

City of St. Marys Master Plan

May 2017

CITY OF ST. MARYS GEORGIA

ONE St. Marys

ONE VISION

Special Acknowledgments

A special acknowledgement for members of the Master Plan Steering Committee who dedicated their time, expertise and resources for this project. Their participation in the planning process, data gathering exercises and document review contributed significantly to the preparation of this Master Plan document. The Master Plan Steering Committee Membership included the following individuals:

Michael J. Rich, Esq., Chair (St. Marys Planning Commission)
Joseph Antao, Vice-Chair
William DeLoughy
Tanya Glazebrook
Joseph C. Holler, Ed. D.
Steve L. Howard* (Camden County Executive)
Kenneth Lyons
Fred Mercier
Elaine Powierski (St. Marys City Council)
Jon Preble
Lee Walker
***Eric Landon (Proxy for Mr. Howard)**

This plan was made possible through a grant from the Department of Defense. This grant allowed for implementation of the Camden County Joint Land Use Study, partially through development and implementation of this planning effort.

A special thanks to Elaine Powierski for her photographs of St. Marys, which are featured prominently throughout this plan.

The Team of Ecological Planning Group, LLC, RS&H, Inc. and Cooper Consulting, Inc. assisted the City of St. Marys and the Master Plan Steering Committee with preparation of this report. A special acknowledgment is noted for Jeffrey S. Adams, PhD, the Community Development Director for the City of St. Marys who provided significant support and guidance to both the Master Plan Steering Committee and the City's consultants.

ECOLOGICAL PLANNING GROUP
35 Abercorn Street, Suite 210
Savannah, Georgia 31401
www.ecologicalplanning.net
(912) 656-1316

RS&H
7 E. Congress Street, Suite 402 E
Savannah, Georgia 31401
Phone: (912) 236-3540
Fax: (912) 236-6197

3839 McKinney Avenue, Suite 155-235
Dallas, TX 75204
Phone: (214) 228-0211
Email: ccconniecooper@cs.com

Table of Contents

Executive Summary iv

1 Introduction 1

Planning Scope 1

2 Setting the Stage 3

History of St. Marys 3

People of St. Marys 4

Plan Coordination 8

3 Community Engagement 10

Public Involvement Strategies 10

4 St. Marys Strategic Vision 15

Vision Statement 15

Values 15

Mission Statement 16

Goals & Policies 16

Economic Prosperity 16

Community Health 17

5 Land Use 21

Existing Land Use 21

Future Development Strategy 24

Inland Residential/Midtown Neighborhood 33

Interstate Access Corridors 35

Marshside Residential 37

Midtown Renaissance 39

Mixed Use Medical 40

Multi-Use Development 41

SUBASE Kings Bay Transition Zone 46

Zoning Recommendations 47

6 Needs and Opportunities 50

Economic Development 50

Land Use 53

Housing 54

Natural Historic and Cultural Resources 54

City Facilities, Services and Funding 56

Resiliency 56

Military Relationship 58
Community Health 59
Technology 60
Education 60
Transportation 61
Master Plan Implementation 64
7 Community Work Program 66

List of Figures

Figure 1: Population Projections for St. Marys and Camden County 4
Figure 2: Counties where St. Marys' Population is Employed. 6
Figure 3: Changes in Monthly Gross Rental Costs in St. Marys 7
Figure 4: Access to Heathy Foods 7
Figure 5 Land Use Breakdown within St. Marys 21
Figure 6: Existing Land Use within the St. Marys 23
Figure 7: Community Character Areas 25
Figure 8: Rendering of Aesthetic Improvements to Osborn Street. 52
Figure 9: Rendering of Beautification and Signage Improvements at St. Marys Road and Hwy 40 Intersection. 63

List of Tables

Table 1: Age Composition in St. Marys 5
Table 2: Land Use Comparison 22
Table 3: Community Work Program 67

Executive Summary

The City of St. Marys, in Camden County, Georgia, is situated along the St. Marys River, which marks the boundary between Georgia and Florida. St. Marys was originally founded as a Spanish colony in the mid-16th century and served as a seaport during the pre and post-colonial days. The City now looks to redefine its character and future after losing its major industrial employer in 2002 and seeing its housing boom deflate in the great recession of 2008. St. Marys seeks to retain its small-town charm while fostering a vibrant economy that embraces technology, clean industry, tourism, and service-oriented business.

St. Marys was once the home of the Gilman Paper Company that manufactured paper products for consumer and industrial markets. It is now the home of the U.S. Naval Base Kings Bay (SUBASE Kings Bay), as well as the gateway to Cumberland Island National Seashore. It has a historic district as well as many newly-built homes fronting on creeks and rivers that lead to the St. Marys River and the Intracoastal Waterway. The City of St. Marys has struggled to fill the void left by the closing of the paper mill despite efforts by community, civic and business leaders to do so over the last ten years.

In preparation for the forthcoming update to the Camden County Joint Comprehensive Plan, the Mayor and City Council decided that it was time to create a City-specific Master Plan. In 2015, the City appointed a Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and ordered the MPSC and the City's consultants to present a new Master Plan along with a new zoning code before June 30, 2017. This Master Plan is the culmination of that effort.

During its first six months of work, the MPSC engaged in significant community outreach. The MPSC received over 600 responses to its online survey, met with almost 80 community leaders for in-depth interviews, conducted focus groups with citizens along with several workshops related to community character areas and transportation, and gave presentations to community groups. It also conducted a traffic study to identify needed changes to the transportation network to safely accommodate the current populations as well as projected growth.

During the second six months of work, the MPSC concentrated on evaluating research data and interview notes taken during the first six months as well as looking at transportation issues with the consultant tasked with conducting that study. There were several publicly attended mapping sessions and those efforts produced a new character map for the City. A MPSC sub-committee created a special report related to bicycle, walking, golf cart and waterway trails connected to the City.

The public outreach yielded consistent results. Of those people who answered the survey, 45% had lived in St. Marys for more than ten years. While just over 70% of those responding was over the age of fifty, residents between 18 and 50 answered the survey as well. Irrespective of age, gender, race or background, there was general agreement about the most important priorities for the City.

- ⇒ St. Marys should improve the downtown area and its waterfront to include more restaurants, docks and shopping.
- ⇒ St. Marys should foster development of the old Gillman Paper Company Mill Site.
- ⇒ St. Marys should support living-wage employment opportunities.

⇒ St. Marys needs to keep its small-town ambiance.

⇒ St. Marys needs more cultural, recreational and entertainment activities.

Other priorities and goals identified through the community engagement process included: streamlining city processes for permits and licenses to foster a more business-friendly community; improving store fronts, creating a better tourist experience, developing the Gateway property, providing for pedestrian walkways, bicycle lanes and golf cart lanes, expanding public transportation options for those without automobiles, preparing for sea level rise and conserving natural resources

From those findings and the MPSC's SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, the MPSC was able to focus on a vision and a set of values around which to construct a new Master Plan. The vision statement below and its supporting values are fully set forth in Chapter 1 of the Master Plan.

One St. Marys. One Vision. One Future.

We are a vibrant, welcoming and friendly coastal community where our residents play an essential role in our success;

We cherish our environment, our heritage and our role as the Gateway to Cumberland Island National Park;

We proudly support our nation's security by maintaining a strong relationship with the military forces who are our neighbors;

We believe that all residents should have access to a safe neighborhood, job opportunities, quality education, and community services;

We envision a resilient community with a thriving and diverse economy, mobility, and recreational and cultural activities for all citizens;

We are One St. Marys.

With a vision, a set of values and a firm set of goals and principles in place, the MPSC developed a ten-year Community Work Program (CWP) for sound economic expansion, infrastructure improvements and aesthetic changes that will revitalize the downtown and the business corridor from midtown to downtown and result in a more attractive, livable and prosperous community.

By design, the CWP proposes an ambitious schedule of projects over the next ten years. The most important goals for the first three years of the plan are twofold: 1) improve city processes to handle increased business activity and possible residential growth, and 2) focus on economic development. It is imperative that significant progress be realized in developing the mill and the airport sites as well as strengthening the corridor from midtown to downtown as a precursor to many of the longer-term goals in the CWP. Annexation of the unincorporated islands in the City and the area west of the City to Exit 1 on I-95 should be seriously pursued to guide future development and to improve the City's financial bottom-line and customer experience as it relates to City services.

The transportation and mobility needs of many of the City's residents are unfulfilled by the current arrangement with Coastal Regional Coaches (CRC). Many residents who do not have private automobiles need regular public transit service for medical, employment and shopping needs. The Master Plan suggests that the City undertake an immediate review of how it can individually or in cooperation with Kingsland, Woodbine and Camden County address transportation mobility by CRC or through other public or public/private opportunities to alleviate the pressing need for reliable and affordable scheduled transportation services.

In the long term, St. Marys' most significant feature is its downtown waterfront area and its ability to provide access to the Atlantic Ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway and Cumberland Island National Seashore. Cumberland Island receives over 60,000 visitors each year, virtually all of whom use the ferry service from the dock in downtown St. Marys. Leveraging these assets, the CWP identifies action items that can be implemented by the City of St. Marys to offer significant opportunities for visitors and recreational boaters along the east coast. The Master Plan seeks to expand the opportunities for businesses and hospitality vendors to serve the maritime, camping and recreational interests of those who visit St. Marys. The work done by the MPSC on reviewing bicycle and hiking trails and developing guidelines for road sharing and safe streets dovetails with the long-term opportunity to develop the waterfront to allow safe and memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike.

St. Marys offers a warm and inviting ambiance to visitors and residents alike. With sixty percent of its residents under the age of forty, St. Marys provides an educated and employer-ready pool of talent. The City is fortunate to benefit from one of the best school systems in the country and is looking forward to the permanent establishment of a technical college in the adjacent City of Kingsland. This Master Plan comes at a pivotal moment for the City where the opportunity to expand the business and commercial base coincides with a market for residential revitalization and growth. As noted in the Values statement in this Master Plan, we value our people and our small-town atmosphere, which, more than anything else, makes St. Marys a perfect place to live and work.

1 Introduction

The City of St. Mary has completed this strategic Master Plan to plot the course for the City to fully realize its potential as a vibrant coastal community. The City is uniquely positioned as a historic, waterfront community that hosts the gateway to Cumberland Island, one of the last remaining largely-undeveloped and scenic barrier islands on the eastern seaboard.

This Master Plan highlights what is special about St. Marys, while simultaneously encouraging the kind of economic revitalization that will improve the quality of life for the City's residents and improve the City's capacity to enhance the tourism economy.

This Master Plan is supplemented by several addenda including a Data Assessment, which includes an analysis of Census and other demographic information, a Multi-Mobility Transportation Study, a Public Participation Program Report, and a Report on the Committee System.

Planning Scope

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) administers the rules and regulations for Comprehensive Planning in the State of Georgia. These rules provide local governments a framework for the development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans. Effective local planning is essential to the State of Georgia's overall economic prosperity.



Pergola at St. Marys Howard Gilman Memorial Waterfront Park

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A) Section 50-8-1 established authority for the DCA to define minimum standards and procedures for developing comprehensive plans for local governments in the State of Georgia. These standards and procedures are designed to help the City prepare a plan that identifies immediate needs within the community and looks for opportunities to allow the City to achieve its vision for the future. An adopted Comprehensive Plan allows the City to maintain its "qualified local government status," which makes the City eligible for selected state funding and permitting programs.

In preparing this Master Plan, the City of St. Marys has addressed and exceeded the minimum planning elements required by DCA and will seek to include the Community Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and the Community Work Program in the Camden County Comprehensive Plan. In addition, a multi-mobility transportation study and a robust community engagement program were conducted as part of this overall effort, and are summarized in addenda to this Master Plan. Lastly, the City elected to begin an update of the Zoning Ordinance through this process,

with both the Master Plan and zoning ordinance update processes running parallel and informing each other.

2 Setting the Stage

History of St. Marys



History Walk in downtown St. Marys

The City of St. Marys is a small, coastal city situated near the mouth of the St. Marys River in the southeast corner of Georgia in Camden County, just north of the Florida state line. This area was originally a Timucuan Indian Village. St. Marys' first European occupants were the Spanish in 1566, one year after the founding of St. Augustine. St. Marys, formally chartered in 1787, was initially a maritime hub. Until 1821, and the acquisition of East Florida by the United States, St. Marys also served as an international border town. The original grid pattern plan of the town was laid out in 1788 and encompasses what is now the St. Marys' Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Industrial development started after the Civil War, and lumber and fishing became the main sources of income for the City. The Gilman Paper Company mill (later the Durango-Georgia Paper Company), commonly and hereafter referred to as the "Mill Site", was built in 1941, and became the largest employer within St. Marys until it was closed due to bankruptcy in 2002. SUBASE Kings Bay is also a large employer within the area, began operations as an Army installation in 1958, and currently serves as the U.S. Atlantic Fleet's home port for U.S. Navy Fleet ballistic missile nuclear submarines armed with Trident missile nuclear weapons.

The City of St. Marys is 24.9 square miles or 16,000 acres in area and contains a variety of different natural resources. Approximately 6,000 acres are wetlands, of which most is coastal marsh. St. Marys is the largest incorporated municipality in Camden County. In 2015, St. Marys' population (17,968) was just over one-third of the County's population (52,102). The next largest jurisdiction in the county is Kingsland at 16,487, followed by unincorporated Camden County at 14,457. In recent years, St. Marys has experienced a steady population growth due to its to excellent school system, presence of SUBASE Kings Bay, low crime, mild weather, accessibility to I-95, and proximity to Jacksonville.

