

SEEING SAVANNAH  
THROUGH A RACIAL  
EQUITY LENS

2022 REPORT





# SEEING SAVANNAH THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS

---

## Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 4
What Does the Racial Equity Lens Reveal?	
Criminal Justice	Page 5
Economic Empowerment and Wealth Development	Page 10
Education	Page 13
Environmental Justice	Page 15
Health	Page 17



# YEAR II REAL TASK FORCE REPORT TO THE SAVANNAH MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

The REAL Task Force completed **Phase One** of its mission to be an advocate for racial equity in Savannah by producing a report, [Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens](#). The document is an analysis with recommendations to address the racial disparities found through the work of six committees that studied criminal justice, economic empowerment and wealth development, education, environmental justice, health, and housing. The work of the committees was presented for community input at a Saturday event (July 31, 2021). Parent University facilitated the *Data Walk REAL Talk*. The event was designed to engage citizens in reviewing and discussing the data collected by the committees and ranking the top ten data points according to the importance to their lives. The event was held at the Kingdom Life Fellowship with ninety-seven registered participants and ten facilitators. A summary of the feedback from the participants was included in the Report (pp. 84-87).

The REAL Report was presented to the Mayor, City Council and City Manager on October 28, 2021. The City Manager supports the role of city government in increasing racial equity beginning with an evaluation of the city's bureaucracy. A position for a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer was created in the City's 2022 budget. The City Manager filled this position in June 2022. REAL will collaborate with the DEI officer to coordinate the community-wide policy work detailed in the report (pp. 88-90).

***“The City of Savannah staff view Equity as a guiding principle that drives us. City staff strive to create and maintain an environment that influences fair and equitable service delivery and distribution of resources to shape the provision of exceptional public services that benefit all Savannah residents, businesses, workers, and guests.”***

**Phase Two** of REAL taskforce's mission is to implement the recommendations made by the six committees outlined in the report. The first task of the group at the conclusion of phase 1 was to determine which of the forty-five original members of the REAL Taskforce wanted to continue working on the task force and to recruit new members. New Chairs for several committees were named. Currently there are approximately thirty working members on the REAL committees. The second organizational task was to find a person to assume the day-to-day leadership for REAL. Alicia Johnson, Executive Director of Step-Up Savannah, agreed to become the Co-chair of REAL assuming the role of providing leadership and direction for REAL with her organization supplying administrative support. Lizann Roberts continues to be a member of the Executive Team.

A decision was made to organize the REAL Report recommendations into short-term, intermediate and long-term goals. Each committee used a matrix that presents its work in ways that can be measured for both process and impact. Committee reports at the monthly REAL meetings are documenting the progress of moving Phase Two forward. This [REAL Savannah 2022 Report](#) is a summary of that work. The Housing Committee was dissolved due to the outstanding work of the Mayor's Task Force on Housing.

Discussions are being held on how to get the work of REAL more widely known in the community to build broad-based support for a long-term community equity agenda. Presentations of the Report will be made to the Chatham County Commission and Savannah Chatham County Board of Public Education. Opportunities to make presentations to the media, neighborhood associations and civic groups are being explored.

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## Members:

Jill Cheeks, Co-Convener  
Todd Martin, Co-Convener  
Coco Papy  
LeRoy Burke  
Julia Sullivan  
Ned Williams  
Ron Flagg

The Criminal Justice Subcommittee has been meeting monthly to advance the REAL Task Force policy recommendations and create a realistic timeframe of implementation. One barrier that remains concerning is that many recommendations focus on suggestions outside the scope of the City of Savannah's

jurisdiction and require county level cooperation and input. This does not mean actions on recommendations should cease, but the committee cannot in good conscience just consider these to be city level efforts and require county stakeholders, as necessary.

## SHORT-TERM GOALS (6 months - 1 year)

### Recommendation 1: Adopt a City and County Cash Bail Ordinance.

Resource Materials: [Technical Assistance Memo](#); [2014 Bond Schedule](#); [OR Bond Draft Resolution](#)

The CJ Committee has reviewed [the technical assistance memo](#) re: ways to revise any cash bail mechanism within the City of Savannah jurisdiction. Four options currently exist on implementation of this recommendation:

1. Recorder's Court creates standing order regarding the recommendation based on any carve out of [the 2014 bond schedule](#) OR Recorder's Court consensus to [revisit the bond schedule](#) and carve out sans standing order. Currently, Judge Tammy Stokes promised to push for the judges to consider revising the [2014 bond schedule](#) and Todd Martin has planned to sit down with Judge Claire Williams to discuss. No direction on who will speak with Judge Odell. Judge Huffman is also moving into Recorder's Court and during his campaign, said he would consider revisiting and revising of the schedule. The CJ Committee has committed to setting up a time to speak with him.
2. Savannah City Council [issues a resolution](#) that specifically orders that Chapter 9, Division II, Subsections (9-1001) through (9-1026) of the City of Savannah Code of Ordinances should be amended. Given current dynamics on Council, as well as potential overreach, this would be the secondary course of action if Recorder's Court does not issue standing orders or [revised bond schedules](#) themselves.
3. City of Savannah works with the Savannah Police Department to classify and codify "cite and release" offenses and charge with local ordinance violations with sister state misdemeanor charges where applicable.
4. Ask the County Commission to add a third section to Chapter 11 ("General Offenses") of the Chatham County Code, including four subsections that would result in the following changes, respectively:
  1. Section 11-301 Citation: Authorizes citation instead of arrest (arrest by citation) for any violation of Chapter 11 of the Chatham County Code.
  2. Section 11-302 Bail: Orders the release on recognizance from the Chatham County Detention Center of anyone arrested and detained for a Chatham County ordinance violation.
  3. Section 11-303 Punishment: Clarifies the general punishment for ordinance violations to be a fine of no more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to six months, or a combination thereof.



