

IV. HOUSING ELEMENT

A. Introduction

The purpose of a Housing Element is:

- To inventory the existing housing stock;
- To assess its adequacy and suitability for serving current and future population and economic development needs;
- To articulate community housing goals; and
- To formulate an implementation program for the adequate provision of housing for all sectors of the population.

The housing element consists of three sections: inventory, assessment, and implementation program. Through an inventory of existing housing conditions, an assessment of current and projected need is established. In performing this analysis housing type, age and condition, tenure, cost, affordability, and occupancy rates are investigated. Finally, goals and implementation strategies will be included for better managing local housing development for Spalding County.

B. Inventory

1. Existing Conditions

a. Housing Types

All housing type data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, which identifies housing type by the amount of units in the structure, rather than classifying type by single or multi-family. These numbers have been broken down in accordance with Georgia DCA standards, which dictate that structures with two or more units per structure are considered multi-family, while all single units are considered single-family.

Figure IV-1 includes the breakdown of housing units by type for the various jurisdictions within Spalding County. Within the county as a whole, 72% of all housing units are single-family detached homes. This rate is almost identical to the rates within the unincorporated county and the city of Griffin.

The extent of multi-family units and mobile homes, however, are quite different: 17% of the unincorporated county's housing stock is mobile homes, compared with just 1.6% within the city. Meanwhile, there are 40% more multi-family units in the city than the

Figure IV-1: Distribution of Housing Types

Housing Type	Spalding County		Unincorporated		Griffin		Orchard Hill		SunnySide	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Total Housing Units	23,001	100%	13,177	100%	9,669	100%	104	100%	51	100%
Occupied Units	21,519	94%	12,478	95%	8,905	92%	87	84%	49	96%
Single-Family	16,528	72%	9,267	71%	7,162	74%	48	46%	51	100%
Multi-Family	4,046	18%	1,698	13%	2,348	24%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Mobile Homes	2,427	11%	2,212	17%	159	1.6%	56	54%	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

unincorporated county (24% versus 13%).

The town of SunnySide is composed entirely of single-family homes. Orchard Hill contains a near 50-50 split between single-family homes and mobile homes and has no multi-family units.

Between 1980 and 2000, roughly 6,000 housing units were added to Spalding County, an increase of 22%. Total housing units increased 21.5% in the 1980s and slowed somewhat to 11.1% in the 1990s.

The most dramatic increase over the two decades was in the number of mobile homes added during the 1980s. As seen in **Figure IV-2**, most of this development occurred in the unincorporated county. During the most recent decade, however, there was an 8% decline (212 homes) in the number of mobile homes countywide due to a policy shift within the county discouraging new mobile homes within the county.

The decline in mobile home units was offset by the net addition of 2,233 single-family homes and 278 multi-family dwelling units during the 1990s. During the 1990s, single-family homes experienced the fastest rate of change while the other two classes saw declines in their growth rates.¹

Figure IV-2: Trends in Housing Types in Spalding County

Housing Type	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980-1990	Change 1990-2000
Total Housing Units	17,037	20,702	23,001	21.5%	11.1%
Occupied Units	16,177	19,426	21,519	28.0%	3.9%
Single-Family	12,809	14,295	16,528	11.6%	15.6%
Multi-Family	2,999	3,768	4,046	25.6%	7.4%
Mobile Homes	1,218	2,639	2,427	116.7%	-8.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

b. Age and Condition

Figure IV-3 surveys the age and condition of housing units within Spalding County over the last 20 years. Two metrics to measure age and condition of housing areas are included here: the number of units built prior to 1939 and the number of units without plumbing facilities. These two measures are common indicators of substandard housing.²

The county does have a higher incidence of structures built before 1939 than either the region or the state. In 2000, 8% of the county's housing units were of that age compared with 6% across the state. There was a sharp decline in older structures in the 1980s but very few additional pre-1939 structures have been lost since 1990.

¹ There are no seasonal housing units in Spalding County.

² While the number of structures built before 1939 is an indicator of substandard housing in an area, it is important to bear in mind the historical and cultural importance of many of these structures.