St. Marys offers numerous recreational activities for residents and visitors including a working waterfront, parks, public docks, boat ramps, kayak launch areas, and an aquatic center. The Howard Gilman Memorial Waterfront Park serves as the center for fishing tournaments, concerts, 4th of July Celebration, and a variety of sponsored events. The Rookery, located within the Mill Site, is the second largest Wood Stork rookery in Georgia and provides a unique wildlife viewing

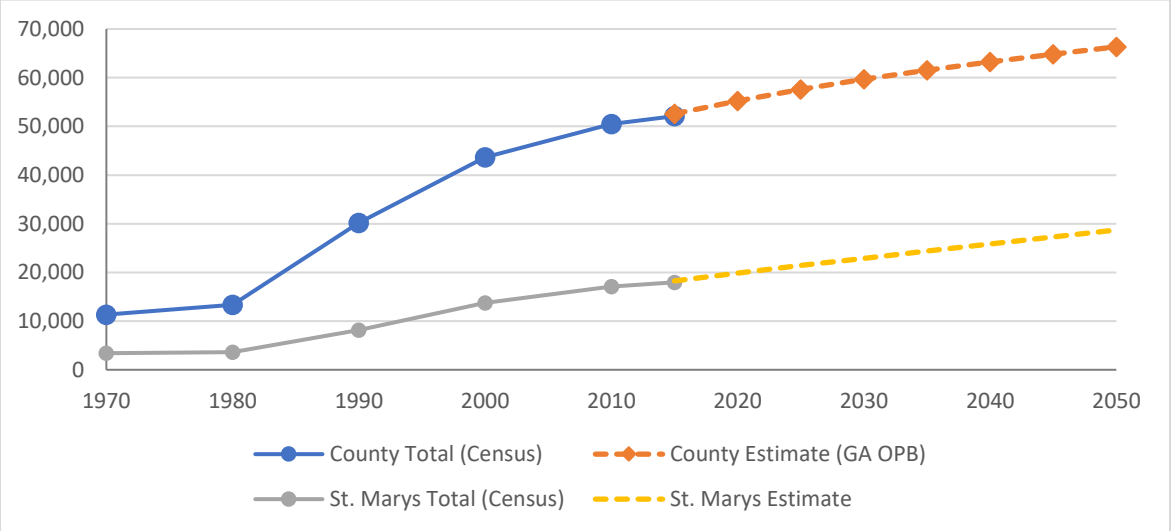
opportunity. Nearby amenities include: Crooked River State Park and Cumberland Island National Seashore. Crooked River State Park, a Georgia State Park touching St. Marys' northern border, offers camping, swimming, fishing, picnicking, hiking, kayaking, public boat landing and cabins. Cumberland Island National Seashore, operated by the National Park Service, has 19,000 acres of uplands, 18 miles of undeveloped beaches, and 50 miles of hiking trails. Because most visitors access the island by ferry from St. Marys, St. Marys is also known as the "Gateway to the Cumberland Island."

People of St. Marys

In support of this Master Plan, a demographic study was performed to identify trends in population, housing, employment, transportation and community health. The full demographic study, which is summarized here, can be found in the Data Assessment Addendum to this Master Plan.

St. Marys experienced population growth from 2000 to 2010, as it rose from 13,761 to 17,121. While the growth rate has slowed since 2010, the population continued to climb to 17,968 by 2015. Based on county population projections by the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB), St. Marys could expect to have another 5,000 to 11,000 residents by 2050. This projected growth presents a number of issues related to city services, infrastructure, impacts to community resources, and overall quality of life that must be considered in future planning.

Figure 1: Population Projections for St. Marys and Camden County



In addition to population growth, the City is also experiencing a shift in the average age of the population due to an influx of retirement-age people. With the shift in age composition, it is important to consider the needs for a growing retiree community. However, a healthy community requires a range of age groups. Therefore, future planning should also consider jobs and amenities to attract and retain more young families.

Further underscoring this shift in age demographics is the increase in social security and other retirement income for St. Marys as compared with the county and state. In 2014, St. Marys had approximately $2,000 more social security and $10,000 more "other" retirement income per

household than Camden County and the State. From 2000 to 2014, the fraction of households drawing social security in St. Marys has increased rather dramatically from about 15% to 25%.

Table 1: Age Composition in St. Marys

Age Grouping	St. Marys			Camden County		
	2000 (Census)	2010 (Census)	2014 (Estimate)	2000 (Census)	2010 (Census)	2014 (Estimate)
Under 18 years	33.4%	28.0%	26.6%	31.7%	27.0%	26.0%
18 years and over	66.6%	72.0%	73.4%	68.3%	73.0%	74.0%
21 years and over	62.6%	67.6%	69.0%	63.1%	67.8%	69.7%
62 years and over	6.6%	13.1%	14.4%	6.6%	11.8%	13.0%
65 years and over	5.2%	10.0%	11.3%	5.2%	9.0%	10.1%

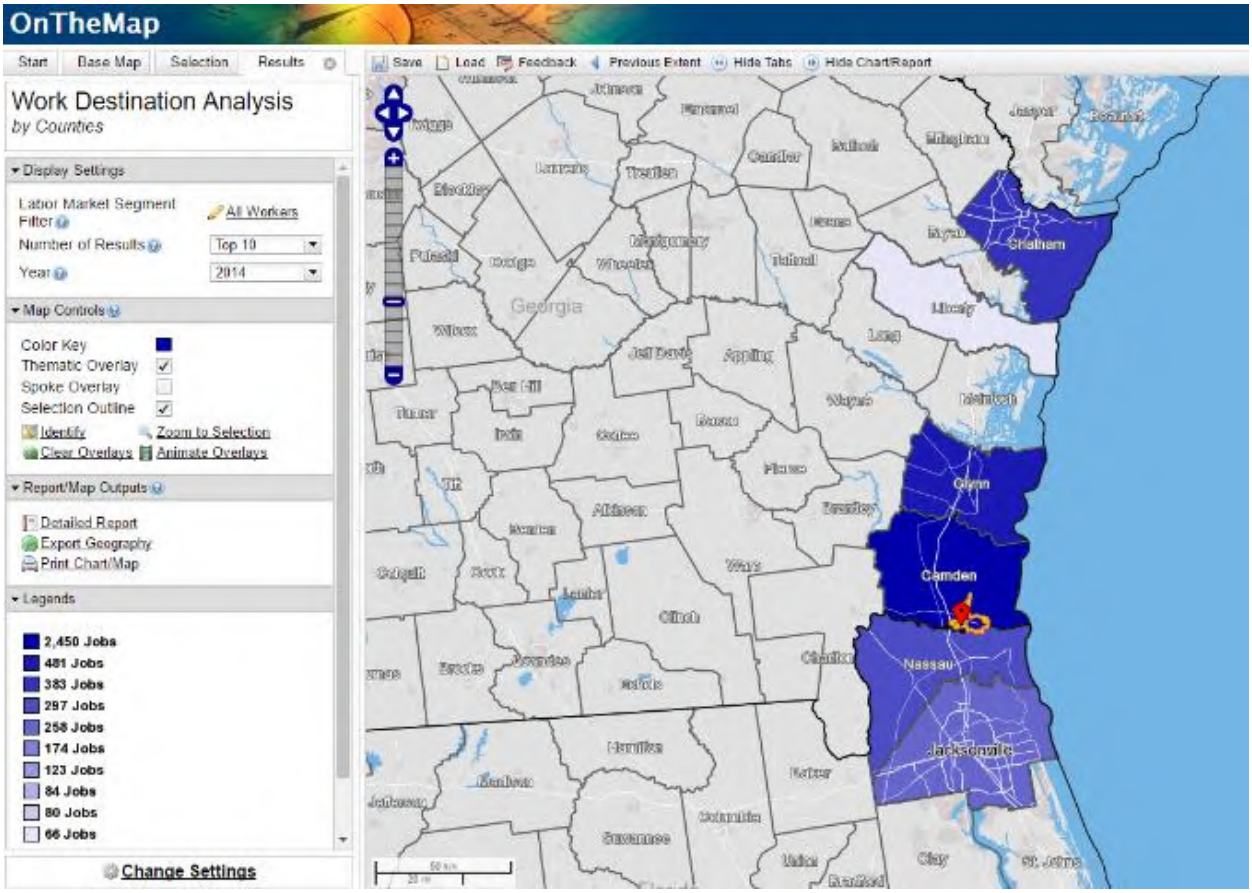
Camden County does an excellent job educating its children. The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is a metric used to evaluate Georgia public school systems. Overall, the CCRPI for Camden County exceeds the state average and the indices for nearby counties. Camden County sets itself apart from the neighboring counties and Georgia with an Index of 91.1 for its high school (maximum score is 100). Georgia's high school CCRPI was only 76.1, and the highest CCRPI of a nearby county was 81.7. Despite Camden County's high performing public school system, the percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree in St. Marys (24.6%) is less than the state (28.3%). This trend is even more pronounced within the 25-34-year-old group. In 2014, only 17.3% of this age group had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 29.2% for the state. This indicates a need for more college and technical school training opportunities for St. Marys residents as well as jobs that appeal to recent college graduates.

Until 2010, educational services, and health care and social assistance were the largest combined employment sector within the city; however, by 2014, no one industry type dominated St. Marys' economy. Manufacturing suffered a large loss from 2000 to 2010 with a reduction in percentage of the civilian workforce from 13.2% to 5.5%, largely due to the closing of the Mill Site. This marked the end of the "industrial days" where the City's economy was dominated by the presence of one primary employer. The focus has now shifted towards smaller, personal-service oriented businesses, i.e. the service, health, and tourism industries.

The percentage of workers in St. Marys and Camden County employed by the government is 30% as compared to the state and national percentage of 15%. The large percentage of government workers in St. Marys and Camden County can be attributed to SUBASE Kings Bay, which is a major economic engine in the Camden County region and has an estimated $600 million payroll. Since the Navy Base began operations in 1978, the county's population has more than tripled. This rapid growth has resulted in development of properties in close proximity to the base. There is also growing pressure to develop remaining vacant tracts near the base, and to provide housing to support military families.

St. Marys lacks reliable public transportation, and many of its residents have long commutes. For those commuting to work, 85% drive alone and 10% carpool. A review of the Census Bureau tool "OnTheMap" shows that most of St. Marys' workers either have a very short (42.6% travel less than 10 miles) or a very long (35.8% travel more than 50 miles) distance to work. This is likely because residents that are unable to find work in the County are most likely to find work in the Jacksonville, Brunswick or Savannah metropolitan areas.

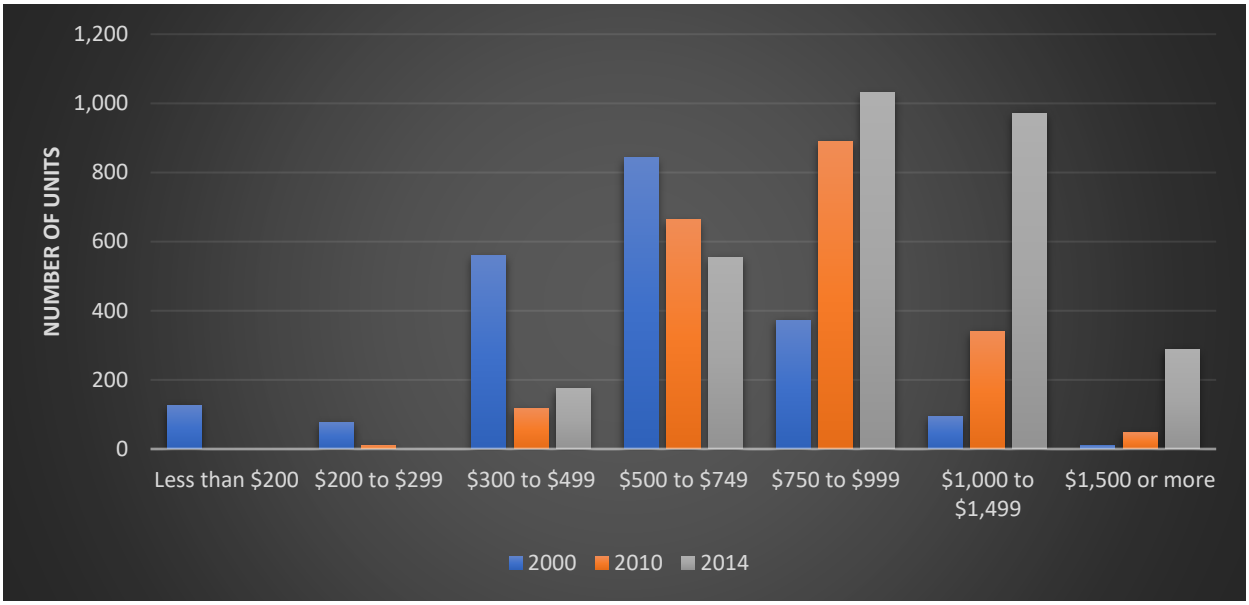
Figure 2: Counties where St. Marys' Population is Employed.



Because of the economic downturn in 2008, house construction slowed and the percentage of vacant units in St. Marys rose from 9.6% to 13.6% from 2000 to 2010. By 2014, the percent of vacant units decreased slightly to 12.5%, due to the improvement in the housing market. A dramatic increase in renter-occupied units occurred in St. Marys from 2010 to 2014, and by 2014, the two groups were nearly equal. The higher percentage of renters in St. Marys is likely attributed to the military influence and its high rate of turnover, as well as to national trends in the mortgage industry and its impacts on home ownership. A lower home-ownership rate and frequent turnover of renters make it challenging to build communities. Home-ownership can lead to a greater personal and financial investment in the property, which creates vested interest in the appearance and condition of the neighborhood as a whole.

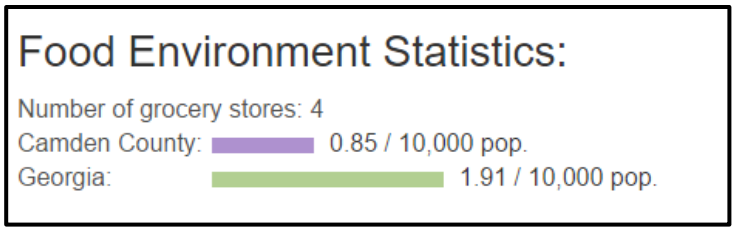
Since 2000 the median gross rent and homeowner costs have increased at a higher rate than has the median household income. This results in a larger fraction of income being required for housing costs, creating more prevalent cost-burdened housing. Cost-burdened households are those households where the owner or renter must dedicate 30% or more of their net income to housing costs. By 2014, 47.8% of renters and 41.2% of homeowners in St. Marys had a home classified as cost-burdened. This is a national problem, where urban/metropolitan areas have continued to prosper, or at least maintain economic status quo, while areas outside the urbanized areas are on the decline. St. Marys is just past the outside edge of the urbanized Jacksonville metropolitan area.