4. Section 11-304 Alternative punishments: Authorizes alternative sentencing for ordinance violations “unless the judge believes in his or her discretion that there is no other meaningful alternative to incarceration” as well as restitution (which is clarified to not be considered punishment in accordance with state law).

**CONCLUSION:** Overall, addressing monetary penalties for minor infractions and offenses is a multidimensional problem with a few necessary courses of action that require action from Recorder’s Court judges, Savannah Police Department, and Chatham County Commission. Recorder’s Court judges need to revisit the 2014 bond schedule and carve out offenses that are directly related to poverty and or the causation that monetary bail would serve no compelling purpose. The schedule can be updated, or a standing order can be issued. This serves as one of the easiest recommendations to implement, given buy-in from one judge, as well as judicial discretion to implement. However, the CJ committee must act on the measure and push for it to happen.

Several members of the committee met with Judge Odell and Judge Williams, both of whom were not open to the idea of revisiting the bond schedule, and actively rejected it. The committee agreed that this did not mean that the committee’s work would cease, but rather the group needed a different strategy, thus, moving forward with the strategy to approach law enforcement regarding cite and release; encouraging the county to add language to chapter 11; and continuing discussions with Recorder’s Court judges, particularly with Judge Joe Huffman, as he has practiced this approach in his courtrooms already.

Overall, this recommendation would be most effective in a three-pronged strategy including bond schedule carve outs; cite and release; and chapter 11 addition. The committee also recommends that due to the present harsher political climate, a shift in language is necessary as “bail reform” has become a charged phrase (despite the committee’s insistence that it is simply describing a process). Henceforth the committee will refer to this as best practices for law enforcement and judicial resources.

### **Recommendation 3: Create, Enhance and Expand Community-Based Detention, Sentencing, and Re-entry Programs.**

Resource Materials: [Harvard Report](#), [SPD Pre-Arrest Diversion Structure](#)

Currently the City of Savannah has three root-cause community-oriented programs that qualify under this recommendation: all strategies save time and resources for law enforcement, as well as ensure that people who come in contact with law enforcement for offenses related to mental/behavioral health, addiction, survival offenses, poverty, or are first-time offenders, are not pulled into an already overburdened justice system.

1. **The Behavioral Health Unit:** BHU) consists of specially trained officers and mental health clinician to respond to calls involving individuals in crisis or with substance abuse. The unit currently consists of two non-uniformed SPD officers and one licensed clinician, who will ride in the car with the officers five days a week (8am-5pm)..



**BHU (cont.)** The clinician will also be available by phone or tele-medicine if she is not physically present. The unit responds to calls with factors that include substance abuse, suicide and mental health disorders, and will assist with calls for homelessness and disorderly conduct. The goal is to decriminalize substance abuse and mental health and reduce the amount of those individuals entering the criminal justice system when other alternatives could address the underlying root of the issue. According to SAGIS data, in the first pilot year of the BHU, there were only 16 arrests, all of which were connected to probation violations.

2. **Pre-arrest diversion:** Originally piloted shortly in 2019-20 right before the COVID pandemic, Pre-arrest diversion or Police Deflection, is the practice of law enforcement connecting first time offender individuals to alternatives to arrest. This is a way of addressing behavior that led to a law enforcement interaction, but without creating an arrest, or a charge that shows up on a criminal history or a conviction, thus creating a barrier for employment, housing, and potential further involvement in the justice system. As it stands, the City of Savannah has currently allocated funding for pre-arrest diversion for the Savannah Police Department and the District Attorney's Office has agreed to the program.
3. **Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE):** The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) is dedicated to reducing youth gun and other violence and increasing neighborhood safety through a collaborative community wide approach. The office will assist with the development and implementation of community-wide crime reduction goals, and work directly with City departments, concerned citizens, and partner organizations to identify and connect individuals to support. The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement will focus on: Identifying and engaging individuals at the highest risk of participating in or being a victim of violent crime; Connecting them to comprehensive support services; and providing an "off-ramp" for individuals to pursue growth and development opportunities.

**CONCLUSION:** All three of these programs represent 1.) active efforts that are currently being utilized in the City of Savannah and in the case of the BHU, have the relevant data to prove effectiveness; 2.) programs listed in the [Harvard report](#) as needing further investment and sustaining; and 3.) the need for deeper monetary investment. The committee's recommendation for the City of Savannah is to consider budgetary resources to grow, stabilize, and continue these programs to strengthen their effectiveness. An example: the BHU currently only operates 8-5pm, Monday through Friday. Crisis does not only happen during business hours and to truly address the deeper-rooted issues, there needs to be a program that operates 7 days a week and 24 hours a day. The REAL Taskforce Criminal Justice subcommittee recommends that in the 2023 City of Savannah budget a significant portion of fiscal resources must be allocated to these programs.

## MID-TERM GOALS (1-3 years)

### **Recommendation 2: Create a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee.**

Resource Materials: [Harvard Report](#)

Criminal Justice Coordinating Committees (CJCCs) are the forum through which elected and appointed executive-level policymakers in local jurisdictions, and sometimes states, convene to collaboratively address issues facing the justice system and its constituent agencies. These committees, also called councils or boards, typically have staff support from one or more criminal justice planners and often use a data-guided and structured planning process to identify, analyze, and solve or manage system issues, such as jail crowding, resource reductions, case processing inefficiencies, sub-par outcomes, and challenging client populations, such as those with mental illness or substance abuse.

Upon researching the CCJC, the criminal justice subcommittee was made aware that the CARES committee was being turned into a permanent oversight body [1] [2] ([Harvard report 2022](#)). While the terms of CARES full powers have yet to be decided, there is a great deal of overlap between the goals of a criminal justice coordinating committee and the current iteration of CARES.

