



Economic Development Briefing • 2026

State of Economic Development

From growth ➤ to intentional growth.

Plans. Numbers. Momentum. And a clear direction of travel.

CHOOSE
*Port
Wentworth*



This is our moment.

The next chapter isn't about attracting activity to Port Wentworth. It's about shaping it.

This briefing follows the same sequence the city has followed on the ground.

*Plans became infrastructure.
Infrastructure is drawing investment.
Investment is producing a place.*

01 We started with a plan.

Downtown Strategy, Highway 21 Streetscape, Anchor Trail, design guidelines.

02 Now we have the numbers.

Population, permits, and tax digest all pointing the same direction.

03 The market has responded.

Named brands on Highway 21, downtown revitalization moving, destinations rising.

04 A direction of travel.

From growth to intentional growth. Live. Experience. Thrive.

We started with a plan.

Every project on the ground today traces back to an adopted framework. Four plans set the direction the city is now building against.

Plan 01 • Adopted 2024

Downtown Master Vision Plan

The City lays out a master vision for downtown: renew identity and experience as a thriving, walkable core, and attract new retail, restaurants, and services.

Walkable core • New investment

Plan 02 • Adopted 2024

Highway 21 Streetscape

An organized framework for improving 3.6 miles of miles of the region's most economically active active corridor, with a transportation study underway.

3.6 miles • 56,550 VPD • underway

Plan 03 • Delivered

Downtown Infrastructure Delivered

A \$2.6M downtown sewer rehabilitation, GDOT green light on SR 25, and the downtown semi-truck ban, together resetting the ground under the strategy.

Sewer • SR 25 • truck diversion

Plan 04 • In progress

Anchor Trail Concept

A multi-segment network stitching downtown, Mobley Park, SR-21, Anchor Park, and neighborhoods into one walkable system.

Downtown • Anchor Park • SR-30 • underway

Sources: Port Wentworth Downtown Strategy 2024, 2034 (Revised); Highway 21 Streetscape Report (Adopted Oct 2024) and current transportation study; Anchor Trail Conceptual Plan (Mar 2025); FY26 City Council Budget Packet.

The plans are working.

Every top-line indicator points in the same direction: this is a city preparing to shape what comes next.



Growth is here. The city's job is to shape it.



The city at a glance.

Port Wentworth, Georgia's fastest-growing gateway to the Port of Savannah, on one page.

17,604

City population
Census V2025 est.

\$85,346

Median HH income
Above MSA average

~245%

Growth since 2010
Fastest in the MSA

\$700M+

Active pipeline
2025, 2026

8,500

Metaplant jobs
Plus 6,900 suppliers

32

Median age
Millennial-led

Drive-time trade area

Metric	5 min	10 min	15 min
Population	14,200	62,800	178,500
Households	5,180	23,400	67,900
Median HH Income	\$78.5K	\$71.2K	\$66.8K
Daytime Population	16,900	78,200	205,300
Bachelor's degree +	28%	30%	32%

This is the community sheet retailers, investors, and lenders see. A young, growing, high-income market at a regional gateway.



05 • The corridor

Highway 21 is our economy.

More traffic than I-95. Higher household income than the region. And 3.6 miles of front of front door for a city.

Vehicles per day

56,550

On Highway 21, per the 2026 City Showcase. More traffic than I-95, per the Streetscape Report.

Adopted streetscape

3.6^{mi}

From O'Leary Road to the Effingham County line. Multi-use paths, lighting, safety, wayfinding.

Trade-area median income

\$90K

Median household income across the Highway 21 trade area. What retailers underwrite from.

The framing

“Highway 21 accommodates more traffic volume than even Interstate 95.”

Highway 21 Streetscape Report, Adopted October 2024.

Sources: Port Wentworth Anchor Park City Showcase 2026 (VPD, trade-area income); Highway 21 Streetscape Report, Adopted Oct 2024 (corridor length, I-95 comparison).

Downtown is opening up.

Three moves in the last year have shifted downtown from truck-dominated thoroughfare to walkable main street.

01

Local control • GDOT green light

The City can take responsibility for downtown SR 25, from Grange Road to Bonnybridge.

02

Truck diversion • enforced July 1, 2026

The semi-truck ban in the downtown corridor is now fully in force.

03

Infrastructure • downtown-ready

\$2.6M downtown sewer rehabilitation delivered.

A truck-dominated thoroughfare becomes a pedestrian-focused main street.



The kind of downtown we are unlocking

Walkable. Tree-lined. Storefronts you want to slow down for.



The market answered.

Every project below is on the City's 2026 project map. National, regional, and local operators, all choosing Port Wentworth.

