for partnering with Habitat for Humanity or other affordable housing developers working in neighboring jurisdictions to develop affordable single-family homes, particularly infill housing in neighborhoods in need of revitalization. Bainbridge should consider meeting with these developers' executive directors or board members to understand opportunities and barriers to working in Bainbridge to inform strategies for collaboration.

An additional tool the City may consider is the use of inclusionary zoning which would require that, in larger developments over some threshold of new units, a percentage of the total units to be built (often 10 to 15 percent) be set aside for rent or sale to residents under certain income levels. To achieve success, inclusionary zoning programs typically require a strong housing development market so that developers are not deterred by the regulations. However, many inclusionary zoning programs offer incentives to developers in return for the development of affordable units, such as the right to build at higher densities

or reduced parking requirements. Often an "in-lieu fee" collects revenue to fund other housing affordability initiatives from developers who opt not to set aside the requisite affordable units.

Goal 2: Address Blight and Encourage Property Maintenance

Both the Housing Needs Assessment completed during this planning process and the City's 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update identify addressing blight in neighborhoods and encouraging property maintenance as goals.

To address blight and property maintenance issues, the City should continue regular citywide code enforcement inspections. Inspections should be completed regularly in all neighborhoods, and as a response to complaints. Code enforcement officers may be assigned to specific zones of the city in order to become more familiar with blight issues in those zones and develop relationships with neighborhood residents. Code enforcement officers could also offer case management services to connect residents to resources, such as identifying owner occupants of properties not in compliance with code enforcement who are unable to afford to remediate properties and referring these individuals to organizations that can assist with completing needed repairs.

In addition to policies designed to promote property maintenance, the City may consider developing a land bank, which would allow it to acquire, hold, manage, and/or redevelop properties to return them productive use and meet community goals, such as increasing affordable housing.

Goal 3: Support Bainbridge Residents in Attaining Homeownership

Supporting residents in attaining homeownership is a vital goal for increasing housing quality and affordability in Bainbridge. Bainbridge's Comprehensive Plan Update (2020) notes that there is an imbalance between owner-occupied and rental homes in the city, leading to code enforcement issues. The City can support residents in attaining homeownership by partnering with the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program, which provides affordable mortgage financing for eligible homebuyers, and by using local funds to further support the City's housing priorities related to homeownership.

The City should prioritize implementing strategies to increase residents' awareness of and participation in the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Georgia Dream Homeownership Program. The program provides down payment loan options for first-time homebuyers, homebuyers who have not owned a home in the past three years, or residents purchasing homes in certain areas. Strategies to increase awareness of and participation in the Georgia Dream program may include adding a page about the program to the City's website, inviting DCA representatives to attend local community events to share information with residents or to meet with local nonprofits to provide information about the program, or posting informational flyers in community spaces such as libraries or community centers.

The City may also consider providing local resources to support these agencies' work providing housing counseling and foreclosure assistance. DCA also offers an online homebuyer education course, available at www.ehomeamerica.org/dca, for $50. The City could promote residents' awareness of and participation in the online homebuyer education class and/or provide funding for residents to access this course.

Bainbridge can also support homeownership by targeting local resources to strategic incentives that further the City's housing priorities and supplement the Georgia Dream program. Strategic initiatives could include additional homeownership assistance or rehab or facade improvement grants or loans to low-income first-time homebuyers purchasing homes in blighted or high-priority neighborhoods. Additional local assistance could also target specific groups of residents, such as seniors, residents with disabilities, or educators or other professional groups. Locally funded programs could also expand on the income ranges of the Georgia Dream program so that more residents would qualify for down payment assistance.

Goal 4: Repair and Increase Accessibility of Housing in Poor Condition

The Housing Needs Assessment completed during this planning process also noted a need for repairs in much of the city's older housing stock, issues of structural damage from storms such as Hurricane Michael, and a need for accessibility modifications for seniors and residents with disabilities.

To address the needs for home repair and accessibility modifications, the City could develop a repair program for residential properties. The program could use a revolving loan fund, potentially capitalized by local banks and lenders, to provide capital for home repair for homeowners earning 100% AMI or less and/or for small landlords. Additionally, as addressed under Goal 2, the City could refer households out of compliance to organizations that can assist with completing needed repairs.

Goal 5: Reduce Housing Cost Burden

An estimated 26% of Bainbridge residents were living below the federal poverty level in 2020. The City could partner with the Southwest Georgia Community Action Council to connect residents with the Council's resources and services or develop marketing materials to increase awareness of available programs. The Council's emergency services program provides assistance with payment of rent, mortgage, utility bills, deposits, food, and provision of shelter to prevent cut-offs, minimize malnutrition, and circumvent incidences of eviction and homelessness. Its Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides income-eligible households an annual financial benefit (up to $400) toward their home heating costs.

