

# OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

The focus of this plan is on Allen Homes and Augusta's urban center, including the neighborhoods of Laney-Walker and Harrisburg, the Augusta University Health Sciences Campus, and a significant part of downtown. The Laney Walker-Harrisburg Choice Neighborhood falls within multiple National Register Historic Districts and reflects the distinct character of Old Augusta.

The Choice neighborhood boundary was established to harness the momentum of recent

investments and the presence of many anchor institutions. The eastern boundary follows interstate 78 to the riverfront, a barrier that cuts off Allen Homes and the area from Old Town. To the north the Savannah River forms a natural boundary. The western boundary follows Milledge Road, which delineates the Sand Hills neighborhood (home of Augusta National Golf Club). The southern boundary follows Wrightsboro Road, an east-west corridor in the city.



FIGURE 3 | Laney Walker-Harrisburg Choice Neighborhood



Golden Blocks Walking Tour (Source: VisitAugusta.com)

## Laney Walker

Construction of the Georgia Railroad and the Augusta Canal between 1833 and 1847 attracted laborers to what would become the Laney Walker neighborhood. Located immediately south of downtown, Laney Walker grew into a well-

*Did you know?* 

### AUGUSTA'S BLACK WALL STREET

The "Golden Blocks" along Laney Walker Boulevard was the center of Black business and entrepreneurship during the Jim Crow era. Standing up against segregation, Black entrepreneurs and leads created a thriving center for the community filled with industry, churches, and schools.

integrated working-class community associated with three minority populations - Irish, Chinese, and African American. But in the early 20th century, Jim Crow laws segregated blocks by race and transformed the neighborhood into Augusta's principal black neighborhood. Despite these barriers, many important black-owned entrepreneurs and businesses (Augusta's Black Wall Street) thrived along with many churches and schools. The daughter of former slaves, Miss Lucy Craft Laney became a noted black educator who founded the Haines Normal and Industrial Institute, the first black kindergarten in Augusta, and the Lamar School of Nursing. Miss Laney's home is now a museum and conference center dedicated to black history in the neighborhood.

## Harrisburg

Harrisburg sits on the western portion of the Choice neighborhood. In the mid-1800s through the early 1900s, it flourished as a mill village centered around the Sibley and King textile mills. The Sibley Mill was built on the site of the Confederate Powder Works used heavily during the Civil War. Harrisburg soon became a place to live, work, worship, and learn with a variety of housing and churches, and commercial development running along Broad Street.

By the 1930s, the mills began to decline, leading to an economic downturn. This caused many homeowners to leave, leading to high vacancies and public safety concerns. In the 1970s, urban renewal efforts left many large open spaces, compounded further by construction

of the Calhoun Expressway. The Expressway was intended to ease access to downtown but instead disrupted the street grid and divided the community in half, creating connectivity issues that remain today.



### *Did you know?*

#### **HARRISBURG IS A MILL VILLAGE**

Augusta evolved as an industrial center of the South, and Harrisburg was the center of industry in the city. A village formed around the Sibley Mill creating a community for its employees to live, work, worship, shop, and learn all in one place.

Sibley Mill (Source: WRDW Alma McCarty)



*Did you know?*



### **MEDICAL COLLEGE OF GEORGIA**

The Medical College of Georgia was the first medical school in the state and an important contributor to the establishment of the American Medical Association (AMA) and standardization of medical practices in the country.

### **Meds and Eds District**

Nestled between the Laney Walker and Harrisburg neighborhoods is the Augusta University Health Sciences Campus. It was established in 1828 as the Medical College of Georgia and now forms a medical research, education, and services hub in the heart of the urban core along with other medical facilities such as the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center and Dental College of Georgia at Augusta. Adjacent to the campus is Paine College, a liberal arts college supported by the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church that was founded in 1822 to train African-American teachers and preachers and today contributes over \$33 million to the City's local economy (according to a 2018 study conducted by the United Negro College Fund).





Downtown Augusta (Source: VisitAugusta.com)

## Downtown Augusta

A major portion of Downtown Augusta falls within the Choice boundary. Centered around Broad Street, downtown is organized in a grid that makes it very walkable. It is home to the Augusta Riverwalk, the Augusta Museum of History, the Morris Museum of Art, the Imperial Theatre, Jessye Norman Amphitheater, restaurants, several hotels, the convention center, and the new Georgia Cyber Center.

Despite these envious amenities, downtown continues to counteract the impact of the automobile beginning in the second half of the 20th century, when the suburbs and open space became so accessible and appealing for residents and businesses. Downtown revitalization efforts

started in 1974 with the creation of a special tax district and a downtown revitalization plan focused on addressing traffic, creating convenient parking, and developing an exciting physical environment, all elements it continues to address. Today, small businesses are slowly filling in empty storefronts and filling out the urban framework of a more vibrant, culturally-rich, walkable environment that is seeding urban redevelopment efforts across the country.

# ABOUT **ALLEN HOMES**

Allen Homes is situated on the far eastern edge of Laney-Walker and the Choice neighborhood. Owned and operated by the Augusta Housing Authority, Allen Homes was built in 1961 and consists of 38 buildings housing 150 residential units. The 16.84-acre site sits on a former chemical plant, surrounded by a 6-lane highway, rail lines, and high-tension power lines, making it unsuitable for living. Reimagining the site and mapping out a vision for Allen Homes residents to benefit from investments in the Choice neighborhood is the focus of this planning effort.





## *Allen Homes at a glance*

**150**  
total units

**139**  
occupied  
(at time of grant)

**38**  
residential  
buildings

**1**  
community  
building



**16.84**  
acre site



**388**  
residents

**14**  
median age



**\$9,528**  
median household income

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT

## Pre-Colonial Settlement

**1540s** Spanish explorers found Uchee & Westo Indians who had fished and farmed the land for hundreds of years.

## 1700s

Tobacco becomes the main cash crop after planters claim land through land grants.

Augusta continues to grow, especially as the cotton industry takes precedence.

1700

**1736**

James Oglethorpe established Augusta as an interior trading post for fur and other commodities with native Indians.

**1785-1795**

Augusta is the state capital of Georgia.

## 1800s

Augusta grows in prominence and prosperity due to transportation improvements and advancements.

**1816**

First steamboat reached Augusta, opening up iron trade and other transport.

**1833**

Georgia railroad is constructed, opening trade to the west.

**1845**

Augusta Canal constructed, bringing water power and manufacturing to South.

## Civil War

Augusta prospers as an industrial center of the South and a major center for Confederate activity.

**1862**

Confederate States Powder Works open on Augusta Canal.



## 1890s

Electric streetcars are connected to outer suburbs, sparking tourism in Augusta.

## Great Depression

Mills decline; business activity is stagnant and tourism drops.

## Late 1800s

Augusta rebounds quickly after the war and continues to grow as an industrial center of the South.

## 1908

Second major flood event since 1888 destroys much of downtown and is followed by another devastating flood in 1912.

## New Deal

Projects boost Augusta, including Canal repairs, road paving, and first public housing built in Augusta.

1872

Augusta Cotton Exchange is established.

1875

Augusta Canal expanded, spurring new factories and mills to open (most notable Sibley Mill & John P. King Manufacturing).

1899

Augusta Country Club established by hotels for tourism.

1914

Levee constructed to protect city from future flooding.

1916

Great Fire of 1916 destroyed 25 blocks and 746 buildings in downtown.

1929

Massive flood broke through levee. Levee is strengthened to current level.

## 1940s

Post WWII Augusta transformed military sites; Fort Gordon becomes home to US Army Signal Corps.

1950



## 1950s

Cars, coupled with cheap energy, lead to suburban flight. Downtown Augusta faces big changes as retail and commercial activity follow people to suburbs.



## 1970s

Downtown slowly declines, but abruptly changes with two mall openings within a week. Revitalization efforts are launched to respond to declining downtown.



1950

1955

Gordon Highway (I-78) built due to reliance on cars; cuts through the oldest parts of Augusta.

1974

Urban Renewal demolishes many mill homes and leaves behind large open spaces.

1978

Two malls open within a week and downtown is left with vacant buildings and storefronts.

1970

Race riot erupts to add to racial injustice.

Magnet schools are established for integration.

1974

Downtown Revitalization program launches; Augusta Tomorrow founded to lead efforts.

## The Next Chapter...

### What's upcoming for Augusta?

The HUB, the Choice planning effort, and several more promising seeds.

### 1980s

Revitalization plan projects are implemented and John C. Calhoun Expressway is built, dividing Harrisburg into north & south.

1982

Downtown Master Plan is conducted of the entire downtown and riverfront for redevelopment.

1984

Lafayette Center groundbreaking (federal HUD funding is used for the project).

1985

Parcels of land along riverfront assembled to develop Riverfront Center.

### 1990s

Downtown revitalization efforts continue with Riverfront Center and Riverwalk.

1992

Riverfront Center completed.

1993

Augusta Marina & Riverwalk extension is built and received the Excellence on the Waterfront Award.

### 2000s

New Master Plan Update is revealed and neighborhood revitalization effort continues.

2001

Augusta 2000 City Center Master Plan revealed

2011

Salvation Army & Kroc Center opens.

2018

Georgia Cyber Center opens.

2020

WHO LIVES HERE:

# DEMOGRAPHICS, INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

Resident Profile

The chart/summary graphic to the right provides a brief profile of those living in Allen Homes and the Choice Neighborhood as compared to residents of the Augusta/Richmond County. Of particular note is the median age of Allen Homes residents (14), which is very young compared to the Choice Neighborhood (40) and the city (35). This also reflects a high number of single parents living at Allen Homes (68% compared to approximately 23% for the Choice Neighborhood and city). There is also a sharp contrast in median household income, with city household incomes of \$56,695 nearly double Choice Neighborhood household incomes of \$27,944 (ESRI 2022 estimates), which are more than double Allen Homes household incomes of \$9,528 (Augusta Housing Authority at time of application).

