

Land Use Survey Report

Georgetown County



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Introduction

Georgetown County Planning Department officially opened the Land Use Survey the week of November 15th of 2021 and closed the survey on January 19th of 2022. In total, the office received 1,852 responses. The majority of responses were received online through the county website or use of the QR code created. The survey was run through a service called SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is an easy and convenient website that allows data collection and analysis all in one location. The questions in the survey were oriented to allow residents to talk about what features about the county they most enjoy, their most pressing concerns for the county and their community, and how improvements can be made in the county and in their own neighborhoods.

Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to collect the most information possible from residents based on what they think, is the best possible use of land in their community and for the county. These responses will be used as a starting point for the draft of the Land Use element for the Comprehensive Plan for the county. The Land Use Element deals with the development characteristics of the land and considers existing and future land use by categories including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forestry, mining, public and quasi-public, recreation, parks, open space, and vacant or undeveloped land. The element is one part of the County's Comprehensive Plan which is a policy document that guides future growth and decision

making in the County. It is important to note that the survey serves as a kick-off to the public input process. Responses provided will be used to generate discussion at future public input sessions/work sessions. The 1,852 responses given are a sample of the 60,000 plus citizens of Georgetown County and reflect those who took the time to respond to the survey request.

Data Analysis

The multiple-choice or single-choice answers were placed into graphs and displayed to help show data trends to understand the wants and needs of respondents. A breakdown comparison of location was also used to help understand what different communities are hoping to see happen in their community in the next 20 years. The free-response questions were harder to analyze and display as data. Between questions 18 and 21 there were over 4,352 different responses. For each question, similar words and phrases were connected to each other to create different categories. SurveyMonkey allows for the grouping method, tagging, each tag is compiled of various responses that all fall within a similar topic. There is a margin of error for this because some responses are left untagged due to the lack of connection or relationship to these categories. These untagged responses make up the smallest percentages of the collected answers.

Demographics

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked questions regarding their age, location of residency, how long they've been a resident, housing type, if they own or rent, how long they must commute to work, their location, and if they were employed in the county. The majority of responses came from the Waccamaw Neck covering 69.60% of total responses. The least number of responses came from residents of Andrews at 0.88% of responses (13 people) Residents from outside of the county made up 3.39% of responses. Residents of the City of Georgetown made up 8.80% of responses. Rural Georgetown residents made up 7.38% of responses and areas around the City of Georgetown made up 9.95% of total responses. The length of residency varied with the top three responses being 21-40 years (23.23%), 11-20 years (22.89%), and 5 years or less (21.73%). 59.85% of the respondents were 61 years of age or older. The next highest age bracket was 51 to 60 years of age at 20.71% of respondents. The lowest age range recorded was one response in the 19 years of age and younger. 46.01% of the respondents said they were not currently employed¹. The Waccamaw Neck had the highest amount of employment location responses at 23.66% of responses. The majority of respondents said they either do not commute to work (54.23%) or their commute is 15 minutes or less (26.11%). 88.30% of respondents said that they live in a single-family home. 95.98% of respondents own their homes.

****Important information is bolded or underlined****

¹ Not currently employed includes people who are retired.

Multiple Choice

This section will look at breaking down questions and looking at the top responses and any variance amongst different communities.

Question one asked what three things are most important to them about Georgetown county. **The majority of respondents said that natural resources were the most important thing to them (96.03%).** Historical and cultural resources were the second-highest and recreational activities were the third highest. Variations between communities were very limited showing that the majority of people agreed that natural resources were most important and recreational activities and historic and cultural resources interchanged for second and third.

Question two asked about the importance of various items to Georgetown County residents, including quality affordable housing, commercial opportunities (i.e., shopping, restaurants), county services and public safety, culture, history and arts, parks and recreation, infrastructure, job opportunities / better-paying jobs, preserving open spaces/ conservation/ wetlands/ natural resource protection, preserving agricultural land and maintaining rural character, maintaining the character of current neighborhoods, and maintaining and improving hurricane evacuation routes. Answers throughout this question remained similar in response from each community. **The majority of responses found all these topics important or very important to them.**