Goal 6: Increase Access to Housing and Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

The City of Bainbridge does not have any agencies providing emergency shelter for people who are homeless. In particular, there are no emergency or transitional housing options for men or men with children. The nearest emergency shelter options for men are located in Tallahassee, FL. The City can work with service providers such as Southwest Georgia Community Action Council to understand needs and provide support for the development of emergency and transitional housing in Bainbridge.

Goal 7: Increase Access to Housing Resources and Services

To communicate that housing affordability and quality are important to the City of Bainbridge and to inform residents and housing professionals about the availability of housing resources, Bainbridge should develop a page on the City's website dedicated to housing. This page could share information about the current

supply of affordable housing in the city and provide links to the Bainbridge Housing Authority. It could also provide information about first time homebuyer assistance available through the Georgia Dream down payment assistance program and other programs. Bainbridge could also consider hosting a homebuyer education event through Georgia DCA or other partners and advertising it on this page. The City may also consider supporting the re-establishment of a homebuyer education program through the Bainbridge Housing Authority.

Goal 8: Increase Collaboration in the Housing Sector

Developing interactive spaces for key organizations and agencies working in the housing sector is vital to implementing housing strategies, supporting increased awareness of resources available, and increasing collaboration. In spearheading these types of collaborative efforts, the City communicates to developers, funders, and other partners throughout the region that it is interested in housing development and committed to supporting new housing proposals. The City might consider developing a standing Housing Committee to coordinate activities among housing professionals in Bainbridge. The committee would increase capacity for implementing strategies included in this plan and in applying for funding.

Bainbridge may also consider supporting broader collaboration by becoming a Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) community, as recommended in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The GICH program provides its participants with annual training on housing, as well as technical assistance and networking opportunities. The City's participation in the GICH program also provides an advantage to prospective developers pursuing LIHTC applications.

Finally, the City should explore ways to partner with the Bainbridge Housing Authority to meet key housing goals. This might include holding a strategic meeting between the two parties and collaborating with a housing authority consultant or RAD consultant to explore next steps for the housing authority.

Table 16: Housing Goals, Metrics, Milestones, Timeframes, and Responsible Parties and Partners

Goal	Metrics, Milestones, and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners
Goal 1: Develop New Affordable Infill Housing	• Pursue and implement a funding source or combination of sources to support affordable housing development and retention as it/they become available, such as Georgia's non-entitlement CDBG program funds • Take actions to encourage and facilitate developers' LIHTC applications, including making connections with developers at LIHTC open houses or other events; letting developers know about available sites; and reviewing the state's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) each year to see how the city is scoring in terms of community factors, such as access to public transportation, grocery stores, and investments in public facilities and infrastructure • Explore the potential for partnering with Habitat for Humanity or other affordable housing developers working in neighboring jurisdictions to develop affordable single-family homes, particularly infill housing in neighborhoods in need of revitalization. Consider meeting with these developers' executive directors or board members to understand opportunities and barriers to working in Bainbridge to inform strategies for collaboration • Consider whether an inclusionary zoning policy may be effective in incentivizing the private market to produce affordable housing	City of Bainbridge LIHTC developers Habitat for Humanity and other affordable housing developers

Goal	Metrics, Milestones, and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners
Goal 2: Address Blight and Encourage Property Maintenance	• Continue regular citywide code enforcement inspections. Inspections should be completed regularly in all neighborhoods, and also as a response to complaints. Code enforcement officers may be assigned to specific zones of the city in order to become more familiar with blight issues in those zones and develop relationships with neighborhood residents • Offer case management services through code enforcement officers to connect residents to resources (e.g., identifying owner occupants of properties not in compliance with code enforcement who are unable to afford to remediate properties and referring these individuals to organizations that can assist with completing needed repairs) • Consider developing a land bank, which would allow the City to acquire, hold, manage, and/or redevelop properties to return them productive use and meet community goals, such as increasing affordable housing	City of Bainbridge Southwest Georgia Community Action Council City code enforcement Housing repair organizations Landlords
Goal 3: Support Bainbridge Residents in Attaining Homeownership	• Prioritize implementing strategies to increase residents' awareness of and participation in the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Georgia Dream Homeownership Program (e.g., adding a page about the program to the City's website, inviting DCA representatives to attend local community events to share information with residents or to meet with local nonprofits to provide information about the program, or posting informational flyers in community spaces such as libraries or community centers) • Target local resources to strategic incentives that further the City's housing priorities • Support the work of housing counseling agencies • Promote awareness of DCA's online homebuyer education course and/or provide funding for residents to access this course	City of Bainbridge Georgia Department of Community Affairs Housing counseling agencies