**CONCLUSION:** Members of this subcommittee remain in conversation with members of CARES to fully understand what overlap exists, and how, if at all, the CCJC needs to move forward in the standard format or if this needs to be a larger multi-jurisdiction model. Therefore, the subcommittee recommends the following:

1. Clarify the mission and directive of the CARES committee. **(A meeting with CARES is being scheduled.)**
2. Define the data and best practices that the CCFFJ would be looking for.
3. Based on CARES oversight, fundamentally ask the question of how effective a City of Savannah CCFJ would be and if this needs to be a multi-jurisdiction effort. If the answer is that it does need to become a multi-jurisdiction effort (a logical step, as most of our police, courts, and jail system all reside under county jurisdiction) is the path forward. If this is the case, this action item needs to be moved to Long-Term Goals.

## LONG-TERM GOALS (3-5 years)

**Recommendation 5: Create a Standardized Data Collection System.**

**Recommendation 4: Implement Implicit Racial Bias Accountability Mechanisms.**

**Recommendation 6: Create a Commission to Address Racial Disparity in Juvenile Justice.**

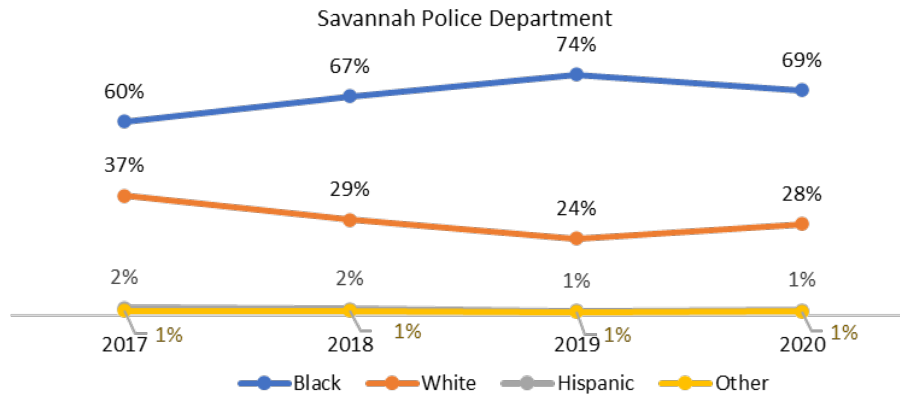
## THEMES

The above three recommendations are tied together by the following themes:

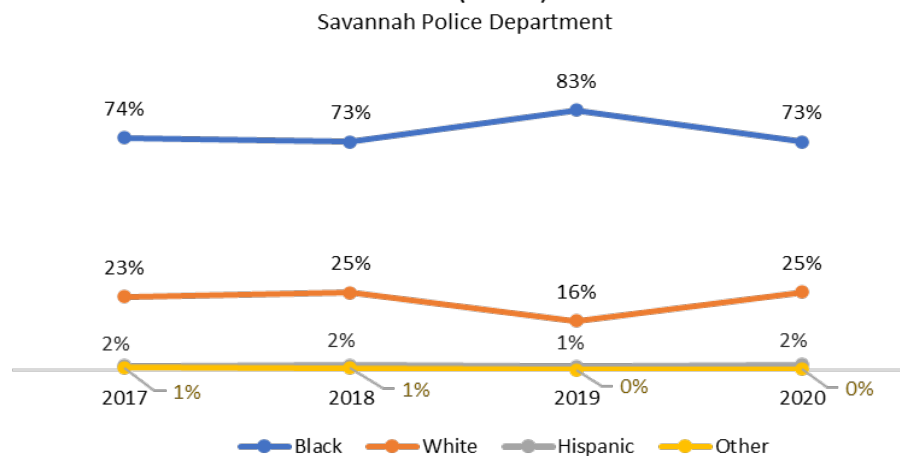
1. They require multi-jurisdiction buy-in.
2. They require data that would be likely collected from the CCJC model.
3. They do not fall fully under the scope of the City of Savannah jurisdiction.



### Percent of Savannah Police Department Interactions by Race (2020)



### Percent of Savannah Police Department Arrests by Race (2020)



**CONCLUSION:** There are still many unknowns regarding these three recommendations, based on the lack of a CCJC, which would be the “data provider” to inform the above, but also, questions needing answers include:

- 1.) What type of data (is this only from the City of Savannah (CoS))? The county? or Municipalities?) and where will this standardized data be stored (what is considered a neutral entity)? If data is only collected by the City of Savannah, what difference will there be given that the City of Savannah already collects data from Savannah Police Department? What other information would be under CoS?
- 2.) The court system is largely under the jurisdiction of the county, thus requiring a multi-jurisdiction effort. Will this also be under CCJC? What buy-in is needed from partners?
- 3.) What will the commission to address racial disparity in juvenile justice (juvenile court and arrests) actually do? What are the oversight powers, the stakeholders, and the mechanism for which accountability can actually happen? Is there budgetary influence or legislative recommendations that can be made?

### MOVING FORWARD TO YEAR 3

Look at the Harvard report where the city wants to make CARES a police oversight board:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1rH6hxZoIBiNvFLHPVYs3cAs\\_b2rxFhtQ](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1rH6hxZoIBiNvFLHPVYs3cAs_b2rxFhtQ)

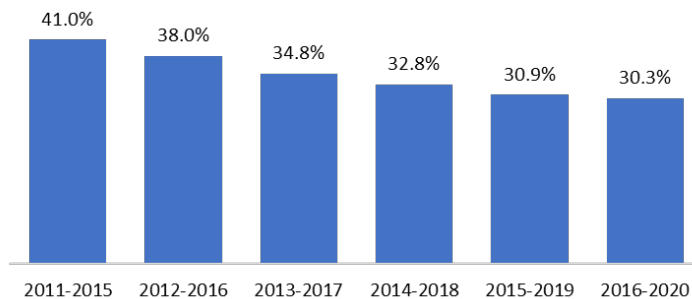
# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH DEVELOPMENT

