COASTAL GEORGIA
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT
DECEMBER 11, 2009

Prepared by: The University of Georgia
Commissioned by:

Communities of COASTAL GEORGIA FOUNDATION
Family Connection
GEORGIA CENTER for NONPROFITS
United Way of Camden County
United Way of Coastal Georgia
A LETTER TO THE COASTAL GEORGIA COMMUNITY

December 11, 2009

The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation, in partnership with Family Connection-Glynn, Georgia Center for Nonprofits, United Way of Camden County and United Way of Coastal Georgia, is pleased to present the results of a community needs assessment conducted in Camden, Glynn and McIntosh counties in the summer of 2009. This report represents a collaborative effort to present both current statistical data and citizen input on our communities’ greatest assets as well as current challenges and pressing needs. It represents a significant step in creating a broad collaborative partnership of key community organizations — a collaborative that will continue as we seek to address the issues presented here.

In this effort, we retained the services of the University of Georgia’s Carl Vinson Institute and Fanning Institute to develop the survey instrument, research and provide statistical data, advise on survey dissemination and interpretation, and prepare this report. We would also like to recognize the invaluable role played by Joy Burch, Archway Project of Glynn coordinator, who accepted the role of liaison with UGA, convened our meetings, summarized our discussions, and gently prompted us when action was needed. We sincerely hope that this report will be of value to the nonprofit community as it seeks to align programs with community need, to city and county government agencies, and to the public as a whole.

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I. Executive Summary

In 2009, a community partnership — comprised of the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation, Family Connection-Glynn, the Georgia Center for Nonprofits, the United Way of Camden County and the United Way of Coastal Georgia — joined with the University of Georgia’s Archway Partnership to undertake a significant community needs assessment designed to gain a better understanding of the strengths, challenges and opportunities in the Glynn-, Camden- and McIntosh-County region. The assessment was designed to analyze both objective, secondary demographic and economic data as well as primary data collected from residents in the community using a random general population survey and an online interested population survey. The assessment took nearly 10 months to complete and was funded entirely by the five community partners and an additional funder for the benefit of the three-county region. Results are reported by county and summarily by region to help the reader better understand residents’ perceptions of issues, whether perceptions match reality as reported in the secondary data, and if not, why not. The assessment presents a snapshot of the three-county region, using historical data over time and comparisons against state and national averages to provide context and make the statistics more meaningful.

The methodology for the assessment involved secondary data analysis and collection of primary data through two surveys administered locally (p. 38). The “general population survey” was a random sample survey conducted by mail in each of the three counties with a sample large enough to produce generalizable results. The “interested public survey” allowed anyone in the three-county area to take the survey online during an approximately six-week period. In the general population survey, 601 surveys were completed and nearly 1,000 people took the interested public survey.

An analysis of the regions’ demographic and economic data revealed three very distinct communities that share a number of common traits and trends. Although concerns about growth were second only to poverty, economy and jobs, the area has generally grown more slowly over the past decade than the state, though it outpaces the state in number of residents under 18 (Camden) and over 65 (Glynn and McIntosh). While the overall poverty rates for the three counties are not nearly as high as other rural Georgia counties, in certain sectors of the region, a significantly high number of people live in poverty. In one census tract in Glynn County, for example, more than 40 percent of the residents live at or below the federal poverty level, and in all three counties at least one third of all residents required some type of government or family assistance to survive.

In all three counties, education was the top issue in overall importance, including dropout rates, effectiveness of the school systems and concerns about young people’s work ethic. The higher test scores and lower high school dropout rates in Camden County were reflected in the responses to both the general population survey and the interested population survey, where fewer people were concerned about their schools. Conversely, more residents of Glynn and McIntosh expressed concern about the higher dropout rate and lower test scores in their communities. While not mentioned in either survey by any resident, all three counties have significantly high rates of students who report being bullied at school. This percentage was nearly one in four in McIntosh County in 2008, with Glynn and Camden not far behind. Notably, all three counties had rates substantially higher than that of Fulton County, the state’s largest school district.

The area’s natural beauty and small-town values topped the list of values prized by people in the three coastal counties. Residents of all three counties agreed that the area’s greatest strength its natural beauty and location on the coast (cited by 31 percent overall). The region’s second most frequently cited strengths were the people and community values (27 percent overall). Newer residents of Glynn and
Camden tend to view their communities more positively than long-time residents, while the length of time in McIntosh County had little effect on those residents’ responses. Camden residents cited both the military and schools as strengths for that county, while residents of Glynn noted that the economy and tourism as strengths. Respondents in the interested public survey — as opposed to the random sample, general population survey — showed a greater concern for the feeling of community in their county and less concern about the responsiveness of government officials, affordable health care, and illegal immigration than the general public. Coastal region residents still rely primarily on newspapers as the main source for news about community matters, and nearly three-fourths of all residents of the three counties have Internet access at home.

Out of a list of 41 potential concerns, residents of coastal counties consider education as the foremost challenge for the region. Figure 16 illustrates each county’s response to the 41 issues and is a helpful reference in reading the needs assessment. Top concerns fall into five over-arching topic areas:

1. Education (including school system effectiveness; appropriate work ethic in youth; dropping out of school; appropriate job skills for youth; motivation of youth; quality childcare/schools; and adult job skills);
2. Law and vice (including crime; child abuse or neglect; and drug and alcohol abuse);
3. Government (including responsiveness of public officials; city/county cooperation; and protection by law enforcement);
4. Economy (lack of jobs and financial stability); and
5. Health care (affordable health care; quality of health care; access to health care; and access to preventative care).

Several issues were not listed as extremely important by a majority of residents but had underlying data that indicate cause for concern. Teen pregnancy rates are an example of community perception and objective data that did not align. Only 33 percent of Camden County residents taking the survey rated teen pregnancy as extremely important, while 44 percent of Glynn respondents and 52 percent of McIntosh respondents said the issue was extremely important. In Glynn County in particular, the rate of teen pregnancies has been increasing since 2004, when the Glynn County rate was well below the state average. In 2007, the latest year for which comparative figures are available, Glynn County’s teen pregnancy rate was 51.7 per 1,000 females, meaning that one in every 19 females age 15-17 years old was pregnant in Glynn County.

Conversely, crime was listed as extremely important by high percentages of residents in all three counties, and with respect to Glynn County, at least, the statistics support that concern. In 2007, one in 25 Georgians experienced a non-violent crime on average. The rate in Glynn County was one in 15 people. While a higher percentage of McIntosh County residents listed crime as extremely important than residents of the other two counties, the crime rate in McIntosh remains below the state average, although it has been increasing in recent years.

