

## CHAPTER TWO: CITY PROFILE/EXISTING CONDITIONS

### 2.0 Population

#### Regional Context

Auburn is located in Lee County, Alabama, the state's 8<sup>th</sup> largest county with a 2021 estimated population of 177,218<sup>1</sup>. Auburn is part of the Auburn-Opelika Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is coterminous with the boundary of Lee County and has a 2020 estimated population of 163,461<sup>1,1</sup>. The Auburn-Opelika MSA is part of the Columbus-Auburn-Opelika GA-AL Combined Statistical Area (CSA), which also includes:

- **Columbus MSA**  
Chattahoochee County, GA; Harris County, GA; Marion County, GA; Muscogee County, GA; and Russell County, AL
- **Auburn-Opelika MSA**  
Lee County, AL
- **Valley, AL Micropolitan Statistical Area<sup>2</sup>**  
Chambers County, AL The Valley Micropolitan Statistical Area was added to the Columbus, GA MSA in 2013.
- **Tuskegee Micropolitan Statistical Area<sup>2</sup>**  
Macon County, AL The Tuskegee Micropolitan Statistical Area was removed from the Columbus, GA MSA in 2013.

The 2020 estimated population of the Columbus-Auburn-Opelika CSA is 503,124.

#### Lee County

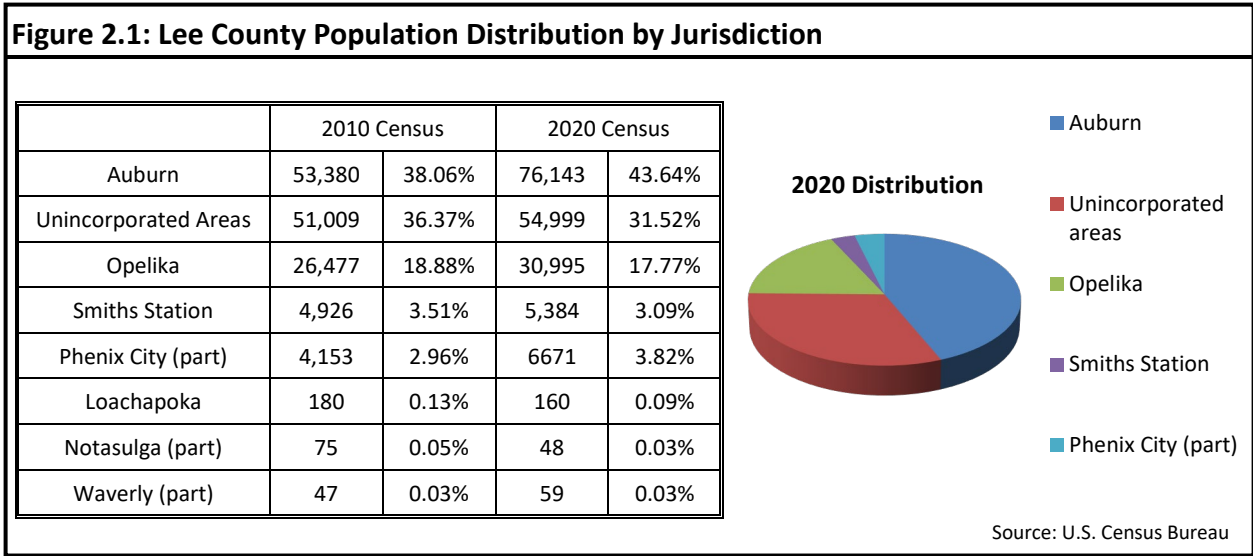
The City of Auburn's 2020 population is 76,143 and estimated in 2021 to be 78,552 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Auburn is the largest city in Lee County. A graphic comparison of the population of various jurisdictions in Lee County is shown in Figure 2.1. Loachapoka and the portions of Notasulga and Waverly are not shown in the pie chart, as their populations are too small to be represented accurately.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>1,1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Redistricting Data (PL-94-171)

<sup>2</sup> US Office of Management and Budget



**Growth**

The City of Auburn and Lee County have been among the fastest growing communities in Alabama for some time. The table below shows population change since 1970 for the cities of Auburn and Opelika, Lee County, and the State of Alabama.