## Members:

Alicia Johnson, Convener  
Rachelle Gregory  
Kimberly Paulk  
Austin Rojas  
Victoria Saxton  
Richard Shinholster  
Moncello Stewart

**Long-term Goal: Wealth-building and Economic Empowerment with an emphasis on increasing African American-owned businesses, improving income mobility for single-heads of households, and achieving significant improvement in childhood poverty rates.**

Children Living Below Poverty  
Census Place: Savannah



**Intermediate Strategy 1: Develop a business service cooperative that incubates and supports minority-owned businesses leveraging existing resources, maximizes collective partnerships, and creates a shared service model that provides revenue, support services, and collaborative bargaining.**

**Benchmark 1: Develop and implement the administrative structure of the Business Services Cooperative by December 31, 2023.**

A cooperative task force began biweekly meetings in July in coordination with the National League of Cities.

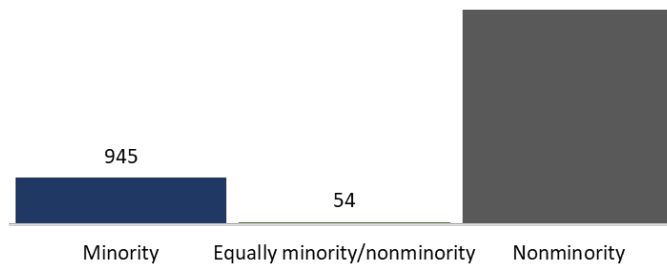
The task force currently consists of the following entities:

- Step Up Savannah, Lead Organizer
- City of Savannah Economic Development
- Greater Savannah Black Chamber of Commerce
- The Culturist Union (Minority Business Owner)
- Chatham County, MBE Development Division

The task force began research of other cooperative models across the United States. The group had reviews of Uptima, E for All, and Mondragon Corporation. Additionally, the Georgia Cooperative Development Center provided a full overview and mapping of cooperative development strategies and structures for consideration.

Minority Owned Businesses Compared to  
Nonminority Owned Businesses  
2017

US Census Bureau



### **Accomplishments**

In the task force's first working session, the group proposed membership models and benefit structures and developed a strategy for outreach and feedback.

- Community Feedback Survey (Summary of Outcomes provided)
  - 188 respondents representing 490 unduplicated citizens
- Minority Owned Business Listening Sessions - November 16 and 30, 2022
  - Major Themes for Business Owner Expectations:
    - Collective Bargaining and Positioning, Funding and Access to Capital, Shared Services, and Shared Space
    - There is great interest from MBE Community and growing support.

Step Up Savannah Staff Member Austin Rojas enrolled in Cooperative Course provided by GCDC to serve as the task force's Subject Matter Expert. Course completion is slated for January 2023. The taskforce completed the MBE Business Model Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas and Owner Model Canvas.

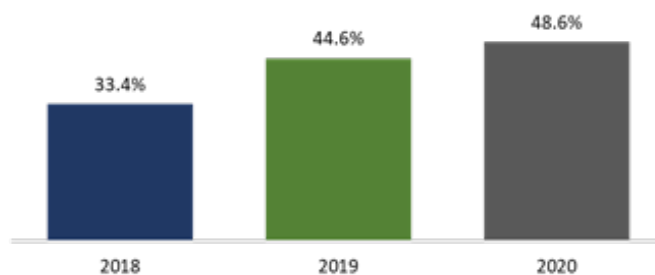
### **Next Steps:**

- The task force will invite five to six MBEs to serve as the implementation board as a result of listening sessions.
- Formalize administrative infrastructure.
- Develop an implementation timeline.
- Develop and implement the marketing strategy for Q1.
- Onboard a local banking partner. Two prospective partners include:
  - Carver State Bank
  - Wells Fargo

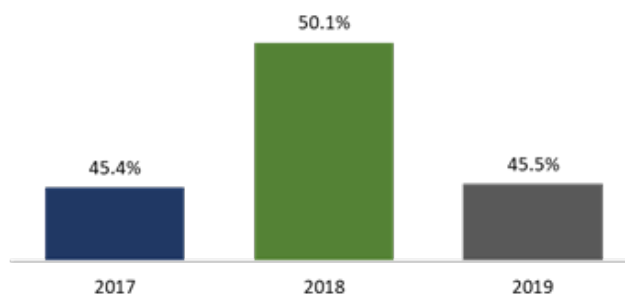
The Economic Empowerment Committee along with Step Up Savannah has taken part in co-leading the following initiatives in the second convening:

- Review and organization of the original recommendations of the REAL Report.
- Identification of key strategies and recommendations for participation with the National League of Cities project in partnership with the City of Savannah's Economic Development Department.
- Convene Stakeholder Feedback Session for review of Economic Empowerment Strategies.
- Launch of Community Engagement Survey 8/1 to garner broad community feedback and support for key strategies.

Centers and Family Childcare Homes in Quality Rated  
GA Family Connection Partnership Kids Count



Children Aged 3-4 Not Attending Preschool  
GA Family Connection Partnership Kids Count



- Expanded Childcare Access Project
  - Held listening sessions, surveys, and townhall with 9 to 5 Georgia
  - Working collaboratively with Coastal Georgia Indicators Economy Team to develop a community-wide solution
- Alicia Johnson participated in the City's DEI steering committee, aiding with the development and implementation of the City's DEI Strategy and support of the DEI Officer
- Coordinated Urban League of Greater Atlanta's feedback session for the State of Black Georgia Report

**Intermediate Strategy 2:** Amplify how to address systematic barriers to economic mobility with a focus on childcare and transportation

Step Up Savannah has been involved in statewide and county coalitions to address childcare and transportation issues from both policy and program levels. The committee has been working with 9 to 5 GA and DHS to address the issue. Following are some of the accomplishments and actions of this committee that have occurred during the second phase of the taskforce.

