

# panorama

GEORGIA CONSERVANCY • SUMMER 2019



Georgia  
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## THE MAGAZINE OF THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY

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Our vision of a Georgia where people and the environment thrive drives our mission to protect and conserve Georgia's natural resources through advocacy, engagement and collaboration.

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Cover photo of Plains, Georgia by Julian Buckmaster

FROM THE DESK OF THE BOARD CHAIR

## A bright new chapter

This year marks a bright new chapter for conservation in our great state and for the Georgia Conservancy. First, in November 2018, 83% of Georgia voters checked "YES" for Amendment One, the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment, and in doing so, created a dedicated fund for conservation. The two-decade effort by the Georgia Conservancy, our coalition of partners and our passionate members succeeded. We are excited for the opportunities ahead to help Georgia's communities capitalize on the conservation and stewardship potential of this new funding source. Thank you for your support!

As you will learn from this issue of *Panorama*, the Georgia Conservancy is expanding its focus on the conservation of small towns. From Trenton to St. Mary's, from Dillard to Donalsonville, and all points between, our state is blessed with some of the South's most beautiful and welcoming small towns. Yet our small towns, like many across the country, struggle to remain viable in the face of a rapidly changing economy and world. The Georgia Conservancy is focused on helping communities enhance and celebrate their assets—natural, cultural and historical—and working with them to create a sustainable future, whether through expanding outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism options, or developing creative approaches to housing that meet the needs of local citizens. The goal: working with nature and society to find workable solutions for the future.

As you may know, the Georgia Conservancy has been led (beautifully) by Interim President Jim Timmons since early January. Our staff and Trustees give our sincere thanks to Jim for his guidance, insight and leadership through this time.

Now, it is with considerable excitement that the Board of Trustees, the Staff and I proudly introduce our new President, Bart Gobeil. Bart is a proven leader, advocate, and partnership builder. This has been demonstrated through every aspect of his career and life experience. He has tremendous insights into the issues affecting the state and its citizens, as well as the challenges that conservation organizations and the greater environmental community face. We believe, in keeping with our long-standing guiding principles and goals for the future, that Bart will bring both strong leadership and a strong voice in advancing the Georgia Conservancy's efforts to protect and conserve our state's land, water and biodiversity.

Our momentum continues. Thank you for your continuing support of the Georgia Conservancy.

We look forward to sharing news about the impact you help make throughout the year.

Warmly,

Leslie Mattingly



Leslie Mattingly  
*Board Chair*

# NATURAL PARTNERS

## INVESTING IN GEORGIA'S CULTURE OF CONSERVATION

The Georgia Conservancy has accomplished much in our 52 years. We pride ourselves on being an organization that collaborates with a diverse range of partners to forward a culture of conservation in Georgia.

Our Natural Partners are some of the Georgia Conservancy's strongest corporate allies in the conservation and stewardship of Georgia's natural resources.

Natural Partners have a stake in the environmental and economic well-being of our state, and help financially support our mission throughout the year.

Learn more at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/naturalpartners](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/naturalpartners)



### *In-Kind Support*



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# Why Do Small Towns Matter?

by Katherine Moore and Johanna McCrehan

When we think about “cities,” the largest ones usually come to mind first. For Georgia, that’s Atlanta, Columbus, Macon, Augusta, and Savannah. As planning practitioners, it’s easy to spend most of our time thinking about big cities because they face obstacles that affect thousands, sometimes millions, of people. But whether it’s water quality, access to nature, housing choice, or transportation and infrastructure, small towns have these problems too, and sometimes have greater need for planning services.

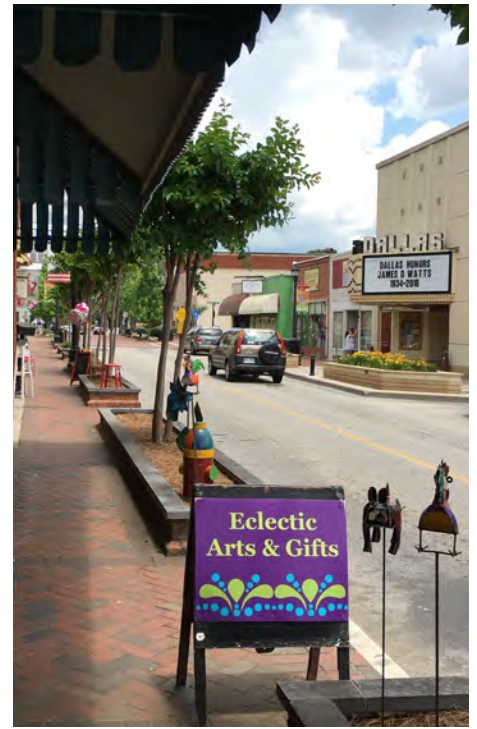
To put it in perspective, small towns make up the majority of municipalities in the state. There are 391 of 535 cities and towns that are home to 10,000 people or fewer (U.S. Census Bureau). Non-metro land use also makes up the majority of our land area. 92% of Georgia, in fact, is classified this way. As a statewide organization dedicated to promoting conservation and sustainable growth, the Georgia Conservancy is keenly aware of the important role that small towns play in impacting overall land-use across Georgia.

