

# **HINESVILLE, GEORGIA**

# **ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE**

## *executive summary*

### **BACKGROUND**

Provisions to affirmatively further fair housing (AFFH) are basic long-standing components of HUD's housing and community development programs. Local communities like Hinesville, GA that receive grant funds from HUD through its entitlement process satisfy this obligation by performing an "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice" (AI). In an AI, grantees evaluate barriers to fair housing choice and develop strategies and actions to overcome identified impediments based on their histories, circumstances, and experiences. Through this process, communities promote fair housing choice for all persons, including classes protected under the Fair Housing Act, and promote racially and ethnically inclusive patterns of housing occupancy, identify structural and systematic barriers to fair housing choice, and promote housing that is physically accessible and usable by persons with disabilities.

HUD presumes that a grantee is meeting its obligation and certification to affirmatively further fair housing by taking actions that address the impediments, including: analyzing and eliminating housing discrimination within the jurisdiction; promoting fair housing choice for all persons; providing opportunities for racially and ethnically inclusive patterns of housing occupancy; promoting housing that is physically accessible to all persons to include those persons with disabilities; and fostering compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of the Fair Housing Act. Mosaic Community Planning assisted the City of Hinesville with the preparation of this Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

An important component of the research process for this Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice involved gathering input regarding fair and affordable housing conditions, perceptions, and needs in Hinesville, GA. The project team used a variety of approaches to achieve meaningful public engagement with residents and other stakeholders, including community workshops, stakeholder focus groups and interviews, and a community-wide survey.

## Community Workshops

In November and December 2023, the City of Hinesville hosted a series of virtual and in-person community workshops to understand local fair and affordable housing issues. One workshop was held virtually via Zoom — residents could join online or by phone — and one was held in-person at Live Oak Church. A total of four participants joined a community workshop.

## Stakeholder Interviews and Resident Focus Groups

The planning team also engaged with stakeholders representing a variety of perspectives through in-depth individual interviews. Discussion topics included barriers to fair housing, housing discrimination, access to opportunity, and fair housing resources. A total of six community stakeholders participated in a stakeholder interview, representing a range of viewpoints. In addition to stakeholder interviews, the planning team engaged with residents through focus groups facilitated through Liberty County Reentry Coalition and the Hinesville Housing Authority. Focus groups included interactive discussions of housing and community development needs and fair housing issues. Thirteen residents participated in a focus group.

## Community Survey

A final method for obtaining community input was a 23-question survey available to the public, including people living and/or working in Hinesville and other stakeholders. The survey was available from November 2023 through January 2024 via an online link. Paper copies were available at the public meetings and other related events held throughout the study area. A total of 37 survey responses were received.



# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Below is a summary of feedback received from residents of Hinesville through methods described on the previous page. Residents emphasized the importance of the following in ensuring fair housing choice:

**Housing needs:** residents and stakeholders emphasized a variety of housing needs in Hinesville, including rehab and repair of existing housing, development of new affordable housing, infill housing/development of vacant lots, and multifamily and workforce housing, among other housing needs. Survey respondents noted the highest levels of need for elderly or senior housing, downpayment assistance, construction of new affordable rental units, housing for families, and rental assistance, all of which were noted as high-level need by 60% of respondents or more.

**Segregation:** residents and stakeholders generally noted that Hinesville is not residentially segregated by protected class and that the city's neighborhoods are diverse, with the military bringing a diverse population into the city. Residents did note that there is some segregation by income.

**Pursuing equality in geographical access to resources:** residents noted that as the city is relatively small, most opportunities are evenly accessible throughout Hinesville, especially for households with access to a vehicle. When asked about the distribution of community resources, more than 50% of survey participants said that roads and sidewalks, property maintenance, and parks and trails are not equally available throughout all areas. More than 60% of survey participants noted that garbage collection and police and fire protection are quality available across their communities.

**Homelessness:** discussions with community members and stakeholders revealed a pressing need for the City of Hinesville to acknowledge the area's growing issue of homelessness. Currently, there is no dedicated homeless shelter in Hinesville or Liberty County, and shelters in the greater region are at very limited capacity. There is a need for transitional housing with wraparound services such as case management, job training, and substance abuse/mental health treatment.

**Residents' thoughts about fair housing:** Most survey participants reported understanding or somewhat understanding their fair housing rights (47.4% and 20.9%, respectively). While only 23.7% of respondents said that they did not know their fair housing rights, 42.1% said they would not know where to file a housing discrimination complaint. Of the three survey participants who noted experiencing housing discrimination in Hinesville, none filed a complaint.