- Held listening sessions and surveys to hear from both parents and daycare providers.
- Co-hosted Town Hall with 9 to 5 GA.
- Listening Sessions and conversations with our employers.
- Raised this as a primary agenda item for economic mobility for the LMI community in both the CGIC Blueprint Economy Team and REAL Taskforce.
- Currently serving on CAT Stakeholder Taskforce

**Additional Projects**

- Feature REAL Economic Empowerment work at Prosperity Now Conference in September 2022.

# EDUCATION

**Short Range Goal 1:** Affirm the work of the Savannah-Chatham Schools and agree to work together for the common good and to achieve the expectations of the REAL final report.

1. The Education Committee met during its monthly zoom meeting on June 23, June 28, July 11, August 8, and September 12, 2022, and as a result, the committee fine-tuned and revised the short-term goals, mid-year goals, and long-term goals.
2. In September 2022, Dr. Otis Johnson and Dr. Brenda Logan presented to the Equity Committee of the Board of Education and Superintendent, Dr. Ann Levett. Dr. Johnson shared statistics and key concepts on inequity and racial discrimination. Dr. Logan shared updates of the Year 2 activities of the Education committee.

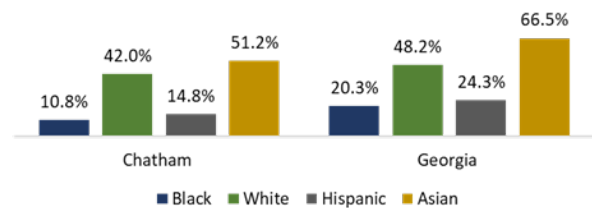
## Members:

Dr. Brenda Logan, Convener  
 Meshelle Cary  
 Melissa Cole  
 Dr. Connie Cooper  
 Lola Shelton-Council  
 Cheri Dean  
 Dr. Clark Derisco  
 Dr. Otis Johnson  
 Karolina Klinker  
 Frank Mendelson  
 Lizann Roberts  
 Dr. Annissa Roland  
 Dr. Pete Silver  
 Dr. Cora Thompson

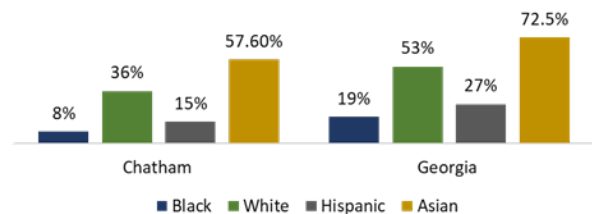
**Short Range Goal 2:** Identify other community groups, parents, and other stakeholders who should be invited to join PHASE II of Education Committee.

1. Dr. Brenda Logan, the Convener for Education Committee invited Dr. Sharon Subreenduth, who serves as the Dean of the College of Education School on the Armstrong campus of Georgia Southern University, to attend the September 12<sup>th</sup> committee meeting to discuss how the university addresses inequities of students of color. The Dean articulated the abundance of programs/opportunities available to students to foster inclusion on the campus. The Dean subsequently provided data showing the demographics of African American students and all others.
2. On September 13, the Education Committee supported the Press Release at United Way, downtown Savannah, for Cheri Dean, Vice -President of Direct Services and Impact, United Way of Coastal Georgia. Ms. Dean was awarded a grant to receive the *Language as a Missing Link* and Missed Opportunity Champion Award (The Toolkit), a community-wide initiative to advance early language and literacy in Chatham County through a special award from the Sandra Dunagan’s Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy. Members of the planning committee include: Zelonia Williams of READ Savannah and Future Minds, Lola Shelton Council, Executive Director of the Live Oak Public Libraries, Lizann Roberts, Director of the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition, Dr. Connie Cooper, Community Volunteer and Board member of Greenbriar Children’s Center and Dr. Brenda Logan, Convener of the REAL Task force Education Committee.

Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners ELA 3rd Grade (2021)  
 Georgia Department of Education



Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners Math 3rd Grade (2021)  
 Georgia Department of Education





3. The Education Committee attended the first ToolKit Meeting on September 27, 2022 at Savannah Technical College. The meeting was attended by 60 professional leaders and agents for children in the Savannah area. The event featured an online presentation by Emily Rubin, a speech pathologist and global expert. A Strategic: Implementation Planning Session was held with 26 online participants on October 21, 2022. On November 3, 2022, Emily Rubin, the author of the ToolKit, appeared in person at Savannah Tech. She demonstrated reading readiness through video tapes of local children using instruments she created on language development.

**Short Range Goal 4:** Establish mutual understanding with the Savannah-Chatham Public School Leadership on the veracity of the REAL-Education Report and their response to the questions answered by the Savannah-Chatham Public Schools.

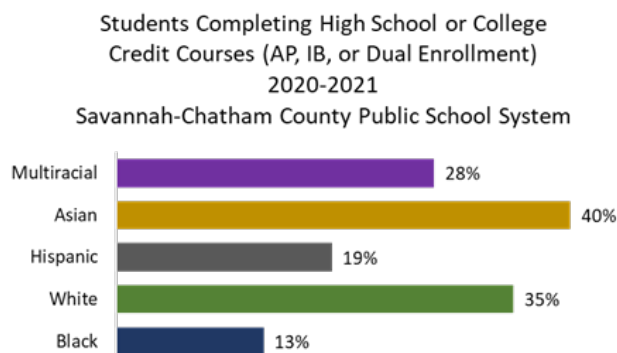
1. On, Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, and Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, via Zoom monthly meeting, the Education members presented the information from the Superintendent’s Report of questions and answers sent to the Education members back in June 2022. This report helps the committee analyze some data requested by the Education Committee and understand what the Board of Education is currently engaged in to improve the lives of children in the community.