The heart of our state remains our small towns and all of the places and spaces within them that make them special: the quaint little shop in St. Marys, the pizza place in Hogansville, numerous city halls and historic theaters that charm and exude authenticity of place. Planners working in larger cities can learn a lot from small towns. Their historic downtowns, mill villages, and Main Streets are the original walkable communities, with environmental and economic benefits that major urban centers spend millions of dollars to replicate. These places, many created before the widespread use of the car, were built so that residents could conveniently access everyday needs.

As small towns continue to provide strong support for our robust agricultural, tourism and nature-based recreation economies, their stability is critical to the economic health of the state, but as times have changed, the vibrancy and sustainability of small towns has wavered. Many have

*continued on next page*

*Photo at left:  
Downtown Plains, Georgia by Julian Buckmaster*



seen decline as younger generations have migrated to cities, as manufacturing has dwindled nationwide, and as resources have been shifted to larger towns and cities. However, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in these towns because they offer many qualities that larger cities do not—greater housing affordability, access to greenspace, and unique cultural activities. By focusing on quality of life, sustainable community development, land use, and benefits provided by existing assets and resources (whether they are natural or manmade), the Georgia Conservancy believes Georgia’s smallest towns can compete.

Since 1995, the Georgia Conservancy has provided planning, design, and technical assistance to communities across Georgia, including many small towns and rural areas, places such as Hiram, Pine Lake, Moreland and Hogansville. We learn from local leaders, provide planning services, and help local government officials shape sustainable futures in an effort to ensure the vibrancy and attractive individuality of these places. The program often refers back to the strong characteristics of a place—farmland, greenspace, historic structures, and unique stories—that should be recognized, conserved, strengthened, and marketed so that the community can thrive alongside the “big cities”.

## RURAL REVITALIZATION ACT AND THE CITY OF HOGANSVILLE

To bolster sustainable planning efforts and work toward revitalization and renewed stability in our smaller communities, the Georgia Conservancy, along with the Georgia Municipal Association and Georgia Chamber of Commerce, advocated at the State Capitol in 2017 for the passage of legislation that would allow for the designation of eligible downtowns across Georgia as Rural Zones. Approved by both legislative chambers and by Governor Nathan Deal, the Rural Downtown Revitalization Act (House Bill 73), which was sponsored by Rep. Penny Houston and Ways & Means Chairman Jay Powell, encourages small, rural and historic downtowns across Georgia to invest in their built environment, all in an effort to create jobs and stimulate economic activity.

In October 2018, Hogansville’s historic downtown was among eight communities in Georgia to receive the Rural Zone designation by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Eligible business owners within the Rural Zone designation will benefit from three different tax credits: a jobs credit, an investment credit, and a rehabilitation credit. *How did Hogansville, a town of 3,200 in Troup County, position itself to stand out among the many applicants?*





In 2017, leadership within the City of Hogansville reached out to the Georgia Conservancy to help make them competitive. With help from partner organizations, Canvas Planning Group and Village Green Consultants, we worked to develop a Downtown Master Plan (DMP), a roadmap for future sustainable development and rehabilitation in the historic core. To create the DMP, we conducted an inventory of existing community assets (its historic structures, city parks, annual Hummingbird Festival, and proximity to a major city), and identified community issues (lower average incomes and vacant or blighted properties). The DMP incorporated public feedback, analyzed socioeconomic, demographic and market data, made zoning recommendations, and developed implementable tasks and projects for the community to enhance its downtown.

Through pursuing and then adopting the DMP, as well as continuing to promote Hogansville as an attractive place to live and visit, the Downtown Development Authority, City Council and city staff were successful in advocating for its Rural Zone designation.

In May 2019, the Fox Theatre Foundation awarded

Hogansville a \$51,250 preservation grant, which will support plans for the ongoing rehabilitation of the Royal Theatre, a historic community asset that figured prominently in the Hogansville DMP.

Through our Sustainable Growth program, as well as our Stewardship Trips and Land Conservation Initiative, we recognize that sustainability is important for towns and cities of all sizes. The implementation of thoughtful land practices for historic restoration, town planning, outdoor recreation, and economic development can benefit even the smallest of Georgia's communities. Hogansville, among other locations in our state, is setting an example of a sustainable way forward for small and rural towns.