Figure 3: Changes in Monthly Gross Rental Costs in St. Marys



One metric for determining the community's balance is the jobs-housing ratio, which compares increases in housing to increases in employment opportunities. A balanced community typically demonstrates a job-housing ration of 1.25 to 1.75. In St. Marys the increase in housing exceeded the increase in employment from 2000 to 2010, so the job-housing ratio dropped below the target range to 1.11. By 2014, a slight increase in employment helped this ratio rebound to 1.20, but it is still below the target range. The City of St. Marys will need to create employment opportunities to support a balanced community, as opposed to a retirement community or a "bedroom community" for Jacksonville.

Figure 4: Access to Heathy Foods



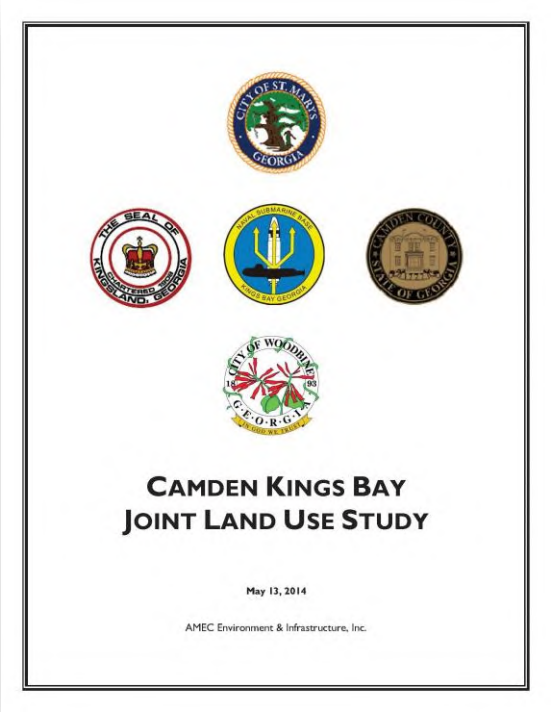
This Master Plan includes Community Health as a major goal, and a review of factors that could affect the health of the population have been assessed. One major issue that St. Marys and Camden County faces that has far-reaching implications is limited access to healthy foods. Often referred to as "food deserts," this condition occurs when low income populations do not live close to a grocery store. Living close to a grocery store is defined as living less than 10 miles from a grocery store in rural areas and less than 1 mile in non-rural areas. Low income is defined as having an annual family income of less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty threshold for the family size. The most recent data from 2010 shows that 11% of households in Camden County were considered to be located within food deserts. The number of grocery stores per 10,000 people in Camden County is 0.85, which is less than half of the state average of 1.91. Supermarkets traditionally provide access to healthier food options than convenience stores or gas stations. Studies have shown that areas with a food desert have a higher prevalence of overweight and obese populations and premature death. According to a recent survey, a larger percentage of Camden County's population is classified as obese as compared with the State (32% versus 29%). Supporting land use decisions which provide for additional healthy food options is a priority for the City, as is development of a countywide trail system that will provide for alternative transportation and recreational opportunities.

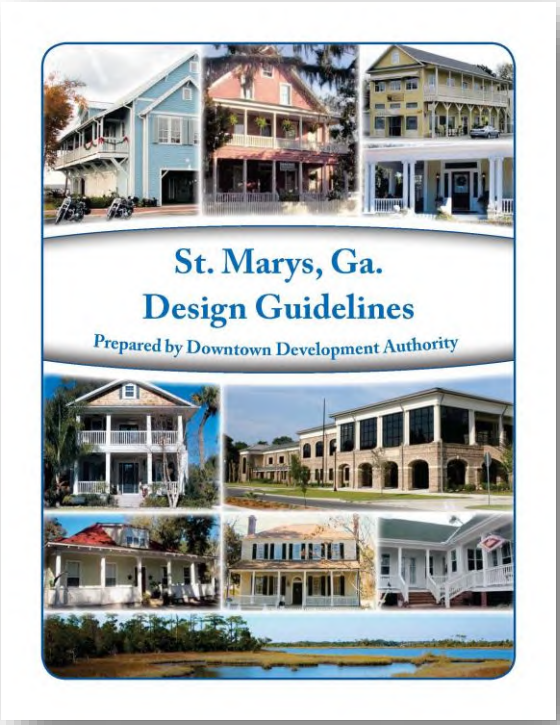
Plan Coordination

Several separate, but relevant planning initiatives have been completed by and for St. Marys and Camden County in recent years. As such, they have been integrated into the Master Plan development process. The plans listed below were reviewed, and the applicable goals, opportunities, and action items were extracted and included within this document.

Plan	Summary
Camden County Kings Bay Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)	The JLUS, completed in May 2014, is an interjurisdictional effort funded by the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) of the Department of Defense (DOD) and facilitated by AMEC Environment & Infrastructure, Inc. The purpose of the JLUS is to anticipate and mitigate existing and potential compatibility issues through improved coordination among Camden County, the City of St. Marys, the City of Kingsland, the City of Woodbine and SUBASE Kings Bay. SUBASE development has impacted population growth trends in recent decades, and growth of the Camden County population and economy is expected to continue. With development pressure likely to increase as the local economy recovers and the real estate market cycle progresses, this plan will guide coordination of military and local community entities to ensure that military operations are not negatively affected by new development, while also encouraging the community to prosper and support military families. This Master Plan, also funded through the DOD, is intended to foster implementation of the JLUS recommendations.
Flood Resiliency Plan	In 2013, St. Marys was selected as one of five locations in the country to undergo community planning through the National Sea Grant's Coastal Community Climate Adaptation Initiative program. The City of St. Marys, Georgia Sea Grant, University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and Stetson University partnered to develop a local flood resiliency and adaptation plan, addressing current flood vulnerabilities and the long-term risks associated with sea level rise. The plan will pair local knowledge with academic expertise to help make St. Marys safer and more prepared for flood events. Based on the information gathered, researchers will link recommendations with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System (CRS) to target adaptation options that could reduce flood insurance rates for local residents. The initial results of this project were presented to the Mayor and City Council of St. Marys in August 2016, and the final plan is due to be completed this year. Recommendations supporting the resiliency of St. Marys have been included in the Master Plan.
St. Marys Renaissance Strategic Vision & Plan (RSVP)	The City of St. Marys was awarded the opportunity to participate in the Georgia Downtown Renaissance Partnership, which includes the Georgia Municipal Association, the Georgia Cities Foundation, and the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government, to create a strategic vision and plan for downtown St. Marys. This plan had a robust community engagement process and was completed in 2015. Focused on positive outcomes for downtown, the programs and action items included in RSVP are intended to be used continually as an everyday resource by local officials and citizens. The RSVP identifies several projects that the MPSC considered to be appropriate for inclusion in the Master Plan.

Camden County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	This plan was completed by the Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) in 2005 through funding from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The CRC worked with the four local governments, the cities of Kingsland, St. Marys, and Woodbine, and Camden County to formulate the plan. A Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was formed to guide the process. The BPAC met three times in the spring and early summer 2005 and provided valuable input in the preparation of this plan. The Multi-Modal Transportation Study performed as part of this Master Plan process included a recommendation to update the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The MPSC formed a sub-committee to review this plan and begin the process of updating the document.
St. Marys, GA Design Guidelines	Prepared by the Downtown Development Authority in 2010, these guidelines are intended to be used to provide direction for growth and development to ensure the Downtown District retains the charm, character, and sense of community that makes St. Marys attractive to families, businesses, and visitors alike. The scope of these guidelines includes the corridor along Osborne Road from the waterfront, extending to the Tilden Norris Marsh Walk to the west and 100 Ready Street to the East, and continues along Osborne to Dilworth Street. In most cases, the boundary line runs to the rear of the property line of the parcel that fronts this corridor. These design guidelines were considered during development of the Future Development Strategy and will be incorporated as appropriate into the form-based standards of the new St. Marys Zoning Ordinance.





3 Community Engagement

The City of St. Marys designed a community engagement program to inform the public about the Master Plan and provide an opportunity for citizens to be involved in the planning process. Effective engagement is essential in developing a plan that has buy-in and leads to better support for implementation efforts that will assist the community in achieving long-term goals. A full report on all the community engagement activities is included in the Public Involvement Addendum to this Master Plan, and is summarized below.

Public Involvement Strategies

Public Involvement Strategies

- *Master Plan Steering Committee*
- *Community Survey*
- *Stakeholder Interviews*
- *Public Presentations*
- *Mardi Gras Festival Booth*
- *Public Workshops*
- *Children's Art Contest*
- *Smart Phone Mapping App*
- *Media Campaign*

Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC)

A steering committee was appointed by St. Marys City Council to assist City staff and the consultant through every step of the planning process. The MPSC met the first Thursday of each month for 18 months to review pertinent materials and to help devise other public involvement activities. The MCSC also participated in visioning, identification of issues and opportunities, and development of the final workplan.

Community Survey

The City administered a community survey to gain feedback from residents, business owners, and other interested parties. The survey provided opportunities for participants to offer opinions on topics such as community appearance, economic development, city services, transportation, housing, quality of life, and other planning issues. Nearly 600 people responded to the community survey.

Stakeholder Interviews

Members of the MPSC conducted interviews with specific stakeholders within the community to gain a more detailed understanding of needs and opportunities within the community. During this outreach activity, 30 individual interviews were completed and 6 group discussions were conducted.

Public Presentations

This public involvement strategy included public presentations to educate residents and other community stakeholders. A presentation was created and given to several community groups including the Camden Round Table, the Rotary Club and the Homebuilders Association. This approach allowed different members of the steering committee to give the presentation using a consistent message. It also provided an opportunity to get feedback from large groups with similar values in a single venue. The MPSC also provided updates on the plan development at two City Council Meetings and two Council Retreats. Lastly, a visioning exercise was held at a City Department Head meeting to get feedback from City staff on their thoughts related to services and other community needs.



Mardi Gras Festival Booth

The City of St. Marys, members of the MPSC, and their planning consultant manned a booth at the City's Annual Mardi Gras Festival on February 6, 2016 to promote the Master Plan. The booth included promotional handouts advertising involvement opportunities, tablets to complete the survey, large maps, and art supplies for the art contest. The Mardi Gras booth provided a great opportunity for members of the planning team to discuss community issues with people in attendance.

Public Workshops

A number of public workshops were held throughout the planning process. These events were designed to be interactive activities that paired members of the community with professional planners to gather information on various planning topics. A community open house was held at the St. Marys Welcome Center in March 2016 to gather information on community character and future land use trends. Three additional land use workshops were also held in March at various times and locations to offer the best opportunity for people to attend at a time and location that worked with their schedules. A workshop focused on transportation related issues was held at the Senior Center and gave residents an opportunity to voice concerns with regard to safety, pedestrian mobility, and other transportation related elements in the City. The topic of sustainability, resiliency, and sea level rise was also covered at a workshop held during a City Council workshop. This workshop included a presentation of a study recently completed for the City that focused on these issues. Lastly, a series of zoning workshops were held to give people an opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations for details that should be included and considered when the City crafts the new zoning ordinance. These workshops looked at scale, density, setbacks, form, and other zoning related elements that could be used to help the City steer development in a direction that best compliments the future vision.



Children's Art Contest

The City and the MPSC coordinated with staff at St. Marys Elementary School to sponsor an Art Contest to create student awareness of and interest in the Master Plan process. Local businesses also supported the contest by providing gift cards, certificates, and other prizes to the winners. The City received over 50 submissions. A panel of high school student judges was assembled and winners were selected from elementary and middle school students. The winners were recognized at a City Council meeting.

Smart Phone Mapping Applications

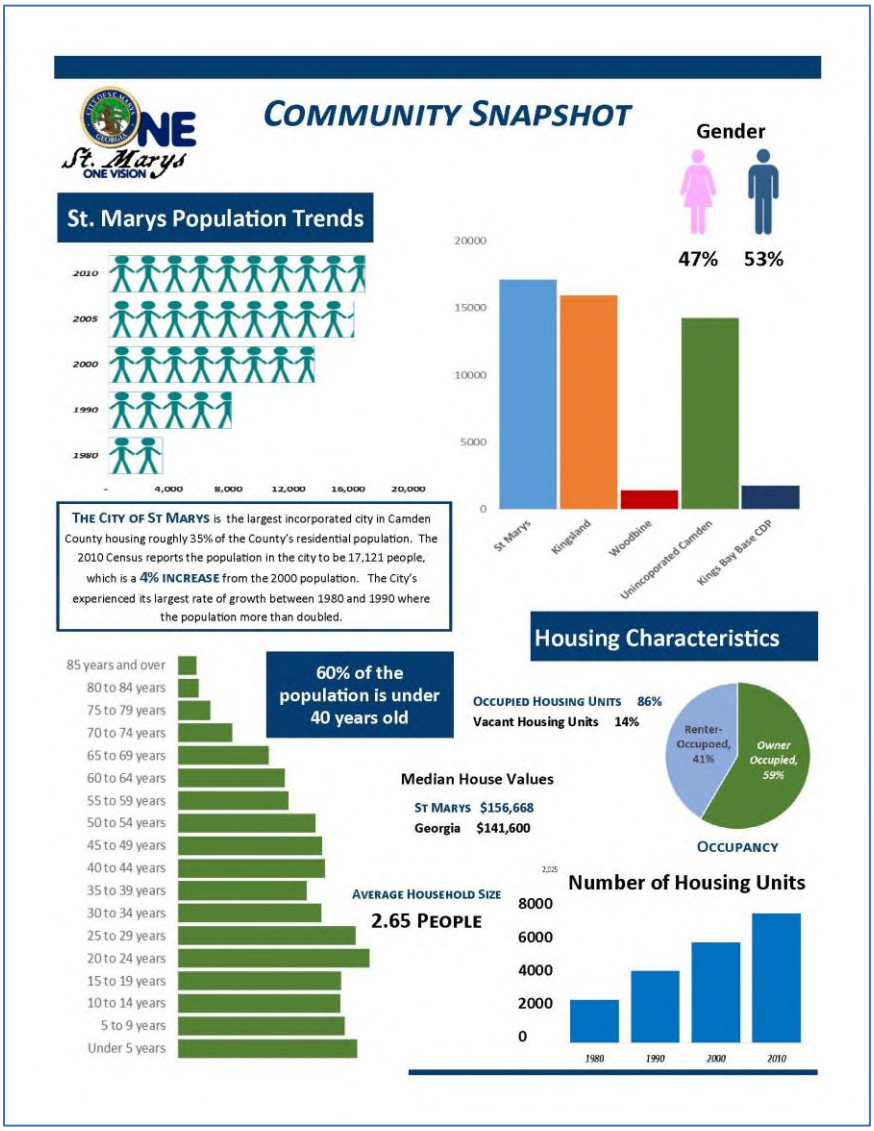
The City's consultant created a mapping application for hand-held devices that allowed people to take pictures of "What they love about St. Marys." The app included a mapping features that allowed the user to take a picture, record the location on a map, and to write a short note about what they love about the given location and/or why they took the picture. The app resulted in 60 St. Marys points of interest being added. The points recorded using the app included historic structures, unique architectural features, parks, sub-base related features, and beautiful vistas.