**Short Range Goal 3:** Obtain relevant information from the Savannah-Chatham Public Schools related to the questions in the Education section of the REAL final report.

1. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Superintendent, Dr. Ann Levett, will discuss what each Savannah School is able to offer students with various interests and talents.

**Short Range Goal 7:** Specify the role of schools and community in addressing third grade performance and proficiency; and the general problems experienced by school-age children.

1. To interview a principal #1 and a third-grade teacher on **January 9, 2023 Zoom Meeting** utilizing questions that will tell them everything they need to hear about experiences with third graders.
2. To interview a principal #2 and a third-grade teacher on **February 6, 2023 Zoom Meeting** utilizing questions that will tell education members everything they need to hear about experiences with third graders at a second school.



**Short Range Goal 5:** Work in tandem with Savannah-Chatham Public Leadership to fully understand benchmarks for early learners and third grade performance and proficiency and participate in setting realistic targets for each of the next five years.

1. Dr. Logan contacted the Assessment team at the Chatham Board of Education, Dr. Laura May, Executive Director of Accountability, Assessment, and Reporting Services and Mr. David Feliciano, Chief Strategic & Performance Officer, to ask them, what elements are students challenged with on their reading assessments (i.e., main ideas, vocabulary, comprehension). The team agreed to present the data on third graders at the Education Zoom meeting on **March 6, 2023**.
2. As a result of this ongoing collaboration, Dr. Otis Johnson and Dr. Brenda Logan accepted an invitation to hear a presentation on third graders’ current reading assessment data being presented to the Equity Committee of the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools on November 29, 2022 at Whitney Complex at 3:30 p.m.

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

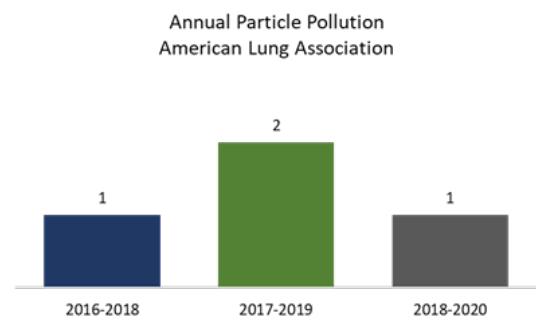
The EJ Committee met and worked to reconstruct the committee to bring on additional agencies and interested parties that could assist in accomplishing the specific Goals of the Committee. The EJ Committee is still trying to identify a Chair and Co-chair of the committee. The group started working through the recommendations and categorizing them into a timeline for short, medium, and long-term implementation. Additionally, the group has begun addressing and identifying at least three indicators that should be used to measure the progress of the recommendations.

## Members:

Yolanda Alston, Co-Convener  
Dr. Mildred McClain, Co-Convener  
Nick Deffley,  
Co-Convener  
Dr. Asli Aslan  
Scott Boylston  
Alicia Brown  
Seth Holland  
Jackie Jackson  
Kait Morano  
Zoe Rinker  
Luke Roberson  
Dawud Shabaka  
Tami Thomas-Burton

The committee is considering the following strategies to **improve air quality** in Savannah:

1. A full study conducted by the City of Savannah, followed by the development of a cross-sector air pollution action plan with the local industrial sector and the Board of Education. The study should provide analysis in the following areas for decision makers:
  - Number of households affected by asthma by neighborhood or zip code
  - Schools within affected neighborhoods/zip codes and schools with a high population of students with asthma
  - Hospitals with high admission rates due to asthma related illnesses/emergencies
  - Cost of the incidence of asthma to the City of Savannah
  - Immediate, no cost and low-cost actions that can be taken by City of Savannah
  - Impact of no action taken by City of Savannah on affected populations
  - An assessment of ambient indoor air quality
2. Distribute air monitors, humidifiers, and air purifiers to families in affected areas of the city through community health workers.
3. Provide in-service training on identifying respiratory conditions to medical and school staff.
4. Form a partnership with the local food bank to provide food that aids in reducing asthma to affected families.
5. Establish a Childhood Asthma Prevention Registry



**Technical note:** The American Lung Association (ALA) assigns grades A-F to counties (A=1; B=2; C=3; D=4; F=5), based on average annual number of days that particle pollution levels exceeded U.S. standards during the three year measurement period. The air quality data is collected by the EPA and summarized by the ALA

The committee is considering the following strategies to **improve lead exposure** in Savannah:

- Build cooperation with Chatham County Commission to expand the City of Savannah ordinance across the county.
- Adoption of state legislation by Savannah City Council, to include all properties, including owner-occupied properties.
- Create an accountability measure for landlord refusal to rent to families with children.

- Implement state guidelines of one lead test at 20 micrograms per deciliter
- Emphasize lead hazard reduction techniques over total abatement per U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommendations through the City's code enforcement.
- Integrate the new standard of checking for lead hazards in pre-1978 rental properties to allow lead hazard reduction techniques to be used with yearly monitoring of the property into code compliance, regardless of the age of the tenants.

