

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

2026

Lowndes County

THE IMPACT OF RISING COSTS
ON COMMUNITY



Why Lowndes County is Concerned

The Double-Edged Sword of Rising Values

- Increased assessments result in higher tax bills when reassessment growth is not rolled back.
 - While Lowndes County has rolled the millage rate back the last 8 years, not all local governments/school systems have.
- Lowndes County shares the concern of citizens with regards to assessed values.
 - The formulas for determining value are set by the State of Georgia, not Lowndes County.
- Balancing inflation and the overall cost of providing services is a central challenge for elected leaders.
 - Due to millage roll-backs, Lowndes County is currently operating with the same dollar amount of revenue in 2026 as in 2018.
 - **Not only do citizens deserve quality services, service value equals growth value.**



**Increasing
Values**

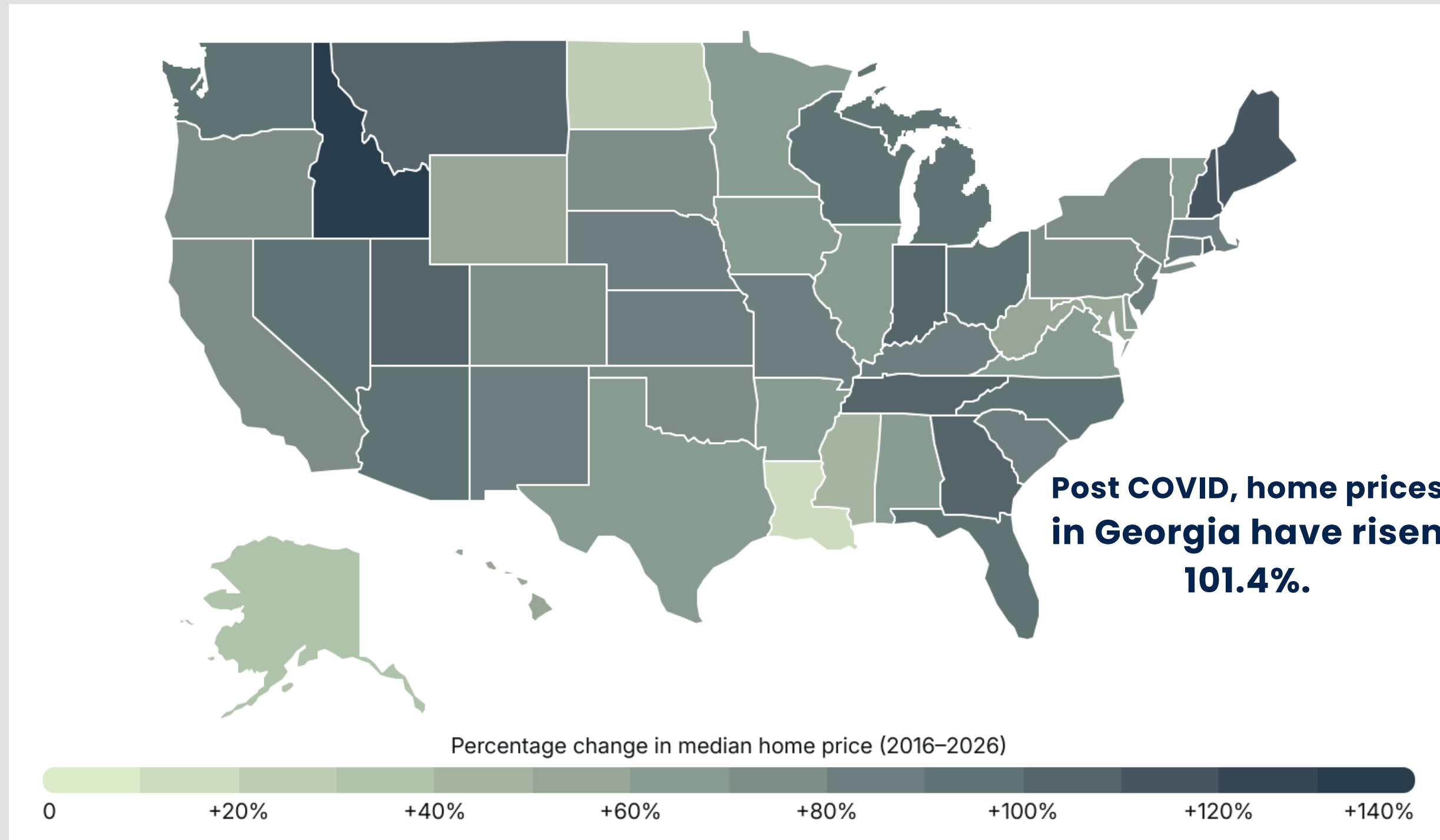


Inflation



**Home
Affordability**

Increasing Values



Source: Construction Coverage via Zillow data

Inflationary Impacts



Wage Growth vs. Cost of Living

While Georgia's wage growth has consistently beaten the national median—often hovering between 3.5% and 4.7% year-over-year—this has not translated to increased wealth for many workers. -Bureau of Labor Statistics