Figure IV-3: Age and Condition of Housing, 1980-2000

	Spalding			Atlanta MSA			Georgia		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Units Built Before 1939	3,380	1,885	1,890	75,467	66,625	66,937	296,662	212,294	192,972
Percent of Total Built Before 1939	20%	9%	8%	10%	6%	4%	15%	8%	6%
Median Year Structure Built	N/A	1971	1974	N/A	1975	1982	N/A	1973	1980
Units Lacking Plumbing Facilities	522	128	201	11,551	5,844	6,751	77,077	28,462	17,117
Percent Lacking Plumbing Facilities	3.1%	0.6%	0.9%	1.5%	0.5%	0.4%	3.8%	1.1%	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The share of houses in Spalding County without plumbing facilities was slightly behind that of the region but substantially better than the state as a whole. In 2000 there were still 201 housing units without plumbing facilities, up slightly from 1990. Since the residents of these units are potentially living in unhealthy conditions, the county should consider actions to eliminate units without plumbing facilities. During a series of public involvement sessions held for the development of the plan, residents agreed that the highest concentrations of poor quality housing are in the city of Griffin. Within the county, where housing is generally newer, residents were primarily concerned with the condition of mobile homes. The unincorporated county is home to 91% of the mobile homes countywide and Orchard Hill contains another 2%. The most problematic areas are older mobile home parks where medium to high-density concentrations of mobile homes house concomitant levels of poverty.

Steps need to be taken to address the declining conditions of some of the county’s mobile home parks.

c. Tenure, Occupancy and Cost

This section describes the Spalding County housing in terms of tenure, occupancy and cost. **Figure IV-4** compares the county to the region and state. **Figure IV-5** compares the county to neighboring counties to the north and west, and **Figure IV-6** examines the cost-burden of housing within the county.

Housing tenure refers to the percentage of units that are in rental or ownership status. In Spalding County, 63% of households are owner occupied and 37% are renter occupied, giving the county a substantially lower incidence of owner occupancy than either the region or the state. The Spalding County rate is also lower than most

Figure IV-4: Tenure and Cost of Housing

	Spalding County			Atlanta MSA			Georgia		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
% Occupied Units	95.0%	93.8%	93.6%	93.5%	90.0%	94.7%	92.3%	89.7%	91.6%
Vacancy Rate	5.0%	6.2%	6.4%	6.5%	10.0%	5.3%	7.7%	10.3%	8.4%
% Owner Units	63.9%	61.4%	62.8%	61.4%	62.3%	66.4%	65.0%	64.9%	67.5%
Median Value	\$32,500	\$56,900	\$86,600	\$47,700	\$89,300	\$135,300	\$36,900	\$70,700	\$111,200
% Renter Units	36.1%	38.6%	37.2%	38.6%	37.7%	33.6%	35.0%	35.1%	32.5%
Median Monthly Rent	\$172	\$365	\$537	\$255	\$529	\$746	\$211	\$433	\$613

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Figure IV-5: Tenure, Cost and Size of Area Counties

	% Owner-Occupied	Median Owner-Occupied Home Value	Median Number of Rooms
Georgia	68%	\$111,200	5.5
Spalding County	63%	\$86,600	5.3
Clayton County	61%	\$92,700	5.4
Coweta County	78%	\$121,700	5.9
Henry County	85%	\$122,400	6.0
Fayette County	86%	\$171,500	7.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

neighboring counties included in **Figure IV-5** with the exception being Clayton County. Compared with the county as a whole, the unincorporated county has a substantially higher rate of ownership. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the county’s renters live within the city of Griffin, which has an ownership rate of 43%. By comparison, the unincorporated county has an ownership rate of 70%.

Over the last three years, the ownership rate within the county as a whole has remained fairly stable, declining slightly during the 1980s and rising by 1.4% during the 1990s. The Atlanta MSA and the state have both seen gradual increases in their ownership rates during the past two decades: 5% for the region and 2.5% for the state.

Vacancy rates in Spalding County remained stable throughout the past two decades compared to the region and state. Also, they

are generally quite low when compared to the state and region. The county’s rate has consistently remained below the state rate for the past two decades. When the larger geographies experienced vacancy rates over 10%, Spalding County’s stayed at 6.2%. These high occupancy rates are an asset for Spalding County.

Within the Atlanta region and the state, Spalding County is a comparably affordable place to live. Average home values and average rents are both substantially below those of the region and state. As indicated in **Figure IV-5**, Spalding County is more affordable than any of its neighbors to the north and west.

Figure IV-6 compiles the number of households within the county whose housing costs are a burden. Households paying between 30% and 49% of their income are considered “cost-burdened” and households

Figure IV-6: Cost Burden of Housing in Spalding County

	Owner		Renter	
	Households	% of Total	Households	% of Total
Households Paying >30% of Income on Housing: Cost-Burdened	1,715	8.8%	1,620	8.3%
Households Paying >50% of Income on Housing: Severely Cost-Burdened	553	2.8%	1,438	7.4%

Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Study, 1990

paying over 50% are “severely cost-burdened.” Just 8.8% are considered cost-burdened and 2.8% severely cost-burdened. While this includes over 2,200 households, it is still relatively low. In the Atlanta MSA by comparison, 22% of households were spending over 30% of their income on housing compared with 12% in Spalding County. While efforts to reduce the cost burden of housing could be considered, this is not among the county’s most pressing problems. Based on a series of public involvement sessions, county residents feel that attracting higher wage employment would be a better strategy for reducing the cost burden rather than increasing the stock of affordable housing. By all conventional measures, Spalding County is already an affordable place to live and maintaining affordability is an important goal for many residents.