**Barriers to fair housing:** Asked to select any factors that are barriers to fair housing in the city and county, respondents most often identified: Income inequality (selected by 76.5% of survey respondents); Not enough affordable housing for families; Not enough affordable housing for individuals; Not enough affordable housing for seniors; Limited access to jobs; and Displacement of residents due to rising housing costs. Notably, responses focused on the need for addressing income inequality and access to jobs, increasing the supply of affordable housing, and reducing the displacement of residents due to rising housing costs.

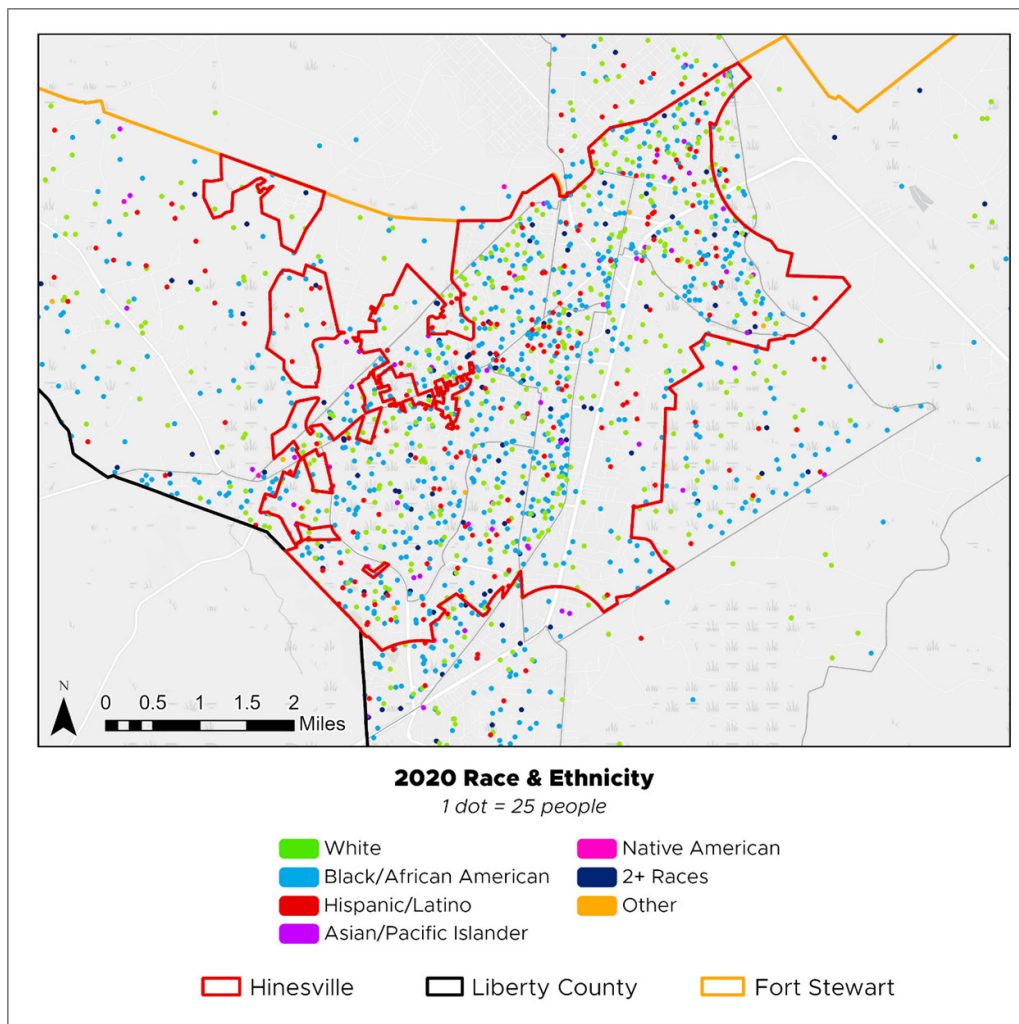
# WHO LIVES IN HINESVILLE?

Hinesville is located in Liberty County, Georgia, and is part of the Hinesville, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The city is home to an estimated 34,733 residents, accounting for 54% of Liberty County’s population 43% of the Hinesville MSA’s population. The city has experienced a modest growth of 5.5% since 2005, with nearly all of this growth occurring between 2005 and 2015.