Goal	Metrics, Milestones, and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners
Goal 4: Repair and Increase Accessibility of Housing in Poor Condition	• Develop a repair program for residential properties. The program could use a revolving loan fund, potentially capitalized by local banks and lenders, to provide capital for home repair for homeowners earning 100% AMI or less and/or for small landlords • Identify owner occupants of properties not in compliance with code enforcement who are unable to afford to remediate properties and refer these individuals to organizations that can assist with completing needed repairs	City of Bainbridge Local banks and lenders Small landlords Home repair organizations Organizations that provide home modifications for people with disabilities City code enforcement
Goal 5: Reduce Housing Cost Burden	• Partner with the Southwest Georgia Community Action Council to connect residents with these services or develop marketing materials to increase awareness of available programs	City of Bainbridge Southwest Georgia Community Action Council
Goal 6: Increase Access to Housing and Services for People Experiencing Homelessness	• Work with service providers such as Southwest Georgia Community Action Council to understand needs and provide support for the development of emergency and transitional housing in Bainbridge	City of Bainbridge Homelessness service providers Southwest Georgia Community Action Council
Goal 7: Increase Access to Housing Resources and Services	• Develop a page on the City's website dedicated to housing to communicate that housing affordability and quality are important to the City of Bainbridge and to inform residents and housing professionals about the availability of housing resources. This page could share information about the current supply of affordable housing in the city and provide links to the Bainbridge Housing Authority. It could also provide information about first time homebuyer assistance available through the Georgia Dream down payment assistance program and other programs. • Consider hosting a homebuyer education event through Georgia DCA or other partners and advertising it on the City's housing webpage • Consider supporting the re-establishment of a homebuyer education program through the Bainbridge Housing Authority	City of Bainbridge Georgia Department of Community Affairs Fair housing organizations/ agencies Housing counseling agencies Bainbridge Housing Authority

Goal	Metrics, Milestones, and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners
Goal 8: Increase Collaboration in the Housing Sector	• Consider developing a standing Housing Committee that would meet regularly (or as often as needed) to coordinate activities among housing professionals in Bainbridge. The committee would increase capacity for implementing strategies included in this plan and in applying for funding • Consider supporting broader collaboration by becoming a Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) community, as recommended in the City's Comprehensive Plan • Explore ways to partner with the Bainbridge Housing Authority to meet key housing goals (e.g., development of a program that helps residents transition from public subsidized housing to affordable housing, a goal detailed in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update)	City of Bainbridge Housing professionals Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Bainbridge Housing Authority

High-Priority Action Items

Strengthen Partnerships with Existing Housing Organizations

Addressing housing needs in Bainbridge requires increased collaboration between the City and area housing organizations and professionals. One key partner in these efforts should be the Bainbridge Housing Authority. According to HUD's 2022 A Picture of Subsidized Housing dataset, the housing authority currently maintains 283 public housing units. The authority does not maintain a website or an email, which creates a barrier to accessing its affordable housing services. A thorough evaluation of the housing authority's status and determination of future goals should be conducted through a joint strategy meeting between Bainbridge City Council and the Bainbridge Housing Authority Board of Directors.

Jointly hiring a knowledgeable consultant can help the housing authority explore repositioning options, which involve the conversion of public housing units to Section 8 Project Based Rental Assistance or Project Based Vouchers. This conversion allows housing authorities greater flexibility to address local needs, rehabilitate and repair aging properties, stabilize project revenue, simplify program administration, and gain access to greater capital. The HUD website also offers repositioning guides for public housing agencies based on size, which may be a useful starting point.

Seeking partnerships with housing organizations that serve the region but do not have a physical presence in Bainbridge could help to focus existing housing expertise and resources on the city without the effort of standing up new local programs from scratch. If offered office space and/or in-kind administrative support, there may be regional organizations such as Habitat for Humanity affiliates, housing counseling agencies, or Community Housing Development Corporations, that could be incentivized to establish office hours in Bainbridge, even if just on a weekly or biweekly basis.

A consultation with staff from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs may also help the City identify available programs and resources. For example, the state's CDBG and HOME Program funds support housing and community improvement activities in rural communities on an ongoing basis, but other opportunities, such as those funded by a one-time federal HOME-ARP allocation, may be less familiar.

Additionally, participating in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) program, which offers communities a three-year program of collaboration and technical assistance related to housing and community development, may help facilitate this collaboration. According to the program website at www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/gich, participating communities:

- Attend two retreats a year with other participating communities
- Identify issues and needs, available resources, and potential obstacles
- Develop new ideas about meeting local housing needs and enhancing community development
- Learn about best practices and available resources and funding for housing and community development

- Produce a community housing plan with objectives and goals
- Begin implementation of the action plan

Strategic Code Enforcement

Code enforcement can be broadly defined as a process used by local governments to gain compliance with ordinances and regulations regarding health and housing codes, land use and zoning ordinances, sign standards, and uniform building and fire codes. To effectively address issues of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties, the city should implement this process in a way that is proactive and community-oriented.