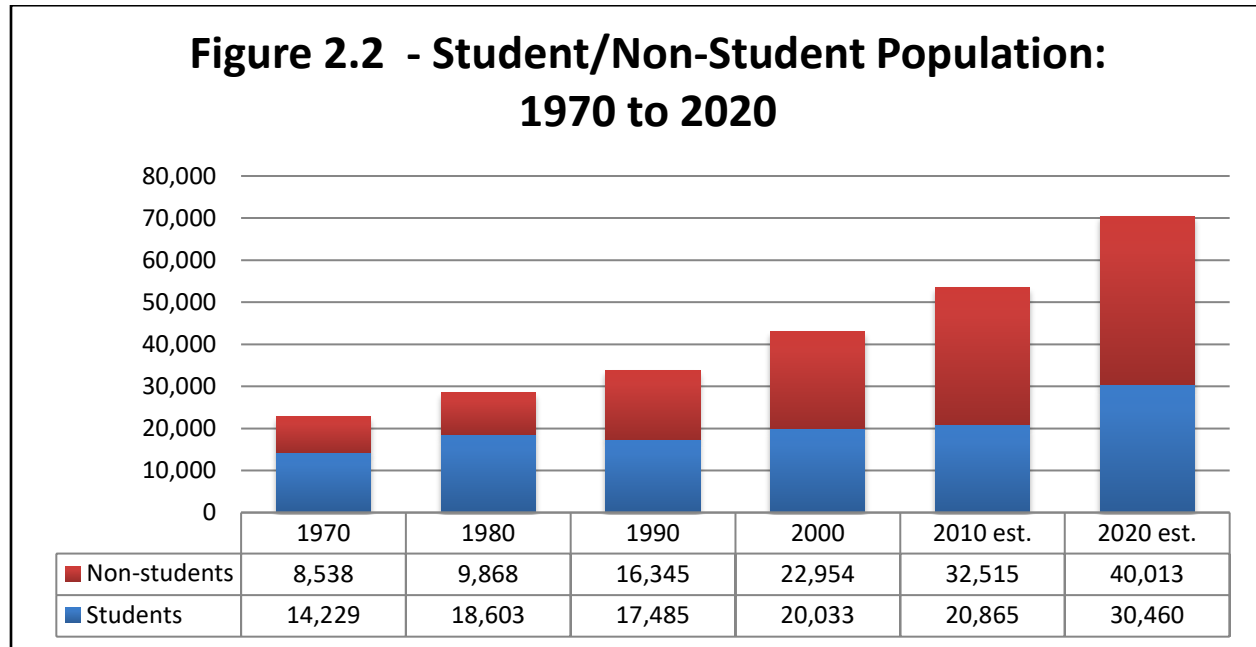
Table 2.1 - Population Change: 1970 to 2020							Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Jurisdiction	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	% Change 1970-2020
<b>Auburn</b>	22,767	28,471	33,830	42,987	53,380	76,143	234.4%
<b>Opelika</b>	19,027	21,869	22,122	23,498	26,477	30,995	62.9%
<b>Lee County</b>	61,268	76,283	87,146	115,092	140,247	174,241	184.4%
<b>Alabama</b>	3,444,354	3,894,025	4,040,587	4,447,100	4,779,736	5,024,279	45.9%

The City of Auburn has seen tremendous growth since 1970, more than tripling in population since that date. Some of that growth is attributable to growth in the student population at Auburn University (AU). Figure 2.2 shows the student population as a share of the City of Auburn’s total population from 1970 to the 2020 population estimate<sup>3</sup>.

In 1970, college students constituted approximately 63% of Auburn’s population. By 2010, that estimated percentage had decreased to 39.1% and is estimated to be 40.1% in 2021. While no formal policy has been adopted by the university, university officials have expressed a desire to maintain existing enrollment figures at approximately 30,000 students. If the university maintains these enrollment levels, the proportion of students to non-students will continue to decrease. Using AIGM (Auburn Interactive Growth Model) population projections, the City of Auburn is estimated to have a population of 92,438 by 2030 (based on the concept plan scenario in Chapter 3); even if every

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/AL,smithsstationcityalabama,opelikacityalabama,leecountyalabama,auburncityalabama/PST045222>

Auburn University student lived in the City limits (which has never been the case), the resulting student share of the population would remain less than 40%. This will have a number of implications for the City’s future growth, including increased household sizes, increased demand for family housing, and changes to the City’s demographics. The current proportion of non-student to student population is approaching a 2 to 1 margin.



