

With the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge's western entrance in nearby Clinch County and Wild Adventures in Clyattsville, tourism is a major attraction and economic stronghold in Lowndes County. For navigation purposes and sense of safety, visitors depend on reliable cellular service. The eastern portion of the County towards Echols County experiences the largest gap in cellular service coverage⁴.

Some of the City of Valdosta buildings are connected by fiber, including the fire stations and police department. Approximately half of the Lowndes County buildings and facilities that could benefit from a broadband fiber connection are currently connected.

Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta recognize there are many barriers for private broadband services providers to effectively roll-out necessary broadband infrastructure in rural areas of the State. City and County leaders recognize the importance of broadband quality for industry retention and recruitment within this small, rural community. Community leaders continuously seek improvement in the quality of life for the rural residents of the Cities and County. Industry relocation and business creation are dependent on the necessary infrastructure being in place. The lack of high quality broadband infrastructure is a major impediment to not only recruitment but also for the expansion of established local industry. The Broadband Ready Community and Site designation has been established to incentivize private investment in the provision of rural broadband services. Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta plan to apply for these designations and signal to the State and to private Internet Service Providers their prioritization of rural broadband improvement and expansion in the community.

Broadband Action Plan

Lowndes County is located within rural South Georgia. It is not expected that broadband infrastructure would be provided at levels seen in major metropolitan areas, except within the City of Valdosta limits. However, the County does rely on broadband infrastructure to compete in the present global economy. The provision of education, access to vital information, and health services demands a certain level of broadband infrastructure which is lacking in portions of Lowndes County. Two key goals of this Comprehensive Plan seek to ensure needed community facilities, including broadband, be provided at adequate capacities to support educational opportunities and career advancement (see Community Goals 6 and 10). This plan identifies the following Needs and Opportunities related to the provision of broadband infrastructure (also see Section 2):

Needs

- Address Broadband Infrastructure needs
- Expand Broadband infrastructure

Opportunities

- Improvements to broadband infrastructure could encourage businesses to locate in the county – this could also encourage new workers to relocate here and to keep existing young people from moving to larger cities
- In locations where the addition of fiber broadband infrastructure may be practical at some point in the future, conduit could be installed during local construction projects. This can occur during the upgrading or repair of water or sewer pipes and/or the repair or construction of road/sidewalk projects.

⁴Cell Phone Coverage Map for Valdosta. Whistleout.com. Accessed 8 June 2021.