Finally, race continues to play a role in the region, as it does in many communities throughout Georgia. In the general population survey, a high percentage of African Americans (73 percent) stated that it is ‘extremely important’ for leaders to address issues of race. African Americans were also more likely to report dissatisfaction with the quality of life in their respective counties than were whites. Additional data broken down by race is available in the Appendix.
II. Introduction

“Coastal Georgia” can be defined geographically in many ways, as can the communities that comprise this unique and special part of the state. Glynn, Camden and McIntosh Counties represent half of the state’s six coastal counties and a significant amount of the oceanfront land in Georgia. The Glynn-Camden-McIntosh area collectively had an estimated population of 129,996 in 2006 (Glynn, 73,630; McIntosh, 11,248; Camden, 45,118). The U.S. Census Bureau lists Glynn, McIntosh and Brantley Counties as part of the same Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) due to commuting patterns, economic synergies and other ways these communities are connected. Camden County includes the micropolitan area\(^1\) of St. Mary’s. In all of these distinctions, political boundaries are necessary because of how information is made available, how resources are collected and allocated, and how people identify their homes.

Georgia is increasingly interconnected, both between counties and across state lines. Whether the three-county region is defined geographically and politically, the common thread shared by all organizations that define it is the need to work across boundaries, to reach out to different communities and partners, and to share and expand precious resources. This concept drove the community needs assessment, funded by the community partners referenced at the beginning of this report. Glynn, Camden and McIntosh Counties share abundant resources and significant challenges to those resources in the coming years. This community needs assessment provides a snapshot of the community at a particular point in time and assesses the greatest strengths and challenges facing it as a region.

III. Demographic Overview of Glynn, Camden and McIntosh Counties

A comprehensive picture of a community as described by objective, secondary data is critical to gaining a better understanding of the community’s challenges and opportunities. Several key demographic and economic measures — poverty rates, per capita personal income, educational attainment levels, population growth rates, unemployment information and others — help provide a broad overview of Camden, Glynn, and McIntosh Counties, particularly when viewed in relation to each other and state averages, and presented over time. The purpose of these comparisons is to provide a context for discussion about how a community is doing on critical indicators in relation to its neighbors and statewide averages, providing a clearer perspective on trends and historical background.

Population Growth

Population statistics are often the starting point for a discussion of a community’s demographics because they contain so much vital information about a community’s most important asset — its people. The numbers for the three coastal counties are somewhat more complicated in that they include the presence of part-time residents and military and civilians living on a military base. The population of all three counties has grown at a slower rate than Georgia’s average growth rate of 18.3 percent, with McIntosh County having only 5.6 percent population growth since 2000. Figure 1 shows the relative growth rates according to the U.S. Census Bureau and illustrates Camden County’s relatively younger population — a higher percentage of Camden’s residents are under 18 and a lower percentage are 65 or older. Conversely, both Glynn and McIntosh have a higher percentage of residents 65 and older than the state average of 9.9

\(^1\) Micropolitan areas are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as areas with populations of 10,000 or more that constitute shopping/retail centers for the surrounding area.
percent. According to the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget’s Georgia 2015 Population Projections, nearly 14 percent of Georgia’s residents will be 65 or older in 2015. If Glynn and McIntosh’s older populations grow at the same rate as the state projections, both will have a substantially higher percentage of their populations over the age of 65.

Camden and Glynn Counties are projected to grow 21 percent and 20.1 percent, respectively between 2000 and 2015, while McIntosh County is only expected to grow 8.6 percent in the same time period, according to the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget.

Figure 1. Population growth and demographic information for the three-county area

Poverty
Poverty rates are one broad indicator of how a community is doing and whether it is moving in the right direction. As with any statistical measure, these rates need to be read with their limitations in mind. Poverty rates measure income according to a federal equation that is used to determine eligibility for certain federal programs and varies based on the makeup and number of family members. In reality, the poverty rate has little relation to how much money a family needs to survive — it does not depict a “living wage.” However, it is a useful indicator when expressed over time to determine if an area’s economy, programs and other efforts are having an effect, and where the community ranks in relation to other similarly situated areas.

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2 [http://www.opb.state.ga.us/media/3016/georgia_population_projections_reduced_web_5_25_05.pdf](http://www.opb.state.ga.us/media/3016/georgia_population_projections_reduced_web_5_25_05.pdf)

3 U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2006-2008
In 2000, the average percentage of U.S. and Georgia residents living at or below the poverty level were 12 percent and 13 percent, respectively. In the same year, Camden County was below those averages at 10 percent, while Glynn County was at 15 percent and McIntosh at 19 percent (Figure 2). However, in recent years, Camden County’s rate has risen to 12 percent (equivalent to the U.S. average), while Glynn and McIntosh Counties have dropped slightly. The Glynn County’s poverty rate, while rising during the 1990s, has fallen to 13 percent recently. Moreover, there are pockets in the three-county region — measured by census tracts — that have much higher poverty rates, indicating concentrations of poor residents not reflected in the county numbers. In one Glynn County census tract, the poverty rate exceeds 40 percent (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Percent of residents living below the federal poverty level

Figure 3. Distribution of poverty in Glynn County, Ga (U.S. Census American Factfinder, Census 2000 SF3 data)

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Child poverty rates often illustrate stories that overall poverty rates cannot tell and help us understand how one of the community's most vulnerable populations is doing (Figure 4). While Camden County is below the state and national averages, Glynn and McIntosh both have much higher child poverty rates than the Georgia average. Furthermore, Glynn County's child poverty rates increased during the 1990s when most communities decreased, and have continued to increase over the past eight years since the 2000 census.

Because poverty rates only illustrate the part of the population living below a certain federal dollar figure, it is helpful to look at the percentage of the population that is living at or above certain percentages of the federal poverty rate. A family can typically survive without any state, federal or local assistance at 200 percent above the federal poverty rate. In 2000, a significant portion of Glynn-, Camden- and McIntosh-Counties’ population lived at or below the 200 percent of poverty figure: 31 percent of Camden residents, 34 percent of Glynn residents, and 48 percent of McIntosh residents. This means that nearly half of McIntosh residents and approximately one-third of Camden and Glynn residents likely required some form of public or family assistance to meet their day-to-day obligations. This is directly related to other measures of the community's wealth, such as the per capita personal income figures discussed below.

Figure 4. Child poverty rates for Camden, Glynn and McIntosh Counties

Education
While the Camden schools consistently out-perform McIntosh and Glynn County schools, as measured by scores on Georgia’s Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), Camden also has a significantly

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5 Selected Economic Characteristics are not available for McIntosh County for 2006 to 2008 due to the county’s small population.
higher rate of students absent from school more than 15 days in a school year (Figures 5-7). Notably, Glynn County has by far the lowest absentee rates of the three counties, and both Glynn and McIntosh Counties have raised 8th grade math scores to a percentage nearly equivalent to Georgia’s average. Conversely, reading scores for 8th graders in Glynn and McIntosh dropped to well below the Georgia average in 2007, the most recent year for which data is available.