Question three asked which type of development does the County either needs more, the same, or less of. The types of developments to pick between were as follows commercial/ office developments, industrial/ light manufacturing developments, mixed-use developments (commercial and residential in the same development), duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes, multi-family developments (more than 4 families in the same building), rural residential development, single-family residential development, and lastly accessory dwellings (a garage with an apartment on top or a smaller residential dwelling on the property). Between various communities, there are some variation responses. **The overwhelming response from people in the Waccamaw Neck was less development for all types except rural residential developments, of which the same amount was the highest category at 38.35%. Residents of the City of Georgetown and Andrews tended to respond in the same way. Residents of rural Georgetown, areas around the City of Georgetown, and outside of Georgetown County follow similar trends.**

Questions four and five both ask about what areas of the county should focus on regarding businesses. Four address what urban areas should focus on and five looks at what rural areas should focus on. **All the various communities were similar in response to question four with all of them having small businesses, recreation and open space, and single-family housing in their top three.** Andrews said that tourism should be focused in urban areas at the 3rd highest choice. In response to question five, there are similar trends between the communities. **The top three choices were recreation and open space, agricultural development, and single-family housing.** Andrews and the City of Georgetown viewed industrial development as important in the rural areas.

Question six asks to rate the current zoning regulations in certain areas and determine if they are too strict, adequate, not strict enough, or other. **The majority of people thought that the current zoning rules are not strict enough.** Overall, the county percentages match the same trends that the communities followed.

Question seven addresses the protection of natural resources and how important they are to the community that respondents live in. **Overall, all of the different choices given were deemed extremely important to the overall community.**

Question eight looks at where future housing in the county should be located. **The majority of respondents voted that future housing should either be in the City of**

Georgetown and surrounding area or in rural Georgetown. The city and surrounding area received 61.11% of responses and rural Georgetown received 68.29%.

Question nine asks how much attention the County should give to certain land use issues in the future. Respondents were asked to determine if it needs considerably more, somewhat more, same amount, somewhat less, and considerably less attention. **From the total responses, it shows that protecting natural resources had the highest percentage of considerably more responses (62.85%). The next highest was the maintenance of neighborhood character (41.48%) and then walkability/other modes of transportation (38.62%). All of the communities varied in what they thought needed more or less attention.**

Question ten asks what techniques residents would like to see better implemented in their communities. The total and various community responses were extremely similar. **The techniques that were found in the top lists for all sections of the county were, zoning regulations to protect natural features (80.31%), brownfield redevelopment (56.77%), pedestrian-oriented development (51.37%), establishing growth boundaries around pre-existing urban areas (49.38%), and agricultural preservation (41.99%).**

Question eleven asks what types of commercial/industrial land uses that would you like to see in your community. The overall data is a little misleading, **the vast majority of responses said that no more development is required (50.41%)**, while the community breakdowns show a more realistic view of what people would like to see in their community. **The Waccamaw Neck overwhelmingly voted no more needed. Other communities outside Georgetown County (40.82%) and areas around the City of Georgetown (40.91%) voted highest no more is needed. While Andrews, City of Georgetown, and Rural Georgetown would like to see more technology industry, commercial and light manufacturing.**

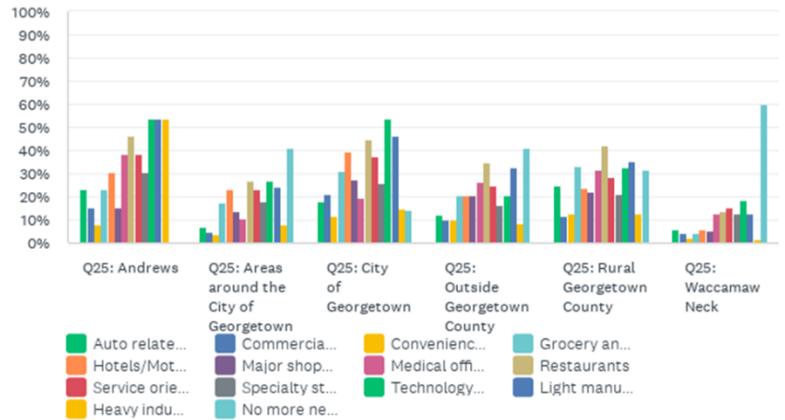


Figure 2.11: This figure shows the response from question eleven on what type of commercial/industry development they would like to see in their community.