Media Campaign

An active media campaign was used to keep the public informed on the Master Plan development, upcoming events, and other opportunities for involvement. The City of St. Marys website contains a direct link to the Master Plan webpage (onestmarys.com), which includes meeting agendas and summaries from the Master Plan Steering Committee, the transportation report, the data assessment, the zoning audit, and upcoming events. The Master Plan page also includes contact information, links to other planning documents, and an interactive mapping application. Press releases and guest columns in the local newspaper were also used to provide information about the Master Plan and how citizens might get involved.

Community Snapshot

A community snapshot was developed to illustrate various demographic and land use trends within the community. Data from the U.S. Census, previous planning documents, and a recent land use study were compiled in a brochure like format to provide some general background information on the community. The snapshot was made available on the Master Plan website and was used to help advertise upcoming opportunity for involvement and workshops. The snap shot was also made available in hard copy format at City Hall, the Mardi Gras Festival, and other events.




Strategic Vision

4 St. Marys Strategic Vision

This section of the Master Plan sets out the underlying theme for St. Marys' growth and development for the next ten years. Through these concepts, St. Marys builds on its history, its people and its distinguishing characteristics to create a philosophical commitment to a vigorous and dynamic future.

Vision Statement

One St. Marys. One Vision. One Future.

We are a vibrant, welcoming and friendly coastal community where our residents play an essential role in our success;

We cherish our environment, our heritage and our role as the Gateway to Cumberland Island National Park;

We proudly support our nation's security by maintaining a strong relationship with the military forces who are our neighbors;

We believe that all residents should have access to a safe neighborhood, job opportunities, quality education, and community services;

We envision a resilient community with a thriving and diverse economy, mobility, and recreational and cultural activities for all citizens;

We are One St. Marys.

Values

We value:

Our people
Our small-town ambiance
Our peaceful and safe environment
Our gateway to Cumberland Island

We respect:

Our rivers, marshes, wildlife and coastal environment
Our diversity and individual differences
Our rich history

We strive for:

Prosperity for all citizens
Protection of our unique natural environment
Inclusiveness
Exceptional educational experiences

A mutually beneficial relationship with the Submarine Base
A balanced tax base to adequately finance city services

We envision a St. Marys where:

All lives are respected
All voices are heard
All families can thrive
All neighborhoods are vibrant and inviting
All individuals have adequate economic opportunities
All businesses have the opportunity to prosper

Mission Statement

The mission of the St. Marys city government is to implement the City's vision in a fair, open and responsive manner through services and programs that will benefit its residents and businesses.

Goals & Policies

The Master Plan Steering Committee has identified the following goals as the guiding framework for the City to realize the Vision set forth in this Master Plan. The policies listed below each goal are intended to provide direction to City officials, staff, and appointees as they make decisions and work towards achieving these goals.

Economic Prosperity

Support the development and expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community, generate employment opportunities, and contribute to the vitality of the local, regional and national economy.

⇒ Use economic incentives to both attract new businesses and industry and to encourage the expansion of existing business and industry.

⇒ Encourage the redevelopment and enhancement of existing commercial and industrial areas within our community, including vacant or underutilized sites or buildings.

⇒ Support increases in residential density in downtown St. Marys and adjacent to the Osborne commercial corridor in order to create a neighborhood residential base to support local retail businesses.

⇒ Promote continued improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of processes for permits and licenses.

⇒ Undertake the annexation of unincorporated land both inside the City as well as land to the east of the City to extend and complete the natural uninterrupted boundaries of the City.

Community Health

Promote public policies that enable all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, to have access to quality goods and services for a healthy and vital lifestyle.

⇒ Create new partnerships and work with existing resources to improve and build parks and trails, recreational facilities and related programs.

⇒ Encourage the creation of walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (i.e. grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.

⇒ Consider the needs of all age groups and families when developing and/or promoting cultural and programs and recreational activities.

Sense of Place

Protect, enhance, and promote the City's signature qualities, including the marshes and waterfront, access to Cumberland Island, and the warm, hospitable and friendly nature of the people of St. Marys.

⇒ Encourage the revitalization of downtown and the waterfront as a vibrant gathering location for the community and its visitors that adds to the quality of life for all.

⇒ Encourage the aesthetic improvement of the City's commercial corridors.

⇒ Encourage redevelopment of the Midtown area as a vibrant commercial center.

Resource Management

Protect and promote the efficient and effective use of our community's natural, cultural and human resources.

⇒ Consider impacts on infrastructure, environmentally sensitive areas and valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources when making decisions regarding improvements for existing buildings as well as for new economic development projects.

⇒ Encourage low impact development that preserves riparian buffers, the floodplain, natural topography, and existing vegetation of development sites.

⇒ Ensure that residents, businesses and developers undertake improvements or new projects that are physically and visually consistent with the City's commitment to protection from floods or other natural disasters.

⇒ Improve use of technology and technological upgrades for the provision of City services and the security of City records.

⇒ Improve City processes to achieve efficiency, simplification and a sense of customer service.

⇒ Support programs for the training and development of City staff in order to reduce the expense incurred through the use of external consultants.

Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.

⇒ Extend infrastructure or provide City services to development outside of City limits only when a customer base would support such extension.

⇒ Annex all areas currently served or potentially served by City water and sewer, and ensure policies are in place that will promote return on investment for current and future facilities.

⇒ Protect existing infrastructure investments by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns

⇒ New land uses should protect the environment, preserve historical and cultural resources, and conserve meaningful open space.

⇒ Assure that City-owned land and buildings are used for the optimal benefit of the community from both a service and financial aspect.

Local Preparedness

Identify and implement the necessary improvements and programs to achieve St. Marys' Vision, including infrastructure maintenance, regulations to appropriately manage growth, resiliency planning and leadership training for City Council and staff.

⇒ Plan and prepare for natural disasters and the recovery thereafter from hazards including hurricanes, tornados, storm surge, and sea level rise.

⇒ Make appropriate, proactive infrastructure investments to accommodate planned growth, and address the impact of storm surge and sea level rise.

Regional Cooperation

Foster an atmosphere of cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions as well as regional, State and federal agencies to address shared needs through adequate funding, legislation and technical assistance.

⇒ Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.

⇒ Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues.

⇒ Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions.

⇒ Consult with the Navy and other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.

⇒ Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.

Housing Opportunities

Promote a healthy range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing that meets the needs of all residents of the City.

⇒ Encourage development of housing options that include affordable housing, assisted living and aging in place living.

⇒ Incentivize infill housing development in neighborhoods where appropriate.

⇒ Consider access to alternative modes of transportation when considering new residential development.

⇒ Accommodate a diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in new neighborhoods.

⇒ Encourage innovative yet visually consistent building options such as attached, semi-attached and detached buildings, as well as mixed-use buildings.

Transportation Options

Promote multi-modal transportation methodology; safe, reliable, and accessible sidewalks; and public vehicular and nautical transit options that can safely and efficiently accommodate the variety of vehicles and vessels in use by residents and visitors.

⇒ Improve and maintain a transportation system that will implement the "Complete Streets" policy and minimize detrimental environmental impacts.

⇒ Promote connectivity of the City's road network by fostering a grid network of streets and multiple connections between subdivisions and commercial developments.

⇒ Develop golf cart rules and regulations to ensure their safe use on City streets.

⇒ Support and invest in opportunities to provide alternative modes of transportation, including public transit, for the City's residents.

⇒ Ensure safe and secure dockage and facilities for intracoastal and water trail transportation in partnership with nautical related businesses and other governmental authorities.

⇒ Consider the impact on traffic flow for all new development or business, neighborhood expansions.

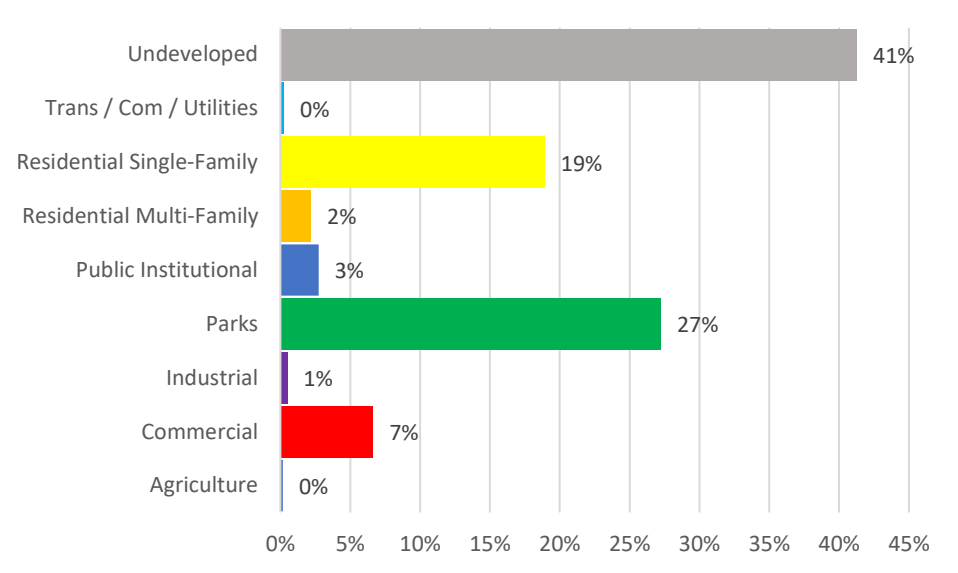

Land Use

5 Land Use

Existing Land Use

The City of St. Marys analyzed development patterns, land uses, current zoning designations, and existing plans to develop a baseline for development of the future land use strategy (character areas). The existing land use makeup within the City gives a good indication of likely development within various areas. Previous zoning decisions and recent development patterns also provide some insight as to what is currently allowed and the market demand for different types of residential and commercial development. Using these resources helped the City and the MPSC formulate a future development strategy that is realistic and consistent with the existing demand and trends within the City. Additionally, the future vision for areas may require revisions to the current zoning ordinance to achieve that vision, which will be represented in the zoning audit.

Figure 5 Land Use Breakdown within St. Marys



The City created a parcel specific existing land use map in the fall of 2015 using desktop GIS practices and field verification via a windshield survey. Figure 5 shows the current land use breakdown within the City by percent.

There is a significant portion of undeveloped land within the City. Undeveloped land can be viewed in two categories; undeveloped land that is likely to be developed in the future (i.e. residential lots) and undeveloped land likely to remain undeveloped (i.e. Coastal marshlands). Since these two categories account for such a significant portion of land area, the City also analyzed land use breakdown based on what is currently developed. Residential land use accounts for roughly 20% of land acreage within the City; however, when evaluating the land use breakdown of only developed land area, residential land use accounts for nearly 60% of the total developed area. Table 2, on the next page shows the comparison of the percentage breakdown of developed land use categories within the City as compared to developed areas.

Table 2: Land Use Comparison

Land Use	Percent of Total City Area	Percent of Developed Area
Commercial	7%	21%
Industrial	1%	2%
Public Institutional	3%	9%
Residential Multi-Family	2%	7%
Residential Single-Family	19%	60%
Trans / Com / Utilities	0%	1%

Previous development patterns in St. Marys were generally like those in the rest of Coastal Georgia. During the late 1990's and early 2000's, the pace of residential development was accelerated. Many lots and residential communities were designed and platted during this time, but never reached full build-out due to a slowing economy. Thus, there are vacant lots located in neighborhoods throughout the community. As the economy rebounds and development picks up, it is anticipated that residential growth will continue in these neighborhoods.

Commercial development has been confined to three primary geographic areas of the City; historic downtown, mid-town and the hospital area adjacent to the Kingsland city limits. There are many undeveloped, platted single-family lots and areas zoned R-3 (multi-family) located throughout the City. When reviewing the land use map, large undeveloped parcels are located adjacent to existing commercial corridors.