Firstly, the City should review its current code to ensure that it meets community needs and goals for addressing blight. If code enforcement has historically not been effective, consider where revisions may be needed. The City should be prepared to issue fines against owners who fail to remediate code violations within the time period allotted by City code. Fines assessed should be sufficient to cover the City's cost to remediate the blight conditions itself and these fines and costs could be enforced as liens against the property. When documented and added to the property's tax bill, code enforcement fines may be collected when the property is sold or transferred. The City could opt to designate the proceeds of any fines paid regarding code enforcement of blight conditions for home repair programs or other efforts to remediate blight conditions or fund neighborhood improvements.

Regular inspections for code compliance should also be made in addition to inspections made as a response to complaints to ensure that neighborhood conditions do not worsen over time. This increased enforcement should be carried out in a manner that prevents the displacement of residents, and should be connected with a review of existing landlord-tenant laws in order to protect tenants from homelessness. This approach to code enforcement ensures that officials are able to respond to code violations in ways that provide support and improve neighborhood conditions in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner.

This may include assigning code enforcement officers to particular neighborhoods so that they can become familiar with conditions and develop strong connections with residents. In code violation cases where property owners cannot afford to make necessary repairs, code enforcement officers should offer case management services that connect these residents to nonprofit, civic, or faith-based organizations that may offer assistance in completing the necessary repairs.

Establish a Land Bank

In the United States, land banks are public or community-owned entities that are created to acquire, manage, maintain, and convert underutilized properties to productive use according to community goals. The special powers granted to land banks vary from state to state, but most land banks have the ability to:

- Acquire property in a cost-effective manner – this is most commonly done through tax foreclosures, but property can also be acquired through donations, direct market purchases, and local government transfers

- Extinguish liens and clear title
- Hold property tax-free
- Maintain and repair property
- Generate and collect revenue from delinquent property tax fees, property tax recapture, or other funding mechanisms
- Sell property to a responsible buyer and/or developer

Funding sources for land banks include foundation and government grants, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) grants, revenue from land sales, tax revenue from properties sold by the land bank, developer's fees, and rental income.

One of the nation's leading examples of land banks is the Fulton County/City of Atlanta Land Bank Authority (LBA), which was authorized by Georgia statute in 1990. In 2012, the Georgia Land Bank Act was passed as an update to the state's land banking policies, and included some of the following key changes:

- Multi-jurisdictional land banks formed between multiple counties, cities, or consolidated governments
- Intergovernmental contracts that outline board responsibilities, land bank powers, and a dissolution process
- Self-financing mechanism – optional 5 year/75% tax recapture program where land banks can authorize up to 75% of the newly generated, non-school district tax revenue on properties that are transferred to a new owner to be recaptured by the land bank for 5 years
- Requires that the number of land bank board members be an odd number between 5-11, and gives them increased statutory power and flexibility to establish their own local priorities

The city should consider establishing a land bank as a way to address a variety of goals outlined above, including the need for increased affordable housing and issues of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties.

Enhance Promotion of Housing Resources

Increased marketing and communication efforts can help connect more Bainbridge residents and housing professionals to housing resources that are already available. The City should develop a page on its website (www.bainbridgecity.com) dedicated to sharing information about housing. This might include listing information on the current supply of affordable housing in the city and information regarding housing resources such as:

- Georgia Dream down payment assistance program for first-time homebuyers
- Georgia Mortgage Assistance Program for homeowners experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Online homebuyer education course through eHomeAmerica
- Southwest Georgia Community Action Council
- Housing counseling services

- And other housing organizations and services identified under “Subsidized Housing Programs & Related Services” on pgs. 25-28

Additionally, this information should be distributed in a physical format at events, spaces of community gathering, and public facilities such as libraries, community centers, and parks to reach a wider audience.

Consider Adopting Inclusionary Zoning Provisions

An inclusionary zoning requirement stipulates that a percentage of the total units in a new development (often 10 to 15 percent) be set aside for rent or sale to residents under certain income levels. Many inclusionary zoning programs offer incentives to developers in return for the development of affordable units, such as the right to build at higher densities or reduced parking requirements. Often an “in-lieu fee” collects revenue to fund other housing affordability initiatives from developers who opt not to set aside the requisite affordable units. Successful inclusionary zoning programs take advantage of strong housing development markets. Where housing demand is high, inclusionary zoning requirements are less likely to deter developers. The program costs virtually nothing to the implementing local government yet generates a growing inventory of affordable housing units that are in scattered sites and integrated into market-rate developments.