Based on its research to date, the environmental justice committee recommends the following **Energy Efficiency** strategies for the City of Savannah:

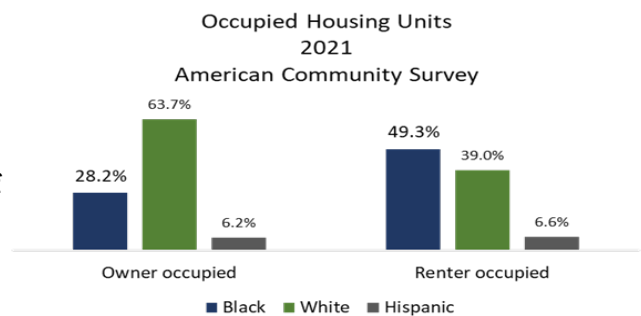
- Develop a residential weatherization program that prioritizes the highest energy-burdened households.
- Develop a program to help residents convert to energy efficient HVAC, lighting, appliances, roofing, etc., prioritizing households with the highest energy burden.
- Develop a public warning, communication, and backup energy system to continue operation of critical infrastructure for residents with the highest energy burden.
- Integrate maternal, infant, and mental health into existing City of Savannah initiatives addressing climate change and energy efficiency.
- Implement a policy that assists energy efficiency improvements and other weatherization updates on the homes of vulnerable households.
- Increase access to perinatal health and mental health care, with targeted resources to children, families, caregivers, and pregnant and postpartum people living in climate-affected areas of Savannah.
- Integrate a heat vulnerability index in the City of Savannah's emergency management system to protect vulnerable residents against extreme heat.
- Expand the City of Savannah's community mental health infrastructure to provide outreach, training, and services to residents in need.

### Environmental Justice

- Integrate maternal, infant, and mental health into existing City of Savannah initiatives addressing climate change, energy efficiency and weatherization.
- Implement a policy that assists energy efficiency improvements and other weatherization updates on the homes of vulnerable households.
- Integrate a heat vulnerability index in the City of Savannah's emergency management system to protect vulnerable residents against extreme heat.

### Affordable Housing

- The implementation of racial equity metrics in current housing programs in Savannah.
- Creation of a joint Chatham County & City of Savannah online developer's toolkit.



### MOVING FORWARD TO YEAR 3

The EJ Committee is still trying to identify a Chair and Co-chair of the committee. The team feels that to ensure the community's voice is adequately heard and documented, neither of these positions should be filled by local government staff. When those two positions are filled, the group intends to move forward in 2023 with reviewing Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations for incorporation.

# HEALTH

**Area of Focus: Food Apartheid in Savannah, Georgia** The Health Committee focused on the problem of “Food Apartheid” in Savannah. In Chatham County, specifically Savannah, there are communities that lack access to healthy, fresh food options including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and quality, lean meat. Until recently, communities such as these have been referred to as “Food Deserts.” To broaden the understanding of the systemic injustice that exist in many communities of color, activists and community organizers now use the term “Food Apartheid.” In Savannah, communities most impacted are low-wealth Black neighborhoods on the east and west sides of Savannah, specifically in census tracks within the 31404 and 31415 zip codes.

## Members:

Armand Turner, Co-Convener  
 Tiffany Young, Co-Convener  
 Jennifer Drey  
 Paula Kreissler  
 Dr Nandi Marshall  
 Darrell Naylor-Johnson  
 Kimberly Paulk  
 Ashley Rainge  
 Lizann Roberts  
 KaRee Wright

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Short Term:** Incorporate food placement strategies in food retail stores to encourage healthier choices.

- Healthy Savannah staff visited all major chain grocers to discuss Healthy Checkout aisles.
- Healthy Savannah has a draft ordinance that may be presented to City Council in early 2023.
- Upper-level management at all major grocers in Savannah (Kroger, Publix, Walmart, Food Lion, and Red & White) identified specific practices and procedures they implemented to make the healthy choice the easier choice throughout their stores. For example, Food Lion has a STAR rating system – the more stars on the product’s price label, the healthier it is. Many of the stores have their produce department near the front of the store. “Lastly, healthy choices are now incorporated throughout the store with identifying labeling rather than being confined to just one ‘healthy section.’”
- Healthy Savannah and the REAL Health Team are developing a handout in conjunction with the grocers to create a summary of healthy choices at each store representing a good partnership.

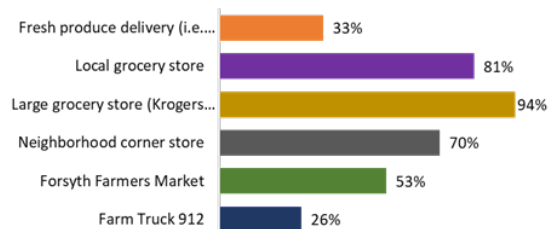
**Intermediate Goal:** Increase the availability of healthy food in existing corner stores.

- Healthy Savannah has twelve corner stores that offer healthier choices – grant funding from the CDC and the City of Savannah supports activities to continue to grow this number through 2023.
- Forsyth Farmers Market will establish a fresh produce delivery schedule to existing and future corner stores.

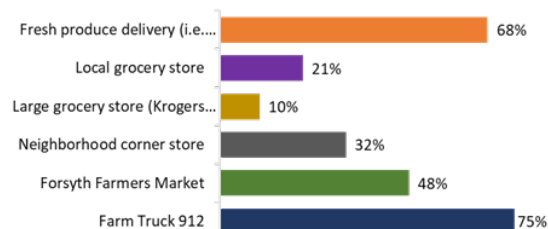
**Long Term:** Evaluate the feasibility of opening supermarkets sustained by the local community (co-op) or a non-profit organization in Savannah.

- No current Activity.

Where do you currently purchase healthy foods?  
 2022 Healthy Savannah Community Survey



Where would you like to purchase healthy foods?  
 2022 Healthy Savannah Community Survey





**Long Term:** Expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) incentives for fresh produce.

- Savannah non-profits are capitalizing on grant opportunities to expand SNAP and access to fresh produce:
- Step Up Savannah currently has funding to increase SNAP enrollment and educate new and renewing SNAP beneficiaries on locations where fresh produce is provided. Healthy food options, including free and fresh produce, are provided at three monthly Fresh Express locations and through a new opportunity - the monthly Windsor Forest Neighbors Feeding Neighbors. SNAP partners include First Hispanic Baptist Church, Forsyth Farmers' Market, Kingdom Life Christian Fellowship, Moses Jackson Advancement Center, Pennsylvania Avenue Resource Center, St. Mary's Community Center, Ready2Connect Inc, Savannah Technical College, Step Up Savannah, and Wesley Community Center.
  - Forsyth Farmers Market and Farm Truck 912 also enroll SNAP recipients and through grant funding provide direct support with two programs:
  - Doubling of SNAP at the weekly market in Forsyth Park and at all seven Farm Truck 912 stops, and
  - Filling of 912 Food Farmacy prescriptions via the USDA Fruit & Veggie Prescription Program. Prescriptions are written at the Chatham County Health Department, St. Mary's Health Center, Memorial HCA Children's Hospital and African-American Health Information and Resource Center.