Figure 5. Percent of 8th grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on the CRCT in math

![Graph showing CRCT math scores for different counties.]

Figure 6. Percent of 8th grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on the CRCT in reading

![Graph showing CRCT reading scores for different counties.]

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6 Data are from the Office of Student Achievement Report Card www.gaosa.org and Georgia Department of Education. Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) are the state’s standard exam for education progress measurement.

7 Data are from the Office of Student Achievement Report Card www.gaosa.org and Georgia Department of Education.
High school dropout rates were frequently mentioned as a concern in both the random survey and in the online community survey. In Glynn and McIntosh Counties, one in seven young people aged 16-19 are high school dropouts. One impact of the dropout rate is on high school graduation rates. In Georgia, the graduation rate is the percent of all students entering 9th grade who graduate on time with a regular diploma. That rate is affected by the number of dropouts in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade, as well as those who are held back from graduating on time (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Graduation rate\textsuperscript{9} for high school seniors\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{graduation_rate.png}
\caption{Graduation rate\textsuperscript{9} for high school seniors\textsuperscript{10}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{8} Data are from the Office of Student Achievement Report Card www.gaosa.org and Georgia Department of Education.

\textsuperscript{9} The Georgia High School Graduation Rate is calculated by dividing the number of regular diplomas conferred in a given year by the number of diplomas conferred plus the number of dropouts in that cohort since 9th grade, as well as those completing that year who did not graduate on time.

\textsuperscript{10} Data are from the Office of Student Achievement Report Card www.gaosa.org and Georgia Department of Education.
While the impact of not having a high school degree on an individual student is clear, the collective impact to the county and regional economies is also substantial. High school graduates on average earn $9,245 more per year than high school dropouts, and it is worth noting that 75 percent of state prison inmates are high school dropouts.

Educational attainment is another strong indicator of the relative wellbeing of an area. Although the percentage of residents with bachelor’s and graduate degrees still lags behind the Georgia and national averages in McIntosh and Camden Counties, Glynn County has continued to match the state and national averages, and all three counties have made substantial increases in the percentage of residents with college degrees. As Figure 9 illustrates, Camden and Glynn Counties have achieved six and seven percentage point increases, respectively, in the number of residents with college degrees since 1990.

**Figure 9. Percentage of residents with bachelor’s degrees or higher**

![Figure 9](image)

The impact of area universities, community colleges, and technical colleges is evident, particularly during the 1990s (Table 1). All three counties saw substantial increases — rates higher than the Georgia and U.S. averages — in the percentage of residents having completed some college coursework between 1990 and 2000. However, McIntosh County had the highest rate of increase by far between 1990 and 2000, with an eight-percentage point increase. This translates into a 58 percent increase in the percentage of McIntosh residents having completed some college coursework during that time period.

**Table 1. Percentage of residents having completed some college coursework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
<th>Camden County</th>
<th>Glynn County</th>
<th>McIntosh County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>23 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>27 %</td>
<td>23 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 Estimates for 2006-2008 for McIntosh County are not available due to the relatively small size of the population.
Educational attainment levels are strongly correlated with other measures of community well being, including per capita personal income. Per capita (per person) personal income is not only an indicator of relative wealth in a community, but it also ties in closely to the unemployment and labor force participation rates. As the number of people not participating in the labor force (for whatever reason) increases, the per capita personal income is likely to decline.

Figure 10 shows per capita personal income as it relates to the national average for all communities. The 100 percent line represents the U.S. average over time, and the average Georgia per capita income and that of the three counties are adjusted in relation to it. In 2007, the most recent year for which figures are available, Glynn County per capita personal income was at 99 percent of the U.S. average, down from a high of 101 percent of the U.S. average in 2004 and 2005. Georgia has been slowly declining from a high of 95 percent of the U.S. average in 1996 to 87 percent in 2007. While well below the U.S. and Georgia averages, Camden and McIntosh County per capita personal incomes have been on the rise during the 2000s, dropping slightly along with state and national averages as the economic downturn began in late 2007. In 2007, Camden County per capita personal income was 73 percent of the U.S. average, while McIntosh was 63 percent.

**Figure 10.** Per capita personal income as a percentage of U.S. average

![Graph showing per capita personal income as a percentage of U.S. average over time for Georgia, Glynn County, Camden County, and McIntosh County.]

**Employment**

A discussion of a community’s economic data is not complete without an analysis of how it is doing in relation to the current economic downturn. Georgia’s unemployment rate in the fall of 2009 rose above 10 percent for the first time in decades. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Georgia is among a number of states with statistically significant unemployment rate changes from October 2008 to October 2009. Georgia’s unemployment rate rose from 6.9 percent in October 2008 to 10.2 percent in October 2009, an increase of 50.7 percent. Discussion about a statewide job summit and a better understanding of how to create well-paying jobs highlights the importance of understanding the region’s economy. While

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13 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.
unemployment rate alone is only one indicator of how a community is doing\textsuperscript{14}, when viewed monthly over time, it provides insight into how the community is doing in relation to the state with respect to certain types of jobs.

**Figure 11. Monthly unemployment rate, 2007-2009\textsuperscript{15}**

![Monthly unemployment rate chart]

Monthly unemployment figures are available historically for states and MSAs – metropolitan statistical areas. As the chart above illustrates, the Brunswick MSA’s (including Glynn, Camden and Brantley Counties) monthly unemployment rate has been slightly below but has closely tracked Georgia’s over the past three years. In September 2009, the Brunswick MSA had an 8.8 unemployment rate, compared to a 10.1 average for the state of Georgia.

According to data recently released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Georgia was one of 12 states that experienced declines in real GDP (gross domestic product) in 2008, largely due to declines in manufacturing and construction. Those areas hit the coastal region particularly hard, as Figure 12 illustrates.

\textsuperscript{14} Measuring employment and unemployment in certain types of jobs and how many people are actively looking for work in those areas and excluding small business activity, most agricultural activity, and people who have given up looking for work

\textsuperscript{15} U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Figure 12 shows the percent of Georgians employed in the top six NAICS sectors ranked by greatest employment and the comparisons in those sectors for Camden, Glynn and McIntosh Counties. While Georgia’s economy is fairly diverse and manufacturing comprised just over 12 percent of jobs in 2008, the coastal region had far fewer manufacturing jobs – 8.6 percent in Camden, 8 percent in Glynn and not enough to be reported in McIntosh. The Accommodations and Food Services sector, which tends to have much lower wages overall, is exceptionally prominent in the coastal region, where it accounts for every 1 in 4 jobs in McIntosh and every 1 in 5 jobs in Glynn County. Even Camden County is relatively dependent on this low-paying sector. It is interesting to note that Glynn County has a lower percentage of its residents working in the relatively high-paying Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector than Camden, when Glynn has a much higher percentage of residents with bachelor’s and advanced degrees (27 percent in Glynn in 2006-2008 to 19 percent in Camden).