Diversity of race has remained fairly constant from 1990 to 2020 in Auburn. The most noticeable trend is an increase in the percentage of people of Hispanic or Latino origin. This trend is consistent with an overall trend in which the Hispanic or Latino population is growing quickly across the South. According to the Census, the Hispanic and Latino population of Lee County grew from 552 in 1990 to 9,135 in 2020, an 1,555% increase, and represents approximately 5.2% of the overall Lee County population.

Auburn has also become more diverse, not only in terms of population, but also in terms of distribution. Based on the 2020 Census, 64.1% of Lee County’s population identified as white alone, 22.7% as Black or African-American alone, 4.9% Asian alone, and 8.6% identified as some other race or multiple races. Overall, more people are identifying as multi-racial which is consistent with the shifting demographics of the nation.

### Racial Composition for the City of Auburn

Table 2.3 - Racial Composition								
	1990	%	2000	%	2010	%	2020	%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>33,830</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>42,987</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>53,380</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76,143</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>White</b>	27,016	80.0%	33,553	78.1%	40,069	75.1%	48,918	67.7%
<b>Black or African-American</b>	5,531	16.4%	7,217	16.8%	8,834	16.5%	14,009	18.4%
<b>Asian</b>	1,138	3.4%	1,422	3.3%	2,825	5.3%	7,414	9.7%
<b>Other<sup>i</sup></b>	85	0.3%	795	1.8%	1,652	0.3%	3,071	4.0%
<b>Hispanic or Latino*</b>	314	0.9%	666	1.5%	1,551	2.9%	3,619	4.7%

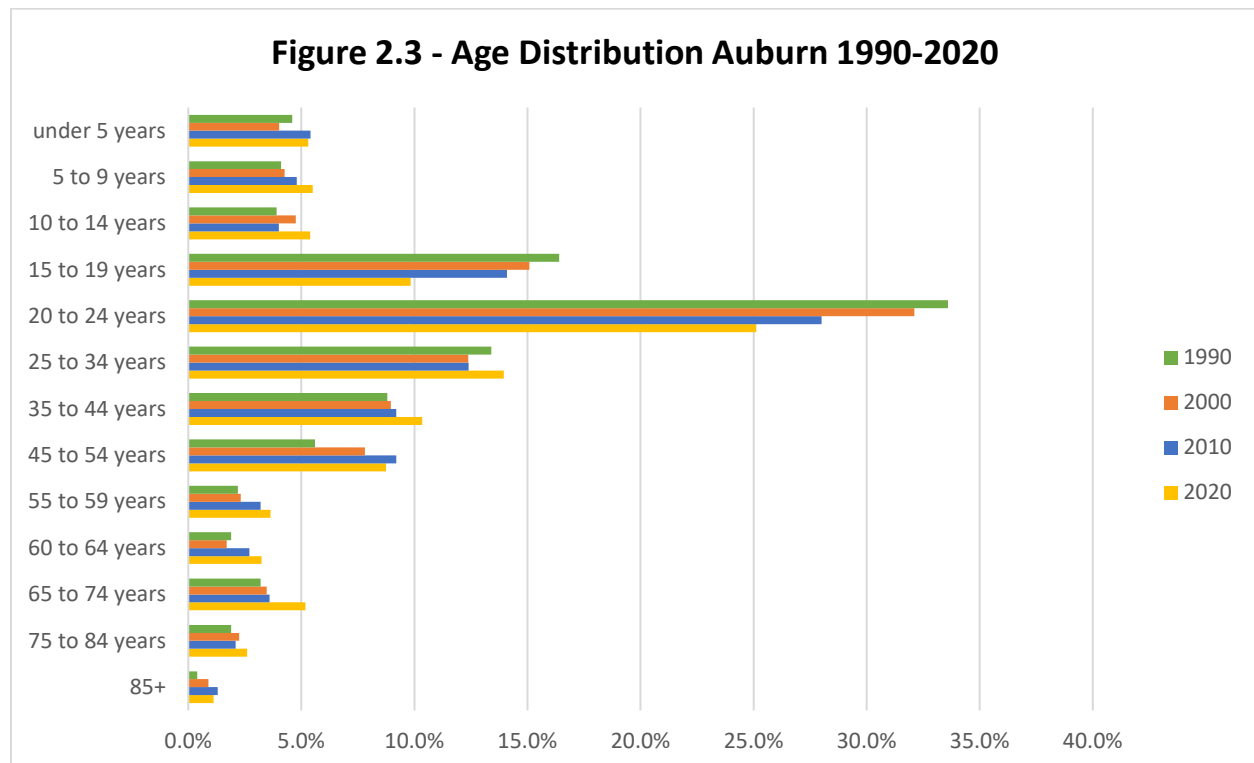
\*People who classify themselves as "Hispanic" or "Latino" may be of any race. For example, in the 2010 column the 1,551 people who identify themselves as Hispanic are all also included in one of the four other categories above.