To learn more about the work of our Sustainable Growth Program in Hogansville, please visit:

[www.gaconservancy.org/blueprints/hogansville](http://www.gaconservancy.org/blueprints/hogansville)

*Photos (L-R): Hogansville by Johanna McCrehan, Downtown Dallas by Johanna McCrehan; Downtown Washington by Brian Foster; Downtown Sandersville by Julian Buckmaster.*



Want to learn more? [www.georgiaconservancy.org/resiliency](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/resiliency)



# Under The Gold Dome

*A recap of the 2019 Legislative Session*

*by Leah Dixon*

The 2019 legislative session ended just before midnight on April 2 after three months of intense deliberation. It was an excellent session for the Georgia Conservancy as our efforts to protect Georgia's land and water resources yielded positive results. While legislators put forth natural resources measures that are of great benefit, several also caused concern.

Our team worked efficiently with lawmakers to improve upon and come to an agreement on various pieces of legislation throughout the session. We thank the legislators for their dedication.

As the General Assembly wrapped up the first of a two-year session, it was apparent that additional safeguards will be needed to protect our state's natural resources. In the interim, we will closely monitor agency rulemaking and legislative study committees along with legislation that carries forward to the 2020 session.

The following are a few pieces of legislation on which the Georgia Conservancy worked or monitored:

## **Opposition to Offshore Oil & Gas Exploration**

House Resolution 48 established Georgia's official position on offshore oil and gas exploration, and was a top priority of the Georgia Conservancy and many other conservation organizations during the session.

While it does not create binding regulations, the resolution signals to our U.S. Congressional delegation and to the White House that our state stands united in bipartisan opposition to the devastating threats seismic testing and offshore drilling pose to our coastal ecosystems and nature-based economies.

*Learn more about our opposition to offshore oil and gas exploration at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/offshore-drilling](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/offshore-drilling)*

## **Amendments to the State Right To Farm Act**

In an attempt to amend the Right To Farm Act, House Bill 545, which did not pass, sought to limit the rights of people who reside near agricultural

operations. If passed, the bill would have forbidden nuisance lawsuits to be brought forth against newly established farms or agricultural activities one year after the creation of such an enterprise. This legislation will be eligible for consideration again in next year's session.

### **Establishing an Oyster Mariculture Industry**

House Bill 501, which passed both chambers well before the end of the session, will allow for the development of a shellfish (oyster and clam) mariculture industry on the Georgia coast. The goals of this mariculture legislation are to provide a regulatory framework which safeguards consumer health, offers state siting guidance for mariculture installations, and protects Georgia's salt marshes.

The Georgia Conservancy supports the development of a mariculture industry in Georgia and looks forward to working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and our state's oyster farmers in the interim to improve upon this legislation through the upcoming rulemaking process.

### **Local Input for Residential Design Standards**

House Resolution 591 creates a committee to study residential building design standards under the premise that local communities should not have a say in creating their own ordinances or regulations.

The Georgia Conservancy supports local communities' authority to explore their own community development solutions, and will closely monitor the work of this new House Study Committee during the interim.

*Learn more about our work in statewide housing at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/housing](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/housing)*

### **Amendments to the State Shore Protection Act**

As an amendment to the state's Shore Protection Act (SPA), House Bill 445 clarifies the jurisdictional lines that delineate protected areas of the shoreline from areas which may see development. The SPA

became law in 1979 to ensure that the sand-sharing system (dunes, beaches, shoals and sandbars) is protected from the adverse impacts of human activity.

We believe that rigorous application and coordination of the SPA is critical to preserving the coast's ecological integrity as tourism and recreation expands. While the Georgia Conservancy supported legislation clarifying and redefining the jurisdictional boundary of the SPA during this session, we will work to encourage an expansion of the protected areas on non-state-owned land and will monitor the delineation process as the new jurisdictional lines are enacted.

### **Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Housekeeping**

As important housekeeping language to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act (GOSA), House Bill 382 will allow for the DNR to better implement and administer the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund, which was overwhelmingly approved by Georgia voters in November 2018. HB 382 passed the House and Senate and was signed by the Governor.

As an active member of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Coalition, we are engaged in the GOSA rulemaking process with DNR and we will remain engaged as the program moves into its first grant cycle in the fall.