Highway 21 & regional corridors

Aldi Grocery, in development	Wawa ×2 Crossgate, Rice Creek	Parker's Kitchen Prototype, Hwy 21 & 30	McDonald's In development	CORE Credit Union 3 Lakeside Blvd, 2,830 sf
Express Oil Automotive, in development	Mayflower Plaza Retail, proposed	Coldbrook Plaza II Mixed retail, Phase 2	The Port Collective Mixed-use district, 12 ac	Optim Orthopedics Healthcare anchor

Hospitality, storage & visitor economy

Woodspring Suites Extended stay	Hilton LivSmart & Tru Dual-brand hotel	Springhill & Towneplace Marriott dual-brand	CubeSmart, Silo Storage Storage
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Source: City of Port Wentworth Project Map (April 2026); CORE Credit Union details from June 12, 2025 Council Packet. Includes in-development and proposed projects.



Rendering · VyStar Pavilion & Ice Cove Arena

08 · Destination economy

A district, not a project.

Anchor Park, VyStar Pavilion, Ice Cove Arena, and The Port Collective come together as one together as one integrated destination. Public investment built to draw private capital. capital.

750K+

Projected annual visitors

\$4M+

Annual sales & hospitality tax

Combined sales, hospitality, and event tax capture projected at build-out, per the City Showcase.

The anchors

Anchor Park
The Port Collective

VyStar Pavilion
Optim Orthopedics

Ice Cove Arena

Source: Port Wentworth Anchor Park City Showcase, 2026.

The city has a story now.

Launched with the Greater Savannah Black Chamber of Commerce, *Choose Port Wentworth* positions the city positions the city where Southern hospitality, natural beauty, and vibrant growth intersect: the gateway to the gateway to the Lowcountry.

Live Here.
Experience Here.
Thrive Here.

Residents

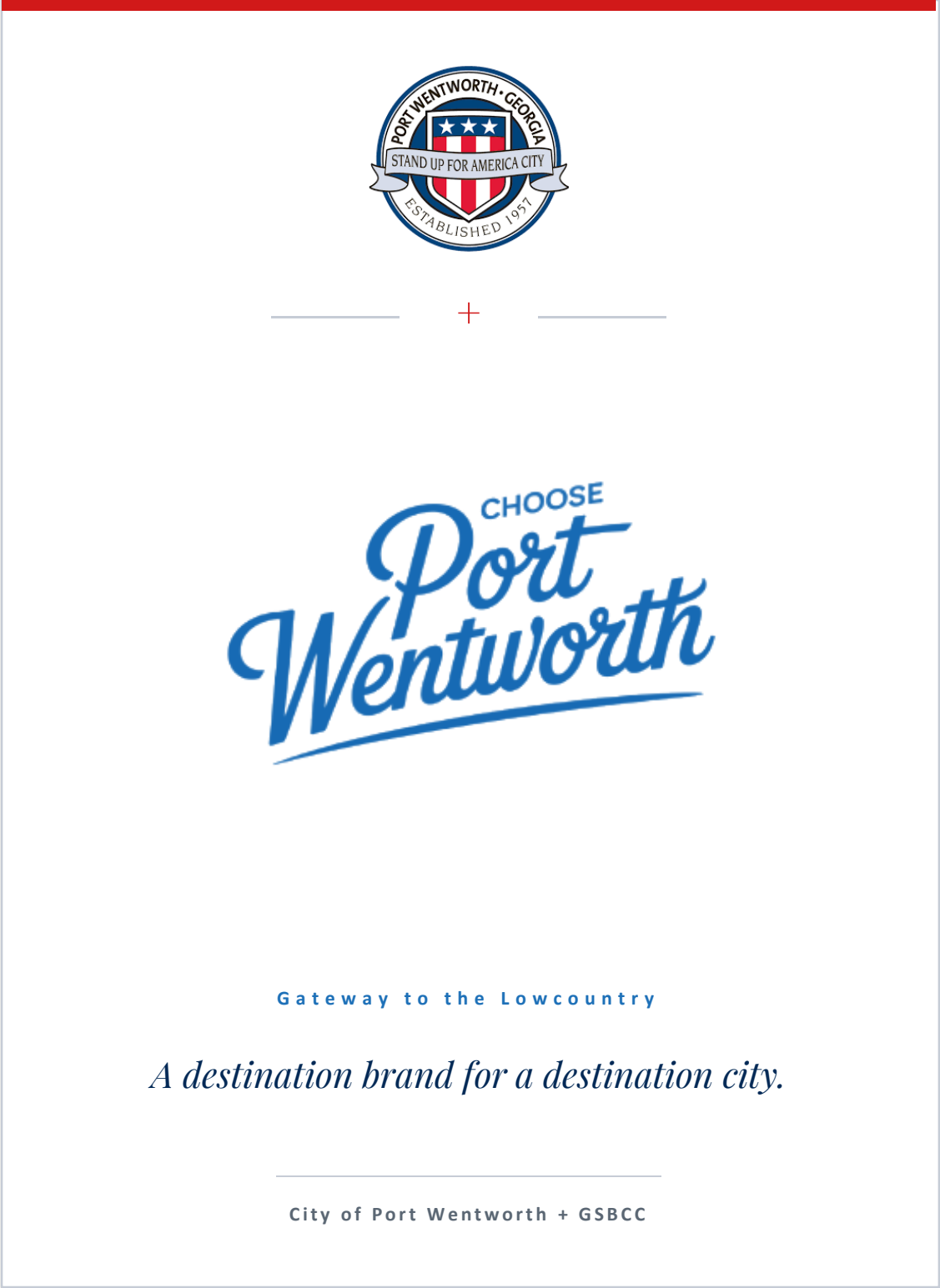
A city with a real, lived identity.