POPULATION

AGE

RACE & ETHNICITY

POVERTY RATE

UNEMPLOYMENT

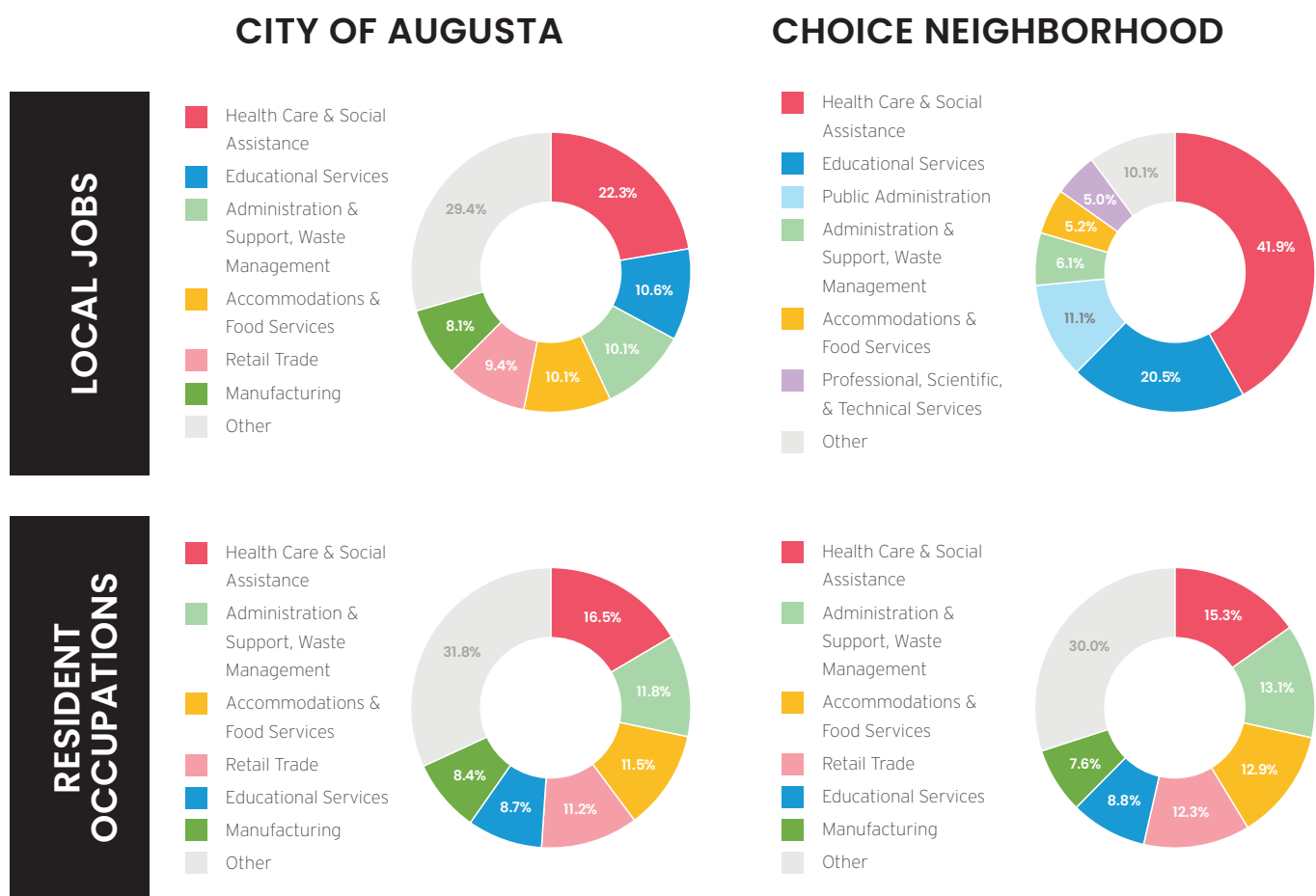
HOUSEHOLDS

HOUSING

FIGURE 4 | Resident Demographics

## Demographics at a glance

	CITY OF AUGUSTA	CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD	ALLEN HOMES
	202,081 **	9,396	388
MEDIAN AGE	35.3	40.1	14
UNDER 15	19%	14.7%	50.5%
15-24	14.5%	18.2%	16.2%
25-34	16.1%	12.1%	13.9%
35-64	34.9%	34.8%	16.8%
65+	15.5%	20.2%	2.6%
BLACK	58.4%	68.9%	97.9%
WHITE	34.3%	25.4%	0.3%
OTHER	2.0%	3.1%	0.0%
HISPANIC	5.3%	2.6%	1.8%
	20.6%	41.5%	NOT AVAILABLE
	7.6%	11.9%	NOT AVAILABLE
# HOUSEHOLDS	77,478	3,883	141
AVG. HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.44	2.00	-
SINGLE-MOTHER HH (2010)	22.7% *	23.0% *	68.1%
MEDIAN HH INCOME	\$44,715	\$20,633	\$9,528
TOTAL # UNITS	88,332	5,061	150
HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE	44.0%	16.6%	NOT APPLICABLE
VACANCY	12.3%	23.3%	7.3%***
MEDIAN HOME VALUE	\$138,165	\$78,606	NOT APPLICABLE

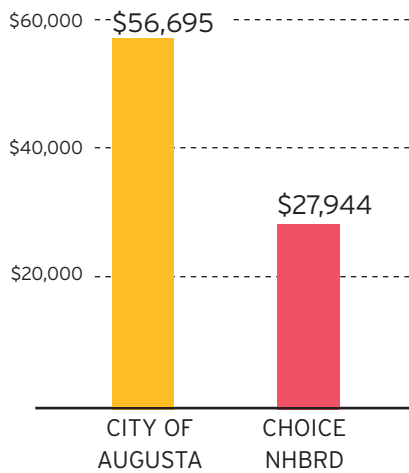


**FIGURE 5** | Job Sectors

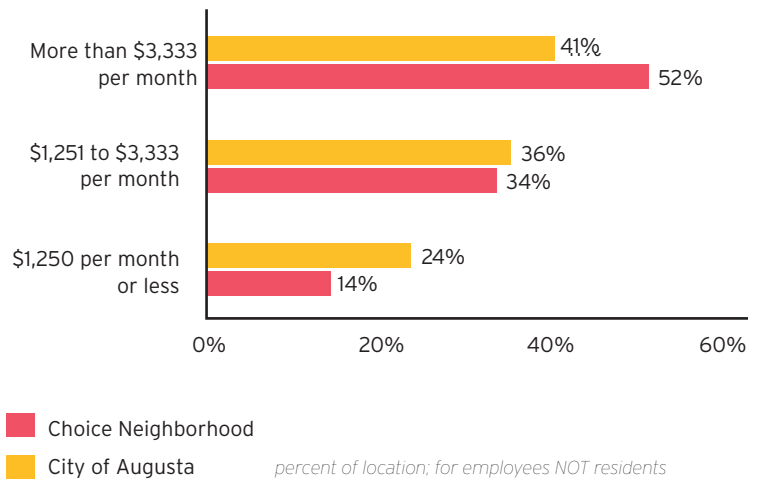
## Employment Opportunities

The Laney Walker-Harrisburg Choice neighborhood provides a large number of jobs to the region. More than 30% of the jobs within Augusta stem from the neighborhood. Of the top ten largest non-manufacturing employers within the city (according to the Augusta Economic Development Authority), six are within the neighborhood including: Augusta University (6,775 jobs), Augusta University Hospitals (5,341 jobs), and Piedmont Augusta (3,000 jobs). Additionally, numerous Richmond County Schools, Augusta-Richmond County offices (City Hall and Augusta Health Department), as well as the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center are located in the Choice neighborhood.

The majority of jobs within the neighborhood are Health Care & Social Services (41.9%) and Educational Services (20.5%). While some neighborhood residents work within those sectors (15.3% and 8.8% respectively), there is a lack of Manufacturing and Retail Trade positions within the neighborhood which collectively make up 20% of the residents' jobs.



**FIGURE 6** | Median Income



**FIGURE 7** | Monthly Income

## Rates of Employment

While Augusta's citywide unemployment rate is 5.1%, the rate for the Choice Neighborhood is much higher at 8.2% (ESRI 2022 estimates). And based on the Choice neighborhood survey, this rate is more than double for Allen Homes residents with 25% of survey respondents unemployed and looking for a job.

Unlike many other distressed neighborhoods across the country where residents are faced with low incomes and high rates unemployment, the Laney Walker-Harrisburg Choice Neighborhood is an employment hub for the city of Augusta. Jobs available within the Choice neighborhood are higher paying positions (than reflected by neighborhood resident incomes) with 52% of the jobs paying more than \$3,333 per month. Only 14% of the jobs within the Choice Neighborhood pay less than 1,250 per month.

*The Choice Neighborhood is an employment hub, supplying more than 30% of Augusta's jobs and offering high paying positions. Yet, resident employment rates and incomes do not reflect this.*



Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

## Challenge of Finding Educated Workers

There is a mismatch between jobs in the neighborhood and jobs of residents: most employed neighborhood residents (81%) work outside of the neighborhood boundary. Meanwhile there are 30,446 jobs within the neighborhood, but 98% of those are taken by workers from outside the neighborhood.

There is not a shortage of jobs within the Choice Neighborhood. But many of the jobs within the neighborhood likely require bachelors or advanced degrees. The number of people who have a bachelors or advanced degree is twice as high for people working in the Choice Neighborhood (26%) as completed to people living in the Choice Neighborhood (13%).

Only **2%** of jobs in the neighborhood are held by residents.

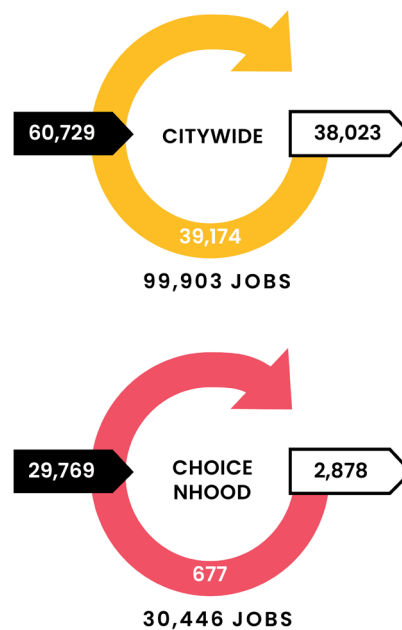


FIGURE 9 | Inflow / Outflow Employment

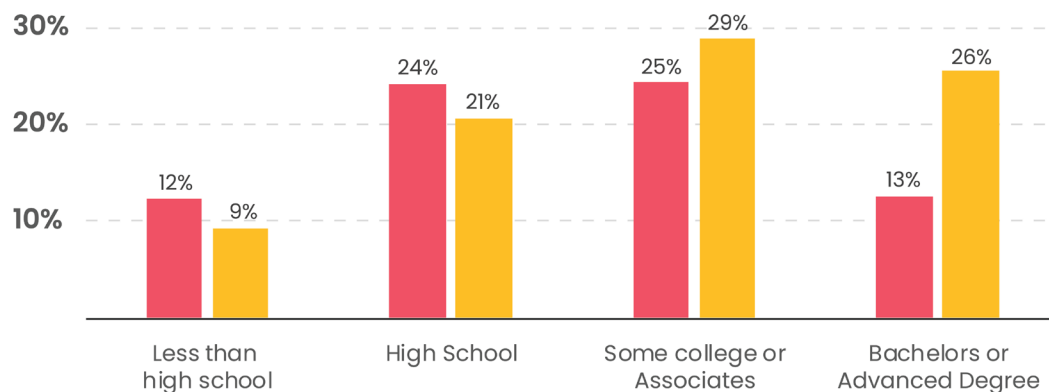
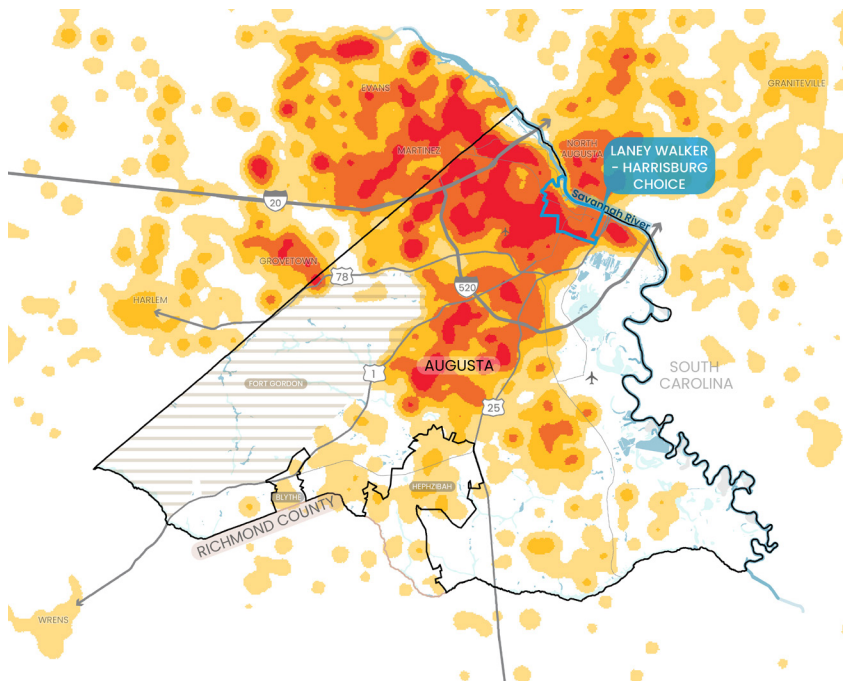