*Learn more about the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program at: [www.georgiaoutdoorstewardship.org](http://www.georgiaoutdoorstewardship.org)*

### **Surface Mining on Conservation Properties**

House Bill 589 sought to allow short-term surface mining on conservation properties under a Forest Land Protection Act covenant. The Georgia Conservancy is strongly opposed to the allowance of such a breach of covenant. This legislation did not pass during this session, but will be eligible for consideration again during the 2020 Legislative Session.

*Photo: The Gold Dome of the Georgia State Capitol by The Georgia Conservancy.*



**Want to learn more? [www.georgiaconservancy.org/advocacy/update](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/advocacy/update)**



**EXPERIENCE**



**LOVE**



**CONSERVE**

 **THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING  
YOU ALLOW US TO CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE, EDUCATE AND ACT ON BE**

# ARE YOU IN THE PICTURE?

The Georgia Conservancy has been protecting Georgia's natural resources for present and future generations since 1967 and helping people *experience, love and conserve special places*. Locations such as Sweetwater Creek State Park, Cumberland Island National Seashore, and Panola Mountain State Park enjoy protected status and are available for recreation through the support of friends like you.

Your support is instrumental as we further our mission, serving as a catalyst for the stewardship of Georgia's natural environment.

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## Our Guiding Principles

1

The integrity of natural systems and the services they provide has value that must be protected, conserved, and restored for present and future generations.

2

Stewardship of Georgia's natural resources is the responsibility of every individual, organization, government, and business.

3

A healthy environment and healthy economy are vital to a thriving society.

4

In conserving Georgia's natural resources, we must understand a changing climate while respecting the demands of social and economic progress.

5

Principled advocacy calls for scientifically sound research, clearly defined agendas, inclusive participation, informed environmental education, and constructive negotiations.

6

Collaboration and public-private partnerships enable the achievement of our goals.

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## Our Goals for the Future

1

Protect, conserve, and restore Georgia's land, water, and biodiversity.

2

Promote and implement sustainable practices throughout Georgia.

3

Remain Georgia's leading conservation organization.

4

Acquire the resources needed for long-term financial viability.

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Put yourself in the picture  
**JOIN the Georgia Conservancy TODAY**

[www.georgiaconservancy.org](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org)

THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY.  
HALF OF GEORGIA'S RESIDENTS AS STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT.





# Association of Georgia Land Trusts

*A collaborative new approach to land conservation in Georgia*

*by Nick Johnson and Charles McMillan*

When it comes to land conservation in Georgia, there is strength in numbers. Conserving lands rich with environmental resources, including wildlife, wetlands, forest, agricultural, and scenic amenities, requires a coordinated effort from non-profits, state agencies, and landowners.

The Georgia Conservancy is pleased to announce a new initiative that takes this coordinated approach: the Association of Georgia Land Trusts (AGLT). This new coalition brings together more than 20 organizations across the state to share news and best practices, provide technical assistance and advice to clients and partners, and advocate for the protection of valuable environmental lands.

The Association of Georgia Land Trusts is modeled after similar initiatives in other states, including Florida and North Carolina, which have seen significant success among land conservation projects in those areas. Thanks to funding provided by R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation and other partners aimed

at building community among local land trusts, this new organization expands on previous networks established for the land trusts of the state by the former Georgia Land Conservation Center. That organization was led for many years by Hans Neuhauser, a revered figure in the realm of Georgia land conservation efforts.

“This newly formed association will provide an important connection among land trusts and land conservation organizations active in Georgia through increased communication, collaboration, and advocacy,” says Shane Wellendorf, Conservation Coordinator at Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy.

AGLT is poised to make a significant impact on the conservation of valuable lands across the state. A good example of such work will be seeking lands to put under conservation easement for viable populations of gopher tortoise, a keystone species. AGLT organizations are working with the Gopher Tortoise



Conservation Initiative in critical areas of the state to conserve and manage gopher tortoise habitat, with the intent to increase its population and keep the reptile from being listed as an Endangered Species.

Partner organizations will also work together to identify key lands in Georgia that could benefit from the newly created Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Fund, and monitor the implications of IRS treatment of state and local taxes on the use and viability of the Georgia State Conservation Tax Credit.

Additionally, the Association of Georgia Land Trusts will explore how to support a Conserved Lands Inventory in order to have a more complete understanding of where land is being conserved around the state.

The Georgia Conservancy has joined the Association's Executive Committee and provides communications support for news, social media and dialogue, technical assistance for advocacy strategy and content, and logistical assistance for operations.

"We are very excited to be a part of this next big step for land conservation in Georgia," says McMillan. "AGLT will strengthen the reach and capabilities of partner organizations. With a coordinated effort toward the conservation of our most precious lands, we can have the greatest impact."