IV. Greatest Strengths of the Region

Residents of Camden, Glynn, and McIntosh see the region’s natural beauty and location on the shore as its greatest strength (cited by 31 percent overall). The second most frequently cited strength for the region was the people and community values (27 percent overall). While 39 percent of Glynn County residents and 38 percent of McIntosh County residents cite the natural beauty of their respective counties as their greatest strength, only 16 percent of Camden residents cited the county’s natural beauty as its greatest strength. It would be a mistake to read into this difference any statements about the relative beauty of the three counties, but rather that the beautiful surroundings rate highly, but secondary among residents of Camden County. Figure 13 illustrates the frequency of responses by county.

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16 U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 quarterly averages based on top six NAICS sectors for the state of Georgia.
17 NAICS is the North American Industrial Classification System, which is a replacement for the SIC code system.
In Camden County, the most frequently cited greatest strength was the people and community values (35 percent). As an example of a response reflecting this view, one respondent wrote, “Small town atmosphere. Results in relatively low crime rate, ease of driving, and better sense of community.” Part of the sense of community in Camden may be related to the military presence in that county. In fact, 13 percent of respondents from Camden cited the military as the county’s greatest strength:

“The Naval Submarine base is pretty much the only thing keeping 80 percent of the businesses open and thriving around here. Without it allot (sic) of the people that live here would move away and take all of their business with them.”

Camden residents were also much more likely than those of Glynn or McIntosh to cite the county’s education system as one of its greatest strengths (10 percent, as compared to 2 percent for each of the other counties). This is consistent with the educational data presented above, showing Camden County schools testing above state averages in 8th grade reading and math and having a relatively low dropout rate at 11 percent.

For residents of Glynn, following the area’s natural beauty, the next two more frequently-cited greatest strengths were the people and community values (21 percent) and then the economy and tourism (18 percent). As Figure 13 illustrates, the frequent citing of the economy and tourism as a strength sets Glynn County apart from Camden and McIntosh in a similar way to how education and the military set Camden apart from the other two. Glynn’s numbers on the economy reflect the higher per capita personal income in the community and the barrier island economies.

Aside from the natural beauty of their county, McIntosh residents’ second most frequently cited strength was the people and community values, cited by 26 percent; this was also the strength most frequently cited by African Americans overall.

On the less positive side, 20 percent of McIntosh residents did not offer any strengths in response to the question. One respondent wrote, “I have lived in McIntosh County nearly 20 years and have not seen what
I would call great strengths,” and a few others gave similar responses. This response differed based on the length of time a person has lived in McIntosh County, with newcomers viewing the area much more positively than long-time residents. Length of time may not be the determining factor, however, in that most of the newer residents to the community also appear to be in higher income brackets than long-time residents.

On the importance of local leaders addressing environmental protection, the issue is more salient among McIntosh residents than among residents of Camden, as illustrated in Figure 14. Nearly half of all McIntosh residents (49 percent) said that the environmental protection is extremely important, and only 10 percent said that it was either not too important (9 percent) or not at all important (only 1 percent). Conversely, while 23 percent of Camden residents said that environment protection was extremely important, less than half of the percent from McIntosh — 21 percent — said that the issue was either not too important (18 percent) or not at all important (3 percent). Residents of Glynn presented views that nearly split the differences between Camden and McIntosh.

![Figure 14. Importance of addressing environmental protection, by county](image)

**V. Greatest Challenges Facing the Region**

To best assess what residents of Camden, Glynn, and McIntosh counties see as the greatest challenges facing their communities, random mail and community online surveys were conducted. Both posed a straightforward, open-ended question — “What would you say is the greatest challenge facing {Glynn/Camden/McIntosh} County?” — followed by a list of 41 issue areas, for which respondents were asked to say how important it is that community leaders address each issue. The responses to the open-ended questions suggest what issues are at the forefront of the respondent’s mind, while the list of issue areas allows us to assess how important a given issue is relative to other issues that the respondent may not have concerned in responding to the open-ended question.
In response to the open-ended question, the most frequent response by far was related to jobs, poverty, and the economy — cited by 35 percent of respondents. The economy was the top response in all three counties. When comparing the “lack of jobs” to other items in the list of issue areas, the lack of jobs was among the top responses, yet significantly lower in terms of importance to “the effectiveness of the school system.” Figure 15 illustrates the coded responses by county.

**Figure 15.** Coded responses to open-ended question, “What would you say is the greatest challenge facing your county?”

The second most frequently cited challenge was managing growth (14 percent). This issue is more prominent in Camden (cited by 17 percent) and Glynn (14 percent) than in McIntosh (10 percent). The following concerns were among those cited related to growth:

“How do we maintain what we have and still grow in the future?” “Infrastructure not enough to support increase in population [sic].”

Curiously, although residents in all three counties are very concerned about growth, the issue did not rank highly when it was listed along with other issues in a closed-ended question. Among a large list of other issues in the closed-ended question, “planning/zoning/over-development” ranked in the bottom third of all the issues listed in terms of importance. Additionally, “traffic and congestion” and “improving downtown Brunswick” fell to the bottom of the list of issues in the closed-ended question.

Table 2 illustrates the issues that rose to the top in terms of overall importance to residents in the closed-ended question, based on the random mail survey distributed in all three counties. It shows the response

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18 The statistics reported from open-ended responses are compiled after rigorous coding of the responses into a predetermined coding frame. To ensure reliability in the coding process, all responses were coded by two independent researchers, and any discrepancies were then addressed by the data analysts.

19 (t = -3.077, p = 0.002)
to each issue by county, but the analysis discusses the responses as a three county, collective region. Of the 41 issue areas listed in the survey’s closed-ended question, 19 produced a mean score that fell statistically significantly higher than the overall average mean of 3.26. These 19 issues fall roughly into 5 over-arching topic areas: (1) education, (2) law and vice, (3) government, (4) the economy, and (5) health care.

