

WAYNE COUNTY COMMUNITY VISION

Wayne County is a bustling and growing rural county of almost 30,000 persons in the lower coastal plain of Southeast Georgia. It is an expanding center of industry and commerce nestled amongst a verdant sea of pine trees, abundant water resources, and an outdoor paradise. Wayne County is a treasure rich in natural and human history with outstanding community facilities and amenities which contribute abundantly to an excellent environment for location of commerce and residential living.

The entire northeast border of Wayne County is the Altamaha River. The Altamaha River has long been important to the history of the New World, the founding of the United States, as well as the establishment of the colony and state of Georgia. Its diverse and rich flora and fauna, extensive wetlands, unusual and ecological resources have led the Nature Conservancy to designate it as one of the last 75 great places of the world. Wayne County and the Altamaha River have been important to Native Americans, Spanish missionaries, and early British and colonial settlements. The Sansavilla Bluffs were home to important homes and trading posts of Mary Musgrove, Captain Alleck, and others as well as several early forts in Georgia history. The Altamaha was truly the frontier of the United States and Georgia from the 16th to 19th centuries. It was also home to the county's first town, Williamsburg. There is historic and archaeological evidence that the Altamaha and Wayne County were home to skirmishes in most, if not all, of the wars fought on U.S. soil through the Civil War. The Altamaha River also played an important component in opening the vast pine forests of Wayne County and other portions of the Wiregrass Georgia interior to the naval stores and lumber industries.

The current municipalities of Wayne County, Jesup, and Screven date from the establishment as rail stations on the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad, or in Odum's case, as a stop on the later established Macon and Brunswick Railroad, which also ran through Jesup. The establishment of these railroads opened transportation access to larger markets for turpentine and lumber products from Wayne County. By the early 20th century, Jesup was known as a railway

center of South Georgia with over 50 trains per day making passenger stops. Today the CSX and Norfolk Southern Railways still cross with active rail lines in Jesup, which also remains a stop on the East Coast routes of Amtrak. The 20th century location of U.S. Highways 84, 301, and 341 through the county provided further stimulus for growth and easy access to larger markets and ports in Savannah, Brunswick, and Jacksonville.

Wayne County wants to build its future on its location, transportation resources, vast pine forests, excellent community facilities, abundant natural resources, and rich history. The community sees itself as a rural growth center of compatible industrial and retail growth and development set amongst a tapestry of retained natural beauty and a rural landscape which invites vibrant tourism and additional residential development to the outstanding quality of life. The community, whose first comprehensive plan was entitled “Evergreen Tomorrow,” and its growth would truly be green in many respects, from the quality of the growth, the type of growth, and the backdrop beauty of the pine trees.

The pine tree which has played such an important part in the past development of Wayne County and its current economy will continue a pivotal role. The community is home to one of the world’s largest producers of cellulosic fluff, as well as other related industries, and one of the leading producers of green-treated yellow-pine lumber, all reliant on the vast pine forests. There are also emerging new markets for the pine trees as a component in wood pellet and biofuel industries. Wayne County will be a central player and location for industries utilizing the pine tree.

The pine forests and the Altamaha River and other water resources of the County, including Lake Grace, also offer important opportunities for tourism and outdoor adventure. The community already hosts fishing tournaments, and advertises forests teeming with wildlife to sportsman and outdoor buffs. The McMillan Creek Greenway completion will add another attractive gem to this treasure. The community envisions further enhancement to this promotion and protection of natural resources. There would be bike trails and nature trails available connecting the towns, Lake Grace, and the Altamaha River. The Sansavilla Bluffs would be under state or national protection with interpreted invitation to exploring and understanding the

important history. There would also be better recreational and park access to the Altamaha River located in Wayne County.

Jesup will continue to be the center of commercial, governmental, social, educational, and civic life in the county. There will be additional retail, hospitality, and service development to support the growing population and tourist trade. Downtown Jesup will be a thriving retail and service center with revitalized buildings and shops. The Jesup Railroad Depot will be a rehabilitated magnet and architectural gem serving an active and expanded Amtrak passenger service stop. This will further enhance Jesup as a rail fan destination, and add an additional facet and outlet for Wayne County tourism.

Wayne County is home to a new, 130 bed hospital constructed in 2007. It is home to one of the largest regional municipal solid waste landfills in Georgia. The community also has an award-winning recycling center and program. It has relatively new schools, and is home to a growing Altamaha Technical College. The William A. Zorn Airport is a Level III facility with continually improving facilities. The community will continue to upgrade and improve its facilities and infrastructure. It will have first-class facilities at the frontier of development for a rural community. It will be a regional leader and example.

Odum and Screven will continue to be growing, thriving small towns with excellent facilities and services, operating schools, and attractive residential and other development compatible with existing development. New growth will respect the history and character of the towns and be of like scale and size, while appropriately serving the populace. Facilities will be upgraded and expanded as needed to continue and enhance the small-town quality of life.

In sum, Wayne County will, much as in its early history, be the frontier of growth in rural Southeast Georgia, making new history to be emulated and admired. Growth will be of high quality, with intense development concentrated around Jesup and other designated areas, but all respective, compatible, and complementary to the outstanding natural beauty and history of the county. Location, transportation access, pine forests, and the Altamaha River will continue to be important factors and components in future growth and development of Wayne County as history repeats, but in differing aspects.