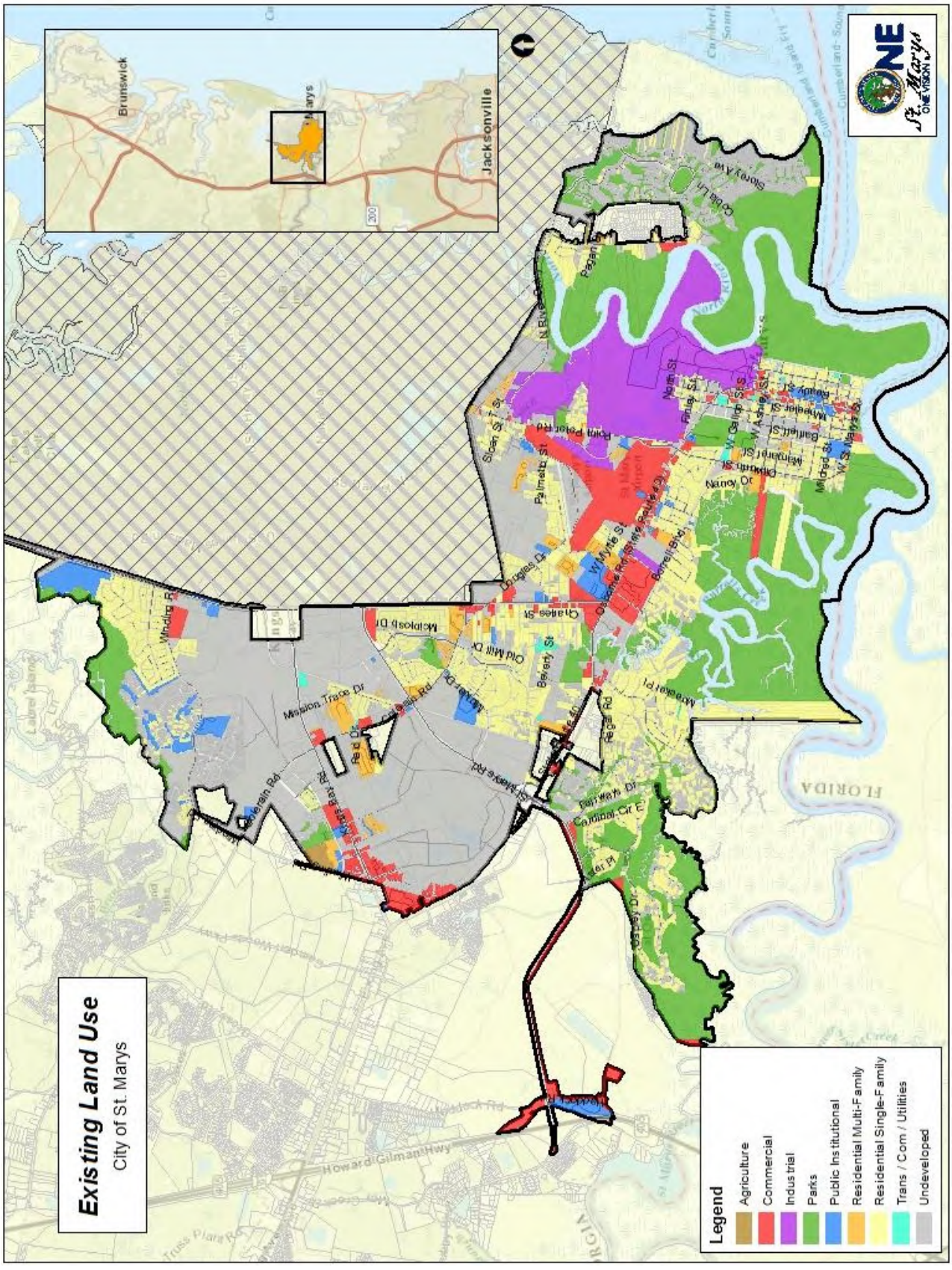
The following are three major land masses in and around the City that are likely to have great influence on the way future development will occur.

⇒ Airport Site. The airport has been officially closed by the FAA and will revert to the City of St. Marys for future development. The City will study market trends to understand the feasibility of developing this site with a mix of uses.

⇒ The Mill Site. The Mill Site is currently zoned as an industrial planned development. The property is privately owned by a Trustee who has a potential buyer/developer, and it is anticipated that the development will include a mix of industrial and commercial uses. If successful, this project will provide needed jobs and could stimulate economic development in other locations of the City.

⇒ SUBASE Kings Bay. A significant portion of the City's population is related to SUBASE employment. Thus, any growth or decline of SUBASE activity could significantly influence development patterns in the City as whole.

The existing land use map in Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of land use within the City of St. Marys at the time of the inventory in the fall of 2015.


Existing Land Use
City of St. Marys
Legend
Agriculture
Commercial
Industrial
Parks
Public Institutional
Residential Multi-Family
Residential Single-Family
Trans / Com / Utilities
Undeveloped
Brunswick
Jacksonville
St. Marys
FLORIDA
Howard Gilman Hwy

Future Development Strategy

Through a series of public workshops, the City of St. Marys identified "character areas" within the community to illustrate desired development patterns. These areas can contain a mix of different land uses that share similar characteristics or a desired future vision.

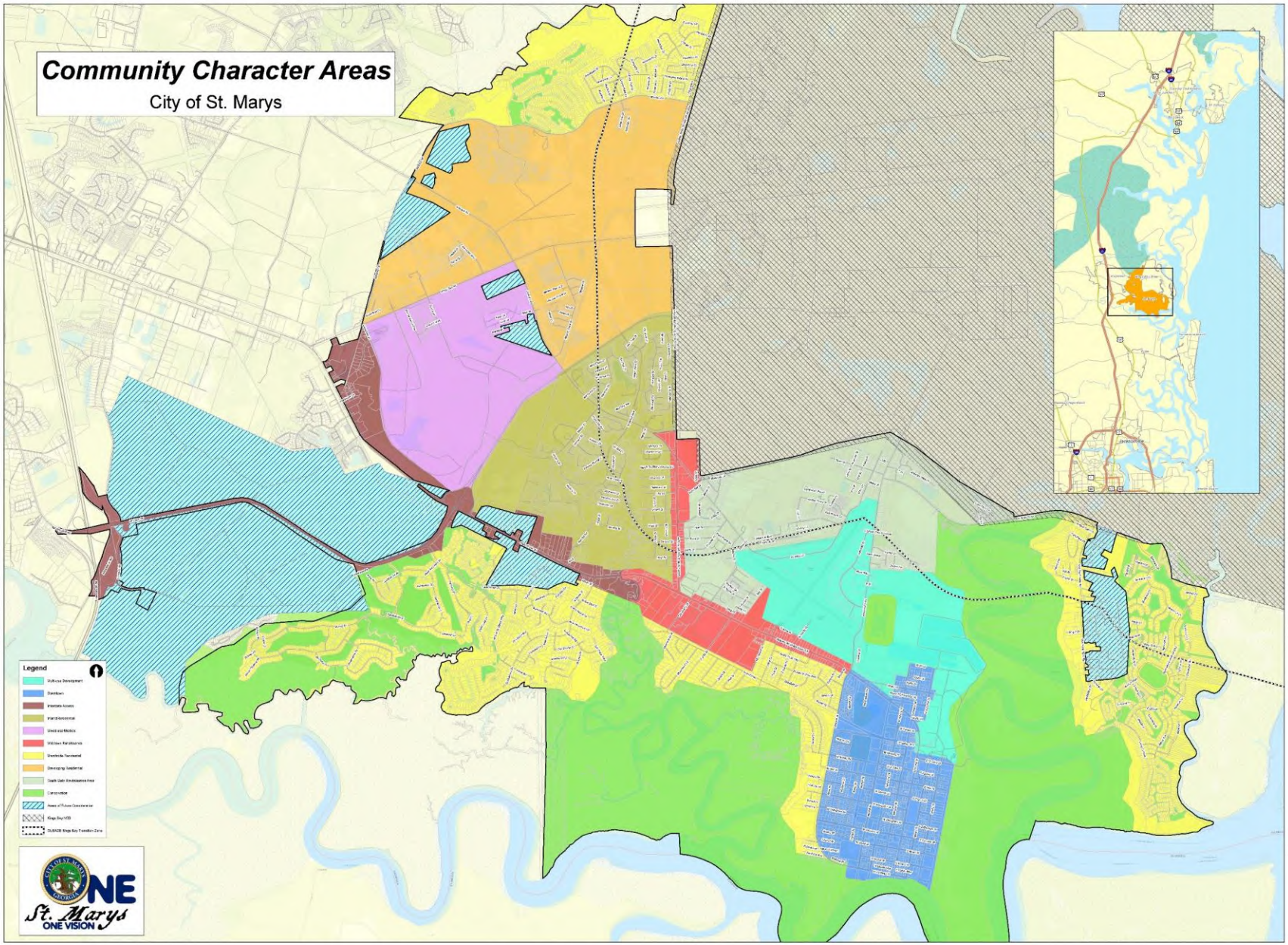
The City of St. Marys is using the Character Area approach to formulate a Future Development Strategy that is consistent with the Strategic Vision. The Community Character Area map will be the basis for ongoing updates to the City's Zoning Ordinance and will be used by staff and elected officials to make decision regarding new development and redevelopment.

The following Character Areas have been identified by the community, and are shown in the map on the following page:

- ⇒ Conservation
- ⇒ Developing Residential
- ⇒ Downtown
- ⇒ Inland Residential
- ⇒ Interstate Access Corridors
- ⇒ Marshside Residential
- ⇒ Mixed Use Medical
- ⇒ Multi-Use Development
- ⇒ South Gate Revitalization Area
- ⇒ SUBASE Kings Bay Transition Zone

Each character area description includes a summary of existing land uses and implementation measures to achieve the desired land uses.

Figure 7: Community Character Areas



Conservation

St. Marys and the surrounding region have a wealth of unique and extraordinary natural resources, which contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. This character area identifies environmental resources that should be preserved for low-impact recreation, multi-use trails, habitat protection, or conservation. This area may include sensitive habitats, coastal marshlands, cultural and recreational amenities.



Issues

Cumberland Island and the estuarine waterways in and around St. Marys that allow recreational access to the Intracoastal Waterway and Atlantic Ocean provide major potential tourism attractions for St. Marys. These sensitive coastal resources should be preserved and protected and low-impact access should be provided where feasible.

Development Strategies

Look for opportunities to provide more access to the coastal environment through the creation of greenways, multi-use trails, docks, boardwalks, and parks.

Protect and secure important viewsheds within St. Marys.

Adopt and develop funding mechanism to implement stormwater standards consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.

Discourage development within designated flood zones or Special Flood Hazard Areas.

Maintain natural character and promote conservation through the use of conservation easements.

To the extent possible, create connectivity to greenspace by linking parks, undeveloped areas, and open spaces through a network of multi-use trails.



Developing Residential

This character area addresses that area bounded by Winding Road, Colerain Road, and St. Marys Road. This area is largely undeveloped but is poised for future growth due to its proximity to the Navy Sub Base and Interstate 95. In many cases, subdivisions have already been platted, but development has not yet taken place. The City has an opportunity to plan for this future growth and encourage more traditional residential development patterns. The focus in this character area should be on a mix of residential densities, connectivity within the street pattern, multi-use transportation facilities, and amenities for the residents such as parks, multi-use trails, and neighborhood-scale commercial uses.



Issues

There is a need to provide moderately-priced single-family and multi-family housing in St. Marys.

Development Strategies

New development and infill development should include a variety of housing types and densities.

Future developments should be required to dedicate a certain percentage of their property to greenspace, including neighborhood parks, trails, and natural areas.

Promote moderate-density, traditional neighborhood development.

New development should be planned with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision.

Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character.



Downtown

Downtown St. Marys serves as a gateway to Cumberland Island National Seashore and is recognized as a welcoming family-friendly small town. This area includes the St. Marys Historic District, which is listed on the National Historic Register, surrounding residential neighborhoods, and the commercial corridor of Osborne Road, east of the Point Peter Road intersection. The downtown includes the City's working waterfront on the St. Marys River, a public event venue and park, and ferry access to Cumberland Island. In addition, the waterfront gives recreational boaters access to the Atlantic Ocean and the intracoastal waterways. The Downtown area of St. Marys has its own character with the potential to attract future tourism and enhance the sense of place within the City.



Issues

The waterfront is in need of attention and investment through upgrades, expansion, and infrastructure improvements. There are vacant and, in some cases, blighted buildings. There is limited public access to overnight boat slips. There is limited access to basic needs, such as shopping, groceries and supplies for residents, visitors, and boaters who do not have access to an automobile. This issue is further compounded by the lack of public transportation to other areas of St. Marys. There is a desire for more restaurants, entertainment and retail opportunities in the downtown; however, existing residential density in the downtown area does not support the desired commercial uses. There is limited parking for waterfront events and potentially insufficient parking should demand increase.

Development Strategies

Review the recommendations of the Downtown St. Marys Strategic Vision and Plan and adopt those recommendations that are consistent with the Master Plan.

Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Require infill development and redevelopment to be compatible in terms of architecture, mass, scale and lot location with the existing neighborhood.

Develop public docks and encourage private marina upgrading.

Improve aesthetics in the waterfront area.

Establish and build a hospitality development on the Gateway property.

Permit residential homeowners to have cottages or furnished rooms over garages (FROG).

Require architectural standards that preserve the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

Residential infill development should support the commercial core by including higher density housing options, such as upstairs residential, multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums.

Consider reductions in minimum residential lot sized to achieve increased densities.

Encourage a mix of retail, office, services that provide for the daily needs of residents and visitors.

Streetscapes should be pedestrian-oriented, with walkable connections.

Road edges should be clearly defined by locating new or rehabilitative construction at roadside with parking in the rear.

Develop ordinances that better define and protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation.

Historic properties should be maintained or rehabilitated/restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Preserve the oak canopy through tree protection and replacement programs





Inland Residential/Midtown Neighborhood

This area includes a variety of residential subdivision development patterns. The area east of Dark Entry Creek typically has smaller lot sizes, and homes there have a higher orientation to the street, with shorter front yard setbacks, front porches, sidewalks, and street trees. West of Dark Entry Creek residential development is more consistent with the more recent development patterns found in the Marshside Residential area. Redevelopment and infill development should be consistent with existing development and maintain the grid street pattern and sidewalk network, where appropriate. Neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses are appropriate within this area to provide residents better access to services and retail. Future development should be designed to encourage pedestrian, bicycle and golf cart travel.