Table 2. Listed items with a mean importance score significantly above the overall average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item from list</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of school system</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>20.939</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate work ethic in our youth</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>13.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropping out of school</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>10.651</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate job skills for our youth</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>7.237</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation of our youth</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.835</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality childcare/school</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.755</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult job skills</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.362</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Law and vice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>15.746</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse or neglect</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>11.648</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug and alcohol abuse</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.824</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness of public officials</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>9.267</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/County cooperation</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>7.214</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection by law enforcement</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>6.665</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of jobs</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>9.187</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>7.967</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable health care</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>8.790</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of health care</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>7.787</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to health care</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>7.343</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to preventative care</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.498</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While public transportation did not rank high overall, those who said that the lack of transportation has been a problem for them at some point in the last 12 months were far more likely to cite public transportation as an extremely important issue for leaders to address (53 percent compared with only 16 percent). The difference between those who have experienced transportation problems and those who have not is statistically significant, with the probability that the difference is due to change at less than .001. Whether or not a respondent works in a zip code other than where he or she lives matters not in one’s opinion of the importance of addressing public transportation.
Figure 16. Percent responding “extremely important” to each issue area
While education ranked fourth in response to the question about the greatest challenge facing each county, it was undisputedly the most important issue on average for all three counties, including the effectiveness of the school system and the dropout rate. McIntosh and Glynn rated these issues even more highly than Camden, reflecting the urgency felt by residents in those communities related to their relatively lower test scores (see Figures 5 and 6 above) and higher dropout rates (11.6 percent in Camden County vs. 15.3 percent in Glynn and 14.8 percent in McIntosh).

While addressing school dropouts ranks highly in all three counties, there exists a higher level of concern in McIntosh and Glynn than in Camden; about 3 out of 4 McIntosh residents and 2 out of 3 Glynn residents cite the issue as extremely important.

High school completion rates measure the number of students beginning school in 9th grade and graduating in four years. Figure 18 illustrates the differences in completion rates among counties and the relatively high number of students who are not finishing high school on average throughout the state.

In 2004, Glynn County had 12.7 percentage points fewer students graduating high school on time compared to the state average of 65.4 percent. While the percentage of students graduating on time has grown from 52.7 percent in 2004 to 66.9 percent in 2008, Glynn is still 8.5 percentage points below the state average. McIntosh County’s data shows greater variance through the years, from a low of 47.4 percent in
2005 (compared to Glynn County’s 57 percent and Camden County’s 72.9 percent), to 2006, which showed 72 percent, higher than the state average.

The reported data appears to support the Glynn and McIntosh County concerns regarding student dropout rates, as well as the rate of high school completion. Additionally, the fluctuation in completion rates for high school students in McIntosh County raises questions as to why there were several drops immediately following a climb in rates, whereas Glynn County, while still below the state completion rates, was climbing steadily from 2004 through 2008.

Finally, bullying in school is an issue that, while never mentioned in either the general population survey or the interested population survey, is an area of concern for all three counties. According to the 2008 Georgia Student Health Survey II, nearly one in four students in McIntosh County reported being bullied in the past 30 days. In Camden County, the number was closer to one in five students, while 18 percent of students in Glynn County reported being bullied over the past thirty days. Although a Georgia state average is not published for this data set, it is interesting to compare the three counties to Muscogee County (an area with a military base) and to the state’s largest school district, Fulton County/Atlanta. In Muscogee County, just over 12 percent of 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grade students reported being bullied in the last 30 days when surveyed in 2008, while 14.7 percent of Fulton County students reported being bullied, both lower percentages than Glynn County and substantially lower than Camden (20 percent) and McIntosh (24 percent) Counties (Figure 19). At a minimum, these high rates of bullying, reported by the students themselves, warrant further attention in all three counties.

Figure 19. Percent of students who report at least one incident of bullying in the past 30 days

Crime

Crime was listed as the second most important issue to residents of all three counties, on average, and crime and child abuse and neglect were both statistically significant in the outcome of the random survey. While crime may have been second in overall importance to education, nearly 80 percent of McIntosh residents listed it as important, a higher response rate than any other issue from any of the three counties. Clearly, crime and feelings of safety in one’s community are concerns for residents of all three counties. Figure 20 shows that Glynn County’s violent crime rates has been rising in recent years and that it has higher rates of violent crime compared to Camden, McIntosh and Georgia overall. In 2007, one in 46 people in Glynn County were the victim of a violent crime.

21 The Georgia Student Health Survey II is conducted by the Georgia Department of Education and is given to students in the 6th, 8th 10th and 12th grades. In addition to bullying, it asks about drug use, alcohol use, sexual activity, and other health-related topics.
While crime resonated as an important issue more strongly with McIntosh residents, its violent crime rates are below that of Camden County and the state average. However, McIntosh’s violent crime rate has risen significantly from 1.2 in 2005 to 5.4 in 2007, and the survey results are likely reflecting concern over that increase. 

Camden County is the only community reporting a decline in violent crime rates, dropping from a high of 15.1 in 2003 to 6.9 (the same as the state average) in 2007.

With respect to non-violent crimes such as burglary and theft, Camden and Glynn Counties had substantially higher crime rates in 2007 than the state average — approximately one-third higher. In 2007, one in 25 people on average in Georgia were victims of a non-violent crime. Comparatively, this ratio was one in 15 in Glynn County and nearly one in 17 in Camden County. It is clear to see why crime is such a concern when so many people have been affected by it recently. And while McIntosh County's non-violent crime rate was much lower than the state average, it experienced a sharp increase between 2005 (5.1) and 2007 (22.2) – an increase of roughly 57 non-violent crime incidents.

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22 McIntosh County is difficult to compare to the other counties, as data from some of the years reported were missing due to very low numbers or lack of reporting.

23 KidsCount data for 2004 shows a dramatic decline in crime rates, that then rebound in 2005. The anomalous crime rates for 2004 are inconsistent with OJJ arrest statistics, which show a steady rate from 2003 to 2005. Thus, we are not reporting data prior to 2005 at this point.

(http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/stateprofile.aspx?state=GA&cat=498&group=Category&loc=1946&dt=1 percent2c3 percent2c2 percent2c4)
For juveniles, the arrest rates in Camden look similar to the national average, whereas both Glynn and McIntosh have significantly lower rates of arresting juveniles, overall. However, in Glynn, the arrest rate of juveniles for violent crime is 20 percent higher than the national average, while both McIntosh and, to a lesser extent, Camden fall below the national average of arrests of juveniles for violent crimes.

Child abuse and/or neglect also had a mean importance score significantly above the average in the random survey. Rates have fallen substantially throughout the state and in the three county area since 2003. McIntosh County historically shows that incidents of child abuse and/or neglect occurred at a rate of 55.1 per 1,000 children in 2003, over double that of both the state and Glynn and Camden Counties. While that rate has dramatically decreased, in 2008 McIntosh County still substantiated incidents of child abuse and/or neglect at a rate of 11.3 per 1,000 children, compared to Glynn County’s 5.7 and Camden County’s 6.9 and is closest to the state average rate of 10.8. In the survey, more Glynn and McIntosh County residents considered this issue extremely important (both at 65 percent) than Camden County residents (54 percent).
Figure 22. Substantiated incidents of child abuse and/or neglect, rate per 1,000 children

Health care
Interestingly, teen pregnancy was not rated ‘extremely important’ by enough residents of any of the counties to have a mean importance score significantly above the average in the random survey – it was an important issue, but not statistically significant. 33 percent of Camden County residents taking the survey rated teen pregnancy as extremely important, while 44 percent of Glynn respondents and 52 percent of McIntosh respondents said the issue was extremely important.