## Race & Ethnicity

Black residents represent the largest single racial or ethnic group within Hinesville, at 47% of all residents. White residents make up the second largest racial or ethnic group within Hinesville at 34% of residents, while Hispanic or Latino residents are the third largest group and make up nearly 15% of Hinesville’s population. Residents of two or more races make up around 10% of the population, while Asian and Pacific Islander residents, Native American residents, and residents of other unlisted races account for less than 5% each.

The map below shows how residents are spread throughout the city by race and ethnicity. Residents are fairly evenly dispersed without regard for race or ethnicity, with Hispanic and Latino residents tending to be slightly more centrally located than Black or white residents. The most notable distribution shift since 2000 is the spread of residents of all races into the city’s most south-eastern census tract, which was nearly empty in 2000 but has been steadily growing since.



# WHO LIVES IN HINESVILLE?

## Age & Disability

In Hinesville, 28.8% of residents are children under the age of 18; 63.0% of the population is working-aged, or aged 18-64; and 8.2% of the population is aged 65 and up. Hinesville's population is significantly younger than that of the United States as a whole, in which 22.5% of the population is under age 18 and 16.0% is over age 65. This is significant to fair housing considerations as families with children typically desire housing with more bedrooms and outdoor space than individuals or families without children.

14.9% of Hinesville residents have at least one disability. This figure is slightly higher than both the total United States disability rate, estimated at 12.6%, and the overall state of Georgia disability rate, estimated at 12.4%. The most common disability type in Hinesville is a cognitive difficulty, followed by ambulatory difficulties, independent living difficulties, hearing difficulties, vision difficulties, and self care difficulties, respectively. People with disabilities may require specialized housing accommodations - for example, ramps and wheelchair lifts for those with ambulatory difficulties, a flashing doorbell and smoke alarm for those with hearing difficulties, or accommodations for live-in care for those with cognitive or self care difficulties.

## Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Hinesville residents as a whole report very high levels of English proficiency, with just 4.2% of city residents having Limited English Proficiency, or LEP, defined as speaking English less than "very well." Spanish is the primary language spoken at home by residents with limited English proficiency, with 2.8% of residents speaking primarily or only Spanish. Other languages spoken by LEP residents include Asian/Pacific Islander Languages, Other Indo-European Languages, and Other Non-Specified Languages; however, speakers of individual languages other than Spanish or English make up less than 1% of each population.



# RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

## Background

Communities experience varying levels of segregation between different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. High levels of residential segregation often lead to conditions that exacerbate inequalities among population groups within a community. Increased concentrations of poverty and unequal access to jobs, education, and other services are some of the consequences of high residential segregation. Additionally, if an area has census tracts that have an individual poverty rate of 40% or more and a non-white population of 50% or more, these are considered Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty, or R/ECAPs. There are no R/ECAP tracts in Hinesville.

## Segregation Patterns

This study also uses a statistical analysis – referred to as dissimilarity – to evaluate how residential patterns vary by race and ethnicity, and how these patterns have changed since 1990. The Dissimilarity Index (DI) shows how much a minority group is segregated from a majority group living in the same area if the two groups are not evenly distributed geographically. The DI ranges from 0 (complete integration) to 100 (complete segregation). HUD identifies a DI value below 40 as low segregation, a value between 40 and 54 as moderate segregation, and a value of 55 or higher as high segregation.

The proportion of the minority population group can be small and still not segregated if evenly spread among tracts or block groups. Segregation is highest when no minority and majority members occupy the same common area. When calculated from population data broken down by race or ethnicity, the DI represents the proportion of minority members that would have to change their area of residence to match the distribution of the majority, or vice versa.

The table below shares the dissimilarity indices for three pairings in Hinesville. This table presents values for 1990, 2000, 2010, and current, all calculated using census tracts as the area of measurement, showing that overall segregation is low, but has been increasing over time. The DI value for Black/White has more than doubled, Hispanic/White has more than tripled, and Asian or Pacific Islander/White has nearly doubled since 1990. When compared to the change in racial and ethnic demographics over the same time, it appears that demographic shift has been minimal and is not enough to account for the doubling or tripling of DI values. This indicates that residents of Hinesville are clustering more tightly into neighborhoods with similar demographics than they were 30 years ago.