Also during public involvement sessions, residents stated they would like to see greater diversity in the new construction within the county. They feel that most new units are small, affordable starter homes and there is a dearth of medium to expensive housing units, both larger in size and higher in quality. As seen in **Figure IV-5**, Spalding County has the smallest number of rooms per housing unit when compared to its neighbors and the state, substantiating public perception. The Implementation Strategy at the end of this element includes a number of strategies aimed at achieving the goal of more diverse new construction.

d. Housing and Community Characteristics

This section of the housing element addresses the relationship between the existing housing stock and two characteristics of the existing population and workforce: commuting patterns and special needs. These two aspects of the community,

when compared with existing housing stock, are good measures of how well the housing stock meets the residents’ needs.

i. Commuting Patterns

Figure IV-7 summarizes the changes in commuting patterns between 1990 and 2000. As seen in the Economic Development Element, the total number of jobs in Spalding County increased from 23,672 in 1990 to 28,931 in 2000. As the county added just fewer than 4,000 new residents, job growth actually exceeded population growth during the 1990s.

Despite this fact, the percentage of employed residents commuting to employment in other counties actually increased from 36.7% to 44.6%. While there are many dimensions to this apparent contradiction, new construction is a probable contributing factor. During public involvement sessions, many residents cited a disconnect between the types of jobs the county is attracting and the types of new construction. Namely, the quality, size and amenities of new residential developments are insufficient to entice new employees and their families to live in Spalding County.

Therefore, there appears to be a latent demand for increasing diversity of new residential developments in terms of quality, size and neighborhood amenities. In order to increase diversity, however, other barriers must be eliminated such as the poor performance of the public school system and infrastructural limitations.

ii. Special Needs

A variety of populations within Spalding County have special housing needs. **Figure IV-8** includes an inventory of some disabilities accounted for by the Census Bureau. Many of these disabilities simply require modifications to existing residences, such as replacing steps with ramps and improving wheelchair accessibility. Others, such as individuals with extreme mental disabilities, require long-term residential care. Spalding County has an array of residential services working within the county. There are shelters for victims of domestic violence and their families, rehabilitation centers for individuals recovering from drug addiction or mental illness; additional residential facilities for people with developmental disabilities; and transitional housing for homeless families

and individuals. A suite of agencies provide subsidized or affordable housing for older adults, and there is a hospice residence for patients with late stage cancer and other terminal diseases.

2. Housing Forecasts

The housing forecasts for Spalding County are discussed in detail within the Population Element, which includes a high, middle and low projection scenario. **Figure IV-9** summarizes the housing projections based on the middle projection.

Household size is not expected to decline much in the coming decades. As seen earlier in the element, household size has been dropping both locally and nationally over the past several decades. This trend is expected to taper off leaving household size around 2.6 from 2005 to 2025.

Figure IV-7: Place of Work for Spalding County Residents

	1990		2000	
	Number of Workers	Percentage of Workers	Number of Workers	Percentage of Workers
Worked in Spalding County	15,541	63.3%	13,715	55.4%
Worked Outside Spalding County	9,006	36.7%	11,060	44.6%
Worked Outside of Georgia	165	0.7%	156	0.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Figure IV-8: Age By Type of Disability

Age Group	Total Disabilities Tallied	Sensory Disability	Physical Disability	Mental Disability	Self-Care Disability	Go-Outside Home Disability	Employment Disability
5-15 Years	809	128	49	517	115	N/A	N/A
16-64 Years	16,883	1,085	3,265	1,706	1,049	3,720	6,058
65 and Over	6,758	1,147	2,277	873	800	1,661	N/A
Total	24,450	2,360	5,591	3,096	1,964	5,381	6,058

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Figure IV-9: Projected Average Household Size, Total Households, and Housing Unit Breakdown for the Middle Projection

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Household Size	2.65	2.62	2.59	2.60	2.61	2.63
Total Households						
Spalding County	21,519	25,076	27,104	28,846	30,344	31,787
Unincorporated County	12,501	15,960	17,619	19,136	20,411	21,670
Griffin	8,876	9,116	9,485	9,710	9,933	10,117
Total Housing Units (Spalding County)	23,001	26,677	28,834	30,687	32,281	33,816
Detached	18,955	22,332	24,168	25,675	26,898	28,035
Attached	4,046	4,345	4,666	5,012	5,383	5,781

Source: Water Supply Report; Woods and Poole Economics, Inc.; Jordan Jones and Goulding

In terms of total households, the middle projection predicts a 6,711 household increase over the next twenty years. The vast majority of this growth (85%) is expected in the unincorporated county. Approximately 2,400 new housing units have already been permitted in two large developments in the northeastern portion of the county: Heron’s Bay and Spring Lake.