<sup>i</sup>The 2020 quantity and percentage of "Other" is calculated for American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, Some Other Race alone, and all multi-race identities (two or more races). Previous quantities reported Some Other Race alone.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Redistricting Data (PL-94-171)

### Age Composition

As expected in a city with a large university student population, the median age in Auburn is quite low, at 23.3 years of age, in 2010 and 25.2 in 2020. The Lee County median age in 2020 was 32.4, and in the State of Alabama the median age was 39.2 years in 2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

As noted earlier, the share of the overall population that consists of students has been decreasing, from 51.6% in 1990 to approximately 40% in 2020, as Auburn’s non-student population grows. Figure 2.3 provides some insight into the shifting age demographics and potential student population. It shows noticeable decreases in the percentage of the population aged 20 to 24 years, and increases in all categories from 35 years to 85 years and over. Increases in overall population have resulted in corresponding increases to the school-age population, with corresponding increases in need for school infrastructure.

## Educational Attainment

	1990	%	2000	%	2010	%	2020	%
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	<b>12,766</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17,060</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22,294</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>33,156</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Less than 9th grade	700	5.5	453	2.7	513	2.3	467	1.4
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	819	6.4	1,049	6.1	936	4.2	1562	4.7
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,861	14.6	2,188	12.8	3,010	13.5	3,610	10.9
Some college, no degree	2,339	18.3	3,001	17.6	3,456	15.5	5,479	16.5
Associate's degree	657	5.1	823	4.8	1,092	4.9	2,447	7.4
Bachelor's degree	2,960	23.2	4,555	26.7	6,777	30.4	10,398	31.4
Graduate or professional degree	3,430	26.9	4,991	29.3	6,510	29.2	10,398	31.4
<b>% high school graduate or higher</b>	<b>11,247</b>	<b>88.1</b>	<b>15,558</b>	<b>91.2</b>	<b>20,845</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>31,127</b>	<b>93.9</b>
<b>% bachelor's degree or higher</b>	<b>6,390</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>9,546</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>13,287</b>	<b>59.6</b>	<b>19,591</b>	<b>59.1</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

With Auburn University as a major employer, the City of Auburn’s population over the age of 25 is highly educated. The proportion of Auburn’s population over 25, as shown in the above table, with a high school education or better is 93.9%, compared to an Alabama state average of 86.9% and a national average of 88.5%. This figure has improved since 2000 by 2.7%. The estimated proportion of Auburn’s population with a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2020 was 59.1%, compared to an Alabama state average of 36.41% and a national average of 32.9%. This level of educational attainment, 26.2% higher than the national average, is an advantage for business recruitment.

## Household Type

The U.S. Census defines a household as “all the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence.” A family household contains “a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption”; non-relatives living in a family household are not included for certain census tabulations. This difference between family and non-family households has historically been useful in cities such as Auburn to make statistical distinctions between the student and non-student populations; changes in household structure that are increasing the number of non-family households nationally may render this as a less useful tool in the long-term.