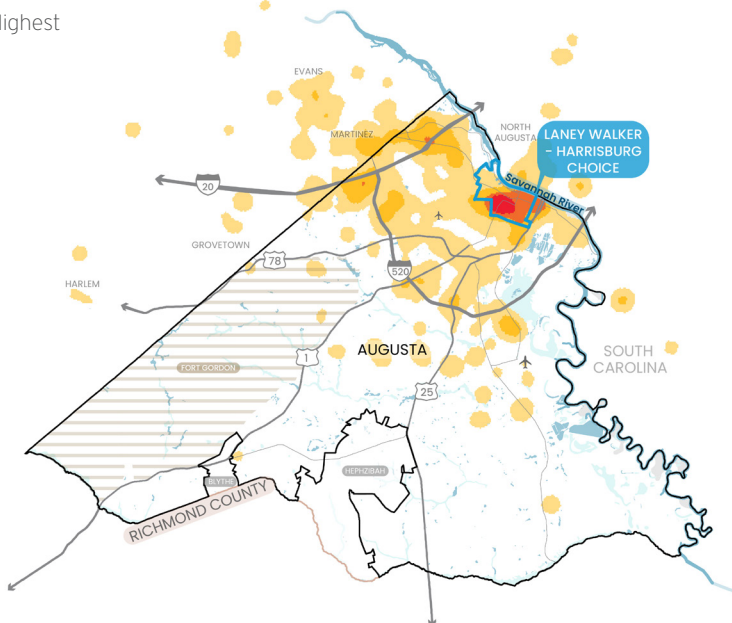
FIGURE 8 | Educational Attainment

Residents of the Choice Neighborhood  
Workers of the Choice Neighborhood



**FIGURE 10** | Workers Distance to Home

Lowest  
Highest



**FIGURE 11** | Residents Distance to Home

Lowest  
Highest

## Getting to Work

Given that 81% of employed Choice Neighborhood residents are working outside of the neighborhood, where are they working? According to the Census, 61% of residents are traveling less than 10 miles, but there is a large percentage (28%) of residents who travel more than 50 miles to get to work.

## "IF EMPLOYED, WHERE DO YOU WORK?"

in the Choice Neighborhood

**0%** **17%**

in Augusta

**82%** **68%**

outside Augusta

**12%** **10%**

Allen Homes Choice Neighborhood

Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Augusta is supported by a diverse array of economic activities, including many that stem back to its founding with an emphasis on manufacturing, the military, and medicine. The city's cost of living, geography, and a young, diverse, educated, and upwardly mobile workforce are just a few reasons many forward-thinking and international companies now call Augusta home.

## MAJOR DRIVERS

### Manufacturing

Building on the city's legacy of industry and manufacturing,

Augusta is focused on seven sectors:

1. Advanced Manufacturing
2. Aerospace
3. Chemical Manufacturing
4. Food Manufacturing
5. Customer Service
6. Cybersecurity And Data Centers
7. Logistics

Companies like EZ GO Textron, Cardinal Health, Graphic Packaging, Kellogg's, Augusta Coca-Cola, Kimberly-Clark, John Deere, Starbucks, Lockheed Martin Corporation, and Occidental Chemical Corporation have substantial operations in the city.

### *Did you know?*



Due to its proximity to the Savannah River, Augusta was one of the main industrial centers of the South pre- and post-Civil War. Industry continued to grow after transportation advancements and the construction of the canal spurring new factories and mills to open.



Georgia Cyber Center (Source: Augusta University)



Fort Gordon (Source: U.S. Army Garrisons)

## Military

Augusta played a critical role in the Revolutionary and American Civil War, and today it plays a major role in guarding the nation's security through the U.S. Army Cyber Command headquarters at Fort Gordon, located about 10 miles from the Choice Neighborhood. The Cyber Command HQ oversees five regional cyber centers in Arizona, Hawaii, Germany, Korea, and Kuwait and conducts global operations 24/7 with 16,500 soldiers, civilian employees, and contractors who operate and defend military networks and protect critical U.S. infrastructure against global cyber threats.

***Fort Gordon employs over 29,000 and is the city's largest single employer.***

Fort Gordon employs over 29,000 and is the city's largest single employer, supporting the need for services and housing across the city. The headquarters has also led to spinoff industries in data centers and cyber security including the new Hull McKnight Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center, located downtown in the Choice Neighborhood.

## Medicine

Healthcare is the top industry in Augusta, providing more than 51,000 jobs within the Augusta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with nine major hospitals serving 18 counties and beyond. Within the Choice Neighborhood, the Augusta University Health Science Campus and Veterans Administration Hospital anchor a major medical services and employment hub that includes the Children's Hospital of Georgia—the region's only hospital dedicated to serving children. Augusta University is a public research university and academic medical center. The University, including Augusta University Health, contributed \$2.6 billion to the state's economy in the fiscal year 2019, according to a recent report from the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

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**51,000** jobs &  
**9** hospitals  
serving 18 counties.

Children's Hospital of Georgia (Source: AugustaTomorrow)



## Tourism

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the natural beauty of Augusta and the surrounding area attracted wealthy patrons for winter retreats, giving rise to golf courses and polo fields. Today, Augusta is synonymous with the Masters, the most prestigious professional golf tournament in the United States. It is one of four major championships held in the country each year. It is the only major hosted on the same course—the Augusta National Golf Club, located just outside of the Choice Neighborhood. The tournament's annual economic impact is estimated in excess of \$100 million.

The Augusta Canal is the only fully intact American industrial canal in continuous operation and has been designated a National Heritage Area. The waterway is now a popular recreation destination where visitors enjoy land and water

trails for paddling, hiking, and cycling. The heritage area hosts guided history and nature tours on replica canal cargo boats departing from the Augusta Canal Discovery Center, housed in a former textile mill. The Canal cuts across the Choice Neighborhood from Harrisburg to Laney Walker and has tremendous potential to become an even greater amenity and destination while supporting neighborhood revitalization efforts.



### *Did you know?*

Augusta grew as a winter retreat for people escaping the harsh northeast winter. Golf became an attraction for families looking for outdoor recreational activities.

## *Building on Recent Plans*



### **DESTINATION BLUEPRINT (2017)**

This plan outlines strategies to make the city more attractive to tourism and visitation, from within the local region and afar. It focuses on revitalizing downtown and capitalizing on the history, culture, and natural resources of the city, while also considering the need for downtown densification and improvements to the overall quality of public space.



#### **Relevance to our plan:**

- + Refined connections from downtown to the river, making the river more of a destination
- + A more defined organization of the downtown area, “defining downtown” more clearly
- + Concentrated city branding, harnessing the potential of public art to create a sense of identity and authenticity
- + New public events, including amateur sports and outdoor / adventure experiences

# EDUCATION

Educational quality and level of educational attainment are factors that play an important role in shaping a person's life, including job and career prospects, income and resiliency, and future opportunities. It is also true that an educated workforce can be a critical driver of a community's overall economic prosperity.

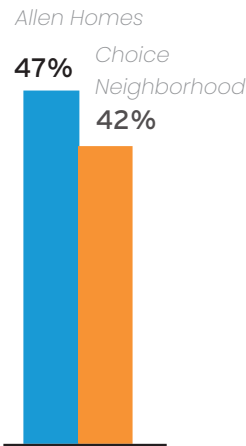
## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FACILITIES

The educational cycle begins in a child's infancy. Participation in a quality early childhood education program for children under age 5 is an important factor in a child's long-term success. There are several licensed early childhood education programs within the Choice Neighborhood, including Westabou Montessori School, YMCA Child Development Academy, EOA Head Start, and Heritage Learning Academy, many of which offer tuition assistance.

According to the Choice Neighborhood Survey, less than half of the area residents have their children taking part in a formal early childhood education program. When asked why, the top reasons for Allen Homes residents was the cost and no available openings.

*There are several early childhood education programs located throughout the neighborhood, and many close to Allen Homes, however a lack of openings is a barrier.*

Percentage of Children NOT enrolled in a licensed Pre-K or Early Childhood Program



Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

### TOP REASONS WHY ALLEN HOMES CHILDREN ARE NOT PARTICIPATING IN A PRE-K OR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM:

- 46% OPENINGS
- 38% COST
- 38% SCHEDULING CONFLICTS
- 30% LOCATION
- 30% QUALITY



**FIGURE 13** | Educational Facilities in the Choice Neighborhood

## LEGEND

### ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE

- 1 C.T. Walker Magnet School (Grade 1-8)
  - 2 Lamar-Milledge Elementary School
- ### OTHER
- 3 Curtis Baptist Schools (13 mos.- 12th Grade)
  - 4 Challenge Preparatory Academy (Grade 5-6)
  - 5 Heritage Academy (6 wks.-8th Grade)
  - 6 Immaculate Conception School (K-12)
  - 7 Richmond County Board of Education
  - 8 Westabou Montessori School (2yrs-8th Grade)

### HIGH SCHOOL

- 9 Lucy C Laney High School
- 10 A R Johnson Health Science & Engineering Magnet (6-12)
- 11 John S Davidson Magnet School (6-12)

### COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

- 12 Augusta University
- 13 Paine College

### PRESCHOOL/CHILDCARE

- 14 Augusta Head Start Central Office
- 15 Big Blue Marble Academy
- 16 Family Y Child Development Academy
- 17 Silas X Floyd School (Head Start)
- 18 Tabernacle Child Development Center
- 19 Pathways Head Start

*NOTE: Many children at Allen Homes attend Jenkins-White Elementary School and W.S. Hornsby Schools, which are not shown on the map and is outside of the Choice Neighborhood.*

## K-12

Four public schools serve the Choice Neighborhood: Laney High School, W.S. Hornsby Middle School, and two elementary schools—W.S. Hornsby and Lamar-Milledge. All of these schools are among the lowest performers in the state, with the lowest—W.S. Hornsby ranked at 1204th out of 1208th (according to schooldigger.com). (It should be noted that many of the children living at Allen Homes largely attend elementary school at Jenkins-White, which is beyond the boundary of the Choice Neighborhood, but also underperforming, ranked at 1237th out of 1,244 George elementary schools.) The performance of these schools not only impacts the students but makes it difficult to retain or attract families to live in the urban core.