The Association of Georgia Land Trusts includes: *Athens Land Trust\**, *Atlantic Coast Conservancy*, *Broad River Watershed Association*, *Camden County Land Trust*, *Chattooga River Land Trust*, *The Conservation Fund*, *Central Savannah River Land Trust*, *LAF Conservation Consultant Services*, *Cobb Land Trust*,

*Georgia-Alabama Land Trust\**, *The Georgia Conservancy\**, *Georgia Piedmont Land Trust\**, *Lula Lake Land Trust*, *Madison Morgan Conservancy*, *Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia\**, *Newton County Land Trust Alliance*, *Ocmulgee Land Trust*, *Oconee River Land Trust\**, *Southeast Land Preservation Trust*, *Southeast Regional Land Conservancy*, *St. Simons Island Land Trust*, *Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy\**, *Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land*, *Pelican Coast Conservancy*, *Southern Conservation Trust*, *The Nature Conservancy*, and *The Trust for Public Land*.

*\* Executive Committee*

# AGLT

Association of Georgia Land Trusts

For more information on the Association of Georgia Land Trusts and to sign up for the AGLT eNewsletter visit:

[www.georgiaconservancy.org/aglt](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/aglt)

Or contact Georgia Conservancy Natural Resource & Coastal Director Charles McMillan:

[cmcmillan@gaconservancy.org](mailto:cmcmillan@gaconservancy.org)

*Photos (L-R): Rural Floyd County road by Brian Foster; Gopher Tortoise in Irwin County by The Georgia Conservancy; Longleaf Pine forest in Worth County by The Georgia Conservancy.*





# Economic Benefits of Outdoor Recreation in Georgia

by Leah Dixon and Charles McMillan

*“Local and state economies are stimulated by the presence of abundant and well-managed outdoor recreation areas.”* - Becky Kelley, former Director, Georgia State Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division

Living within a 10-minute walk of public greenspace brings tremendous benefits to individuals and communities. Parks and greenspace improve individual and physical health. They can strengthen community and maintain the health of our natural environment. They can help to build resilience by offering shade and stormwater management. In Georgia, there are also other benefits that are often overlooked. Outdoor recreation is the fourth largest sector of the nation's economy (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017).

As calculated by the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), outdoor recreation provides an annual \$27.3 billion boon to Georgia's economy. Put another way, 238,000 people are employed directly within the outdoor recreation industry, which generates \$8.1 billion in wages and salaries and has the ability to generate \$1.8 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Outdoor recreation is an important economic driver for the state of Georgia and its communities. It is worth noting that this industry's economic impact amounts to more than double the increasingly visible \$10 billion film industry, plus it ranks higher than the 207,000 jobs generated by the automotive industry. The Georgia Chamber of Commerce has calculated an even greater economic impact for the outdoor economy in 2019. These numbers indicate that the demand for parks, trails and outdoor recreation opportunities in Georgia are likely to increase. To meet this rising demand, we must increase Georgia's supply of recreation spaces: city-scale parks and trails, as well as larger protected lands such as state parks and wildlife management areas, National Parks National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and other publicly accessible natural areas.

We must steward existing public lands and parks, while continuing to add to our state's inventory. While there are many factors included in the OIA's calculations, one of the most prominent is the opportunity Georgians have to get outside. Thanks to Georgia's history of natural resource conservation, there is a diverse array of recreation areas to enjoy. State treasures as beautiful as Cloudland Canyon State Park or as vital as the Okefenokee National Wildlife



*Photos (L-R): Biking in Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area by Fernando DiCillis; Chattahoochee River in Columbus by William Brawley*



Refuge must be protected alongside “everyday places” like local parks.

Georgians continue to soundly support conservation. In 2016, citizens of Milton, Georgia voted yes on a bond to set aside land for greenspace amidst development pressures from the metro Atlanta area. The “Greenspace Milton” agenda will protect water quality in local rivers and streams, preserve natural areas for wildlife habitat, preserve agricultural land, and create and improve parks. The bond will also provide recreational trails for walking, biking, and equestrian use.

With collaboration from the Georgia Conservancy’s Sustainable Growth Program, and supported by the Georgia Conservancy’s Advocacy and Land Conservation staff, the Milton Greenspace Advisory Committee and City staff identified desirable properties to set aside for greenspace management. The Georgia Conservancy also assisted in creating an acquisition strategy that will enable the pursuit of greenspace in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Outdoor recreation is enjoyed all over our state. Georgia’s population voted overwhelmingly this last November on a referendum to set aside a portion of the existing sales tax on outdoor sporting goods. These funds will help provide for conservation and steward-

ship, increasing the amount of conserved lands in the state. The newly created Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund will bolster the ability of state agencies, nonprofits, and local land trusts to hold more lands in permanent protection so that Georgians can take advantage of their natural beauty and educational opportunities.