The data on teen pregnancy in the three counties show that, in Glynn and McIntosh Counties in particular, there is cause for concern. As Figure 23 illustrates, the rate of teen pregnancies in Glynn County has been on the rise since 2004, when the Glynn County rate was well below the state average. In 2007, the latest year for which comparative figures are available, Glynn County’s teen pregnancy rate was 51.7, meaning that one in every 19 females aged 15-17 years old was pregnant in Glynn County. McIntosh County’s rate has similarly been on the rise since 2004 and in 2006 went above the state average. Although it dropped in 2007, the relatively small population in McIntosh County means that one less pregnant teenager can significantly affect the numbers. While Camden County has maintained a relatively low rate of teen pregnancies over a period of five years, the rates rose in 2006 and 2007 from 15.7 to 22.5 and 23.1, respectively.
Using data from the Georgia Department of Public Health, it appears that pregnancies among 10- to 14-year-old girls are far lower than those for 15- to 17-year-olds; however, in Glynn County, 31 girls between the ages of 10 and 14 became pregnant between 2000 and 2007 (1.6 percent pregnancy rate), while the rates were under 1 percent for both Camden and McIntosh.

Teen pregnancies are not the only health indicator for teenagers. Figure 24 illustrates the exceptionally high rate of teen births in all three counties compared to the Georgia average.

While Camden County still has the lowest rate of teen births on average across years, when compared to Glynn and McIntosh Counties, this rate has been on the rise since 2005. In general, Camden and McIntosh counties hover near, though slightly over in 2007, the state average rate, while Glynn has remained constantly above the average, and has slowly but steadily increased since 2004.
These rates reflect the relatively high pregnancy and birth rates of 18 and 19 year olds, who have likely only had an opportunity to finish high school, at best. Research continues to show that finishing high school and waiting until at least 20 to have a child makes a young person much less likely to live in poverty.

While many residents in the three coastal counties recognize the importance and the implications of teen pregnancy, nearly 17 percent of respondents in Glynn County and nearly 20 percent of respondents in Camden County believe the issue is “not too important” or “not at all important.”

**Figure 25. Importance of addressing teen pregnancy, by county**

The high cancer rate in the coastal area is another issue that was not specifically mentioned by any respondents to either the general population survey or the interested population survey, but where the data show cause for concern. The following map highlights Glynn and McIntosh Counties as communities among those with the highest cancer incident rates in Georgia. Notably, they are nearly surrounded by counties with the lowest cancer rates in Georgia, including Camden County. We would have expected to see a higher rate of cancer in Camden due to the prevalence of prostrate cancer in men and the presence of the military base in Camden. However, only the cancer rates for small children ages 1-4 were higher in Camden than in Glynn or McIntosh. Otherwise, Glynn and McIntosh have significantly higher cancer rates (for all types of cancer) per capita than any of the surrounding counties.

Interestingly, the high cancer rate in Glynn County appears not to be attributable primarily to African American residents. When we separate the data and look at cancer rates for only African American residents in Glynn County, the cancer incidence rate drops into the next lower category.
The Impact of Race

A major difference exists between the mean importance scores given by African-American respondents and those given by whites. Of the 41 issue areas on the list, African Americans rate all but seven significantly higher than do whites. And for those seven, the differences in mean importance scores are statistically meaningless. In other words, race does not factor into one’s opinion about the relative importance of these seven issue areas:

- Effectiveness of school system
- Appropriate work ethic in our youth
- Responsiveness of public officials
- City/County cooperation
- Protection by law enforcement
- Planning/zoning issues/over-development
- Illegal immigration

Concerns about the effectiveness of the school system and the appropriate work ethic for youth are paramount issues for both races. Responsiveness of public officials, cooperation between city and county,
and protection by law enforcement also fall into the upper third in importance among the 41 issue areas listed. These five issue areas rank highly among residents in the region without regard for race.

The largest discrepancy in mean importance ratings between whites and African Americans is in the area of discrimination; on a 4-point scale with four being most important, whites give discrimination a score of 2.78 whereas African Americans give it a score of 3.725. Figure 27 illustrates the differences in response. The issues of homelessness and the availability of affordable housing are the issues with the largest mean difference following discrimination, and it’s clear that African Americans show more concern about health care and job training.

**Figure 27. Importance of leaders addressing the issue of discrimination, by race**

![Bar chart showing the importance of leaders addressing discrimination by race.](image)

**General Population vs. Interested Public**

Responses to the open-ended question about the greatest challenge facing the counties were very similar between the respondents in the general population survey and those in the interested public survey, except in two important respects: (1) the interested public respondents were more likely to cite education as a challenge, and (2) less likely to focus on political corruption.

The interested public survey respondents gave “Responsiveness of public officials,” “Affordable health care,” and “Illegal immigration” significantly lower scores in terms of importance than did the general population respondents.26 At the same time, the interested public survey respondents placed more importance than did the general public in the following areas:

- Feeling of ‘community’

---

25 \( (t = 12.48, p < .00001) \)

26 Using independent sample t-tests, the mean scores for these three issue areas were significantly higher for the general population respondents, at a 95 percent confidence level, than those found for the interested public respondents. In other words, we can be 95 percent confident that the differences found are not the result of chance, but rather a reflection of real opinion differences.
• Improving downtown Brunswick
• Poverty
• Adult literacy
• Arts and cultural activities
• Domestic violence
• Public transportation
• Homelessness
• Quality childcare/school

Overall, corruption and health care are issues that are seen as more important to the general population than to the interested public, while education and family issues rank more highly in importance with the interested public respondents than with the general population.

VI. Satisfaction with Life in One’s County

While there is not a statistically significant difference in levels of general satisfaction between residents of Camden and Glynn, satisfaction levels in McIntosh County are lower than those of the other two counties by a small, but statistically significant difference. In other words, McIntosh residents are less satisfied with the quality of life in their county than are the residents of Camden and Glynn with the quality of life in theirs. Nevertheless, large majorities in all three counties express some degree of satisfaction, as opposed to dissatisfaction. Figure 28 illustrates the differences in satisfaction levels for each of the three counties. The differences in satisfaction levels can be explained in part by the fact that African Americans show significantly lower levels of satisfaction than do whites in the region, and the African American population in McIntosh is proportionately higher than that found in Camden or Glynn counties.