Race / Ethnicity	Hinesville			
	1990	2000	2010	Current
Black / White	5.53	13.16	10.27	12.95
Hispanic / White	4.40	10.99	12.87	14.97
Asian or Pacific Islander / White	7.59	10.65	8.37	14.21

# ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

## Background

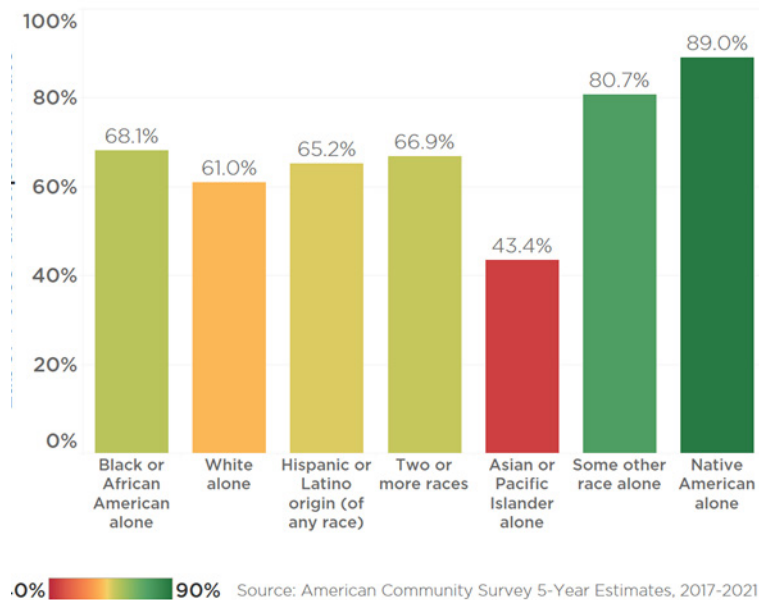
Where people live shapes prospects for economic mobility and access to resources and services such as high-quality education; affordable transportation; a healthy environment; fresh, affordable food; and healthcare. However, neighborhood or housing choices are often limited by discrimination in housing markets or public policies that result in concentrated poverty, disinvestment, and a lack of affordable housing in neighborhoods with access to high-performing schools and jobs that pay living wages.

In addition to proximity, access to opportunity is also shaped by economic, social, and cultural factors. For example, residents may live in locations with high numbers of jobs but may be unable to obtain them due to gaps in education or skills, a lack of reliable transportation, or childcare needs. In this way, limited housing choices reduce access to opportunity for many protected classes.

## Labor Market Engagement

An estimated 65.4% of the population aged 16 and over in Hinesville participates in the labor force. Residents of east Hinesville tend to participate in the labor force at the lowest levels, at rates below 60%, while participation tends to be highest in west Hinesville. Labor force participation is highest among Native American residents and residents of some other race alone, 89.0% and 80.7% of whom participate in the labor force, respectively. Participation is lowest among Asian or Pacific Islander residents, 43.4% of whom participate.

Data from the Georgia Department of Labor shows the unemployment rate in the city at 3.7% as of August 2023. Unemployment varies across the city's census tracts, ranging from 4% in a tract located in east Hinesville to 18% in a tract in west Hinesville. The unemployment rate is highest among Black or African American residents, residents of two or more races, and residents of some other race (12.9%, 11.8, and 11.4%, respectively) and lowest among Asian or Pacific Islander residents (5.4%).



Labor Force Participation by Race/Ethnicity, Hinesville, 2017-2021

## Job Proximity

Jobs in the city are clustered in east Hinesville, where two census tracts each contain 2,200 to 2,600 jobs. The fewest jobs are located in west Hinesville, where two primarily residential census tracts each contain fewer than 150 jobs. Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data also indicates that a substantial share of workers living in Hinesville work outside of the city (75.5%). The high level of commuting across jurisdictions indicates that limited access to vehicles and a lack of frequent public transportation are often barriers for residents in accessing employment.

## Education

Public schools in Hinesville fall within Liberty County School System, which includes 12 schools that serve more than 11,500 students. Block groups that rank highest on HUD's School Proficiency Index —indicating better access to proficient schools—tend to be in south and west Hinesville. Block groups that rank lowest on the index are clustered in northeast Hinesville. Two block groups in this area have school proficiency index scores of 25, indicating very low levels of access to proficient schools for residents. While parts of the district have particularly low levels of access to proficient schools, the majority of block groups in the city and surrounding area have school proficiency index scores of 60 or lower out of 100, indicating generally low access across the area. An estimated 53.3% of students in the district are economically disadvantaged, a rate similar to that of the state of Georgia overall (54.5%).