**Long Term:** Create initiatives focused on reducing prices of healthy food in existing markets.

- With current inflation and significant increases in the price of food, the Health Committee has determined that this strategy will be addressed when inflation comes down below average historic rates.

### **MOVING FORWARD TO YEAR 3**

Savannah Chatham Food Policy Council has contracted with Upstream Consulting to bring over 37 food system stakeholders together in 2022 to relaunch Savannah Chatham Food Policy Council (SCFPC), through funding from the CDC, the YMCA of Coastal GA and Healthy Savannah.

- The practice of Equity, Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion are central to the mission of the SCFPC. In addition to its composition and structure, onboarding, training, implementation of best practices, policy creation, and community engagement, the SCFPC will work to ensure Equity is at the forefront of their work.
- **Community Engagement** – The Healthy Savannah/REACH Team hosted three community engagement meetings, two of which were in the Food Apartheid zip codes. Over 30 community members identified assets and barriers to fresh food and provided clear direction for future development.
- **Focus** - A SCFPC must be relaunched with three main (and related) areas of focus: 1) solving communities' top food system priorities for their residents; 2) identifying and passing new and revised City and County policies related to equitable food access and a robust and resilient food system; and 3) collaborating with other local, regional, state, and national efforts that seek to improve healthy food access and address upstream barriers to nutrition security, improve social determinants of health, and ensure health equity.
- **Ordinance** - A City ordinance, as well as County-level ordinances, must be passed to outline the mission and responsibilities of the SCFPC, and acknowledge its important role in making policy recommendations to the City of Savannah and County to advance food access for all.

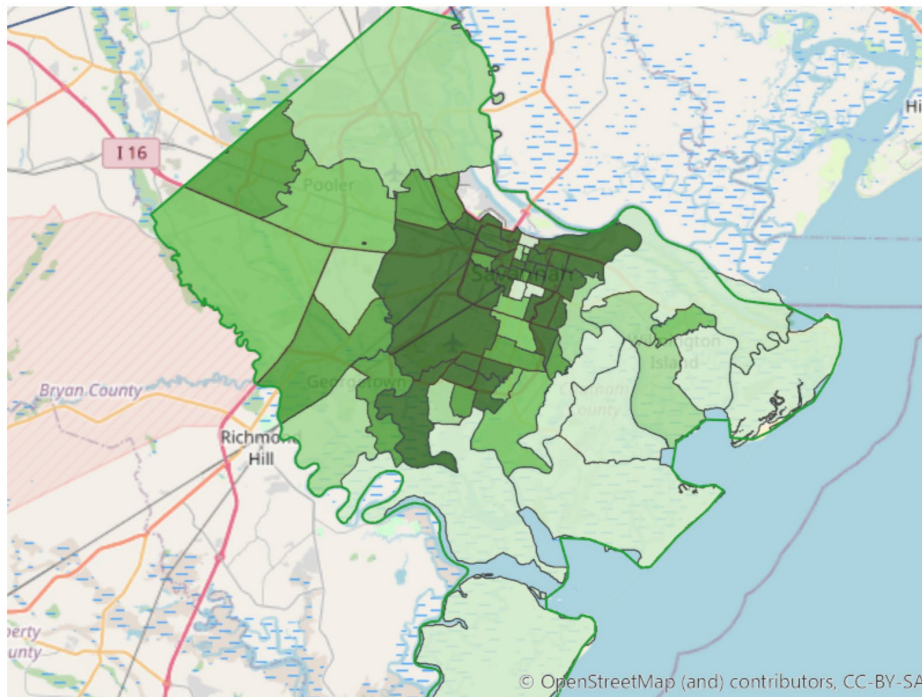


- **Organizational Structure-** Healthy Savannah would be the anchor organization and Co-chair the SCFPC. The other Co-chair of the SCFPC will be a community member with lived experience, working on community food efforts, and with deep connections to their neighborhood. The SCFPC will be comprised of a diverse group of organizational and agency representatives, policymakers, farmers, academia and students, community members, and other experts in the food system. The community Co-chair and members will all receive stipends.
- **Alignment** - The SCFPC will seek to align with local, regional, statewide, and national efforts and recommendations on nutrition security and food sovereignty, including:
  - **Local:** The Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force Report, City of Savannah efforts on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Plan Grant, and the Chatham Community Blueprint.
  - **State:** The recommendations put forward by the Senate Study Committee on Improving Access to Healthy Foods and Eliminating Food Deserts. Georgia Grown, a division of the Georgia Department of Agriculture, helping new agribusinesses grow and established agribusinesses thrive by bringing producers, processors, suppliers, distributors, retailers, agri-tourism and consumers together in one powerful, statewide community.
  - **Regional:** Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network (SAAFON) works to strengthen Black farmers' collective power to build an alternative food system rooted in progressive values. Based in Atlanta, GA SAAFON is a network of Black farmers in the Southeastern United States who are committed to culturally relevant, ancestrally guided, and ecologically sustainable agricultural – based living.
  - **National:** White House Food and Nutrition Task Force Report 2022.

Food Insecurity Index  
Census Tract

Measurement Period: 2021

Data Source: Conduent Healthy Communities Institute



MAP LEGEND  
greater need →

**REAL**  
**SAVANNAH**  
*Racial Equity and Leadership*  
**TASKFORCE**