Figure 28. Satisfaction with the quality of life in one’s county, by county

Using independent sample t-tests, the mean scores for these three issue areas were significantly lower for the general population respondents, at a 95 percent confidence level.
Figure 29 illustrates that, while 37 percent of whites in the region said that they were very satisfied with the quality of life in their county, only 13 percent of African Americans said that they were very satisfied. And while 37 percent of African Americans said that they were either somewhat dissatisfied (29 percent) or very dissatisfied (8 percent), while only 11 percent of whites expressed any level of dissatisfaction.

**Figure 29.** Satisfaction with the quality of life in one’s county, by race

Aside from race, other factors that were positively correlated to one’s level of satisfaction with the quality of life in one’s county were education and income; as either education or income rose, so did the propensity to express satisfaction. Another factor that is related to the level of satisfaction with the quality of life in one’s county is homeownership; homeowners expressed higher levels of satisfaction than did non-homeowners, particularly in Glynn County. Several other factors that are related to satisfaction with the quality of life in one’s county were found for Glynn and Camden counties but not for McIntosh, such as marital status, income, education and age. Oddly, employment had no effect on one’s level of satisfaction either, except that retired persons expressed higher levels of satisfaction in general.

Figure 30 illustrates the primary sources survey respondents use to get news about their community. While newspapers are still the primary sources for local news by majorities in every county, Camden residents are more likely than those of Glynn or McIntosh to use television as a primary source.
A. Satisfaction with Life in Glynn County

A large majority of Glynn County residents said that they were either very satisfied (33 percent) or somewhat satisfied (52 percent) with the quality of life in their county. While 13 percent of the residents are somewhat dissatisfied, only 3 percent reported being very dissatisfied. There is a significant relationship between Glynn County residents’ satisfaction level and their source for news about the county; those whose primary source for news is newspapers are significantly more satisfied with the quality of life in the county than are those whose primary sources are either radio or television. Part, but not all, of the relationship between media use and satisfaction can be explained by the intervening variable of education; the higher one’s education level, the more likely it is that one relies on newspapers and that one expresses high satisfaction. Figure 31 illustrates the linear relationship between one’s level of education and satisfaction with the quality of life in Glynn County.

\[ \text{Cramer’s } V = .185, \ p = .002 \]
In 2006-2008, 27 percent of Glynn County’s population had a bachelor’s or graduate degree, the highest in the region, reflecting positively on the levels of satisfaction in the County.

Figure 32 shows that, while one's level of satisfaction is irrespective of one's employment status, retired residents of Glynn County expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of life in the county than either employed or unemployed residents. Putting aside those who are retired, there is no meaningful difference in satisfaction levels for employed and unemployed residents of Glynn, and where differences appear to exist, these differences are in the middle categories of somewhat satisfied and somewhat dissatisfied.

In an effort to measure what is important to residents in their community, we asked respondents to rate each of the items listed in Figure 33 in terms of how important that item is to keeping them in their
community. Presumably, the items that one rates as extremely important are those that weight most heavily in keeping one in the community. While Glynn residents cited the natural environment as extremely important or important with greater frequency than any other item, jobs or other sources of income was the item most frequently cited as extremely important—by nearly half of all respondents. It is noteworthy that one’s home and doctor were cited as extremely important with greater frequency (41 percent and 39 percent, respectively) than were friendships (33 percent), relatives (33 percent), and one’s church (32 percent). Those in Glynn County with the lowest levels of education and with the lowest household incomes were the most likely to cite relatives in the area as extremely important to keeping them in the community; it is likely that, for these residents, they rely on family for support and resources.

**Figure 33. Glynn County residents rate the importance of reasons to stay in their community**

![Image of bar chart showing importance of reasons to stay in community]

**B. Satisfaction with Life in Camden County**

Similar to Glynn County, the vast majority of residents in Camden County are either very satisfied (31 percent) or somewhat satisfied (55 percent) with the quality of life in Camden; only 12 percent said that they were somewhat dissatisfied, and a mere 3 percent said that they were very dissatisfied. Camden residents who cited growth as the greatest challenge facing their county were among the most satisfied overall, with 50 percent saying that they were very satisfied and another 41 percent saying that they were somewhat satisfied.

As Figure 34 illustrates, the impact of education on levels of satisfaction is less prominent in Camden than in Glynn and McIntosh Counties, although clearly, those with post-graduate degrees expressed higher levels of satisfaction in every county. But in Camden, the least educated are second only to the most educated in the percent who said that they were very satisfied with the quality of life in Camden County. Those with a high school diploma or less have higher levels of responding ‘very satisfied’ than do those with some college or a bachelor’s degree.
Given the percent of Camden respondents who cited the community, people and values as the greatest strength of the county, and the fact that friendships rate as the most important reason to keep one in the community, it appears that Camden has a strong sense of community cohesion and camaraderie. In response to the open-ended question about the greatest strengths, one Camden resident expounded in detail about the sense of community being threatened by the economy and how the Naval base is so intricately tied to the community, even for those who are not in the military:

“I believe that we have a wonderful small town community that over the years has been a wonderful place to live and raise your family with good jobs and education, but all that has changed and people are very scared because of the closing of the Gilman Paper Company has left lots of people without jobs, and their future has caused many to have to move to find other jobs ... The Naval Base has been wonderful coming into this community and helping to create some jobs and many projects have happened, and a Big Thank You to them because they have given so much, and every time I see one of our Military, I stop and thank them for their service to our country, some are so young but willing to give their all to help make our country safe and I think this is our greatest strength for Camden County and all the people that are very lucky to know they are here to serve and protect this “Great America.”

Adding to the sense of camaraderie, it is important to note that the population of Camden, mostly due to the military presence, is younger and more heavily male than either Glynn or McIntosh Counties. In fact, **half of all Camden residents are under age 30**, as compared to 40 percent of Glynn and 41 percent of McIntosh residents. Conversely, only 7 percent of Camden residents are 65 years of age or older, as opposed to 11 percent in McIntosh and 14 percent in Glynn. It is likely that having such a large cohort in a similar stage of life, combined with sharing a similar lifestyle in the military, contributes to the higher level of collegiality seen in Camden.
Figure 35. Camden County residents rate the importance of reasons to stay in their community

It is also important to note that the percentages of Camden residents citing friendships as either very important or important does not differ statistically from those found in Glynn or McIntosh, but the importance of friendships is more highly placed relative to the other items in the list. One might extrapolate from this that there are fewer pulls keeping people in Camden than in the other two counties, which is borne out by statistics. According to the U.S. Census figures, in 2000, only 40 percent of Camden residents had lived in the same house 5 years earlier, as compared with 52 percent from Glynn, 60 percent in McIntosh, and 49 percent statewide in Georgia.