Issues

Some neighborhoods within this area experience a sense of isolation due to the lack of connection to other areas of St. Marys other than by automobile, the lack of youth oriented supervised recreational and after school facilities, and the existence of food desserts.

Development Strategies

Preserve and continue grid street pattern, where feasible.

Encourage infill development that is consistent in architectural style, mass, and scale with existing homes.

Provide multi-modal connectivity to St. Marys Middle School and Midtown Renaissance area.

Provide pocket parks where appropriate.

Reinforce stability of area by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties.

Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.

Allow neighborhood-scale commercial development & activities at suitable locations, e.g. restaurants, grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents.

Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections to permit residents to walk/cycle to destinations in the area.



Interstate Access Corridors

This represents the I-95 Exit 1 area and extends along St. Marys Rd to the intersection with State Route 40. It also includes the Hwy 40 Corridor between the Kings Bay Road intersection and Dark Entry Creek Bridge. These corridors are the primary entrances to the City of St. Marys. Focus along these corridors should include landscaping and improved signage to let residents and visitors know that they have arrived in St. Marys. St. Marys Road serves as a main evacuation route for St. Marys and SUBASE Kings Bay. The Hwy 40 corridor is likely to face future commercial development pressure due to the expansion of existing development in Kingsland to the west.



Issues

The exits and roadways lack effective and attractive signage able to direct both commercial and recreational visitors to St. Marys. Exit 1 off I-95 is inadequate in design and appearance to serve as an attractive or inviting entry into Georgia and does not encourage people to stop at that exit. St. Marys Road is a major evacuation route for the Navy, so development along this route may be limited.

Development Strategies

The Exit 1 Visitor Center provides an opportunity to showcase St. Marys and encourage tourists to visit St. Marys.

Work with state government officials to improve the State Visitors' Center and redesign Exit 1 to better handle the commercial traffic coming on and off the interstate.

Implement a signage and landscaping plan at the intersection of Hwy 40 and St. Marys Road.

Look for opportunities to provide city services and annex undeveloped land on either side of the St. Marys Road corridor.

Maintain a natural vegetation buffer (at least 50 feet in width) along the St. Marys Road corridor.

All new development should be set-back behind this buffer, with access roads, shared driveways or inter-parcel road connections providing alternate access to these developments and reducing curb cuts and traffic on the main highway.

Encourage landscaped, raised medians to provide vehicular safety, aesthetics, as well as a pedestrian crossing refuge.

Provide pedestrian facilities/sidewalks behind drainage ditches or curb.

Where possible, provide paved shoulders and/or bicycle lanes that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.

Manage access and keep traffic flowing by using directory signage to developments.

Prohibit the addition of any new billboards.



Marshside Residential

These are established residential areas with similar post-1960 suburban development patterns, including curvilinear streets, larger single family lots, limited pedestrian orientation, and large front setbacks. Many of these areas were developed under a Master Plan or as a planned subdivision. These areas may contain onsite amenities for residents of the community, water access, and view sheds of the marsh. There is a high percentage of undeveloped lots within this area, so future development should focus on infill housing that is consistent with the existing neighborhood fabric and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and the large undeveloped lot inventory.



Issues

There are properties within this area not served by St. Marys water and sewer infrastructure, and there are unincorporated islands within New Point Peter subdivision that should be annexed into the City.

Development Strategies

Encourage infill development on existing lots served by City water and sewer.

Require new subdivisions to tie in to public water and sewer.

Convert private wells and septic systems to public water and sewer service.

Infill development should be consistent with the character and Master Plan for development.

Protect and preserve natural resources in these areas, including wetlands and coastal marshlands

Larger lots and less dense residential development is appropriate in these areas.

Provide neighborhood focal points by locating community centers, or well-designed small commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences



Midtown Renaissance

This area has the potential to be redeveloped as a commercial center for the City of St. Marys. Centrally located, this area sits at the crossroads of Hwy 40, Osborne Street, and Charlie Smith Jr. Highway and currently includes an underutilized shopping center as well as an aging and aesthetically unappealing warehouse/office building. This area includes a commercial corridor from the shopping center north to the SUBASE and east on Osborne Street to the downtown district. Development should focus on restaurants, services, neighborhood-scale commercial establishments, and family-friendly activities. Aesthetic improvements are needed to provide an attractive environment for shoppers, and multi-modal connections to residential areas should be provided were feasible. The orientation of the buildings along this corridor should be to the road, with parking largely on the sides or behind the building. Architectural standards for future development and façade renovations for existing structures is recommended. With appropriate planning and investment, this area could become a shopping destination, providing retail, restaurant, and entertainment opportunities for the residents of and visitors to St. Marys.



Issues

There is a need for more family-friendly activities within St. Marys. There is a consumer need for more diverse retail opportunities. The Kings Bay Village Shopping Center and the midtown to downtown corridor have significant vacant commercial space. Two five-lane State roads intersect within this area, and make walking safely a challenge. The aesthetics of this corridor are lacking. There are existing light industrial and residential uses along this corridor that do not fit the desired character.

Development Strategies

Establish architectural standards for development and redevelopment along this corridor.

Encourage redevelopment and infill commercial development along this corridor.

Improve the safety and aesthetics of the area through streetscaping (i.e. median islands, landscaping, street lighting, and signage.)

Regulate commercial signage along this corridor.

Discourage single-family residential uses and prohibit the intrusion of industrial uses along this corridor.

Allow a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, adjacent to the commercial development, including multi-family townhomes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums.

Encourage the private development of family-friendly activities along this corridor, such as indoor sporting venues, bowling/gaming, skating, etc.

In cooperation with the owner, encourage redevelopment of the Kings Bay Mall area through a master-planned concept. Retrofit this property to be more marketable through the addition of more commercial structures, office space, pedestrian amenities, and landscaping.

Upgrading the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvement, new architectural elements, or awnings.

Providing pedestrian and bicycling amenities, including covered walkways, benches, lighting and bicycle racks.

Mixed Use Medical

The Medical Activity Center includes the Southeast Georgia Health System and is bounded by St. Marys Road, Colerain Road, and Kings Bay Road. Future development should focus on medical services and other uses that promote wellness and community health, including senior and assisted living housing, greenspace and recreational facilities, and commercial development consistent with these uses.





Issues

St. Marys has an aging population that will need aging in place services. Many residents of St. Marys are currently forced to travel to Jacksonville or Brunswick for needed medical services. This area could provide a central location for medial and aging services. It should be noted that this area is also facing commercial development pressure from Kingsland.

Development Strategies

Encourage aging in place resources and facilities, including retirement developments, assisted living housing, parks, activities, retail, and medical services.

Encourage planned development or "campus-style" medical developments.

Work with private developers to build tax credit senior housing.

Use landscaping and buffers to separate adjacent use and screen unattractive areas such as parking lots.

Encourage greater mix of uses (such as retail and services to serve hospital employees and residents of senior housing) to reduce automobile reliance/use.

Multi-Use Development

This area includes the airport site, the Mill Site, and adjacent industrial parks. A mix of commercial, public/institutional and clean industrial uses should be promoted in this area with appropriate consideration for the surrounding neighborhoods. This area provides the best opportunity for job creation within a range of employment sectors that would expand and diversify the economy of St. Marys. Protection of sensitive environmental resources, including the

Rookery, and low impact on adjacent residential areas must be an essential element of any future redevelopment.



Issues

The City needs to assure permanent protection of environmentally sensitive areas within the Mill Site consistent with the conditions imposed when the Mill Site was rezoned. There some areas of contamination within the Mill Site that may require remediation for commercial or industrial development. In some instances, the properties surrounding the Mill Site and the airport are falling into disrepair.

Development Strategies

Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized industrial sites to provide a variety of employment opportunities within St. Marys.

Establish and implement stormwater standards within this district that are consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.

Development within this area should be master-planned with appropriate architectural and design standards.

Encourage the location of light industrial and clean/green manufacturing industries within industrial areas.

Allow for and encourage supporting commercial uses to buffer the industrial development from surrounding neighborhoods and to support the employers/employees at the industrial facilities.

Incorporate landscaping and site design to soften or shield views of buildings and parking lots, loading docks, etc.

Incorporate signage and lighting guidelines to enhance quality of development.

Use buffers to separate adjacent but different uses.

Assure permanent protection of environmentally sensitive areas.



South Gate Revitalization Area

This area represents property and neighborhoods that have been directly and indirectly impacted by the closing of the South Gate access to SUBASE Kings Bay. There is opportunity for residential and commercial redevelopment and infill development within this area. Development within this area should focus on providing a mix of residential densities, and improving public transportation access from the neighborhood to retail, services, and schools in the area.



Issues

This area continues to suffer from a combination of recession, lack of employment and the closure of the South Gate to SUBASE Kings Bay. Many residents do not have safe access to basic retail services and recreational activities. There are limited pedestrian and bicycle networks and inadequate and unreliable public transportation.

Development Strategies

Continue discussions with the Navy to see whether it might be possible to reopen the South Gate for a two to four-hour period to allow easier access to downtown during the lunch hour.

Work with Coastal Regional Transit to improve public transportation services this area.

Provide access to alternative forms of transportation and connections to the other commercial areas of the City.

The redevelopment strategy for the area should focus on preserving and rehabilitating what remains of the original housing stock, while encouraging neighborhood type residential development on the remaining land.

Public grants and private investment should be focused where needed to foster redevelopment and stabilization of the community.

Encourage apartment complex owners to maintain and upgrade rental properties.

Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided to enable residents to walk/cycle to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.



SUBASE Kings Bay Transition Zone

SUBASE Kings Bay occupies about 16,000 acres of land, of which approximately one quarter are protected coastal marshlands. Georgia State Law O.C.G.A. § 36-66-6 requires a 3,000-foot buffer zone around the boarder of any military installation, including the SUBASE, to address issues related to security and land use directly adjacent to it. Zoning and land use decisions within this buffer area with the potential to affect military operations must be coordinated with the SUBASE. The Camden Kings Bay Joint Land Use Study, completed in 2014 through a partnership between the Navy, Camden County, and the cities of St. Marys, Woodbine, and Kingsland, identifies potential development that could occur within this buffer area, as well as the uses that are consistent with the vision and goals of both the SUBASE and surrounding communities.



Issues

A portion of the airport site lies within this zone and redevelopment could have has a direct impact on SUBASE Kings Bay. Other property that will redevelop adjacent to this zone, including the Mill Site, will also potentially have an impact on SUBASE operations.

Development Strategies

Develop overlay district standards to require Naval review of development applications within the Transition Zone.

Engage with the Navy to assure that civilian use of the St. Marys River, intracoastal waterway, and its tributaries does not conflict with SUBASE operations.

Zoning Recommendations

The City of St. Marys has already begun the process of updating their Zoning Ordinance, based on public input received at the Zoning and Land Use Workshops and in accordance with the Future Development Strategy. The table below provides a summary of a detailed review of the City's current Zoning Ordinance, including aspects of the ordinance needing revision (or deletion) as well as suggested additions to the current regulatory provisions. The detailed review included an evaluation of existing zoning districts, uses and standards, administrative processes, zone changes, variances, and special permits.

Zoning Ordinance Recommendations

Increased Readability

⇒ Tables for Zoning District Standards

⇒ Illustrations of building types, how buildings address the street and public spaces, setbacks, lot dimensions, parking lot layout

Residential Districts

⇒ Reduced minimum lot widths and side setbacks

⇒ Increase heights & lot coverage and add a zero-lot line provision

⇒ Require front-facing garages set back behind front façade

⇒ Add minimum open space requirements

C-1 Downtown District

⇒ Include form-based design elements

⇒ Permit detached, attached single-family and multi-family

C-2 Commercial District

⇒ Add design standards

C-3 Office-Apartment District

⇒ This should be an office-only district with multi-family allowed by special permit

⇒ Do not allow commercial that is not incidental to primary use

I-L Light Industrial District

⇒ Delete heavy uses lumber yards, boat repair, sand/gravel

I-G General Industrial District

⇒ Increase minimum lot size to 5 acres.

1-A Airport District

⇒ Change to NEW Light Industrial based on Market Study

Recreational Vehicle / Travel Trailer District

⇒ Permit as a special permit use within C-2 and Industrial Districts as opposed to having a separate zoning district

MH Manufacture Housing Park District

⇒ Permit as a Special Use in R-3 not as a separate zoning district

Special Permit Uses

⇒ Assess and revise standards including annual renewal process and lack of transferability upon sale of property

Review and Revise As Appropriate

⇒ Site Plan Review

⇒ Application Requirements

⇒ Nonconformities

⇒ Administrative Review

⇒ Zoning and Hearing Procedures

⇒ Variances, Relief Options and Appeals, and Enforcement

The summary above should not be viewed as complete listing of all elements that will be in the new Zoning Ordinance. The final work product will contain many new elements, based on additional public input, City staff review, and elected official comments and contributions. Some of these may include:

- ⇒ Form-Based Code approach for area within the Downtown Character Area including some building types and architectural design standards, such as raised elevations, porches, roof pitch and metal roofing.
- ⇒ Design standards for C-2 commercial regulating building façades, roof pitch, location of parking, signage recommendations.
- ⇒ Standards for accessory units, sometimes referred to as garage apartments or "furnished room over garage" (FROGS).
- ⇒ Better regulation of outdoor sales in commercial districts and storage containers (PODS) and boats in residential districts.
- ⇒ Addition of short-term rentals provisions as well as provisions for bed and breakfast uses.
- ⇒ Addition of telecommunications provisions.
- ⇒ Clarification of the impact on existing nonconforming structures.
- ⇒ Clarification of the role of Planning Commission.