<b>Table 2.5 - Households by Type</b>								
	1990	%	2000	%	2010	%	2020	%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>13,444</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>18,421</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22,111</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24,386</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family households (families)</b>	5,530	41.1	7,238	39.3	9,900	44.8	12,658	51.9%
<b>With children</b>	2,732	20.3	3,429	18.6	5,137	23.2	5,943	24.4%
<b>Without children</b>	2,798	20.8	3,809	20.7	4,763	21.5	6,715	27.5%
<b>Nonfamily households</b>	7,914	58.9	11,183	60.7	12,211	55.2	11,728	48.1%
<b>Householder living alone</b>	4,374	32.5	6,778	36.8	7,476	33.8	7,974	32.7%
<b>65 years and over</b>	513	3.8	827	4.5	979	4.4	1,488	6.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The distribution of household types in Auburn has changed since 1990 with the number of family households increasing by 10.8%, passing the number of non-family households, see previous chart. Family households with children have increased by more than 20%. While there has been a decrease in the percentage of nonfamily households, the overall number of householders living alone has increased which may reflect the number of residents that have retired in Auburn. The decrease in the share of non-family households as a percent of the total is indicative of the decreasing share of the Auburn population that consists of students.

From 1990 to 2020, the number of households in the City of Auburn increased by 10,942 households or 81%, while overall population increased by 42,313 or 125.1%.

<b>Table 2.6 - Household Size</b>						Source: U.S. Census
	1990	2000	2010	2020	% change from 1990	
<b>Auburn</b>	2.23	2.12	2.24	2.47	+10.8%	
<b>Lee County</b>	2.50	2.42	2.44	2.59	+3.6%	
<b>State of Alabama</b>	2.62	2.49	2.48	2.53	-9.0%	
<b>United States</b>	2.59	2.59	2.63	2.60	+0.4%	

Household size has fluctuated in Auburn from 1990 to 2020, but the average size is currently higher than it was in 1990 while the average household size in Lee County and Alabama has increased slightly. Auburn households tend to be smaller than households at the county or state level. This difference is attributable in part to the large student population in Auburn, which is reflected in the differences in household size between family households and non-family households.

### Income & Poverty

Because of Auburn’s large student population, the City’s poverty rate is higher than expected, despite the City’s apparent prosperity. The disparity between family income (families include two or more related people) and household non-family income is significant. It is useful to point out here that the low non-family income may be attributable, in part, to students with non-reported income from sources including family allowances or support while in school. According to the US Census Bureau, the estimated 2020 median family income for Auburn was \$94,720, an increase of 30% from 2010, and the 2020 estimate for nonfamily household income was \$20,560, an increase of 5.9% over the same period.