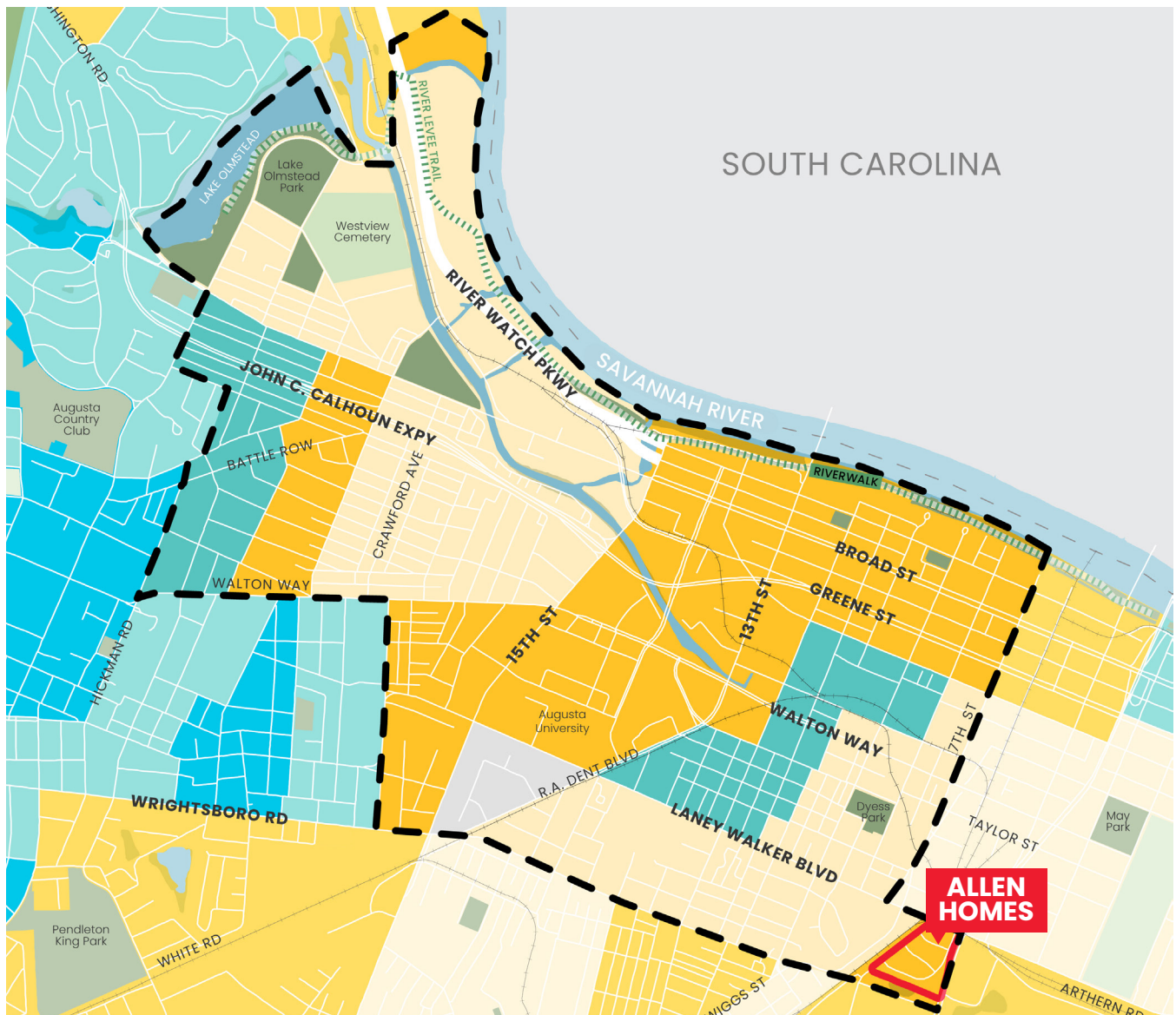
There are, however, nine other (private and magnet) schools in the Choice Neighborhood

that serve students from K-12 and are strong performers such as the AR Johnson and Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School. Many of these require an application, a certain grade level, and sometimes a portfolio or try out for admittance, and as a result, few neighborhood residents apply. The presence of these schools, however, presents an opportunity for the planning process to explore ways to help students overcome the barriers to entry.

In the Choice Neighborhood, 74.9% of residents have obtained a high school diploma, GED equivalent or higher, but only 13.5% received a bachelor's degree or higher, based on ESRI forecasts for 2021. This is somewhat lower than Augusta residents in general: 85.6% have a high school diploma, GED equivalent or higher, and 23.3% earned a bachelor's degree or higher (ESRI 2021 forecasts).

Laney Walker High School





**FIGURE 14** | Percent of People with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

**LEGEND**

- 1-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%

*Residents in Allen Homes and the Choice Neighborhood have a low educational attainment level, which feeds into the jobs and employment mismatch.*

Residents who have a bachelor's degree or higher

**18%**

Choice Neighborhood

**3%**

Allen Homes

Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

## LITERACY

Literacy is an essential skill needed to navigate society. With a low level of proficiency, a person may face serious barriers to even basic needs and services, employment, and important information. According to SchoolGradesGeorgia.gov, only 50% of 8th graders in Richmond County were reading at or above grade level. In 2021, only 25-29% of students attending Laney High School were reading at the standardized level for their grade.

Literacy deficits may also have generational impacts beyond the individual, as low rates of literacy affect parents' ability to help their children learn. There are several institutions working within the Choice Neighborhood to increase literacy, including the Augusta University Literacy Center and RISE Augusta (headquartered at the HUB).

*Low rates of literacy impact the ability of the city to employ residents and to nurture a locally-grown educated workforce to fuel its diverse economy.*



Hornsby Elementary Students (Source: RISE Augusta)



Georgia Cyber Center

## ACCESS TO WI-FI

The internet is a vital, global portal to education, employment, necessary services, knowledge, communication, and advancement. Within the Choice Neighborhood, 34.2% of households lack access to the internet altogether, and a further 19.1% of residents do not possess a computer at all (based on American Community Survey 2015-2019). As the world continues to increase its reliance on digital technology, this gap in access to critical infrastructure will pose an increasingly great disadvantage to those without it.



**34.2%**  
households in the Choice  
Neighborhood do not have  
access to the Internet.

**19.1%**  
of residents do not have  
access to a computer  
at home.

*Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019*

# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## MAJOR CONDITIONS

Health and wellness are crucial to the prosperity of any community, but it is important to recognize that physical and mental health are highly complex and are affected by a host of social and environmental factors, many of which are significantly more prominent in marginalized and disenfranchised communities.

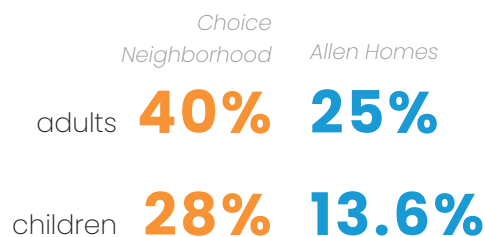
Citywide, the leading causes of death in Augusta are heart disease and cancer, two conditions which can be substantially mitigated by early recognition and proactive treatment. However, according to the Choice Neighborhood survey of neighborhood residents, over 40% of all adults and 28.8% of children do not have health insurance.

These rates are better for Allen Homes residents—25% of adults and 13.6% of children do not have health insurance. Twenty percent of residents would be unable to cover a 400-dollar emergency expense if one were to arise, let alone pay for continual medical care directly (2019 Community Health Needs Assessment Report by Augusta Health).

Capacity for treatment also extends beyond finances, where, for instance, almost half of all children at Allen Homes live with only one parent, who therefore bear a greater burden of care for both themselves and their dependents. Continual care is just as critical in the 34% of households in the Choice neighborhood where at least one member has some form of disability (2015-2019 ACS data), wherein those peoples' disabilities may impact their ability to manage their own health independently or without a strong social safety net.

The top health issues facing residents of Allen Homes are high blood pressure, depression/anxiety/or post-traumatic stress, and asthma/breathing issues (Choice Neighborhood survey of Allen Homes residents). In the Augusta region, the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment cites heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and women's health as the primary health needs. Similar to nationwide reporting, Georgia diabetes rates are significantly higher in Black and Hispanic populations than in white communities.

### Residents who do NOT have health insurance



Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

**20%** of residents would be unable to cover a \$400 emergency expense or continual medical care directly.

Source: 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment

## Trauma and Mental Health

Of 20 health issues presented as potential problems for Augustans in the 2019 Augusta Health CNA, mental health was listed as the top community concern (94.3% ranked as a “Major Problem” or “Moderate Problem”), above Substance Abuse (90%), Diabetes (88.5%), Nutrition/Physical Activity (88.1%), and Heart Disease/Stroke (83.7%). While Augusta has a high number of physical health treatment facilities, it has far fewer mental health facilities. Health assessments of Richmond County indicate that mental health issues, particularly depression and Alzheimer’s or dementia, affect a similar number of people as do heart disease and cancer, but overall rely on roughly half the number of mental health providers compared to physical healthcare providers. Of Allen Homes survey respondents, 30.3% stated trauma support services are not available in the Choice Neighborhood and 26.3% said mental health services or therapy are not available.

Other issues such as substance-use and alcohol-related disorders are reported as high concerns to residents of Richmond County, though these issues are often treated at separate facilities and may be of prohibitive cost to their beneficiaries, particularly those struggling through active addiction. Thirty-six percent of Augusta residents report being personally impacted by substance abuse, a similar figure to nationwide reporting. Of Allen Homes survey respondents, 29% cited that substance abuse facilities and support are not available in the Choice Neighborhood.

The top health services that Allen Homes residents feel are not available in the Choice Neighborhood are:

- 
- #1** Trauma Support Services
  - #2** Reproductive Health / OBGYN  
Substance Abuse and Addiction
  - #3** Mental Health Services  
Domestic Violence  
Physical Therapy

*Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey*



## Did you know?

### TOP HEALTH ISSUES FOR AUGUSTANS

*2019 Augusta Health CNA*

- #1** MENTAL HEALTH
- #2** SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- #3** DIABETES
- #4** NUTRITION / PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- #5** HEART DISEASE



(Source: Augusta Locally Grown)

**51.3%**



of Allen Homes residents find that at least once per week there is not enough food in the house.

Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

**29%**

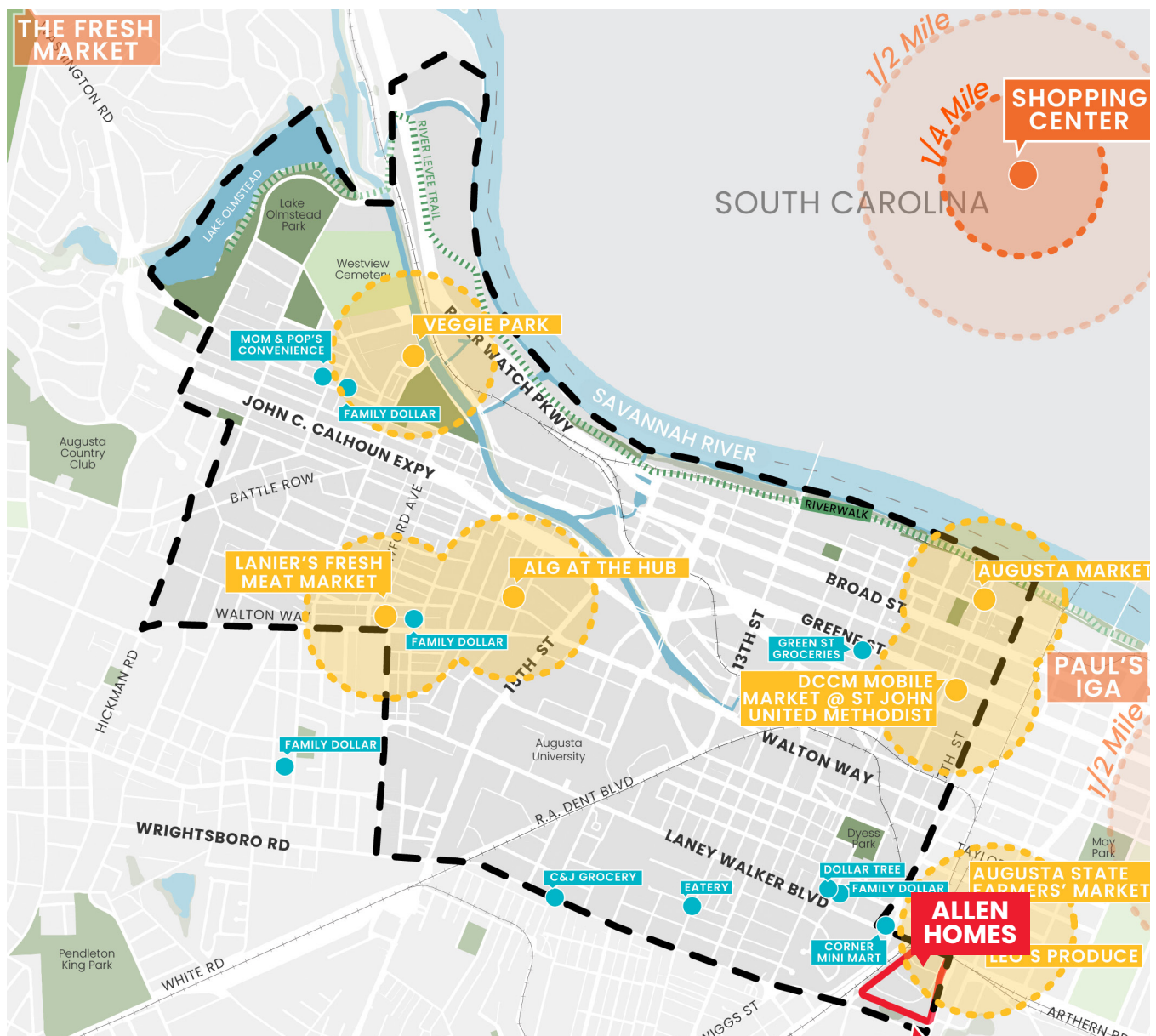
of Richmond County residents state they are not physically active.

## Food Access

Access to fresh, nutritious food is of major concern for residents, as Augusta's urban core does not have a single grocery store, forcing many residents to travel well beyond the neighborhood to meet their basic needs. When Choice Neighborhood residents were asked to rate the health of the neighborhood, only 24.9% of neighborhood residents and 40.8% of Allen Homes resident feel high-quality fresh fruits, vegetables and food are widely available and affordable (Choice Neighborhood surveys). As a result, 51.3% of Allen Homes survey respondents do not have enough food to eat one or more times a week.

## Physical Activity

Across Richmond County, 29% of residents report physical inactivity, compared to 19% nationwide. This is reflected in the Choice Neighborhood survey results. Only 26.5% of neighborhood respondents and 28.9% of Allen Homes respondents agree there are many places to exercise (gyms, parks, playgrounds) in the Choice Neighborhood. In addition, 39.5% of Allen Homes survey respondents never jog, walk, or ride a bike outside and 60.5% never exercise at a gym or fitness center.



**FIGURE 15** | Food Access

**LEGEND (FOOD ACCESS)**

- Discount or Convenience Store
- Farmer's Market or Bulk Produce
- Full Service Grocery Store
- Access to Healthy Food

*The Choice Neighborhood is a food desert as there are no full service grocery stores available within the boundary.*

# PUBLIC SAFETY

Crimes are generally recorded in two categories which are used to monitor criminal activity in an area. Part I Crimes are ten serious crimes designated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that are likely to be reported such as burglary, homicide, arson, and aggravated assault. Part II Crimes generally do not result in serious injury to the victim and pose less of a threat to public safety.

Based on data from Richmond County Sheriff's Office from the beginning of 2022 through August 2022, the top Part I Crimes reported in the Choice Neighborhood are larceny from auto, auto theft, and burglary. The top three Part II offenses include sexual assault and battery, larceny, and damage to property.

Top crimes in the Choice Neighborhood from January - August 2022:

**Larceny from auto, auto theft, burglary, sexual assault and battery, larceny, and damage to property.**

*Source: Richmond County Sheriff's Office*

Zooming in, Allen Homes residents have encountered burglary, simple assault/battery, larceny, and damage to property with relatively low (but not non-existent) instances of homicide, assault with guns and weapons, drug-related instances, and other forms of robbery. This is consistent with patterns endemic to the greater Choice Neighborhood area as well, but major

differences include the high rate of sexual assault and battery, as well as the presence of other criminal activities such as fraud and criminal trespass which do not occur in the data describing Allen Homes.

## PERCEPTION OF CRIME

Residents of both Allen Homes AND the Choice Neighborhood residents cite crime and safety as the number one neighborhood challenge that needs to be improved immediately.

Top safety concerns for Allen Homes residents are gun shots/gun violence, gang activity, and run-down buildings / squatters, which is echoed by Choice Neighborhood survey respondents whose top concerns are: run-down buildings/squatters, homelessness, gun shots/gun violence, and gang activity.

### "WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE SAFETY CONCERNS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?"