## Transportation

Liberty Transit provides fixed-route bus and ADA paratransit services in Hinesville, Flemington, Walthourville, and Fort Stewart. The fixed-route transit system includes three bus routes that are centered in downtown Hinesville and span north to Fort Stewart, south to Walthourville, and east to Flemington. Combined housing and transportation costs tend to make up a greater share of household income (65% or more of income for moderate-income households) in parts of east, west, and south Hinesville, areas that tend to also have lower levels of access to bus service. In areas outside of north Hinesville, the combination of lower proximity to jobs and transit and higher shares of household income spent on transportation presents barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment and housing.

A lack of access to vehicles creates barriers to accessing needed services in areas in which those services are not located within walking distance and transit access is limited. In this way, residents without access to vehicles often find their housing choices limited to locations where public transportation is available.





## Environmental Quality

In Hinesville, parks are most accessible in the northeast area of the city. In contrast, fewer parks exist in parts of north, central, and south Hinesville. 34.2% of survey respondents noted that parks and trails are equally provided in the city, while 60.5% said that they are not equally provided. According to the EPA's National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA), Hinesville has low levels of cancer risk from air toxins of 30 per million in city census tracts. One emitting facility is located just outside the city in Fort Stewart.

## Food Access

USDA Food Research Atlas data indicates that the share of residents who have low incomes and live further than one-half mile from the nearest supermarket is highest in census tracts in west Hinesville, where two census tracts have approximately 46% to 49% of residents with low incomes and live more than one-half mile from a supermarket. In two additional census tracts in north and south Hinesville, about 32% to 37% of residents meet the USDA definition of low income and low access at one-half mile.

Poverty and a lack of access to vehicles also contribute to issues of food access and insecurity in the county. An estimated 19.0% of Hinesville residents were living below the federal poverty level as of the 2017 to 2021 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, and approximately 14.3% of households in downtown Hinesville did not have access to a vehicle.

## Healthcare

Access to high-quality, affordable physical and mental healthcare shapes community health outcomes, including both length of life and quality of life. Sufficient availability of primary care physicians is essential for preventive and primary care, and for referrals to appropriate specialty care when needed. Residents of Liberty County have access to healthcare providers at a rate of one primary care physician per 3,320 residents, one dentist per 760 residents, and one mental health provider per 250 residents (see Table 6). These figures indicate that residents of the county have less access to primary care physicians but more access to dentists and mental health providers than do residents in the state of Georgia and the United States as a whole.

Lack of health insurance coverage is also a barrier to accessing needed healthcare—including preventive care—and to maintaining financial security. While the share of residents with health insurance in the city overall has increased to 89.3% as of the 2017 to 2021 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, up from 85.6% in the 2011-2015 estimates, shares of uninsured residents continue to vary by location across the city. The proportion of residents who are uninsured is highest in south and central Hinesville, where more than 14% of residents are uninsured. Tracts with low shares of uninsured residents are clustered in north and south Hinesville, where fewer than 8% of residents are uninsured.



# HOUSING PROBLEMS

## Background

To assess affordability and other types of housing needs, HUD defines four housing problems:

1. A household is cost burdened if monthly housing costs (including mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance, and utilities for owners and rent and utilities for renters) exceed 30% of monthly income.
2. A household is overcrowded if there is more than 1.0 people per room, not including kitchen or bathrooms.
3. A housing unit lacks complete kitchen facilities if it lacks one or more of the following: cooking facilities, a refrigerator, or a sink with piped water.
4. A housing unit lacks complete plumbing facilities if it lacks one or more of the following: hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, or a bathtub or shower.

HUD also defines four severe housing problems, including a severe cost burden (more than 50% of monthly housing income is spent on housing costs), severe overcrowding (more than 1.5 people per room, not including kitchens or bathrooms), lack of complete kitchen facilities (as described above), and lack of complete plumbing facilities (also as described above).

## Housing Problems In Hinesville

According to Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 1 in 3 Hinesville households (33%) and Liberty County households (32%) have at least one housing problem. Approximately 17% of city households and 15% of county households have at least one severe housing problem. Both housing problems and severe housing problems occur at a slightly higher rate in Hinesville than in Liberty County.

Though overall numbers are low, Native American households have disproportionately high rates of housing problems and severe housing problems in the city and county, with over half of all Native American households experiencing housing problems (80%) and severe housing problems (63%). Additionally, nearly 1 in 3 Black households have at least one housing problem in the city and county (34% and 32%, respectively). Hispanic households also experience housing problems at similar rates in the region. White and Asian or Pacific Islander households exhibit the lowest rates of housing problems in the city and county, with 29% of white households and 28% of Asian or Pacific Islander households in Hinesville experiencing at least one housing problem.