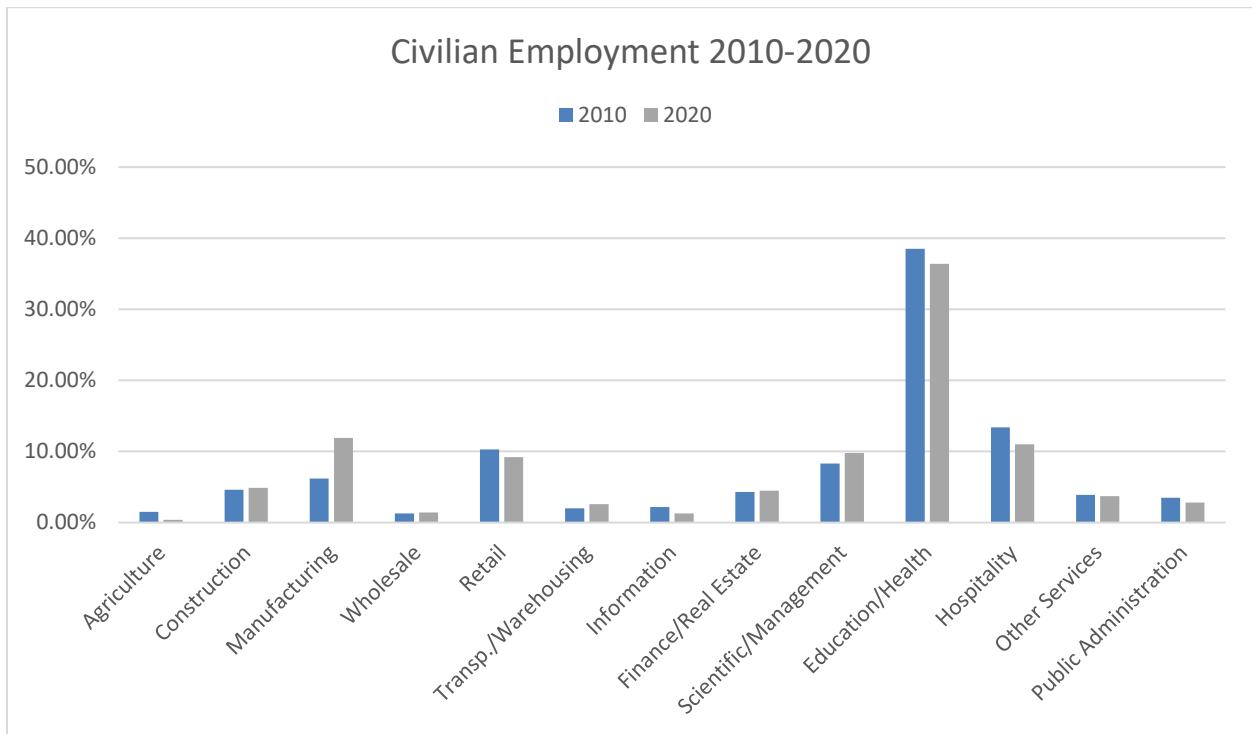
<b>Table 2.7 - Income &amp; Poverty</b>							Source: U.S. Census
	1989	1999	% change from 1989	2010	% change from 1999	2020	% change from 2020
<b>Median family household income</b>	\$35,876	\$55,619	55.0%	\$72,771	32.1%	\$94,720	30.2%
<b>Median nonfamily household income</b>	\$6,662	\$9,677	45.3%	\$19,411	103.4%	\$20,560	6.0%
<b>Poverty rate (all people)</b>	39.90%	38.10%	-1.8%	24.1%	-14%	26.3%	+2.2
<b>Jan 1989 to Jan 1999 CPI increase (South Urban): 34.48%</b>						US Department of Labor	
<b>Jan 1999 to Jan 2010 CPI increase (South Urban): 33.58%</b>						US Department of Labor	
<b>Jan 2011 to Jan 2014 CPI increase (South Urban): 8.13%</b>						US Department of Labor	
<b>Jan 2014 to Jan 2023 CPI increase (South Urban): 26.7%</b>						US Department of Labor	

Income indicators have improved significantly in Auburn since 1989. From 1989 to 2020, family household income in Auburn jumped 164%, or more than double, while non-family income increased by 208%. In real terms, median family household income has increased only 5.0% from 1989 once adjusted for inflation but median non-family household income has increased by 44.9%. The year over year increase in median family household income is +\$1,899 per year or 5.2% per year and the median non-family household income increased +\$448 per year or 6.7% per year.

The significant increase in both household income categories between 1989 and 2010 may have helped reduce the overall poverty by 14% during that period. The estimated 2020 poverty rate has remained close to the 2010 rate with a total rate of 26.3%. This higher rate of poverty despite high area incomes may be attributed to the higher number of college students in the community who may be receiving financial assistance from parents or other sources and, as a result, their reported household income is below the poverty level.

**Labor Force**

The Census defines the civilian labor force as those 16 years of age and older who are employed or are looking for employment. The 2020 American Community Survey estimate of the size of Auburn’s civilian labor force is 30,661 (52.4% of the total population). The relatively small number compared to Auburn’s overall population is a function of the large student population. The largest employment sector remains education and health care at 36.4% (38.5% in 2010), followed by manufacturing at 11.9% (6.2% in 2010) and Arts, Entertainment, and Food Services (hospitality) at 11.0% (13.4% in 2010). Retail trade accounted for 9.2% (down from 10.3%). Despite the large increases in new home builds and construction activity in Auburn, Construction employment remained nearly unchanged at 4.9% (4.6% in 2010).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Employment in Auburn is dominated by Auburn University with approximately 8,630 employees. The top 10 employers in Auburn are shown in Table 2.9:

<b>Table 2.9 – 2023 Top Ten Largest Employers</b>			
Source: City of Auburn Economic Development Department, Alabama Department of Labor			
<b>Employer ranking based on 2015 &amp; 2023 data</b>	<b>Product(s)</b>	<b># of Employees 2023</b>	<b>% Total Employment 2023</b>
Auburn University <sup>(1)</sup>	Public University	8,630	25.7%
Auburn City Schools	Public Education	1,120	3.3%
Briggs & Stratton, LLC	Small Engine	800	2.4%
City of Auburn and Auburn Water Works Board	Municipal Government	770	2.3%
Aptar CSP Technologies, Inc.	Specialty Plastic Packaging	560	1.7%
Wal-Mart	Retail & Grocery	450	1.3%
Publix	Grocery	350	0.9%
SCA, Inc.	Automotive Plastic Components	300	0.9%
SiO2 Medical Products, Inc.	Medical Vial, Cartridges & Containers	250	0.7%
Seohan Auto USA Corporation	Automotive Axles	250	0.7%
<b>Total</b>		<b>13,480</b>	<b>39.9%</b>
<sup>(1)</sup> Includes temporary and seasonal employees			Total Civilian Labor Force: 33,362

## 2.1 Housing

### Housing Units

In 2022, The City of Auburn was estimated to have approximately 36,351 housing units, up from approximately 26,761 in 2011, excluding units on the campus of Auburn University. A breakdown of housing units is shown in Table 2.10.

In addition to housing units within the City, Auburn University has approximately 1,350 units of student housing which can accommodate approximately 4,800 students.<sup>4</sup>

Using City of Auburn GIS data from 2022, the percentage of single-family detached units as a total of dwelling units has increased by 2% from 2011 to 2021, while the percentage of duplexes and twin homes have decreased and been replaced by the townhome product type.

Type	2011		2016		2022		Change from 2011
	Unit Count	% of Total	Unit Count	% of Total	Unit Count	% of Total	% Change
<b>Apartments &amp; Condominiums</b>	12,149	45.4%	13,019	43.0%	15,378	42.3%	+26.6%
<b>Private Dormitory<sup>2</sup></b>	N/A		565	1.9%	1,643	4.5%	N/A
<b>Single-Family Detached</b>	10,329	38.6%	12,077	39.9%	14,741	40.6%	+42.7%
<b>Duplex/Twin Home</b>	1,765	6.6 %	1,942	6.4%	1,964	5.4%	+11.3%
<b>Mobile Homes</b>	1,045	3.9%	1,045	3.4%	1,037	2.9%	-0.8%
<b>Townhouses</b>	784	2.9%	780	2.6%	1,234	3.4%	+57.4%
<b>Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential</b>	308	1.2%	215	0.7%	228	0.6%	-26.0%
<b>Triplex/Quadplex</b>	56	0.2%	260	0.9%	126	0.3%	+125%
<b>Total</b>	26,761	100%	30,297	100%	36,351	100%	+ 35.8% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Percent increase in total housing units between 2011 and 2022  
<sup>2</sup> Use was not codified in 2011. Private Dormitory includes mixed-use developments where purpose-built student housing is the primary use.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.auburn.edu/administration/housing/>

<b>Table 2.11 Housing Tenure</b>				Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Type	2000	2010	2020	
<b>Owner-occupied Housing</b>	40.8%	47.5%	48.2%	
<b>Renter-occupied Housing</b>	59.1%	52.5%	51.8%	

<b>Table 2.12 Vacancy, Mortgage &amp; Rental Rates</b>					
Type	2000	2010	Change 2000-2010	2020	Change 2010-2020
Owner Unit Vacancy	3.0%	4.6%	+1.6%	2.6%	-2.0%
Rental Unit Vacancy	8.8%	9.3%	+0.5%	8.3%	-1.0%
Median Mortgage Rate	\$1,105	\$1,440	+\$335 (+30%)	\$1,595	+\$155 (+11%)
Median Rental Rate	\$446	\$677	+\$231 (+52%)	\$877	+\$200 (+30%)

### Age of Housing

The age of existing housing stock provided a rough estimate of the quality of existing housing stock. Older homes that are well-maintained are an asset to the City of Auburn. Older homes do, however, often contain health hazards as well as maintenance issues that are found less frequently in newer homes.