Allen Homes

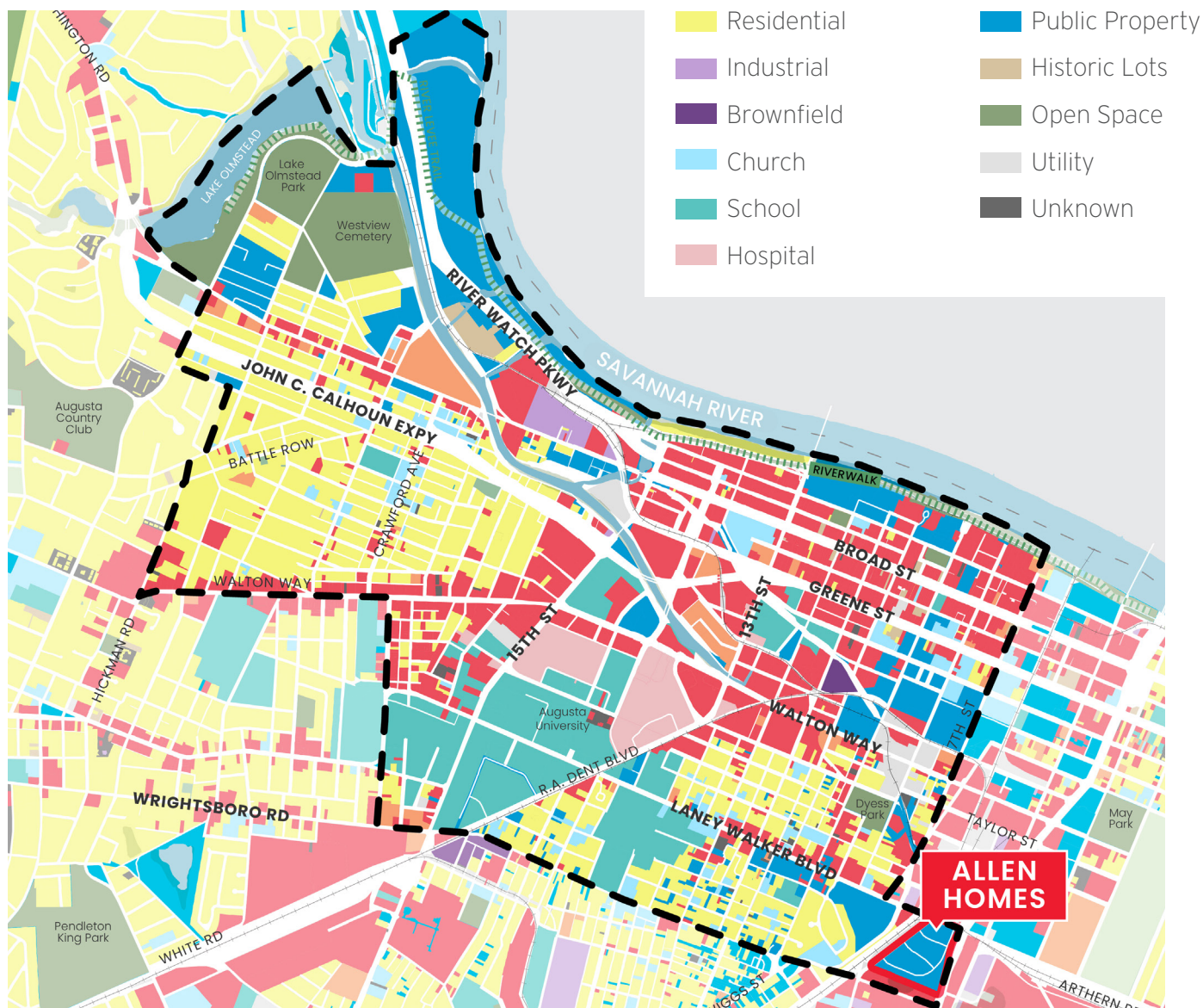


Choice Neighborhood



***A large number of vacant lots and blighted properties create conditions that can attract unwanted activity.***

# LAND USE

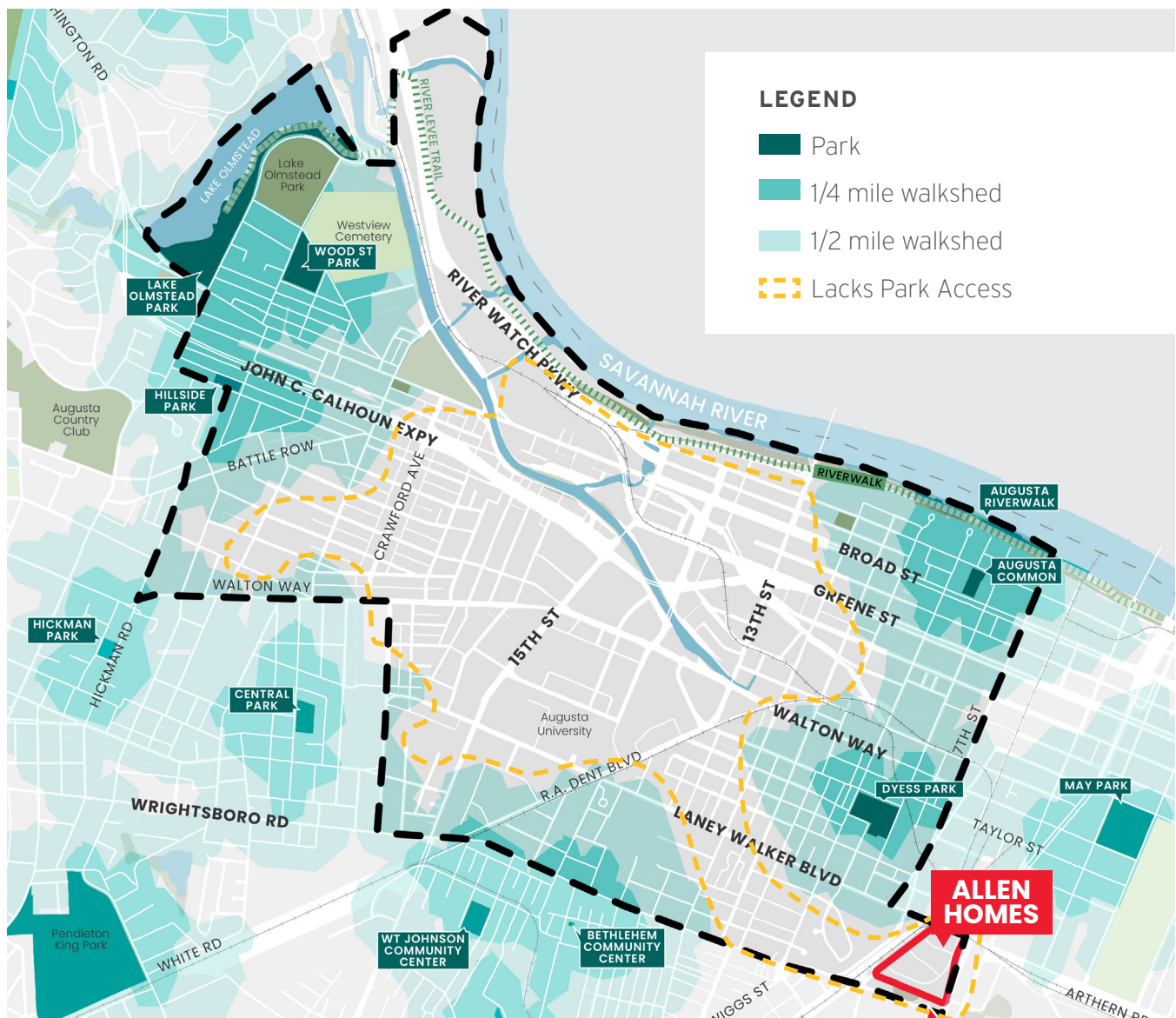


**FIGURE 16** | Land Use Map

A look at the current land use map to the right indicates that there are three primary land uses in the Choice Neighborhood: commercial, residential, and school. Laney Walker and Harrisburg are largely residential; downtown is mostly commercial (along with public property), and the area surrounding the medical campus is largely categorized as “school” and “hospital.”

A closer look shows that commercial uses (in red) are dotted throughout the neighborhood, along more major corridors like Broad Street and Walton Way, but also scattered within the neighborhoods. Scattered commercial activity dilutes the impact of more concentrated activity centers that could attract more foot traffic. Also of note are the limited number of green or open spaces, which are discussed later.

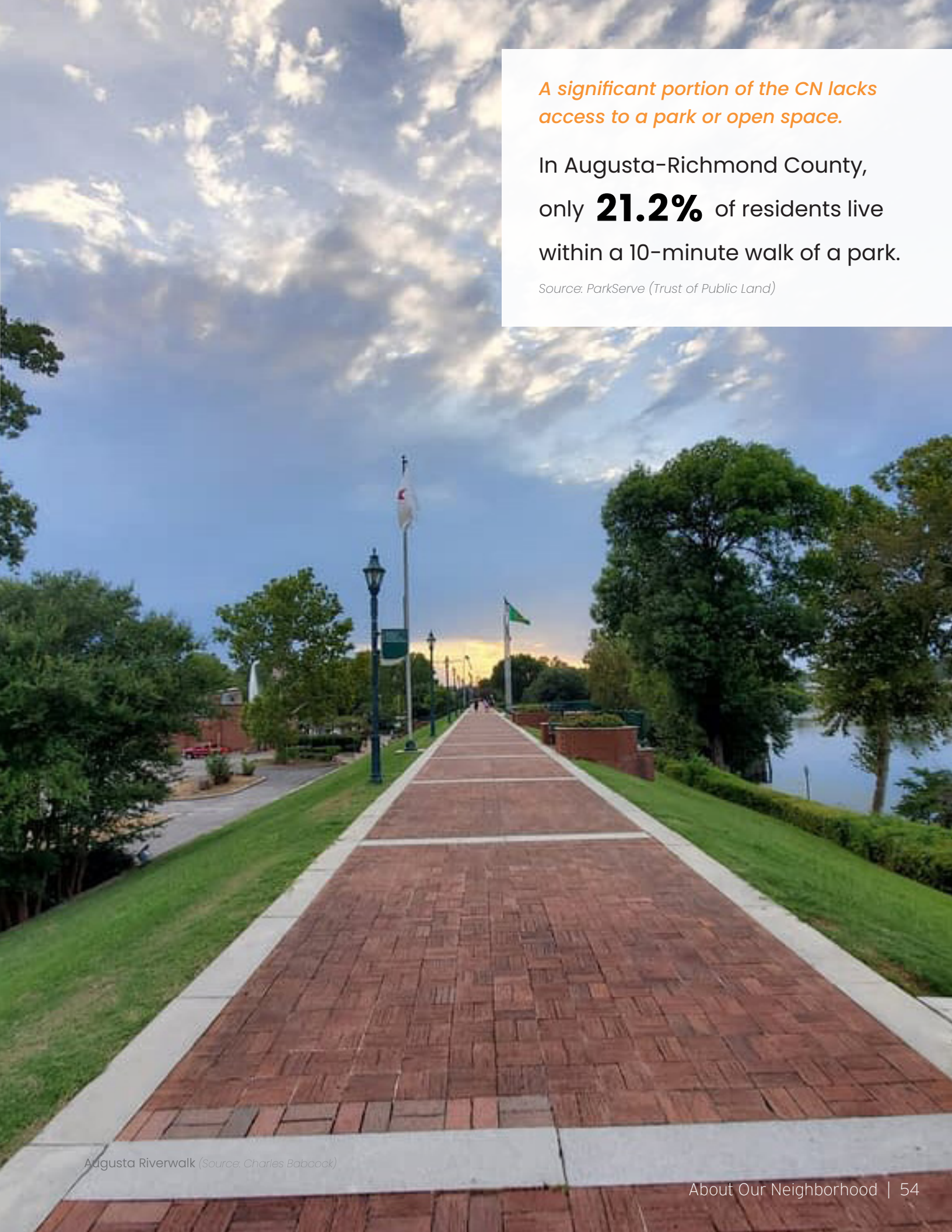
# PARKS & OPEN SPACE



**FIGURE 17** | Park Access

The land use map also suggests that residents of the Choice neighborhood have limited access to park space, served primarily by Dyess Park in Laney Walker, Lake Olmstead Park and Wood Street Park in Harrisburg and the Riverwalk along the northern edge. ParkServe®, a tool developed by the Trust for Public Land, indicates that in Augusta-Richmond County only 21.2% of

residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park with a high priority need for new parks in the center of our Choice Neighborhood. An analysis of the Choice Neighborhood indicates that a significant portion of the neighborhood lacks access to park spaces within a 10-15 minute walk of their home.

A wide-angle photograph of the Augusta Riverwalk. The path is paved with red bricks in a herringbone pattern, flanked by green grass and trees. In the distance, a body of water is visible under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A flagpole with a white flag stands on the left side of the path.

*A significant portion of the CN lacks access to a park or open space.*

In Augusta-Richmond County, only **21.2%** of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park.

*Source: ParkServe (Trust of Public Land)*

# HOUSING

The overall housing trends in the City of Augusta show an increasing cost of homes and rents, a lack of available affordable housing, and decreasing participation in Section 8 by landlords, all of which compound the availability of quality affordable housing in the metro region. In comparison, the trends in the Choice Neighborhood show a significant increase in renter-occupied homes, a decrease in homeownership, a decrease in median home values, and an increase in vacancy rates.

## ARCHITECTURE & CHARACTER

A significant portion of the Choice Neighborhood is historic, and residents cite the history and culture of the neighborhood as one of its greatest assets (45.6% of neighborhood residents responding to Choice Neighborhood survey cited history/culture as top two greatest strengths). Four national register historic districts intersect the Choice Neighborhood: Laney-Walker Historic District; the Harrisburg-West End Historic District; the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area; and the Augusta Downtown Historic District. Within these districts are individual historic landmark sites of cultural and historic significance, many clustered in the Downtown area.

In Harrisburg, historic mills are clustered along the Augusta Canal north of the Calhoun Expressway, part of the designated historic district. Outside the brick mill buildings, south of the canal, housing is typically single-family wooden or brick construction, relatively small by today's standards. Laney-Walker homes are of a similar age and construction, but tend to be in worse repair than Harrisburg houses. Single-story shotguns, bungalows, and other narrow housing forms are typical, usually with front porches. Some larger two-story buildings do remain throughout.



Laney Walker Historic District (Source: National Parks Service)



Harrisburg Historic District (Source: National Parks Service)



Heritage Pines Homes (Source: Realtor.com)



Pinched Gut (Olde Town) Historic Homes (Source: Afar.com)

Choice Neighborhood and Allen Homes residents think that the **history and culture of Laney Walker and Harrisburg** is one of the neighborhood's greatest strengths.

Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

## Preserving the Historic Character

The historic character of the neighborhood is central to residents' identities, and existing initiatives like the Laney-Walker/Bethlehem Heritage Trail project cited in the LWB Urban Redevelopment Plan (2016) look to grow this identity. The 2011 "Reclaiming Historic Harrisburg" plan also prioritizes this existing historic housing stock as the neighborhood's primary revitalization opportunity. The study links the poor quality of the neighborhood's

housing to perceptions of crime and poor safety, finding 55% of Harrisburg houses in need of maintenance. However, the Plan also assesses that the neighborhood's shotgun and bungalow typologies are small enough to be good entry-level housing for residents, with especially deep lots that could easily receive back "carriage houses" to increase supply and keep attention on back alleys.

Unfortunately, many of the homes in the Choice Neighborhood have suffered from a lack of maintenance and repair for decades, leading to poor and in some cases dangerous living conditions. Vacancy is high in the Choice Neighborhood, even compared to the rest of the city - 23.3% of parcels are vacant, compared to 12.3% citywide (2019 American Community Survey). This high, scattered-site vacancy rate contributes to a lack of a cohesive urban fabric, particularly in the Laney-Walker neighborhood.