Visitors

The Lowcountry's next stop, not a pass-through.

Businesses

A market with income, traffic, and momentum. momentum.





Meet the Port Wentworth Development Authority.

The public partner that turns City strategy into deals, sites, and finished projects. It is one of the most important reasons this city can act on a plan and not just publish one.

What PWDA does

Attracts investment. Assembles sites. Structures deals. Delivers placemaking.

Public partner

A willing partner for developers, matched to the City's placemaking priorities.

Site assembly

Holds, positions, and repositions catalytic real estate the City has prioritized.

Deal structure

RFPs, negotiations, development agreements, and bonds led by the PWDA board.

Tax base & jobs

Turns underutilized City assets into projects that expand the expand the digest.

The Board of Directors

Residents appointed by City Council. Guiding how strategy becomes real projects on the ground.

Charlene Middleton

Chair

Gabrielle Nelson

Director • Mayor Pro Tem

Morgan Halloran

Director

Alfonso Ribot

Director

Jeana Wright

Director



And now, a Downtown Development Authority.

Newly reconstituted this January. A public partner engineered for one job: revitalize the business districts of the City of Port Wentworth.

What the PWDDA does

Revitalizes and redevelops the business districts. Promotes trade, commerce, and employment. Creates the climate for new industry to locate here.

Focus

Downtown revitalization and business-district redevelopment.

Geography

The City’s downtown corridor is designated the central business district.

Statute

O.C.G.A. § 36-42, Downtown Development Authorities Law.

Board & terms

Seven directors appointed by Mayor and Council; four-year four-year terms.

Reconstituted • January 15, 2026

By Resolutions R26-01-01 and R26-01-02, the City reconstituted the PWDDA and named its founding directors.

The founding directors

Hilton Fordham

Director

Kevin Thomas

Director

Nishant Shawn Randerwala

Director

Keyur Patel

Director

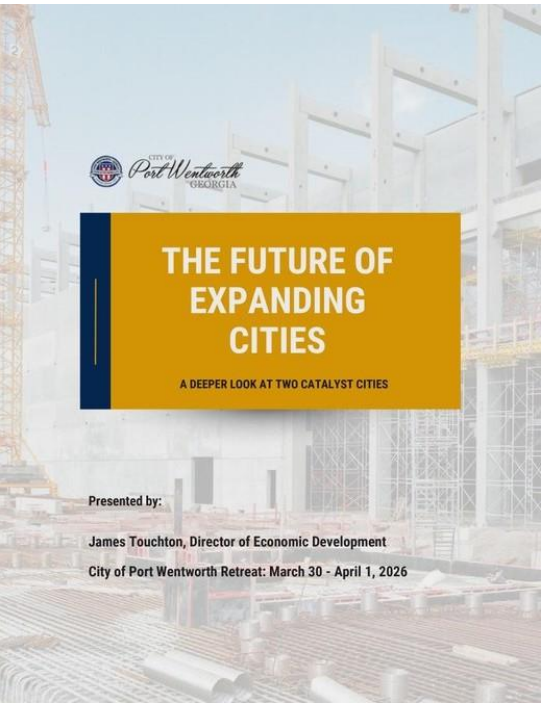
Cindy Patel

Director

Two seats remaining, to be appointed by the Mayor and Council.

We didn't guess. We went.

We visited two Georgia cities that already lived the growth we are living now. Kennesaw and Woodstock. Two catalyst cities. Three days. cities. Three days. One question: *How do great downtowns take shape?*



The Booklet

The Future of Expanding Cities.

A deeper look at two catalyst cities.

Prepared for the City of Port Wentworth Retreat, March 30 – April 1, 2026.

Read the guidebook

[portwentworthga.gov / dept-economic-development / how-great-downtowns-take-shape](http://portwentworthga.gov/dept-economic-development/how-great-downtowns-take-shape)

What we studied

Kennesaw

The compounding city

Population from ~21,000 to more than 40,000. Over **\$200M** in delivered delivered downtown projects. About **\$650M** more near completion or completion or breaking ground in 2026.