- Inflation: Wages have increased over 20% in nominal terms since 2020, but the inflation-adjusted real wage increase has been essentially flat. -Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Cost of Living: The cost of essential goods has jumped significantly since the start of the pandemic, with index costs tracking up to 7.3% annually in recent years. -UnitedFORALICE
- Living Wage: Economists calculate that a living wage in Georgia for a single adult with zero children is approximately \$24.21/hour, and jumps to \$47.81/hour for an adult supporting two children. -MIT wage calculator

Home Affordability



In Lowndes County, GA, the median household income is roughly **\$58,500 to \$60,000**, while the income required to afford a median-priced home hovers around \$60,000. While this balance makes homeownership theoretically achievable, local wages often fall short of the living wage needed for households with children, creating a tight local market.

-Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Wage vs. Cost Disconnect

- While Lowndes County has a generally lower cost of living than national averages, stagnant local wages mean home affordability remains a persistent challenge for many.
- Median Earnings: Median household incomes in the area range between \$45,000 (inside the Valdosta city limits) and \$58,500 region-wide.
- Living Wage: According to MIT's Living Wage Calculator, a single adult with no children in Lowndes County requires a living wage of about \$21.02 an hour, but for one adult with two children, that requirement jumps to over \$46 per hour (\$95,680.00 annually.)

Renting vs. Buying

- Because saving for a down payment is challenging on average wages, many residents are trapped in the rental market.
- Average Rent: The average rent in the Valdosta area is roughly \$1,000 to \$1,200 per month, depending on the number of bedrooms.

VULNERABLE DEMOGRAPHICS ARE BEING PRICED OUT OF HOMES



**SENIORS ON
FIXED INCOME**

AT RISK



VETERANS

DISPLACED



YOUNG FAMILIES

PRICED OUT



**RISING COSTS. LIMITED OPTIONS.
AT RISK OF LOSING THEIR HOMES.**



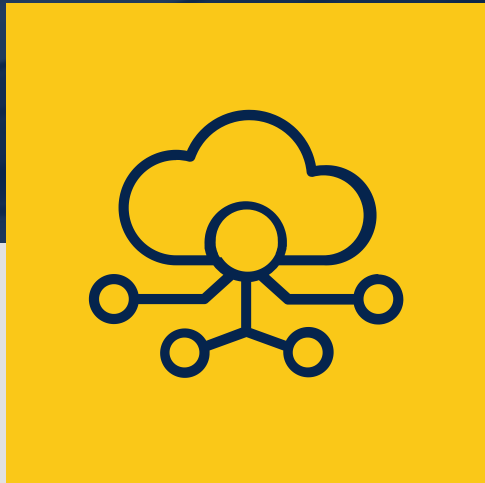
**DISPLACED FROM COMMUNITIES
THEY SERVED TO PROTECT.**



**SOARING PRICES. OUT OF REACH.
THE NEXT GENERATION LEFT BEHIND.**

Policy Levers

What Officials Can Do



**Homestead
Tax Relief**



**Millage
Considerations**



Transparency



Shift the Burden

Homestead Tax Relief



During the 2025 Legislative Session, the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners and the Lowndes County School System introduced legislation to increase the Homestead Tax Exemption for citizens across Lowndes County. On May 19, 2026, voters elected to enact the legislation during the primary election.



GENERAL COUNTY EXEMPTION

\$6,000 TO \$12,000

Increases the general homestead exemption from \$6,000 to \$12,000 off the assessed value for county purposes.



GENERAL SCHOOL EXEMPTION

— NEW —
\$12,000

Adds a new \$12,000 homestead exemption for school district ad valorem taxes.



SENIOR EXEMPTION AGES 65+

— INCREASE TO —
\$40,000

Increases the exemption to \$40,000 off the assessed value for homeowners 65 and older.