Needs and Opportunities

6 Needs and Opportunities

This chapter provides the list of needs and opportunities that the City of St. Marys intends to address through this planning process. Each of the needs or opportunities listed herein is addressed through a corresponding implementation measure in the Community Work Program in the following chapter. This list was developed by the Master Plan Steering Committee through a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, evaluation of demographic and economic information summarized in the Data Assessment Addendum, and review of the public input received through numerous public workshops and a community survey, summarized in the Public Participation Program Addendum. In addition, the MPSC also reviewed the supplemental planning recommendations provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and included relevant ideas and information.

Economic Development

Needs
The waterfront area of St. Marys needs revitalization and investment.
Living-wage employment opportunities are needed.
The airport has been closed and the property will revert to the City of St. Marys and be available for redevelopment.
The closure of the South Gate of the Navy Subbase has negatively impacted commercial traffic for St. Marys' businesses.
There is a perception that additional hotel rooms and other types of tourist housing are needed.
The City is not benefiting as much as it could from the tourist traffic generated by visitors to Cumberland Island.
Residents have expressed a need for more restaurant/retail opportunities.
The City is not perceived by some to be a "business-friendly" city.
Overall appearance of the Midtown area, including closed buildings and vacancy, is having a negative impact on economic development.
The Midtown area and corridor to downtown needs revitalization.
There is a need for more diversification of the economic base (top employers are governmental, hospital, and education)
The City's permit fee structure is not perceived to be accommodating to new restaurants and other service related businesses.
Gateway & signage improvements are needed to direct people to and around St. Marys.

Opportunities

Continue to work with the Navy to explore opportunities to open the South Gate.

Foster improved relations with the JDA and work with the JDA to recruit clean industries and/or marina-based businesses.

Develop the Gateway Intracoastal property.

Attract intracoastal boating traffic by constructing docks with overnight slips and support services like marine supplies.

Capitalize on the population that visits Cumberland Island daily.

Create a business-friendly permitting and licensing process.

Develop a city-wide beautification program.

The Mill Site and airport properties offer opportunities for jobs and economic development.

Initiate a mutually beneficial connection with Fernandina Beach.

Leverage ecological and historical assets to foster economic growth.

Crooked River and other waterways provide ample locations for commercial aquiculture and fisheries.

Wedding, boating and marine activities can bring more tourists to the City.

The figures on the following page illustrate the City's vision for Midtown commercial corridor beautification and revitalization. By adopting and/or enforcing standards for landscaping, parking, and property maintenance in the Midtown area, the City can foster the type of aesthetic improvements illustrated. Realization of this vision is likely to require some up-front public investment by the City of St. Marys, similar to the sidewalk improvement project that is planned for the downtown area.

Figure 8: Rendering of Aesthetic Improvements to Osborne Street.



Land Use

Needs

The City needs to revise or replace its outdated zoning code.

Residents want to maintain the "small-town ambiance" while allowing for future development and economic growth.

The aesthetics of the City's commercial corridors need improvement.

Vacant commercial buildings and undeveloped land along the City's major commercial corridors are available for development.

There is a lack of connectivity of residential areas to neighborhood and regional commercial centers.

Family-oriented activities and attractions are lacking.

There is a lack of service related businesses in different areas of the City.

There is a demonstrated need for opportunities for temporary housing (furnished rooms, cottages, RVs, etc.).

Residential density in the downtown area is needed to support desired commercial development.

Opportunities

Use the adoption of a new Master Plan as the impetus to adopt a modern zoning code that includes form-based standards for commercial corridors in Midtown, Downtown, and appropriate areas.

The airport closing provides a complementary commercial/industrial space for development.

Create incentives to encourage additional neighborhood commercial services, such as grocery stores and pharmacies, in areas in need of these services.

Protection of local cultural, historic and natural resources are necessary to create tourist destination opportunities.

A new zoning ordinance can attract appropriate businesses.

Explore ways to better address vacant and underutilized structures.

Use a new zoning code as an opportunity to create and increase residential living space in downtown St. Marys.

Housing

Needs
More affordable/workforce housing is needed, both for rental and owner-occupied units. Housing is needed for special populations, including the elderly and special needs. A wider variety of housing options besides detached, single-family is needed. Safe neighborhoods should be enjoyed by all residents of St. Marys' residents. There is a lack of housing opportunities for first-time home buyers, young couples, and military families.
Opportunities
Consider assisted living and tax credit housing for aging populations. Consider marketing St. Marys as an ideal housing opportunity for the growing workforce in North Florida. Consider zoning changes to develop mixed use and higher density living opportunities in downtown along with middle class and affordable housing development.

Natural Historic and Cultural Resources

Needs
Unique and sensitive environmental, historic and cultural resources within the City could potentially be adversely impacted by development. Any loss of these resources could potentially have an adverse impact on the tourism industry and local economy.

Opportunities

Partner with the U.S. Park Service to expand tourism for Cumberland Island.

Ensuring the preservation of the marsh environment and waterways is necessary to provide a major attraction for residents and visitors.

Thoughtful and practical preservation and adaptive reuse of significant historic structures should be considered as appropriate.

Seek to include design standards for the Downtown in the new zoning code that are consistent with the historic character of this area.

Protection of the Rookery and other critical wildlife habitats is desirable to preserve the City's natural resources.

The City could better capitalize on the history of the City that currently remains undocumented / uncelebrated.

Consider a program to install historic markers to highlight the historic nature of St. Marys.

Seek to balance the City's need to encourage business and residential development with the preservation of natural, historic and cultural resources.



City Facilities, Services and Funding

Needs
There are numerous city-owned facilities in need of maintenance or improvements. The permitting and development review process as well as many ordinances are perceived to be difficult and discourage new business and development. The City has a high debt to income ratio and is limited in its ability to attract capital for needed improvements. Code enforcement is perceived to be inconsistent. There is a need for supervised activities and centers for youth. The property tax base is not diversified and is heavily dependent on residential property owners. Wayfinding signage is inadequate and confusing. Some areas of St. Marys do not receive water and sewer services. There is a desire for additional City services for residents of all ages.
Opportunities
Expand programming for all ages at City parks and facilities. Review the City's ordinances and permitting process to ensure that it is business friendly. Annex islands of unincorporated Camden County that currently receive City services at little to no cost. Find alternate sources for public revenues.

Resiliency

Needs
Tidal influence on the stormwater drainage system causes flooding during rain events at or near high tide. There is street flooding in downtown, which will increase as development increases and new impervious surfaces are created.

Sea level rise will exacerbate the flooding issue as high tides heights increase.

Low lying wetland areas directly east of Bartlett Street will be impacted by increasing sea levels and flooding due to high tides.

The City is vulnerable to coastal hazards, including hurricanes and associated impacts from wind and storm surge.

New FEMA Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps will be effective in November 2017, and the Base Flood Elevation has decreased in many areas of the City.

Flood insurance rates are increasing for certain property owners.

Better partnerships and coordination with the county and other agencies that address resiliency and disaster response is needed.

Opportunities

Consider integrating flood resiliency and catastrophic emergency planning with the City's efforts to beautify the downtown and waterfront areas, to encourage residential and economic development, and to update the City's Code.

Routine maintenance of the drainage system is essential.

Determination how a Stormwater Master Plan could be funded.

The development standards identified in the Coastal Stormwater Supplement can be used as guidance for future development and redevelopment.

Determine whether it is possible or feasible to provide ongoing financial and staff support for the City's Floodplain Management program.

Maintaining and/or improving the City's CRS rating will benefit some property owners.

The viability of alternative energy sources / resources (solar, wind, etc.) should be evaluated.

Implementing streetscape improvements that also include green infrastructure solutions for stormwater offers possible options for resiliency.

Cooperation with County Emergency Management should be supplemented by an expanded City plan for disaster response, recovery and redevelopment.



Military Relationship

Needs
The City's ongoing relationship with the changing military leadership is important to achieving mutual objectives for creating a healthy community. It is difficult to involve the members of the military in the St. Marys community when they are only in St. Marys for a few years. The SUBASE provides on-site services for members of the military that are often superior to similar services in St. Marys, thus competing with local businesses. The SUBASE operations can be affected by adjacent land uses in St. Marys. Look for ways to make the rail line a multi-user resource as noted in the JLUS. Provide more family-friendly activities for military members in the community, including teenagers, families, and couples.

Opportunities
Consider how the recommendations in the JLUS can be integrated into the Master Plan. Find ways to partner with the military facilities to better integrate military family lives with community beyond the school system. Continue dialogue with military leaders to open the South Gate for lunch hours.

Community Health

Needs
Food deserts exist in several areas of the City. Mental health services are inadequate to meet the needs of the community. It is difficult to attract physicians to St. Marys due to the small patient pool. Many residents of St. Marys travel to Jacksonville or Brunswick for medical services. St. Marys has an aging population that will need aging in place services. There is a lack of support centers to assist caregivers.
Opportunities
Support campus style medical developments addressing the stated needs, in collaboration with the hospital. Acknowledge the need for and support opportunities for providing healthy food and resources to underserved areas. Support businesses seeking to bring in facilities to serve seniors.



St. Marys Community Market Courtesy of VisitStMarys.com.

Technology

Needs
It is difficult for a small city to keep up with the rapid pace of changing technology. More residents are seeking greater online services from the City. There is a need to create a more effective GIS system.
Opportunities
Improvements in computer hardware and software allow the City to better utilize advances in technology to serve the public. Better use of technology can alleviate problems caused by lack of staff.

Education

Needs
Job training related to local employment options (current and future) is lacking. Life-skills training for the City's youth is not available for many of the young residents in the City.
Opportunities
Encourage local employers to work with the Board of Education and Coastal College of Georgia, Camden Center, to tailor classes & programs to their needs. Encourage nonprofit organizations, churches, foundations, etc., and the Board of Education to develop life skills and future job training for high school students.



Coastal College of Georgia, Camden Center

Transportation

Needs
Unsafe and confusing golf cart accessible designations on local roads cause safety issues.
Bicycle paths along the rail corridors are desirable.
Improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to coastal marshlands is desirable.
Resurfacing projects should, where feasible, include provisions to bicycles and golf carts, e.g. striping for bicycle lanes.
Complete bicycle network with adequate lighting is needed.
Multi-modal access from residential areas to community facilities is not adequate.
Safer crossings for access to schools are needed.
Coastal Regional Commission demand response bus service and taxi cab services are not sufficient.
Public transportation is needed from downtown St. Marys along Osborne Road to Kingsland to access services, shopping and employment centers.
Ferry service to Fernandina should be considered.
Event traffic and parking is an issue for the community and visitors.
Congestion around the schools at peak times is an issue.
Traffic speed and cut through traffic is an issue on some neighborhood roadways.
The City has several intersections with operational issues that need to be addressed as outlined in the Multi-Modal Transportation Study.
Safety at intersections, particularly near schools, is a primary focus.
Gateway signage into St. Marys along SR 40/Osborne Road needs to be enhanced.
There is limited dock space at the Waterfront and it is not boater friendly. Improvements are needed.

Opportunities

Identify appropriate golf cart routes and modify existing ordinances regarding golf cart operations.

Consider public and private ways to install charging stations for golf carts and electric vehicles.

Implement priority recommendations from the Camden County Bicycle and Pedestrian Study.

Create trails that link downtown with surrounding neighborhoods.

Consider using abandoned rail corridors and utility easements for recreational trails.

Consider ways to maximize the attractiveness of waterway trails for tourist and residents.

Consider remote parking and shuttle services to address event parking issues.

Encourage multi-modal interconnectivity for all new developments.

Identify opportunities to provide transit service to underserved populations.

Coordinate with rail companies to promote accessibility and safe crossing opportunities while ensuring efficient mobility for all modes.

Continue to coordinate with GDOT on roadway improvements, including improvements to Exit 1, and to address operational and safety issues.

Local safety projects along the Federal Highway system should be identified, coordinated with city and county officials, and submitted to the GDOT and FHA for consideration in the lump sum safety funding program.

Where City funds are available, use them as leverage to conduct feasibility studies, perform preliminary engineering/design and conduct right of way acquisition to incentivize State and federal funding participation in local safety projects.

There are school crossing safety issues that should be addressed as outlined in the Multi-Modal Transportation Study.

Assess feasibility and potential locations for additional boat dock facilities and associated improvements.

Protect evacuation routes in general, and specifically those that connect to SUBASE Kings Bay and peripheral residential areas.

Figure 9: Rendering of Beautification and Signage Improvements at St. Marys Road and Highway 40



Intersection.



Concept Drawing for St. Marys Gateway Enhancement Project, courtesy of Thomas & Hutton

Master Plan Implementation

Needs
A mechanism is needed for ensuring that the Master Plan is implemented.
Opportunities
Develop an oversight process for plan implementation

Community Work Program



7 Community Work Program

The Community Work Program (CWP) presents the specific action items designed to address each of the needs and opportunities. It is important to note that there are numerous actions items listed within this plan and that implementation of all these elements within the 10-year time frame may not be realistic. However; after much consideration, the MPSC and the City of St. Marys elected to include all recommended action items with the understanding that circumstances that currently limit options may change (e.g. future development, federal and state infrastructure programs, tax legislation, debt restructuring, etc.) and that such changes may give the City an opportunity to consider additional action items in the future. Therefore, a complete listing of desired activities and programs is included within this plan.

The CWP includes the following information for each listed action item:

⇒ Action Item: Brief description of the activity.

⇒ Time Frame: The timeframe for initiating and/or completing each action item is broken into three categories: 1) Ongoing (currently in-process) 2) Immediate (1-2 years); 3) Short-Term (2-5 years); and 4) Long-Term (5–10 years). Items identified for immediate or short-term implementation should be viewed as having a priority status.

⇒ Priority: With an understanding that the City has limited resources to dedicate to implementation of the CWP, the MPSC has assigned a priority status to each action item in an effort to assist the City with identification of the most urgent, necessary, and/or desired programs. However, it is important to recognize that all action items included herein relate to needs and opportunities identified within this Master Plan. The four priority levels are: *Current*, i.e. already in-process (C), *High* (H), *Medium* (M), and *Low* (L).

