

# Housing Savannah Action Plan: Synopsis

## Housing Savannah Task Force

Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, established the **Housing Savannah Task Force** in August 2020, appointing Brynn Grant, President & CEO, United Way of the Coastal Empire and Israel G. Small, retired Savannah Assistant City Manager, as Co-Chairs. The Task Force consisted of nearly 40 members including one appointee by each Alderperson. The Task Force was organized into six committees—three population focused and three technical focused.

### Population Committees and Chairpersons:

- Homeless Housing– Katina Wheeler
- Renter Housing– Sheri Butler
- Homeowner/Homebuyer Housing– Leia Dedic

### Technical Committees and Chairpersons:

- Housing Cost & Production– John Neely
- Housing Policy & Regulatory– Josh Yellin
- Housing Resources– Lamar Owens

The Task Force, its Executive Committee and six Committees met regularly. City staff provided technical assistance and support to the Task Force.

The first Task Force meeting was on September 17, 2020 where members began to establish and refine the mission and goal statements found below:

***Mission:*** *The Housing Savannah Task Force is to assess local housing needs and opportunities, and develop a comprehensive plan to improve housing availability, accessibility and affordability for all who choose to make Savannah their home.*

***Goal:*** *Develop a comprehensive action plan that identifies the public, private and philanthropic resources and systems necessary to 1) improve, construct and retain at least 15,000 dwellings that are in good condition, affordable and available for occupancy by Savannahians earning up to 80% of the area's median income, regardless of household size or life circumstance, by 2032 and 2) sustains the 2032 rate of activity each year thereafter.*

**September, October and November** were used to research, learn about and discuss Savannah's housing challenges. The Task Force viewed and heard presentations by multiple Savannah organizations. It also reviewed several documents including, but not limited to, the 2008 Savannah Affordable Housing & Regulatory Reform Task Force Report, the One Atlanta Housing Action Plan, and American Community Survey Census data. A brief summary of housing challenges facing Savannah includes:

- Savannah housing costs have outpaced incomes at a rate of at least 2:1 during the past 30 years.
- About 21,000 (40%) Savannah households cannot afford quality housing.
- Multiple earner households with gross annual incomes less than \$50,000 (\$24 hourly full-time) or single earner households with annual incomes less than \$35,000 (\$17 hourly full-time) are not likely able to afford quality housing in Savannah.
- A single person earning minimum wage (\$7.25 hourly) has to work 2-1/2 full-time jobs to afford a one-bedroom apartment.
- Improving housing conditions and options for 21,000 low- and modest-income households could cost upwards of \$1.5 billion and take up to 50 years based upon existing investment levels and sources.

**December, January and February** were spent identifying, discussing, proposing, and refining suggested Strategies and Action Items; proposing Action Item Priorities and Implementation Time Frames; and identifying possible Implementation Teams. This resulted in the identification of five (5) major Strategies and led to 43 associated Action Items.

## **Five Major Strategies Recommended**

- 1. Increase Community Wide Awareness, Support and Education for Housing Savannah.**
- 2. Increase & Sustain Housing Improvement, Development, Purchase and Retention Activity to Benefit 15,000 Households by 2032.**
- 3. Increase & Sustain Investments for Housing Improvement, Development, Purchase and Retention to \$100M+ Annually by 2032.**
- 4. Increase the Capacity and/or Number of Housing Partners.**
- 5. Support Local, State & Federal Housing Friendly Policy and Legislation.**