Question twelve asks what type of housing residents would want to see in their part of the County. Similar to question eleven, **a large majority of responses said no more is needed. Other top choices in the total were detached single-family houses on a lot less than half an acre (18.56%), independent living for seniors (18.91%), and residential sites larger or equal to half-acre (25.13%).** The Waccamaw Neck (62.28%), Rural Georgetown County (35.24%), Outside of the County (36.73%), and areas around the City of Georgetown (39.73%) all had no more is needed in the highest spot. Andrews said they needed more residential sites larger or equal to a half-acre in size (53.85%). The City of Georgetown’s highest choice was townhouses/apartments (45.31%).

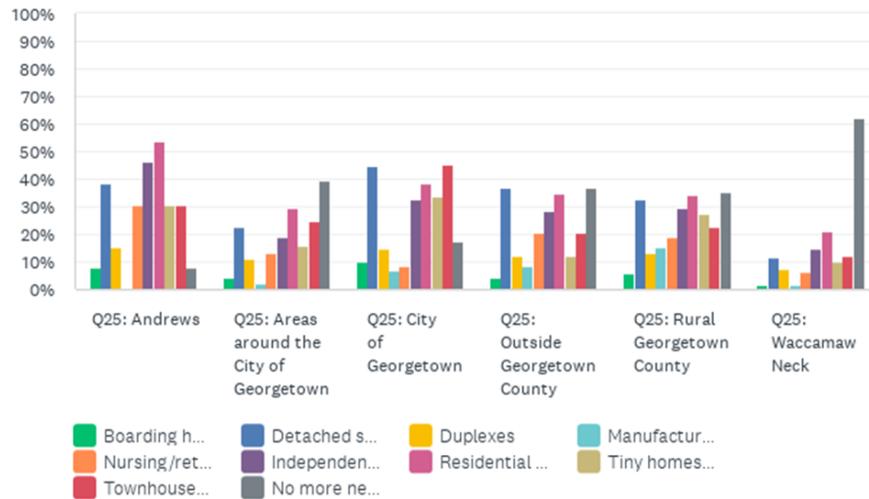


Figure 2.12: This figure shows communities responses to what types of new residential development it needs. The data is displayed in percentages to prevent the graph from being distorted.

Question thirteen asked about what community members would like to see in their open spaces. Respondents could make three choices. **Waterways and Wetlands (75.84%), Walking paths and trails (75.21%), and Woodlands (52.37%) all appeared in the top three of each community.** Passive parks were next highest and appeared in many of the community's top choices (33.00%). These four choices were the most popular uses of open space in all the communities.

Questions fifteen and sixteen both look at how and where future population growth should be. Fifteen asks how the county should accommodate the future population growth through development. **The top three responses were, to encourage development in vacant and under-utilized property in already developed areas of the County (58.90%), develop rural areas of the County (47.43%), and cluster development that sets aside land for open space and conservation (36.93%).** Sixteen looks at where would the respondent prefer to accommodate future population growth. **When given various locations in the county, Rural Georgetown County (36.24%), areas around the City of Georgetown (26.38%), and Andrews (15.72%).** Were the top three for the total responses to each question. The community responses were all very similar to the top three in each question.

Figure 2.13: On the left is the total responses for question thirteen and on the right are the responses for each community. The overall trends from the left graph can be seen in the one on the right. This shows that all respondents generally agreed on use of open spaces.

Gentrification

Questions seventeen and eighteen address the topic of gentrification in Georgetown County. Question seventeen asked about concerns within the community regarding gentrification. The lowest choice was extremely concerned at 17.34% of respondents. The second lowest was very concerned at 20.55% of respondents. Then not concerned at 30.51% of respondents and the highest somewhat concerned at 31.60% of respondents. Question eighteen asks how you would address gentrification in your community and what are the best ways for outreach. The various categories were created, and the percentage of responses was untagged (38.23%), community engagement (33.88%), government support (22.45%), and education (15.18%).