Many protected areas are located near smaller cities and towns, which serve as gateways to outdoor opportunities. The implementation of thoughtful land practices for outdoor recreation can benefit even the smallest and most rural of Georgia’s communities as outdoor recreation activities such as fishing and hiking are a point of common interest to residents of rural, suburban, and urban landscapes.

The Georgia Conservancy’s 2018 Common Ground Summit highlighted smaller communities savvy in leveraging their outdoor opportunities to attract new residents and visitors. Examples of small town environmentally-oriented attractions and initiatives include Porterdale’s Yellow River, Carrollton’s Greenbelt, the Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve Initiative, and various nature centers sprinkled across Georgia’s unique geography.

Special public-private partnerships have demonstrated the power of outdoor recreation to educate



Georgia residents about wildlife management, preservation of critical resources, and active lifestyles.

Additionally, outdoor recreation was particularly important to the Georgia Conservancy in 2018 with regard to several key aspects of our programmatic work, including the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act, the Common Ground Summit, our Stewardship Trips Program and our Small Town Sustainability and Rural Resiliency Initiative.

Without conservation, Georgia would not have natural resources of such high quality. Without conservation, there would be fewer opportunities to fish, hike, exercise, bird watch, kayak, and photograph. Protected lands are critical assets for Georgians and our many visitors. They are our treasures, as well as our responsibilities.

**The Georgia Conservancy has been exploring Georgia since 1967!**

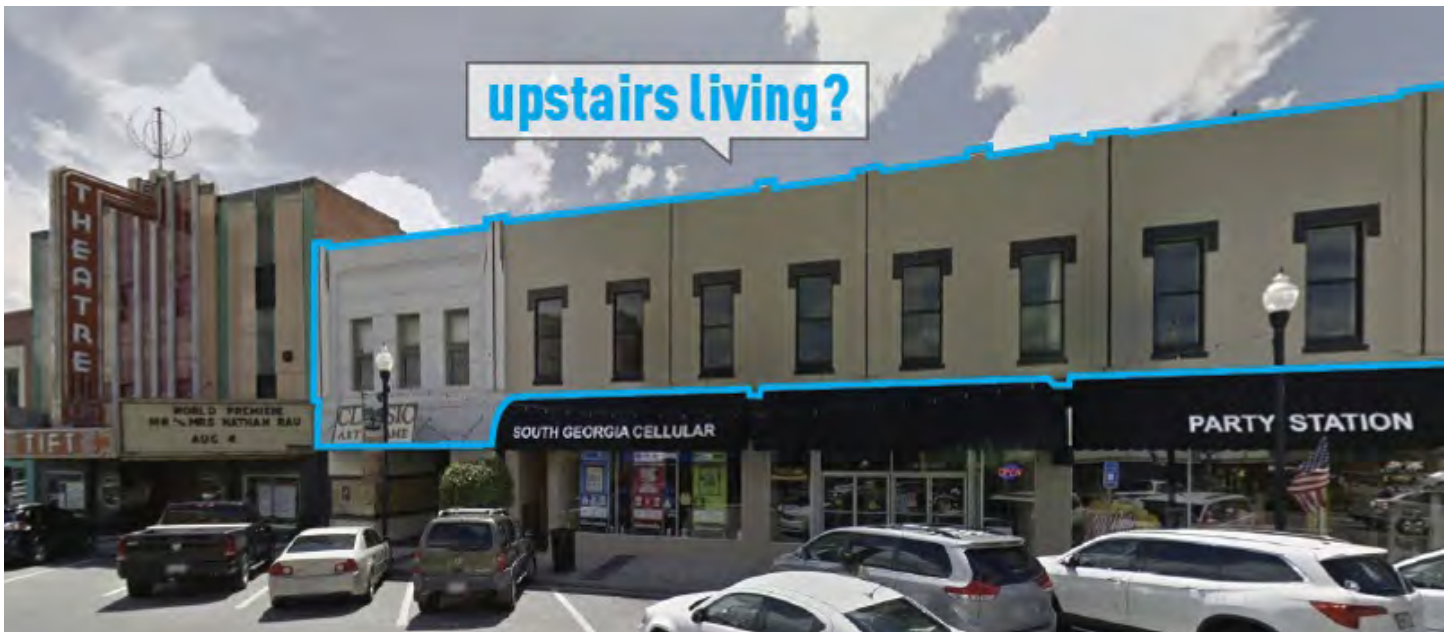
Join us on one of our of Stewardship Trips, hosted throughout Georgia.