# Housing Savannah Action Plan: 10 Year Investment & Dwelling Goals

Year	Strategy 3.1 - Savannah Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) Investments					Strategy 3.1 SAHF Investments	Strategy 3.2 Leveraged Investments	Total Investment Goals	Strategy 2.1 Dwellings Goals	Strategy 2.2 Dwellings Goals	Strategy 2.3 Dwellings Goals	Total Dwellings Goals	
	HUD	City	County	Business	Philanthropic								
1	2022	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 21,000,000	\$ 24,000,000	50	500	5,000	5,550
2	2023	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 4,000,000	\$ 28,000,000	\$ 32,000,000	100	550	5,000	5,650
3	2024	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 35,000,000	\$ 40,000,000	150	600	5,000	5,750
4	2025	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 6,000,000	\$ 42,000,000	\$ 48,000,000	200	650	5,000	5,850
5	2026	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 7,000,000	\$ 49,000,000	\$ 56,000,000	250	700	5,000	5,950
6	2027	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 3,500,000	\$ 1,200,000	\$ 1,200,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 8,000,000	\$ 56,000,000	\$ 64,000,000	300	750	5,000	6,050
7	2028	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 4,000,000	\$ 1,400,000	\$ 1,400,000	\$ 700,000	\$ 9,000,000	\$ 63,000,000	\$ 72,000,000	350	800	5,000	6,150
8	2029	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 4,500,000	\$ 1,600,000	\$ 1,600,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 10,000,000	\$ 70,000,000	\$ 80,000,000	400	850	5,000	6,250
9	2030	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 1,800,000	\$ 1,800,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 11,000,000	\$ 77,000,000	\$ 88,000,000	450	900	5,000	6,350
10	2031	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 6,000,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 12,500,000	\$ 87,500,000	\$ 100,000,000	500	1,000	5,000	6,500

Note: Goals can be impacted by a number of variables including investment and opportunity availability, costs, etc.

<b>10 Year Goal</b>	<b>2,750</b>	<b>7,300</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>15,050</b>
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**March** was spent considering and discussing possible investment options, sources, amounts, percentages, time frames and partners. The Task Force identified the need for significant local investment from the City and County governments, and from the business and philanthropic communities. History reveals that this type of investment will leverage other needed housing investment at an average rate of \$1 to \$7. The table above shows how the Task Force projects this investment can increase gradually over 10 years and be sustained annually thereafter. The level of investment is directly related to the number of Savannah households who will benefit. The Task Force arrived at these projections based upon a 20-year review of costs, investments and households served by the City and its partners.

**April and May** were spent developing and launching a comprehensive informational video; several short human interest videos featuring those in need of housing and those helping provide it; a Community Input Survey; and a savannahga.gov/HousingSavannah website that included the **Strategy & Action Item Table** and other information. Between April 20<sup>th</sup> and May 30<sup>th</sup>, 358 persons responded to the Community Input Survey. Co-Chairs also met with members of the Neighborhood Leadership Council and Chatham County Housing Coalition to inform and solicit input.

**June and July** saw the completion and submission of the **Housing Savannah Action Plan**. See the Plan and videos at [savannahga.gov/HousingSavannah](http://savannahga.gov/HousingSavannah).

**Summary:** The **Housing Savannah Action Plan** marks the next step, rather than final step, in years of dedicated efforts to make housing accessible, affordable and available to Savannahians. It contains a good foundation upon which to build. It is not a City-government Plan. It is a Community Plan.

The degree to which the Plan can be fully implemented will depend upon the level of community wide awareness, support and investment it receives. This includes receiving substantial and sustained financial investment and support from the City of Savannah, Chatham County, the business community, the philanthropic community and the community at large. To be most successful, it will take a wide variety of persons and organizations working collaboratively together to solve Savannah's housing challenges.

### **2021 Suggested Immediate Next Steps**

City Council endorsement of the **Housing Savannah Action Plan** followed by:

1. The City should seek Plan support from Chatham County government, business, philanthropic and community leaders and organizations.
2. The City should take the lead in establishing a **Housing Savannah NGO** (Non-Governmental Organization) in partnership with the above entities—to include working together to appoint a Board of Directors, interviewing and hiring staff to begin work in January 2022.
3. The City should take the lead in appointing **Action Item Implementation Teams** to begin the work necessary to implement Action Items.