<b>Table 2.13 - Age of Occupied Housing Stock, 2010, 2014, 2021 est.</b>						
Source: U.S. Census Bureau						
	2010		2014		2021	
	Number of Units	% of Units	Number of Units	% of Units	Number of Units	% of Units
<b>Built 2010 or later</b>	n/a	n/a	852	3.4%	5,527	20.0%
<b>Built 2000 to 2009</b>	6,369	27.0%	7,427	30.0%	6,596	23.9%
<b>Built 1990 to 1999</b>	6,115	25.9%	5,894	23.8%	8,906	32.3%
<b>Built 1980 to 1989</b>	3,468	14.7%	3,583	14.5%		
<b>Built 1970 to 1979</b>	3,824	16.2%	3,365	13.6%	4,828	17.5%
<b>Built 1960 to 1969</b>	2,006	8.5%	1,684	6.8%		
<b>Built 1950 to 1959</b>	901	3.8%	1,194	4.8%	1,490	5.4%
<b>Built 1940 to 1949</b>	419	1.7%	342	1.4%		
<b>Built 1939 or earlier</b>	444	1.9%	379	1.5%	309	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,576</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24,270</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>27,656</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Home Ownership

As with other indicators, the rate of home ownership in Auburn is lower than national rates due to the City's high student population. The trend is, however, changing as the character of Auburn's population changes over time. In 2009, housing units in Auburn were 44.4% owner-occupied and 55.6% renter-occupied. By 2014, the estimated owner-occupied units had slipped slightly back down to 43.8% and renter occupied increasing to 56.2%. In 2020, housing units in Auburn were 48.2% owner-occupied and 51.8% renter occupied.

**Vacancy and Rental Rates**

With the volume of new construction in Auburn since 2000, vacancy rates are an important indicator regarding the adequacy of the housing market to meet the needs of Auburn’s growing population. Nationally, apartment vacancy rose in the period from 2000 to 2010, reaching an all-time high at the beginning of 2010, which may have been a result of the decreased economic activity after the 2008 recession. Vacancy rates have since reduced to their prior level.

Rental rates increased by 30% in the period from 2010 to 2020 (Table 2.12). The Rent of Primary Residence component of the Consumer Price Index for Southern cities in Auburn’s population range increased by 51.9% during the period from 2000 to 2010, suggesting that the rental market is performing well, as higher demand for units results in higher rents. In addition, a number of luxury apartment communities have entered the market since 2000.

**2.2 Citizen Survey**

The Auburn Citizen Survey is administered every year by ETC Institute, a firm that specializes in market research for local governments. While relevant results from the survey will be discussed in each section, a summary of the 2022 results follows.

Highlights from the 2022 Citizen Survey:<sup>5</sup>

- Satisfaction with the value received for City tax dollars/fees is 42% above the national average (31% higher than the national average in 2016).
- Satisfaction with the overall quality of City services is 36% above the national average.
- Overall satisfaction ratings significantly increased with 19 of the 68 areas that were assessed in prior years. Some of the most significant improvements from previous years include:
  - Availability of parking
  - Quality of drinking water
  - Maintenance of City facilities
  - Transparency of government
  - Feeling of safety
- Overall priorities for the next two years
  - Flow of traffic congestion and management
  - Maintenance of City streets and facilities
  - Enforcement of city codes and ordinances
- When asked for “perceptions of the city” in five (5) qualities and the overall perceptions of Auburn, the city ranks significantly above other communities in the US who were also surveyed by ETC Institute.

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2022 US Mean</b>
Overall quality of life in the City	86%	91%	87%	77%
Overall image of the City	81%	87%	79%	55%
Overall quality of City services	77%	86%	87%	51%
Overall appearance of the City	71%	76%	74%	56%
Value received for city tax dollars and fees	68%	75%	76%	34%

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<sup>5</sup> 2022 Citizen Survey Findings Report conducted by ETC Institute