[www.georgiaconservancy.org/trips](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/trips)

**This is your Georgia, explore it with the Georgia Conservancy.**



*Photos (L-R): Silver Comet Trail by Johanna McCrehan; Yellow River Water Trail by William Brawley; Augusta Canal by Georgia Conservancy; Cumberland Island by Phuc Dao*



# A Different Perspective on Housing

*Why housing diversity and affordability are integral to environmental “resiliency”*

*by Johanna McCrehan and Katherine Moore*

Cities are established on the assumption they will exist for a very long time. The world's oldest cities continue to use original streets, buildings, and public spaces, even amidst new construction and technology improvements. Historical patterns of city design—characterized by smaller blocks, different-sized lots, various housing types and regular networks of streets—offer a more flexible framework for development than recent patterns of suburban housing and strip retail. The historical framework facilitates change over time. Businesses may come and go. Housing options may change. Buildings may be reused or replaced. Downtowns may feature a diversity of “things” that make them appealing. Mobility options abound in these walkable, connected spaces.

In other words, if we protect and build within this historical framework, we will preserve and create downtowns, neighborhoods, and homes that are beloved.

The Georgia Conservancy believes that this historical framework promotes resiliency. Encouraging the reuse of the same land, infrastructure, and building stock is an effective way to both conserve resources

and further a community's investment of heart and soul in a place established to last. To be diverse is to be resilient: cities, neighborhoods, and communities that grow creatively and provide a variety of services can adapt and flourish even as the economy, technology, and peoples' preferences change.

Through community-based planning initiatives, the Georgia Conservancy's Sustainable Growth Program helps bring a resiliency focus to plans for urban neighborhoods, transportation corridors, rural communities, and coastal areas. The program addresses all aspects of a community, including its housing stock, land uses, economic development, equity, and recreation from an environmental and conservation perspective.

It may sound odd for a conservancy to focus on housing. Why is it so important for environmental sustainability? The answer is simple: the type and location of housing stock impact the quality of our natural resources statewide. Housing decisions also have land use, economical, equity, and social justice impacts, all key components of community resiliency. Without quality, diverse, and affordable housing

options, the growth and long-term health of cities, towns, and communities are threatened.

These beliefs are shared by city and county leaders who have indicated that housing diversity and affordability are top concerns. In recent history, national housing patterns have focused very heavily on single-family homes, leaving few accommodations for changing lifestyles and incomes over time. Recent graduates, hourly and salaried workers alike are not able to find housing to meet their needs due to this housing monoculture. Additionally, large-scale single-family developments often limit access to jobs, services, and amenities while using more land less efficiently.

The Sustainable Growth Program believes in reusing buildings, land, and infrastructure to strengthen and invigorate local communities. To that end, the staff provides recommendations for housing flexibility, affordability, and diversity throughout Georgia, both in larger metropolitan areas and smaller towns. We recognize that population shifts and ongoing land development are different in every community, so the Sustainable Growth Program works directly with local leaders and residents to plan for their community's future. Some proposed joint solutions include:

- **Supplying a variety of housing types (forms and sizes)**
- **Providing a more significant opportunity for residents to attain affordable, safe homes in their community as needs and incomes change**
- **Prioritizing location variation, near services and amenities that satisfy a given household's needs and wants**
- **Expanding the variety of housing price points and financing options (owning vs. renting)**

The Sustainable Growth team has partnered with communities facing various challenges, including:

- **The City of Brunswick, to understand how housing types can shift with market demands in a coastal environment extremely susceptible to climate concerns**
- **The Calumet Park neighborhood of LaGrange,**



*Housing types in LaGrange's Calumet Park neighborhood*

**where we demonstrated how the introduction of a few new housing units could create stability and commercial viability**

- **The City of Lithonia, just east of Atlanta, to explore how locating housing nearer to jobs and transportation can help revitalize Main Streets**

Through community visioning and planning exercises, the Sustainable Growth program helps civic leaders make informed determinations about what goes where. Through educational workshops and events, the program shares lessons from across Georgia and beyond, facilitating and helping communities learn from each other. With help from partners' expertise in infill development, market analysis, and zoning, we advance the implementation of housing options.

Ultimately, the Georgia Conservancy is assisting Georgia's communities in utilizing their existing assets and determining what to save, reuse, where, and how. Our Sustainable Growth program is rooted in that historical development framework, which advances a geographically-based approach to solutions beginning with the adaptation, reuse, and expansion of existing housing stock near vital amenities and attractions.

By identifying the treasured aspects of a city, town, or neighborhood—including housing stock, natural resources, and local history—the Sustainable Growth Program utilizes what already makes those cities, towns, and neighborhoods special, and offers roadmaps for future growth and development that promote resiliency, vibrancy, and quality of life.