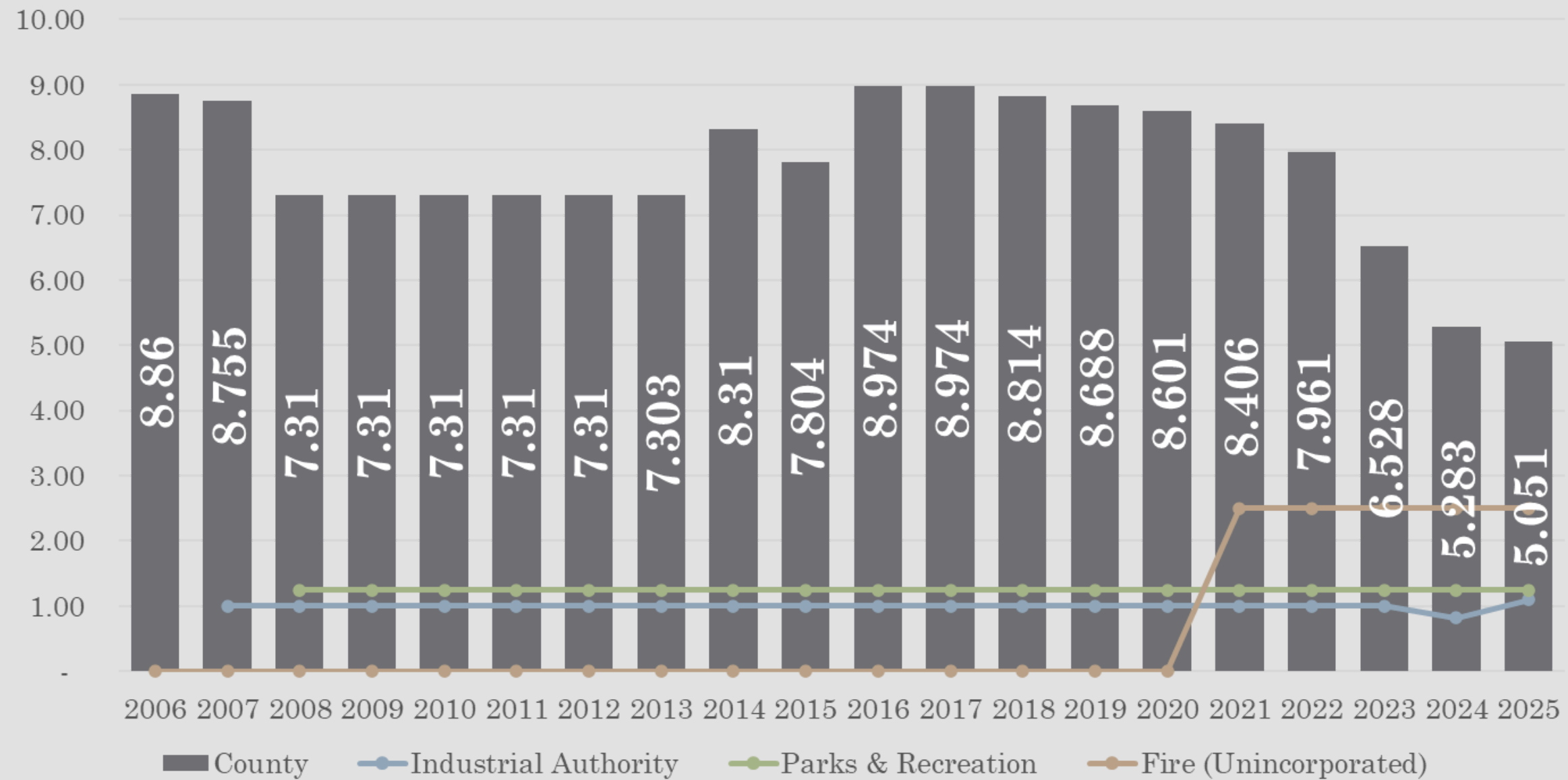


SENIOR EXEMPTION AGES 70+

— NEW TIER —
\$50,000

Introduces a new, higher tier granting \$50,000 off the assessed value for homeowners 70 and older.

Millage History



Transparency

Commitment to financial accountability, responsible stewardship, and public trust.



01

Balanced Budget – June 30 Deadline

The budget is required to be balanced each year by June 30.



02

State & Federal Audit Compliance

Current on all state and federal audit requirements.



03

Fund Balance – Hurricane Responsive

Fund balance responsive to recent hurricane events.



04

20th Consecutive Year GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

Recognizing Lowndes County's continued commitment to financial transparency and excellence in annual budgeting.



LOWNDES COUNTY



Local Homestead Option Sales Tax



MECHANISM

1 percent local sales tax funds homestead exemptions.



IMPLEMENTATION

Requires local legislation and voter approval.



GOAL

Shifts tax burden from homeowners to consumers including visitors.



36 MILLION
COLLECTED



51 PERCENT
FROM OUTSIDE COUNTY



100 PERCENT
APPLIED TO PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF

Our Commitment



The Lowndes County Board of Commissioners understands and shares the concerns of our citizens. We are committed to continuing to work towards efficiency in local government and exploring new ways to keep home ownership costs as low as possible. Through strategic policy on job recruitment and wage growth, we are building a better today and the best tomorrow for every family in Lowndes County.