Untagged response:

“Gentrification in my area is in the reverse. Pawleys Island was an upscale community. When Tract Builder was allowed to replace individual custom home builders it started to decline”- Georgetown County Resident

Tagged response:

“Not limiting the number of residences and businesses but rather encouraging growth that adheres to the culture of our county through strict exterior requirements. Supporting festivals and events that celebrate our culture and history. Put an immediate stop to the "I moved here now shut the gates and don't let anyone else in" mentality. Create affordable housing so

that the longtime locals are not priced out of their homes and the workforce can live where they work. Create employment opportunities for those that live here and are not retired”- a concerned community member

“Gentrification that displaces people who have lived in a community all their lives is a very bad practice. How about the county just make life better for those who live in poorer areas by investing in projects that repair or rebuild housing for the same residents it seeks to displace. People who have little or no income should not have to live in homes that have floors falling in, AC that doesn't work, roofs that leak, windows that are broken, septic system that don't work or have to fight mosquitos and stench because the ditches designed to carry water off their property stopped draining years ago---as in Browns Ferry”. – a concerned community member

“Focus should be on Education. Work with the people in the area to see what they say their needs are. If they want improved quality of life, find out what that means to them”. – A concerned community member

Community concern, Improvements, and Vision

Questions nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one cover the top three concerns, improvements for the county for the next 10-20 years, and a mission statement. Even though these questions received thousands of responses many followed similar trends.

Question nineteen looked at the top three concerns for the community during the next 10-20 years. There was a total of nine categories created from responses: crime, education, housing, infrastructure, jobs, land preservation, natural disasters, public works, and urbanization. **The top three responses looked at Infrastructure (51.97%), Urbanization (44.40%), and Land Preservation (36.31%).**

“We are surrounded by waterways and wetlands--we must make sure that development is ecologically friendly and sustainable. Housing needs of the workforce and residents--not retirees from other places--must be prioritized. Social services, housing efforts, and education must receive better funding to make Georgetown County a good community to live in.”- a concerned community member

“1.) We don't have the combination of industry with above average paying jobs that will sustain our community in the long term. I would like to see our children and their children be able to find jobs here and stay and grow here. We need younger families who will grow with our community. 2.) Opening and Closing of retail and small businesses- In most cases it is because we are still a very transient community-dependent on tourism and retirement relocation. Business is still higher in the spring/summer. Fall and winter business falls - people are laid off. We need to have some industry that brings workers and their families who will help sustain our retail, service businesses, and other small businesses. 3.) If we do not find a way to offer more affordable housing our community will dry up and will not thrive- I am not talking about HUD housing (although we need some of this too) - I am talking about a more diverse population along the Waccamaw Neck where we have teachers, policemen, EMS workers, nurses,

retail/restaurant/accommodation employees who can find a home close to where they work”. A concerned citizen

“Infrastructure is a real concern. Population growth is outpacing road capacity. I'm concerned about evacuation routes I'm concerned for the health of our waterways and ecosystems. Construction is booming. I would like to see green landscaping required in development codes. Requiring native trees/plants to be used and possible zero-scaping. Less grass and fewer chemicals leeching into our waterways. Improving school resources and opportunities for our youth and families. I'd like to see Georgetown county # 1 in the state for education at all levels”.
A concerned citizen

Question twenty looked at the top three improvements for the county. These improvements had similarities to question nineteen. There were seven categories created from the responses, better recreation, improvement of infrastructure, land protection, public works, quality of life, sustainable development, and urban redevelopment. **The top three response categories were improvement of infrastructure (46.94%), sustainable development (39.30%), and land protection (38.82%).**

“Legislation to protect natural resources, green spaces, and waterways. Legislation to prevent overcrowding and overpopulation and to limit further development in the Waccamaw area. This would help prevent flooding and protect our waterways. Stricter water standards to improve water quality”

“1. More affordable housing 2. More commercial, industrial, and manufacturing in Georgetown County 3. Alternate forms of transportation” - a concerned community member

Question twenty-one asked respondents to provide a mission statement of how the county should look in 20 years. Four tags were created from the responses to the questions: **preservation of natural beauty (40.47%), improvement of life (28.87%), maintaining the small town (20.95%), and preservation of history (8.63%).**

“Georgetown County is a role model for sustainable development and community resilience with a thriving economy built upon responsible stewardship of the natural resources, community character, and cultural heritage and remains committed to transparency & good governance by seeking proactive solutions for the future of all citizens. The county has transformed is economic base and serves as a 'green hub' that supplies the entire Grands Strand. Because of the leadership in the county recognizing natural resources are the driver of its tourism-based economic engine and adopted green infrastructure and resource protection to improve community resilience and reduced the carbon footprint in all county operations” - a proud community member