**Want to learn more? Visit [www.georgiaconservancy.org/housing](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/housing)**

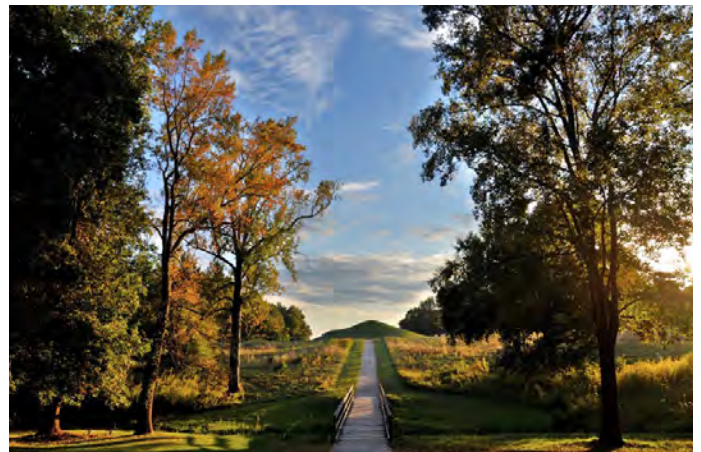
# PROGRAM UPDATES

## *Advocacy*

Though the 2019 Legislative Session is complete, the Georgia Conservancy remains engaged in number of issues important to the use and conservation of the state's natural resources, including continued opposition to offshore oil and gas exploration on Georgia's coast, advocating for the passage of the National Heritage Area Act of 2019, participating in Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust fund rulemaking, as well as monitoring a number of Cumberland Island related matters, including Spaceport Camden, private property rights and updates to the Visitor-Use Management Plan. *Learn more at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/advocacy](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/advocacy)*

## *Land Conservation*

In February, Congress voted to expand Ocmulgee National Monument and to rededicate this public resource as Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. The Georgia Conservancy continues to work with local communities, leaders and partner groups, as well as the National Parks Conservation Association, to identify key areas for additional conservation, with a focus on connectivity, critical habitat protection and outdoor recreation opportunities. *Learn more at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/ocmulgee-park-expansion](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/ocmulgee-park-expansion)*



*Ocmulgee Mounds by the National Park Service*

## *Sustainable Growth*

The Sustainable Growth Program works to foster smart, resilient development across the state, enabling communities to grow while using fewer resources and disturbing less open space. To expand our reach, the Georgia Conservancy is currently partnering with both the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Municipal Association to bring our services to communities interested in sustainably planning for the future. Look for the Georgia Conservancy and our partners in Albany, Canton, Forest Park, Millen, Milledgeville, Paulding County, and elsewhere this year. *Learn more about our Sustainable Growth Program at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/growth](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/growth)*

## *Stewardship Trips*

Our Stewardship Trips Program is connecting Georgia's special places with the people needed to protect them. Paddle, camp, hike, bike and more with us in every corner of Georgia this year. Some of our most popular upcoming trips include service weekends to Ossabaw and Sapelo islands, paddle trips on the Etowah, Chattahoochee and Flint rivers, and weekend adventures to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and to Cloudland Canyon State Park. *Check out our trips schedule at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/trips](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/trips)*



*Sweetwater Creek State Park Day Hike by William Brawley*

# STAFF UPDATES



## BART GOBEIL, PRESIDENT

Bart Gobeil joins the Georgia Conservancy after four years serving as Senior Director of Economic Development and State Government Affairs at the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA). At GPA, he oversaw developing and implementing regulatory, legislative and administrative strategy to support the customers, investors, and community partners of the East Coast's second busiest port. From 2011 through 2015, Bart was Chief Operating Officer of the State of Georgia, where he led and directed more than 60 operational agencies and authorities of the State. He also served at Chief of Staff for former Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, as well as Director of

Government Relations for AGL Resources. Bart is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. He and his wife, Elizabeth, reside in Savannah and enjoy spending time on the Flint River near Thomaston, where they own land.



Georgia Conservancy Staff (L-R): Johanna McCrehan, Charles McMillan, Jane Zoellick, Felixsha Abram, Brian Foster, Jim Timmons (former Interim President), Liza Mueller, Katherine Moore, Lisa Patrick, Nick Johnson, Clark Harrison, Leah Dixon, and Chad Smalls

# SUMMER EVENTS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2019

[WWW.GACONSERVANCY.ORG/THEGRAND](http://WWW.GACONSERVANCY.ORG/THEGRAND)

# THE GRAND

## COLUMBUS WHITEWATER PADDLE

*A Celebration of Environmental Stewardship  
on The Chattahoochee River and in Uptown Columbus*





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