Demolition of blighted housing continues through the Augusta Georgia Land Bank Authority, which addresses the neighborhood's most severely under-maintained housing stock but also contributes to a further drop in available supply. Seventy-five demolitions are slated for the next year, the demolitions are performed on behalf of City by Environmental Services, a division of Engineering. Narrow parcels subsequently make scattered infill redevelopment difficult due to size constraints.

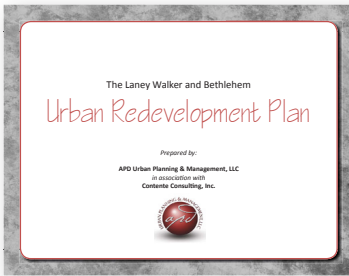
*Vacancy coupled with poorly maintained properties has lead to poor and sometimes dangerous living conditions in several areas in the neighborhood.*



Renovating the area's severely deteriorated historic housing is difficult economically, but culturally central to the identity and character of these neighborhoods. Guidelines like the Historic Property Treatment Guidelines put forth in 2015 by the Augusta Housing and Community Development Department indicate the city understands the importance of intervening as early as possible to save and rehabilitate the neighborhood's housing stock.

Many of these homes in the Laney Walker neighborhood in particular are also being targeted for lead removal, which would bring an additional number of units back into healthy use for the neighborhood. The Lead Hazard Reduction Program, launched in 2022 and administered through HUD, granted \$3.3 million to Augusta in order to remediate 120 homes built before 1978.





## THE LANEY WALKER AND BETHLEHEM URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (2016)

A blueprint for the redevelopment of “blighted” areas within the historic Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods. The plan goals are centered around rehabilitating and replacing sub-standard housing with affordable mixed housing types, providing affordable rental housing, and offering financial incentives to existing property owners and new investors.

### Relevance to our plan:

- + Enhancing public open space
- + Key proposed development areas within the Choice Neighborhood
- + Restoring the cultural heritage through the restoration of existing buildings and design guidelines for new construction



## RECLAIMING HISTORIC HARRISBURG (2011)

Based on Georgia Conservancy’s Blueprints for Successful Communities, a sustainable community design program that involved rigorous community engagement.

The plan emphasizes existing investment opportunities as well as major corridor improvements, connectivity to the Augusta Canal, and alternatives for the June C. Calhoun Expressway. Harrisburg’s unique character, which stretches back 200 years to its founding as a mill village, is also celebrated in this plan through preservation and branding initiatives. As a general development strategy, this plan recommends a block-by-block approach to infill development.

### Relevance to our plan:

- + Emphasis on preserving and celebrating the neighborhood’s history and identity
- + Embracing the Augusta Canal as a major city amenity with trails, improved street connections, and new housing along the Canal
- + Restoring Broad Street as a main corridor for an enhanced pedestrian experience, integrating a “Complete Street” approach



**FIGURE 18** | Vacancy

## VACANCY

While the city has a vacancy rate of 12.3%, this figure is nearly double at 23.3% within the Choice neighborhood. This high rate of vacancy is clustered among smaller parcels within the residential areas, which disrupts the continuity of neighborhood blocks. Vacancies also attract trash and illegal dumping that cause eyesores and can also lead to crime and other unwanted activities. Downtown, vacant storefronts detract from the street life. While a high rate of vacancy can negatively impact the character of a neighborhood, it also presents an opportunity for thoughtful and inclusive redevelopment.

### LEGEND (VACANCY)

- Vacant
- Vacant City-Owned
- City-Owned

*For the most part, vacancy is clustered in small parcels within the residential areas, disrupting the urban fabric.*



*The available housing stock in the Choice Neighborhood is largely small single-family detached houses. Recent investments are infilling and starting to stabilize the housing stock.*

## HOUSING TYPES

As with much of Augusta, the Choice Neighborhood is mostly comprised of small single-family detached houses, rather than typologies like apartment buildings or townhomes. Many of these homes are smaller than current market demand, according to a 2022 Market Study of the Choice Neighborhood prepared by BLOC. Potential new residents moving into the Augusta area (ex. military families, cybersecurity workers, etc.) would have difficulty finding supply for modern rental housing in the Choice Neighborhood, with very few apartment buildings available for rent outside of Housing Authority properties. More traditional “urban” housing types like townhomes, loft buildings, and larger mixed-use apartment buildings could bring new residents of alternate demographics and household composition to the neighborhood, particularly closer to the Downtown.

Reflecting this, the Choice Neighborhood Needs Assessment found that Allen Homes residents are most interested in the townhome typology of housing (65.8%), in contrast to the single family detached housing stock of the surrounding neighborhood. This could be because they are most familiar with the current style of Allen Homes. Even among current residents, there is a perception of a lack of safe, well-maintained housing available for potential homeownership. The Needs Assessment found the top challenge to homeownership among neighborhood residents was “Finding an affordable, safe, well-constructed home in a location you would like to be in the neighborhood” (70.6% of respondents).

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The overall median home value in the neighborhood is relatively low at \$78,606, compared to the citywide figure of \$138,165, but this seems to be a side effect of the lower quality and smaller sizes of houses in the neighborhood. Median income is also low in the neighborhood, making overall affordability of homes less accessible: median home values are 3.8 times higher than median income in the neighborhood, compared to 2.5x citywide. Affordability also has a racial component: citywide, home affordability is 2.1x homes to median income for white Augustans, but 3.0x for Black Augustans.

Allen Homes is one of the Housing Authority's five properties in the Choice Neighborhood, with a total of 832 apartment units, making up 11% of the area's total housing supply, according to a Market Study of the Choice Neighborhood prepared by BLOC. An additional three public housing sites with a total of 560 units sit just outside the Choice Neighborhood, 310 units of which serve elderly residents. Also in the Choice Neighborhood are several other multi-family sites, HOME Program activity, and one LIHTC site.

# OWNERSHIP

Citywide, more than half of Augusta residents are homeowners (52.6%), but only 22.4% of Choice Neighborhood houses are owner-occupied. Approximately, 77.6% of neighborhood residents are renters, compared to 47.4% citywide. Average rents are high (\$939, compared to \$1,060 citywide).

Affordability of homes in the Choice Neighborhood is **3.8x** higher than the median income.


Source: 2019 ACS

Choice Neighborhood      Allen Homes

**76%**      **77%**

Residents believe **new affordable rental housing** is what is most needed in the Choice Neighborhood.

In the Choice Neighborhood:

 **66%**  
Rent

ONLY **34%** own

**71%** of Choice Neighborhood residents said **finding an affordable, safe, and well-constructed home in a location they want to be in** was a challenge in moving towards homeownership.

Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey

## OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Currently, Augusta has several investment tools in place for various parts of the Choice Neighborhood to incentivize redevelopment efforts. Laney Walker and Harrisburg West End are designated as Enterprise Zones as well as Opportunity Zones, which focus on designated areas that suffer from disinvestment and economic distress. Enterprise Zones encourage revitalization by allowing real estate taxes to be abated for up to 10 years and provide other incentives to private employers who create five or more new jobs. Businesses that fall within an Opportunity Zone that create more than two jobs qualify for a state tax credit for each job.

There is one Tax Allocation District (#4) in the Choice neighborhood which spans a cluster of blocks around 15th Street and Walton Way where the HUB now sits, and another cluster between Green Street and Walker Street from 13th Street to Gordon Highway. Similar to Tax



## Did you know?

### TOOLS FOR REVITALIZATION

**Opportunity Zones** focus on spurring economic growth and job creation in distressed, low-income communities.

**Enterprise Zones** encourage private economic development and job creation.

**Tax Allocation District (TAD)** similar to Tax Increment Financing (TIF), this designation allows the city to use anticipated increases in tax revenue to fund public improvements to incentivize private investments.

Increment Financing, this designation allows the city to use anticipated increases in tax revenue to fund public improvements upfront to incentivize private investments.

*The entire Choice Neighborhood falls within an Opportunity Zone, offering incentives for reinvestment.*

## Building on Recent Plans



### DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE (2017)

Like many cities, Downtown Augusta experienced significant neglect and disinvestment following migration to the suburbs. Due to a popular resurgence of interest in living in urban areas, the downtown is now being revitalized.

#### Relevance to our plan:

- + The Downtown Redevelopment Area (DRA) includes the Choice Neighborhood
- + Improving connectivity throughout the DRA, including: gateway enhancements, wayfinding, and a safer multi-modal transit network



# MARKET STUDY FINDINGS

The BLOC Global Group recently conducted a Market Study of the Choice Neighborhood to understand current conditions and future projections for the area's residential market.

*The study found that there are two primary factors holding the local neighborhood back in comparison to the larger Augusta market: the lack of a major grocery store and lack of modern, improved housing options for a wider range of residents.*

Other parts of the metro region include a broader range of options like townhomes, multifamily condominiums, and apartment buildings, all which are generally more attractive to newcomers to the area, especially renters. The Market Study recommends that in addition to providing quality housing for existing residents, the Choice Neighborhood housing plan should also target new demographics for the area, including: employees in the nearby medical and cyber industries; military households—both active-duty and retirees; and empty nesters. For both, the study suggests targeting households without children seeking higher-density

## Strengths and Challenges

Among the biggest strengths of the neighborhood, the Market Study cites the central location and the commitment of the public, private, and philanthropic communities—as evidenced by the successful application for the Choice Neighborhood Plan and the recent launch of new HUB for Community Innovation and Boys & Girls Club facilities. However, the study acknowledges that the neighborhood is challenged by negative perceptions in the greater Augusta region of blight and disinvestment, including widespread vacant lots and the poor condition of existing houses; small and dated housing stock that does not meet modern market demands; and perceptions of crime.

The low household income of the neighborhood makes the seeding of widespread reinvestment and redevelopment difficult without significant capital. BLOC recommends taking an incremental approach to redevelopment building on gradual successful improvements to help mitigate these perceptions and raise awareness of the strengths of the area: good location, proximity to jobs centers, and the latent potential for mixed-use walkable communities.

## Current and Projected Demand

Augusta-Richmond County

	# Units Delivered Annually	# Units in the Pipeline <i>Oct 2022</i>	Current Average Rent / Sales Price
<b>Mixed-Income Rental Units</b>	455	588	\$969 to \$1,249
<b>For-Sale Units</b>	950	1,125	\$152,625

Currently, there are 150 units at Allen Homes. At this point in the planning process, the Choice Housing Plan ideally would like to double this number of units for a total of 300 units. One hundred and fifty (150) of these units will be replacement units and the other 150 units will be mixed income. Based on BLOC's analysis, it is recommended that each phase of development be mixed-income with no more than 40% of the units being replacement and 60% non-replacement mixed-income units. This is suggested to create a sustainable balance for the community. The highest mixes of replacement units that BLOC's national analysis identified is 73% replacement and 27% non-replacement,

mixed-income units. However, BLOC would not recommend going beyond a mix of 50% replacement units / 50% non-replacement, mixed-income units.