Woodstock

A city unexpected

Population from ~10,000 to more than 41,000. Median home values from under **\$150K** to more than **\$520K**. Downtown as destination, by design.

What both cities had in common

01

Density & mixed use.

People living near activity. Foot traffic that pays the rent.

02

Public & private, aligned.

Public leadership set the direction. Private capital followed a clear signal.

03

Infrastructure, sequenced.

Streetscapes, utilities, and civic spaces built at the right moment, not the not the last one.

Studies, strategies, and prospectuses, delivered.

This department does not outsource its thinking. Every plan, prospectus, and pitch behind the projects you have seen tonight was researched, written, designed, and published in-house — a level of published in-house — a level of output the development community rarely sees from a city this size.



Adopted 2024

Downtown Master Vision Plan

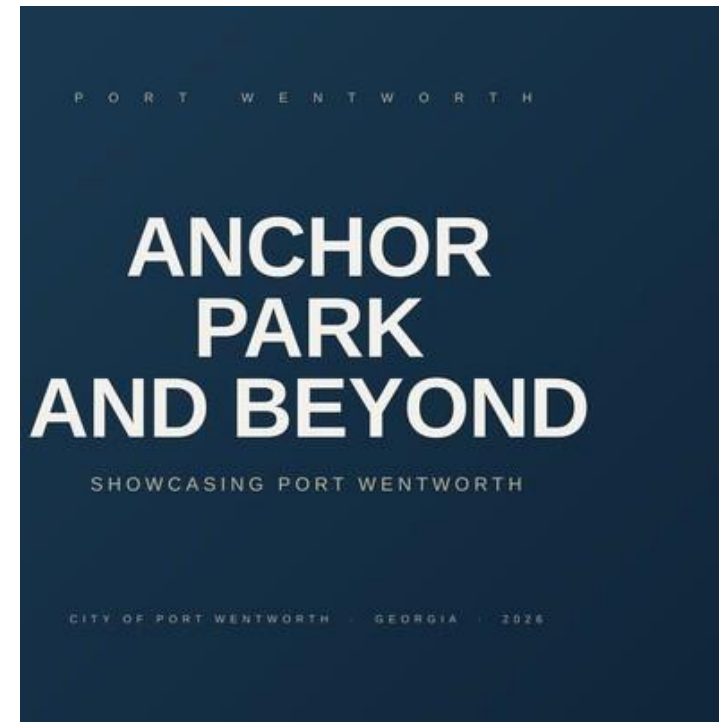
2024, 2034 (Revised).



Published 2026

Community Snapshot 2026

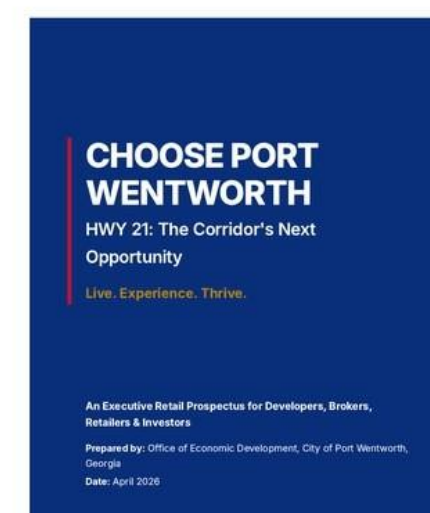
Revised community fact sheet.



Published 2026

Anchor Park City Showcase

Anchor Park and Beyond, Revised.



Published 2026

Choose PW Retail Prospectus

Highway 21 investor package.

Plus: Investor Prospectus, ECD Retreat Booklet, Owner Editions, Multi-Overlay District Framework, and site-specific packages, all available on request.

Where we go next.

Four moves define the next phase. Each one makes the next dollar of private investment easier, more predictable, and more likely to raise quality of place.

01

Timeline • 3–5 years

Deliver downtown.

Move the Downtown Master Vision from plan to plan to project. Convert the truck-diverted corridor into a walkable main street.

02

Timeline • Ongoing

Build the corridor.

Advance the 3.6-mile Highway 21 Streetscape into phased construction: safety, walkability, wayfinding, identity.

03

Timeline • Fall 2026

Stand up the playbook.

Advance the proposed overlay districts and Book of Patterns so “good” is defined up front, not litigated project by project.

04

Timeline • The culmination

Connect the district.

Build the Anchor Trail so downtown, Anchor Park, VyStar Pavilion, Ice Cove, and Port Collective work as one system.

Quality of place is economic development. Everything above is economic development.



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From growth *to intentional growth.*

*Plans became infrastructure. Infrastructure is drawing investment.
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And that is the state of economic development in *Port Wentworth.*