3. Key Findings

Major points found in conducting the inventory include:

- Within the county as a whole, 72% of all housing units are single-family detached homes.
- In 2000, 17% of the unincorporated county’s housing stock was mobile homes, compared with just 1.6% within the city. There are 40% more multi-family units in the city than the unincorporated county (24% versus 13%).
- In 2000, 63% of households were owner occupied and 37% were renter occupied - a substantially lower incidence of owner occupancy than either the region or the state.
- Vacancy rates remained stable for the past two decades. Spalding County’s rates are quite low when compared to the region and the state.
- 2,200 (9%) Spalding County households devote more than 30% of household income to housing. About 500 households devote more than 50% of their income to housing. Compared with the Atlanta region, Spalding County’s housing is very affordable.
- The percentage of employed residents commuting to employment in other counties increased from 37% in 1990 to 45% in 2000.

C. Assessment of Current and Future Needs

The housing in Spalding County is generally well suited to the needs of current residents. A small number of areas within the unincorporated county were identified as areas of distress and in need of assistance. While small, these areas include the older manufactured home parks, East Griffin, and portions of North Griffin.

Residents of the county identified the need to provide a balanced range of housing options. Presently, a large share of the housing being constructed is starter and workforce housing. The county needs to attract more housing for middle and upper income households and families with children.

At the same time, residents do not want to see property values and taxes appreciate to the point where current residents are “priced out” of their homes. Taxes should be kept low and appreciation should be moderate.

The housing forecasts in the previous section project the unincorporated county will need approximately 8,200 new housing units by 2020. To accommodate these new residents, appropriate infrastructure and community facilities need to be emplaced. Public-private partnerships for funding infrastructure improvements need to be pursued to shift some of the cost burden to incoming, rather than existing, residents.

The county needs to develop mechanisms to ensure these new housing units fulfill the county’s vision for its future and meet the objectives established in the Land Use Plan. This includes locating most new housing units within the new Village Nodes. It also includes providing amenities and open space within new subdivisions as well as protecting sensitive environmental areas.

D. Housing Goals

1. Improve the overall quality of housing within Spalding County and ensure that new development meets high quality standards.
2. Create a balance of housing choices within the county.
3. Keep housing within Spalding County affordable, which includes keeping purchase prices and property taxes low.
4. Housing in Spalding County should accommodate residents at all stages of their lives.
5. Housing in Spalding County should meet the needs of those who work in the county.
6. New housing should be clustered around new Village Nodes.
7. New housing should not degrade the environment.

E. Implementation Program

Goal #1: Improve the overall quality of housing within Spalding County and ensure that new development meets high quality standards.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Update residential zoning ordinances to include quality standards in each district.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004 – 2005
Create and enforce a property maintenance code.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004 – 2005

Goal #2: Create a balance of housing choices within the county.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Strengthen the role of the Comprehensive Plan by requiring that all rezoning actions be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004
Create a TND (traditional neighborhood design) zoning district, which requires a mixture of housing types, sizes and densities with high quality standards. Allow TND developments near Village Nodes and Commercial Centers.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004 – 2005

Goal #3: Keep housing within Spalding County affordable, which includes keeping purchase prices and property taxes low.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Fully utilize existing infrastructure through the promotion of redevelopment and infill housing.	Spalding County	2004 – 2020

Goal #4: Housing in Spalding County should accommodate residents at all stages of their lives.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Create a TND (traditional neighborhood design) zoning district, which requires a mixture of housing types, sizes and densities with high quality standards. Allow TND developments near Village Nodes and Commercial Centers.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004 – 2005
Update residential zoning ordinances to include quality standards in each district and encourage housing developments targeted at the Baby Boomer generation.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004 – 2005

Goal #5: Housing in Spalding County should meet the needs of those who work in the county.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Encourage a stronger balance between local jobs and housing through the promotion of a nodal development pattern.	Spalding County	2004
Create quality and design standards for multifamily and small-lot single-family districts.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004

Goal #6: New housing should be clustered around new Village Nodes.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Strengthen the role of the Comprehensive Plan by requiring that all rezoning actions be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004

Goal #7: New housing should not degrade the environment.

Action Item	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Consider the adoption of wider minimum stream buffer requirements (recommend 75 or 100 feet).	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004
Amend subdivision regulations to improve the conservation subdivision option by including incentives and guidelines for developers. Coordinate with the development of a Greenway Master Plan	Spalding County Community Development Department	2004
Create a Greenway Master Plan as part of a new Recreation Master Plan. The Greenway Master Plan should include recommendations on linking the open space in conservation subdivisions together.	Spalding County Parks & Recreation Department	2004 – 2005