Fifteen percent of Augusta-Richmond County's demand for mixed-income units are forecasted to be potentially captured in the Choice Neighborhood geography, for a total gross capture of 68 units. With a 60% annual absorption rate, a conservative annual market-rate target is 41 units. With a 50/50 mixed income/replacement unit split, each annual development phase is recommended to be no more than 80 units.

## Recommended Development

*in the Choice Neighborhood*

	Annual Units	Total Units <i>1-10 years</i>	Total Units <i>1-15 years</i>
<b>Mixed-Income, Non-Replacement</b>	41	410	615
<b>Replacement Units</b>	39	380	575
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>1,190</b>

For a site like Allen Homes with 150 units, this market projection would take approximately four annual development cycles of ~80 units each year, with a 60/40 market-rate to affordability mix. Early development successes could lead to a gradual increase in perception and in the capture rate for the neighborhood, increasing the viability for mixed-income unit development and therefore, proportionately increasing replacement unit development.

## Seniors

Demand for senior rental units is separate from the previous mixed-income / replacement unit analysis. BLOC found the market in the Choice Neighborhood could absorb about 80 units of senior housing every three years, and could hold at 100% affordable with no impact on the community. These 80 units are above and beyond any replacement development for existing affordable senior apartments in the neighborhood.

## Homeownership

As with the apartment analysis, a fraction of the total annual units delivered in the Augusta-Richmond County market fall within the capture rate of the Choice Neighborhood. Of the 950 homeownership units coming online each year, BLOC estimates only 5% of those (in Years 1-5) are viable within the neighborhood, for a total of 47 units annually. However, the study estimates a gradual uptick in capture rate for the ensuing years based on improvements in perception, for a rate of 7.5% in years 6-10 (71 units annually) and 10% in years 11-15 (475 units).

	Total Homeownership Units
<b>Annual Units</b> <i>1-5 years</i>	47
<b>Annual Units</b> <i>6-10 years</i>	71
<b>Annual Units</b> <i>11-15 years</i>	95
<b>Total Units</b> <i>1-10 years</i>	<b>590</b>
<b>Total Units</b> <i>11-15 years</i>	<b>1,065</b>



## Needed Amenities

One of the primary reasons for the relatively low market demand in the Choice Neighborhood is the lack of necessary amenities for residents. A grocery store is by far the most impactful need for the neighborhood, but other services like parks, schools, shops, recreation, more frequent bus service and transportation options, and public improvements to roads, lighting, and landscaping all factor into prospective residents' decisions. These need to be developed in concert with new housing in order for these market projections to be accurate.

## Conclusion

Because the area studied by BLOC is a large geography with several distinct neighborhoods, it is as-yet unclear whether these market projections hold throughout the geography, or should be targeted at specific areas. Recent residential development in the neighborhood has mostly entailed limited infill housing with some new construction closer to or in downtown. Generally, site selection for new housing sites needs to be in highly visible locations that are connected, safe, and close to everyday amenities.

In all, the study determined that large fundamental changes to the neighborhood's housing inventory, cost structures, and perceptions of quality and safety would have to be made in the study area in order to be truly competitive in the larger Augusta housing market.

# MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

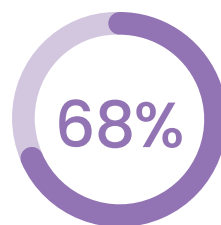
Augusta's evolution and character is closely tied to its transportation. While waterways like the Savannah River and the canal supported the city in its infancy, it later embraced the railroad and streetcar. These largely preserved the intimate pedestrian scale found in the historic neighborhoods of Laney Walker and Harrisburg. But once the automobile arrived and opened up access to the suburbs, it became the mode of choice. Expediting trips in and out of the city became the focus of major infrastructure investments like the John Calhoun Expressway built in 1976, to the detriment of existing communities like Harrisburg, which it sliced in two. Today, most trips into, across, and out of the city take place by car so much so that Downtown's revitalization efforts have apparently been hampered by access and parking challenges.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

The city is served by a bus network with nine fixed routes and a complementary paratransit curb-to-curb van service. The Broad Street Transfer Facility is located Downtown. Operating hours for local service are Monday through Saturday, 6:30 am through approximately 8:00 pm. Late evening and Sunday services are not provided. Several routes serve Laney Walker and Downtown but the routes on the Harrisburg side of the Choice Neighborhood are more limited.

Although the city has a wide network, the buses do not run very often, or very late, and they do not connect easily to job or activity centers. In addition, many stops do not have benches or shelters, or signs providing details about the routes and schedules. Consequently, it is not a primary mode of transportation for Augusta's residents. Car dependency throughout Augusta

has become a self-perpetuating cycle: some people want to use other forms of transit, but because these modes of transportation are not robust or reliable, they fall back on car use, creating congestion and safety problems. In 2022, Augusta Transit received a \$1.4 million grant to update bus stops throughout the city to improve safety and accessibility by adding bus route signs, seating, and shelters.



of Allen Homes residents said they do not use public transit.

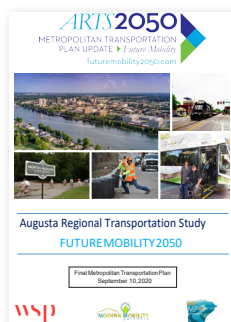
*Source: Assets & Needs Assessment Survey*



*There are many bus routes that serve the Choice Neighborhood; however, the limited service hours, need for transfers, and lack of bus stop amenities and signage deter residents from using public transit on a regular basis.*

**FIGURE 20** | Bus Routes

## Building on Recent Plans



### FUTURE MOBILITY 2050 (2020)

The long-range transportation plan aims to reduce congestion and delay, improve accessibility and connectivity, enhance safety, maintain the existing system, support economic vitality, and promote environmental stewardship & sustainable land use development patterns.

#### Relevance to our plan:

- + Promote connectivity and alternative transportation modes such as bicycles and pedestrians, as well as van pools and car sharing
- + Improve linkages to employment, business, retail, & activity centers
- + Street and intersection improvements on Laney Walker Blvd, James Brown Blvd, and Walton Way
- + Bridge repair and restoration on 15th Street over Augusta Canal



# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & RESILIENCY

## NATURAL RESOURCES & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Augusta has abundant natural resources. Nearly 15% of the overall area of the city is considered to be a wetland and another 57% is considered forested land, most of which is privately owned. While there are few specific initiatives geared towards green infrastructure, the overall land use management strategies designed to protect the river, canal, and aquifers, functions very similarly to contemporary green infrastructure strategies and has done so far most of the city's recent history.

**15%**

of the city is considered  
wetland

**57%**

of the city is considered  
forested land

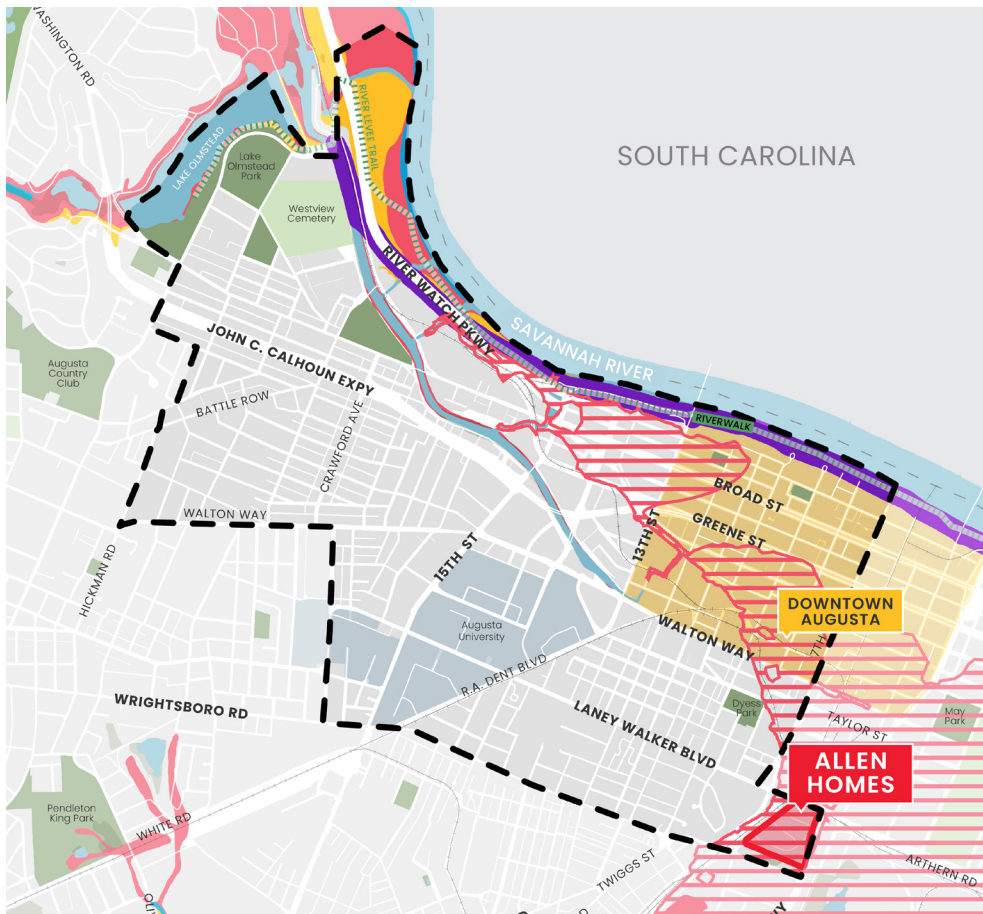
## VULNERABILITY PROFILE

National, state, county, and city resources indicate that Augusta's highest risks regarding environmental hazards and mitigation primarily concern flood, drought, and excessive heat.

### Extreme Heat and Drought

Urban heat island effect is a real concern for those who reside in the urban core of Augusta and presents particular dangers for the elderly and people with disabilities. The most recent hazard mitigation plan describes nine severe to exceptional drought occurrences between the 2000-2017. Extreme heat events are less well-documented, but the 10 hottest days in recorded history for the region have all occurred after 1997. The number of days above 95 degrees per year is expected to increase substantially over the next century.

*Many of these natural resources provide critical habitat for wildlife, manage flooding and drainage, enhance water quality and overall ecosystem health, and promote various passive and active recreation opportunities.*



## LEGEND

Levee

Flood Zones

Floodway

100 Year Flood Zone

500 Year Flood Zone

Area Protected by Levee

*The Choice Neighborhood is largely protected from flooding by the levee, however there are still areas that are at risk of flooding.*

**FIGURE 21** | Flood Zones Map

## Flooding

Flood risk in Augusta is largely due to its place along the Savannah River as well as the many smaller tributaries within the city limits. A portion of the Choice Neighborhood falls within the floodplain but is largely protected by the extensive levee system. Recent stormwater management efforts utilize a “watershed approach” and include a new Stormwater Utility Fee that corresponds to the impervious area of a property to prevent new residential and commercial developments from increasing the amount of stormwater discharge above the pre-development rate.



## Did you know?

### FLOODING WAS A MAJOR PROBLEM

Three major flood events in 1888, 1908, and 1912 destroyed a lot of downtown and led to the construction of the levee. However, in 1929 another massive flood broke through. The levee was strengthened to today's current level.