

#### 4. Broadband Element

The Georgia legislature, in recognition of the importance of broadband infrastructure to the vitality of communities passed the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act (SB 402) in 2018. The Act provides for broadband services<sup>1</sup> planning, deployment, and incentives, along with other purposes. It also requires comprehensive plans to include the promotion of the deployment of broadband services. Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta recognize the importance of broadband expansion to economic development and quality of life for residents.

Provision of broadband services enables access by residents to a number of vital services such as healthcare, economic opportunity, and education. Expansion of rural broadband along with improvement in the provision of broadband services can address concerns of resident out-migration. Effective and efficient broadband enables internet-based businesses to succeed in the global economy. It is difficult to educate upcoming generations of students in web literacy and digital skills training without adequate broadband speed and connectivity. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of home broadband availability and quality as all students and many workers studied and worked remotely.

The latest data shown in Map 1 below identifies 27% of the locations in Lowndes County as unserved. This analysis is based on a broadband availability map made available in June, 2020 and most recently updated in June, 2021. The new map utilizes more granular data than the previously utilized Federal Communications Commission (FCC) map. 90.4% of households in Lowndes County have a computer, compared to 92.6% of households statewide.<sup>2</sup> Broadband internet subscriptions in the County are held by 70.6% of households, compared to 84.2% within the state.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in O.C.G.A. §50-40-1. Definitions. "Broadband services" means a wired or wireless terrestrial service that consists of the capability to transmit at a rate of not less than 25 megabits per second in the downstream direction and at least 3 megabits per second in the upstream direction to end users and in combination with such service provides:

(A) Access to the Internet; or

(B) Computer processing, information storage, or protocol conversion.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, Households with a computer, percent

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2014-2018