Households Experiencing any of the Four Housing Problems	CITY OF HINESVILLE			LIBERTY COUNTY		
	# with Problems	# of Households	% with Problems	# with Problems	# of Households	% with Problems
<b>Race / Ethnicity</b>						
White, Non-Hispanic	1,210	4,170	29.0%	2,830	9,425	30.0%
Black, Non-Hispanic	2,155	6,290	34.3%	3,340	10,420	32.1%
Hispanic	554	1,685	32.9%	1,020	2,645	38.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	103	369	27.9%	163	494	33.0%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	48	60	80.0%	52	75	69.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,385</b>	<b>13,300</b>	<b>33.0%</b>	<b>7,805</b>	<b>24,055</b>	<b>32.4%</b>

# IDENTIFIED IMPEDIMENTS

This analysis identified five impediments to fair housing choice, along with associated contributing factors that are likely to limit or deny fair housing choice or access to opportunity in the City of Hinesville.

## 1. Limited Incomes and Lack of Access to Resources Restrict Housing Choice Among Protected Classes

Disparities in labor market engagement exist by geography, race, and ethnicity in Hinesville. Unemployment is highest among Black or African American residents (12.9% as of the 2017-2021 ACS estimates), and the share of residents aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher is lowest among Asian or Pacific Islander residents (7.9%), who also participate in the labor force at the lowest levels (43.4%). The unemployment rate is highest in northeast Hinesville (20.7%), while educational attainment is lowest in central Hinesville. Median household incomes in Hinesville are lowest among Native American households (\$30,880) and in north and central Hinesville, where they fall below \$45,000 in three census tracts.

Residents and stakeholders noted that in addition to income, residents' housing choices are shaped by a variety of factors, including access to employment, childcare, transportation, grocery stores, healthcare, and other needed resources, and availability of public infrastructure such as sidewalks. Participants also noted a particular need to support economic development by bringing new activities and programming to the city's downtown area.

## 2. Limited Supply of Quality Affordable Housing for Low- and Moderate-Income Households.

An overall lack of quality affordable housing options available to low- and moderate-income households was one of the most frequently cited issues in discussions with residents and area stakeholders. Black and Native American households experience severe cost burdens at disproportionately high rates compared to white and Asian or Pacific Islander households in Hinesville. Non-family households also experience disproportionately high housing costs compared to family households. With limited publicly supported housing options available in the area and existing resources coupled with long waitlist periods, there is a great need for increased numbers of affordable multifamily units, rehabilitation of existing affordable units, and assistance for prospective homebuyers.

## 3. Lack of Transitional Housing, Supportive Housing, and Homelessness Services.

Data on numbers of residents experiencing homelessness and from community engagement efforts in Hinesville and greater Liberty County indicate that homelessness is a growing issue in the region. There is a high level of need for resources and services directed towards vulnerable, at-risk populations. The demand for these services far exceeds the resources available in the area. The City of Hinesville does not have a dedicated shelter for those experiencing homelessness. Though there are programs dedicated to providing relief for those experiencing homelessness, such as the Rapid Rehousing program, these programs are limited in scope and can be difficult to navigate.

## **4. Lack of Affordable and Accessible Housing for Residents with Disabilities.**

Hinesville's population has a disability rate that is higher than both the national average and the average for the state of Georgia at nearly 15%. The City's population is also aging – since 2005, the share of the population aged 65 and up has increased by 67%, and disability rates increase with age. Residents with disabilities frequently have specialized housing needs, and research into the availability of suitable housing in Hinesville indicates that these needs may be going unmet due to the following factors: a higher-than-average disability rate coupled with a lack of accessible housing; a lack of services for senior and disabled residents; a strict and potentially discriminatory zoning code; and a pattern of housing discrimination against disabled residents.

## **5. Lack of Fair Housing Education and Activities.**

Only 42% of Hinesville residents surveyed said that they felt confident that they understood their fair housing rights, and only 35% said that they knew how to file a fair housing complaint. Three residents surveyed reported experiencing housing discrimination, but none filed a report. Reasons given for not filing a report included not knowing how to file, not knowing that the discrimination was illegal, not knowing what good it would do to file, and fear of eviction. This data indicates that knowledge of fair housing rights and resources is not widespread within the community in Hinesville and that increasing efforts in this area would be instrumental in overcoming barriers to fair housing choice.