“I envision Georgetown County as a community where young people can thrive and grow in their hometowns instead of being forced to move away to find opportunities, families can find security in their neighborhoods, school systems, and careers, and retirees can enjoy the years

they worked hard to create all together, altogether while honoring the history and culture of our county”. – a hopeful County resident

“Our vision for the Waccamaw Neck preserves and protects its pristine beaches, waterways, trees and wetlands, rich history and low country charm. We need planned growth that is sustainable, consistent with our infrastructure, and emphasizes development of low-density single-family residences and small local businesses in keeping with the unique character of our community. High density and urban development trends are not appropriate or desirable for the Waccamaw Neck”. – Waccamaw Neck residents over 50 responses resembled this.

Demographics

As the demographic information shows, the vast majority of respondents came from the Waccamaw Neck area. Residents of this area are clearly invested in this process and in the outcome of the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This area has experienced significant growth in the past 20 years so it is expected these residents would have concerns about the future regulation of development having witnessed such growth in and around their neighborhoods. Many residents of other areas of the County have not experienced that level of growth and despite concerted efforts by staff and other community members, the percentage of respondents from these areas was much smaller.

Well over half of the respondents are over 61 years of age, own their own single-family home, and are not currently employed. This speaks to the large volume of retirees in Georgetown County as well as their interest and investment in the land use process. The aging population will have an effect on the type of future development in the County as well as create future demand for more healthcare and service-related industries.

Natural Resources

Respondents made it very clear that the natural resources of the County are highly valued. The preservation of waterways, beaches, and open spaces was consistently found at the top of respondents' choices. A major point of emphasis from the survey is the need for better zoning and other regulatory protections for these areas. Based on the survey, Georgetown County citizens value their open space and want to see it protected. Recent flooding events and natural disasters in the County have resulted in a demand for more strict regulations in these areas.

Growth

Questions regarding growth were met with resistance from residents especially on the Waccamaw Neck where development pressure has been the greatest. As a result, when asked about where future growth should take place, the focus was on areas around the City and rural Georgetown County. Gentrification was included in this survey to address the potential consequences of growth in areas of the County that have not experienced it before and the effect that growth may have on existing communities. It is clear from the survey responses that many respondents were unfamiliar with the topic. There is a clear need for more education and discussion of this issue.

The survey responses indicated a desire for more zoning regulations and restrictions on growth especially in regard to the protection of natural areas. Neighborhood character and a desire for walkability also ranked high among respondents. Walking trails are also ranked among the types of desirable open spaces.

In addition to growth in areas outside of the City and rural areas, the survey indicates support for the redevelopment of existing vacant or underutilized areas. These sites would not require an extension of infrastructure and would in many cases use existing impervious areas for new development thus preventing further removal of green spaces.

Rural Residents

Respondents in rural communities had similar responses throughout the survey. Their answers consistently point to the desire for an increase in the overall quality of life. For the mission statements question, this was either the highest or next highest type of response after the preservation of natural beauty. Respondents focused on better-paying jobs, better education, increased service industry businesses such as restaurants, and more affordable housing for workers. Light manufacturing was also mentioned. The growth of industry and housing in these areas will require improved infrastructure which was another need mentioned by residents. These areas also all agreed that future population growth should be supported either in their own communities or in other rural parts of the county.

City Residents

City residents also referred to an increase in quality of life in their responses. There seems to be a repeated request for the redevelopment of industrial sites and underused vacant areas as well as a need to replace these areas with affordable housing to bring in younger residents. Respondents of the City also said that they would like to see a more tech-oriented industry and light manufacturing. City residents also do not want to lose the history and culture of their historic area. Even though many of them want to see the progression and success of the County overall they do not want us to lose sight of the rich history and culture of Georgetown.

Waccamaw Neck Residents

Conversely, residents of the Waccamaw Neck would much rather see growth in other areas of the County and would also like to see industrial and commercial growth in other areas as well. The Waccamaw Neck also was the largest supporter of conservation and preservation of natural resources. The respondents of the Neck were clear about their desire to slow the growth of the area to prevent overwhelming demands on existing infrastructure especially in terms of stormwater and traffic.