C. Satisfaction with Life in McIntosh County

As the Census figures above show, McIntosh residents exhibit less mobility than residents in Glynn or Camden Counties, or Georgia as a whole. The question remains to be explored, to what extent is the lower rate of moving a matter of choice as opposed to having fewer options? Twenty percent of respondents from McIntosh County either could not or would not list the county’s greatest strength, and McIntosh residents expressed a significantly lower level of satisfaction about the quality of life their county than the residents of either Camden or Glynn.

In Glynn and Camden Counties, the longer a person has lived in the county, the less satisfied the person is. However, there is no statistical relationship between how long a person has lived in McIntosh County and his/her reported level of satisfaction. When we combine this information with the fact that McIntosh’s population growth from 2000 to 2008 (5.6 percent) lags far below the state average (18.3 percent) and the average for Camden (9.1 percent) and Glynn (12.3 percent) Counties, we should not expect the level of satisfaction to improve with the influx of new residents. On a brighter note, the natural beauty of McIntosh is highly valued by the county’s residents. In the open-ended question about the county’s greatest strengths, more McIntosh residents cited the natural beauty of the area than any other category, in any other county. Also, residents of McIntosh showed a higher level of concern for environmental protection than did the residents of either Glynn or Camden (see Figure 14, page 14). For those who said that addressing environmental protection is extremely important, there was a greater propensity to be very
satisfied with the quality of life in McIntosh. As is evident in Figure 36, the natural beauty of the area is at the top of the list of reasons that keep people in the community.

Figure 36. McIntosh County residents rate the importance of reasons to stay in their community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The natural environment</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your house or residence</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships with people who live here</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of goods or services you buy</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic or road and street conditions</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your job or other sources of income</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical care that you need or prefer</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A church or religious group you prefer</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives who live here</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational opportunities for you and/or your family</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores or businesses you need or prefer</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to recreational or entertainment opportunities</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs or organizations of interest to you</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Connectedness**

Throughout this report, differences and similarities among the three counties have been highlighted. In reality, the three counties function as a region in many aspects, including employment, workforce and tourism. The counties are connected in many ways, and technology has enhanced those connections. Internet accessibility is a critical part of ensuring that all sectors of a community are connected. Camden residents are the most likely to access the Internet from home, work, and at public places such as the library or Internet cafes. This is not surprising given the younger male demographic in Camden, and the propensity of younger males to be frequent Internet users. Consistent with this is the fact that Camden survey respondents were significantly more likely to participate online than were respondents from Glynn and McIntosh Counties. Figure 37 highlights Internet access by county and place of access.
In addition to being more connected to the Internet, Camden residents are also slightly more likely to be accessible by either cell phone or landline than are residents of either Glynn or McIntosh. The penetration of cell phones into the coastal counties’ households exceeds 85 percent in every county, with a high of 92 percent in Camden. In Glynn County, 16 percent of county residents are reachable only by cell phone, not by landline at all.

These data come from the general population survey conducted for this project.
VII. Conclusion

There are many more issues that bring the three counties together than divide them. Residents share a passion for the beauty of the area and a need to protect it, although they see different ways of achieving protection, ranging from enhancing tourism to increasing environmental regulation. The region’s economy is not as diverse as Georgia’s overall and is heavily dependent on tourism and the lower-paying jobs that accompany that sector. Concerns over K-12 education, dropout rates, work ethic and work readiness are reflected in responses to both surveys as residents wonder about the quality of the regional workforce available to existing and new companies. While the unemployment rate is not as high as Georgia’s, an 8.8 percent unemployment rate as of September 2009 for the Brunswick MSA means more demand for social services, fewer resources, and less income in the community. The presence of the military base and the constant of tourism have somewhat mitigated the hits the local economy took with respect to construction and manufacturing, but like many communities, there is still great need.

The community partners’ vision in conducting this needs assessment means that the three county region will be better positioned to take advantage of an upswing in the economy. Armed with better knowledge about relative strengths and weaknesses and a good understanding of community perception, the region is in a position to have an informed, meaningful discussion and start setting priorities and direction for the future.
VIII. Methodology

The survey data used in this report come from two independent samples: (1) a random sample, general population survey of residents in Camden, Glynn, and McIntosh counties; and (2) an open-access survey allowing any resident the opportunity to respond in a non-random attempt to hear from as many interested persons as possible. The random sample allows us to generalize the results with some degree of scientific certainty to the general population in the region. The non-random survey presents the researchers with an opportunity to hear from interested parties and distinguish their views from those of the general public. For the purposes of distinguishing between the two samples throughout this report, we will refer to the random sample as the general population sample and to the non-random sample as the interested public sample. When the sample of any given survey statistics is not explicitly identified, the default is the general population survey; data resulting from the interested public survey will be explicitly identified as such throughout the report.

General Population Survey

The sample for the general population survey was drawn at random from the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File, including all residential addresses in Camden, Glynn, and McIntosh counties. The Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) mailed letters and paper surveys to 2,000 residents in each of the three counties (for a total of 6,000 letters) inviting the recipients to either complete the survey on paper and mail it back to CVIOG in an enclosed business reply envelope or to go online and complete the survey using an individually assigned access code. In each county, approximately 20 percent of the surveys were undeliverable, giving us a valid base close to 1600 in each county. Table 3 illustrates the estimated response rates for the three counties based on the number of valid addresses.

Table 3. Estimated response rates for the General Population Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Surveys sent to valid addresses</th>
<th>Number of completes</th>
<th>Estimated Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glynn</td>
<td>1598</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>1628</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Region</td>
<td>4822</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data from the general population survey represents our best estimate of public opinion in the three-county region. The potential sampling error for the region is +/- 4%, although the sampling error will be higher for any population projections estimated beneath the regional level. The data reported for the region have been weighted to adjust for the relative differences in county size as a percent of the region; thus, the weighted county distribution is equal to the U.S. Census estimate for county populations (given in the far right column of Table 3).

Interested Public Survey

At the completion of the general population survey, the web survey was opened to allow anyone who wanted to express an opinion the opportunity to do so. Many community groups were given access codes to circulate among their constituents. In total, 983 individuals completed the Interested Public Survey,
although 18 of these respondents did not list the county in which they live; Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents by county and compares that distribution with the total adult population in the region.

**Table 4. Distribution of respondents in the Interested Public Survey by county**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of completes</th>
<th>Percent of Total Completes per County</th>
<th>Percent of Region’s Adult Population per County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glynn</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Region</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4 illustrates, the responses to the Interested Public Survey overestimate the views from Glynn, and subsequently underestimate the views from Camden and from McIntosh, although not by much. While these data cannot serve as a basis for generalizing any findings to a wider population, they do serve as a means for examining relationships among viewpoints and for a better understanding of the viewpoints of groups and individuals that are more likely to possess passionate and informed views related to their community.