⇒ Responsible Party: Parties identified as being responsible for the implementation of the action items include City departments, agencies, and authorities. The responsible parties identified within this workplan are listed by the following acronyms:

CD - Community Development
CMO - City Manager's Office
CVB - Community Visitors Bureau
DASM - Development Authority of S.t Marys
DDA - Downtown Development Authority
EVM - Every Voice Matters
HR - Human Resources
JDA - Joint Development Authority
IT - Information Technology
MS - Main Street
PSA - Public Services Authority
PW - Public Works
SMFD - St. Marys Fire Department
SMPD - St. Marys Police Department

⇒ Potential Funding Source: This identifies the potential or recommended funding source. It may be a specific City fund or a grant/loan program.

Table 3: Community Work Program

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
Plan Implementation					
1	Establish a Comprehensive Resource Allocation and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to implement a prioritized Master Plan incorporating specified activities in the Master Plan. Plan should include all resources; financial, staff, consultant, citizen appointee utilization, equipment/facility use, maintenance and replacement.	Immediate	H	CD, PW, SMPD, Finance, HR, SMFD & CMO	General Fund
Economic Development					
2	Implement planned downtown improvements in accordance with the CIP.	Ongoing	C	PW & MS	General Fund, DOT, 319 Grant
3	Streamline business licensing and permitting process.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund
4	Consider and budget for business incentives including tax abatement, reduced/waived fees, etc.	Short-Term	M	DDA	General Fund, DDA, Grants
5	Review and revise the existing permit and license fee structure, including alcohol licensing, to support new and existing restaurants.	Immediate	M	CD & CMO	General Fund
6	Incentivize the reuse or redevelopment of existing commercial/industrial buildings over the development of new properties, where appropriate.	Short-Term	M	CD, DDA & DASM	General Fund
7	Better utilize a revolving loan fund for economic development.	Long-Term	L	DDA & DASM	General Fund, DDA, Grants

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
8	Create a plan to revitalize mid-town. This plan should include events and activities in this area to increase activity, create demand, and foster investment.	Short-Term	H	CD, DDA & DASM	DDA, General Fund, Grants
9	Expand the DDA façade grant program through matching funds.	Ongoing	C	DDA	General Fund, Grants
10	Continue to annually prioritize the many suggestions of the RSVP and include the most appropriate and financially feasible suggestions in its annual workplan.	Ongoing	C	MS & DDA	DDA
11	Identify what steps the City could take to recruit eco-tourism businesses to St. Marys.	Long-Term	L	MS & DDA	General Fund
12	Develop partnerships to support historical tourism and related businesses.	Long-Term	L	DDA	General Fund
13	Work with the owner(s) of the Kings Bay Village to update and redevelop the site.	Long-Term	M	CD	General Fund
14	Work with public and private entities to develop the aquaculture industry in St. Marys including identifying harvesting locations and support facilities including the Weed Street location.	Long-Term	M	DASM & Volunteers	Donations, Coastal Incentive Grant (CIG) grant
15	Work to maximize docking opportunities along the St. Marys Waterfront, including the Gateway Marina project.	Immediate	H	DDA, CD & PW	Grants

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
16	Update the Economic Diversification of Camden County Strategic Report and consider development of a new countywide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.	Long-Term	L	CMO, Camden County, JDA	General Fund
17	Evaluate and implement a partnership of the City of St. Marys and SUBASE Kings Bay to initiate limited gate opening and operation.	Immediate	H	CMO	TBD
Land Use					
18	Perform an evaluation of all relevant ordinance (signs, landscaping, tree, etc.) and determine if updates are needed to support the goals and visions of this plan.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund
19	Adopt a formal landscaping ordinance to improve the aesthetics and stormwater design of new development and redevelopment.	Immediate	M	CD	General Fund
20	Codify the recommendations from the JLUS study through creation of an overlay district within 3,000 feet of the Subbase.	Ongoing	C	CD	General Fund & Department of Defense (DOD) Grant
21	Develop design standards for Midtown Renaissance commercial corridor and incorporate in zoning code.	Ongoing	C	CD	
22	Add specific family friendly entertainment uses to appropriate zoning classifications.	Ongoing	C	CD	
23	Incentivize infill residential development and allow for mixed use in downtown St. Marys.	Ongoing	C	CD	
24	Create form based zoning in downtown St. Marys.	Ongoing	C	CD	
25	Reduce minimum lot sizes in downtown.	Ongoing	C	CD	
26	Create upper-story housing incentives in downtown.	Ongoing	C	CD	

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
27	Provide RV opportunities (storage and parks) as special use in defined areas.	Ongoing	C	CD	
28	Perform a market study for the St. Marys Airport property to determine the highest and best use and to establish appropriate zoning.	Ongoing	C	CD & DASM	DOD Grant
29	Implement a blight tax on properties to encourage compliance with property maintenance standards.	Immediate	H	CD	General Fund
30	Hire such personnel as may be needed to inspect and enforce ordinances and regulations implementing the plan.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund
Housing					
31	Utilize innovative planning, zoning and funding solutions to provide affordable, quality housing for eligible civilian and military households.	Ongoing	C	CD	General Fund
32	Support Georgia Initiative for Community Housing program by providing board member(s) to increase opportunities to implement housing initiatives and further affordable housing development.	Immediate	M	CD	General Fund
Natural and Cultural Resources					
33	Seek grants for trails and other features that provide low-impact access to the coastal environment.	Immediate	H	CD	General Fund
34	Develop partnerships that enhance St. Marys heritage such as oral histories, pictures, etc. and find innovative ways to exhibit those projects to residents and visitors.	Long-Term	L	Volunteers, CVB	General Fund
35	Review and update the City's codes and development standards to ensure that future development does not adversely impact the environment.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
36	Adopt the Coastal Stormwater Supplement to reduce flooding and ensure that stormwater runoff does not cause pollution of the coastal marshlands.	Short-Term	H	CD	General Fund
37	Develop a long-term plan for Orange Hall that will ensure its restoration and continued operation.	Ongoing	C	City Council	General Fund, Charitable Donations
City Facilities, Services and Funding					
38	The Police Department should develop strategies to strengthen the community outreach program.	Ongoing	C	MPD	General Fund
39	Create a Parks & Recreational Services Master Plan with the PSA and regional partners based on a regional market assessment that takes into account SUBASE programming and interest to expand youth activities.	Short-Term	M	CD, PSA, Camden County	General Fund
40	Implement a comprehensive wayfinding signage plan.	Long-Term	H	CD	Grant
41	Update Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Master plans. These plans should consider the built-out conditions that would potentially result from the proposed zoning ordinance updates.	Long-Term	M	PW	W&S Fund
42	Apply for WaterFirst designation so that the City will be more competitive for grants and eligible for a discount on Georgia Environmental Finance Agency (GEFA) loans interest rates.	Ongoing	C	PW	W&S Fund
43	Consider instituting Accident and Incident Recovery Fees for emergency response services performed by the City's Fire Department.	Immediate	H	CMO	General Fund
44	Conduct a staffing needs assessment for all city departments.	Ongoing	H	HR	General Fund

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
45	Develop a plan to annex islands of unincorporated Camden County that currently receive City services at little to no cost.	Long-Term	H	CMO	General Fund
46	Update and modernize programming at the Senior Center to significantly increase the number of seniors served daily.	Immediate	H	Senior Center	General Fund
47	Perform a financial assessment of the City's water and sewer debt to determine if refinancing is a viable option.	Ongoing	C	CMO	General Fund
48	Work with Camden County, Kingsland, Woodbine, the JDA, and the Chamber of Commerce to effectively market the next SPLOST referendum.	Immediate	H	CMO	General Fund
49	Consider the use of LED lighting to improve visibility in downtown neighborhoods and promote long-term cost savings and energy efficiency.	Long-Term	L	PW & City Council	General Fund
50	Improve communications with citizens through regular and meaningful updates to the website and Facebook, increased use of online services and expanded use of GIS. Develop alternative methods of reaching citizens without technology access.	Immediate	H	All Departments	General Fund
51	Explore options to correct the current connectivity issues in established areas including Brant Creek and Shadowlawn.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund
52	Develop and implement a transparent reporting apparatus and review process for St. Marys' boards and committees, which provides City Council and management a functional oversight system for tracking and auditing City priorities, policies, programs and projects.	Immediate	H	City Council	N/A
53	Consider adoption of a stormwater utility to fund needed stormwater improvements.	Short-Term	H	City Council	Reserves

	Action Item	Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
Resiliency					
54	Prioritize and install tide gates/flaps on stormwater outfalls below mean high tide	Short-Term	M	PW	SW Utility
55	Acquire and permanently protect low-lying wetland areas as a flood storage areas.	Ongoing	C	CD	SW Utility
56	Install green infrastructure (GI)/low impact development (LID) practices to address stormwater runoff quantity and quality.	Ongoing	C	PW & DDA	SW Utility
57	Develop a prioritized CIP for making stormwater repairs recommended in the Resiliency Study and Stormwater Master Plan.	Immediate	H	PW	SW Utility
58	Expand current drainage system maintenance program.	Short-Term	M	PW	SW Utility
59	Participate in a countywide resiliency plan that is consistent with the County Plan and National Incident Management System for disaster response, recovery and redevelopment.	Short-Term	H	SMPD, SMFD & CMO	CIG
60	Continue coordinated emergency management response with SUBASE Kings Bay and Camden County.	Ongoing	C	SMFD & SMPD	General Fund
61	Use NOAA sea level study findings in future required updates to the Camden County Joint Comprehensive Plan	Ongoing	C	CD	General Fund
62	Maximize benefits of the Community Rating System program to minimize impact of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood insurance rate increases on property owners by achieving a CRS rating of 5.	Ongoing	C	CD	General Fund
Military Relationship					
63	Continue to implement the JLUS recommendations.	Ongoing	C	All Departments	General Fund

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
64	Work with the Navy and local and State development authorities to enhance usage of the rail access as part of the Mill Site and airport property development while assuring that sufficient safety and traffic concerns are met.	Ongoing	C	CMO	General Fund
65	Work with SUBASE Kings Bay and regional partners to cooperatively address additional traffic within the navigable channels.	Ongoing	C	City, Coast Guard, & USACOE	General Fund
66	Study feasibility of SUBASE fence line relocation to address Cumberland Harbor tower.	Long-Term	L	Joint Land Use Study Committee	DOD Grant
67	Ensure that development on the previous Mill Site and at the airport are coordinated with the SUBASE leadership.	Ongoing	C	CMO	General Fund
Community Health					
68	Determine the feasibility of recruiting one or more grocery stores to underserved areas	Long-Term	L	DDA	General Fund
69	Support efforts of the local hospital and nonprofit agencies working to increase mental health services in Camden County.	Long-Term	M	CD	General Fund
70	Develop partnerships with regional health organizations to develop trail network.	Short-Term	M	DDA & CD	General Fund
71	Investigate a mobile farmers market program that utilizes a food truck to provide opportunities to purchase healthy foods in underserved areas.	Long-Term	H	CVB & MS	General Fund
Technology					
72	Make public buildings, parks, and city facilities Wi-Fi enabled.	Ongoing	C	IT	General Fund

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
73	Explore the option for joint ventures for technologies (consolidated IT) with other cities and Camden County.	Ongoing	C	CMO	General Fund
74	Update the City's hardware and software for efficiency and security.	Ongoing	C	IT	General Fund
75	Expand the City's GIS capabilities and services.	Ongoing	C	CD &CMO	General Fund
Education					
76	Work with Kingsland, Camden County, and State officials to support construction of the planned technical college in Kingsland.	Short-Term	M	CD	SPLOST
77	Consider the possibility of using city operated facilities and finding partners to house a supervised and structured community center for youth that can provide entertainment and life-skills training.	Short-Term	H	CD	General Fund
Transportation					
78	Modify existing golf cart ordinance to meet the goals outlined in the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund
79	Develop specific golf cart regulations and education materials that allow for use on designated streets.	Immediate	M	CD	General Fund
80	Update design standards and development ordinances to address community interconnectivity as development occurs.	Immediate	H	CD	General Fund
81	Implement the Gateway landscaping plan for St. Marys Road at Exit 1.	Ongoing	C	CMO	LMIG
82	Review and update 2005 Camden County Bicycle and Pedestrian Study.	Ongoing	C	CD & Bicycle Committee	General Fund, Grants

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
85	Identify and map all known City rights of way and easements.	Ongoing	C	CD	General Fund
86	Identify funding for implementation of Tabby Trail.	Short-Term	H	CD & Bicycle Committee	Grant Fund
87	Consider SR 40/Osborne Road improvements, including implementation of raised and landscaped median, improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, wayfinding signage, and landscaping.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund, GDOT, FTA
88	Explore alternative funding sources and options with the County, the CRC, private transportation agencies (university, hospital, SUBASE, etc.), or private rideshare providers to provide alternative transportation in underserved areas.	Immediate	H	PSA & EVM	General Fund
89	Coordinate with GDOT on safety and operational issues recommended in the Multi- Modal Transportation Study	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund
90	Perform gap and accessibility analysis to address and correct crossing safety issues at St. Marys Middle School.	Ongoing	C	GDOT & PW	General Fund/ SPLOST
91	Upgrade crossings and access to Crooked River, Mary Lee Clark, and Sugar Mill Elementary Schools, as outlined in the Multi- Modal Transportation Study.	Long-Term	M	CD	General Fund /SPLOST
92	Upgrade intersection of St. Marys Road and SR 40/Osborne Road to incorporate Gateway elements.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund/ SPLOST
93	Consider local safety projects for submittal to GDOT for funding through the lump sum safety program.	Long-Term	M	CD	GDOT
94	Consider participation in a multi-jurisdictional Camden County Long Range Transportation Plan.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund

Action Item		Time Frame	Priority	Potential Task Leader	Potential Funding Source
95	Adopt access management techniques (i.e. inter-parcel access roads, and corridor planning) to maintain Level of Service for limited access state routes (under SUBASE review), while providing property owners and City tax digest the highest and best use of property.	Short-Term	M	CD	General Fund