

## 2.1 Population

### Introduction

As recently as 40 years ago Suwanee was a small rural community in northeast corner of the Gwinnett County with a population of only 615 people. Gwinnett was just cranking up the growth engine that has been running strongly ever since. Through the 1970's and even the 1980's people slowly started trickling into Suwanee as the population climbed to 2,412. Since 1990, Suwanee has averaged adding more than 750 people per year - an annual increase of more than the City's entire population in 1970. The growth rate has continued up to the present where the City is estimated to have a population of 16,253 at the end of 2007.



The City estimates the population of the City by using the 2000 Census population as a base and then using a formula that combines building permits, vacancy rates and average household size data.

The characteristics of Suwanee's population have changed as the community has increased in Suwanee. The population has shifted from primarily school-aged to predominantly young adults and middle aged. The community is gradually becoming more diverse – particularly with recent increases in the city's Asian population. Where Suwanee's educational attainment and income were comparable to Gwinnett and Georgia just a few years ago, the population now is much more educated and affluent. With a highly educated and affluent population, Suwanee is well positioned to draw more high paying jobs into the area.

### POPULATION ESTIMATE:

Year	Population
2000	8,809
2001	10,107
2002	10,318
2003	10,646
2004	11,109
2005	13,339
2006	15,720
2007	16,253

Table 2.1-a

Source: City of Suwanee Planning Department and 2000 Census

## Age

In 1970 just under half of Suwanee's population was under the age of 24, with the largest segment of the population being between the ages of 5 and 14. As the city moved into the 1980's, 1990's, and into the 2000's, the age of Suwanee's population moved steadily upward. This is despite the fact that the percentage of the population 55 and older has moved steadily downward. These trends convey that Suwanee is a community that 1) was rapidly being populated by families with school age children and 2) these families have laid roots in the community. According to the 2000 Census, the largest segment of Suwanee's population was between 25 and 55 years old. In the last 7, years the City trended more toward smaller lot subdivisions and townhouses. These housing types tend to be more popular with empty nesters (parents whose children have left the house) and young married professionals without children. When the 2010 census is released it will be important to analyze Suwanee's aging trend. The City will need to ensure that housing options are provided to meet the needs of the aging population.

### POPULATION BY AGE:

	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>0 to 4</b>	48	7.7%	61	5.9%	218	9.0%	746	8.6%
<b>5 to 14</b>	126	20.1%	187	18.2%	399	16.5%	1,476	16.9%
<b>15 to 24</b>	108	17.3%	170	16.6%	242	10.0%	885	10.1%
<b>25 to 34</b>	84	13.4%	186	18.1%	473	19.6%	1,402	16.1%
<b>35 to 44</b>	65	10.4%	142	13.8%	597	24.8%	2,029	23.3%
<b>45 to 54</b>	82	13.1%	91	8.9%	220	9.1%	1,325	15.2%
<b>55 to 64</b>	64	10.2%	114	11.1%	133	5.5%	485	5.6%
<b>64 &amp; older</b>	49	7.8%	75	7.3%	130	5.4%	377	4.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,026</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,412</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,725</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 2.1-b

Source: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census

## Race

Historically, Suwanee has been a predominantly Caucasian community. According to the 2000, Suwanee continues this trend, but the Census numbers also indicate that minority groups experienced rapid growth, primarily in the Asian population. In 2000, the City was 84.5 percent

white, 6.4 percent black and 6.9 percent Asian or Pacific Islander. This shift in Suwanee's demographics is consistent with the overall of shift in Gwinnett County becoming a more international community.

## Educational Attainment

In 1990 the population of Suwanee was slightly more educated than the rest of the state but interestingly, less educated than the rest of Gwinnett County. In the following 10 years a dramatic shift occurred. From 1990 to 2000, Suwanee witnessed an 84 percent decline in the adult population with less than a 9th grade education, and increase of 19.1 percent increase in the adult population with a high school degree or higher, and a 67.7 increase with a Bachelor's degree or higher. Suwanee has rapidly shifted to a much more educated community.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

	Less than 9th Grade			High School degree or higher			Bachelor's Degree or higher		
	1990	2000	% change	1990	2000	% change	1990	2000	% change
<b>Suwanee</b>	10	1.6	- 84.0%	78	92.9	19.1%	27.2	45.6	67.7%
<b>Gwinnett</b>	4.5	4.6	2.2%	86.7	87.3	0.7%	29.6	34.1	15.2%
<b>Georgia</b>	12	7.6	- 36.7%	70.9	78.6	10.9%	19.3	24.3	25.9%

Table 2.1-c

Source: 1990, and 2000 Census

## Income

In recent years the City has become considerably more affluent. In 1990 the per capita income and average household income for Suwanee was comparable to Gwinnett County and higher than the state. However, in the following decade both of these numbers increased by over 30 percent for the City, while Gwinnett and rest of the state experienced much smaller increases. A comparison with the rest of the cities in Gwinnett indicate that only Berkley Lake has experienced a similar such increase in affluence.

**PER CAPITA AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME:**

	Per Capita			Household Income		
	1990	2000	% change	1989	1999	% change
<b>Suwanee</b>	\$ 17,301	\$ 22,566	30.4%	\$ 48,750	\$ 63,825	30.9%
<b>Gwinnett</b>	\$ 17,881	\$ 18,991	6.2%	\$ 43,518	\$ 45,976	5.7%
<b>Georgia</b>	\$ 13,361	\$ 16,066	17.8%	\$ 29,021	\$ 32,227	9.4%

Table 2.1-d

Source: 1990, and 2000 Census

Note: Per capita income adjusted to 1990 dollars and household income adjusted to 1990 dollars

**Population Projections**

The Atlanta Regional Commission regularly issues population forecasts for counties within its ten-county planning area. In a recent update, ARC predicts Gwinnett County will add over 400,000 people by 2030 to lead the region in population growth. The Gwinnett County-Cities Joint Community Assessment mirrors this analysis with an estimated 2030 population of 1,019,166 – an increase of 430,718 persons over the 2000 census. Suwanee is part of this robust growth scenario for the county, although population forecasts from ARC and from the city itself vary considerably. Suwanee is almost entirely contained in census tract 502.02, with about one-half of the tract occupied by the city and one-half occupied by unincorporated county areas that are largely comprised of either low-density residential subdivisions or vacant land. Current ARC 2030 projections for census tract 502.02 estimate future population at 42,965 with growth slowing significantly between 2020 and 2030, while previous projections estimated the 2020 tract population at 36,801 and the city population at 29,551. If the city's share of the tract population is considered to be roughly 80%, it follows that the 2030 estimate for the city would be around 34,000. However, the city itself projects a 2030 population of roughly 30,000, or 12% lower than the ARC figure.

The difference in population projections is largely due to land use policy and limited development potential. An estimated 11,495 total housing units could be present in the city in 2030 under the methodology described in Section 2.2.4 - Future Land Use and Development. With estimates of future household sizes ranging from approximately 2.6 to 2.8<sup>1</sup>, the city's 2030 population is likely to be between between 30,000 and 32,500 persons, as summarized in Table 2.1-e

<sup>1</sup> A simple regression analysis utilizing known numbers of housing units as x values and known household sizes as y values yields a 2030 average household size of 2.6 when future housing units are estimated at 11,495. ARC forecasts for 2030 Suwanee total population and households yields an average household size of 2.83.

**POPULATION PROJECTIONS:**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2007	2010	2020	2030 Low	2030 High
<b>Population</b>	615	1,026	2,412	8,725	13,339	16,253	<b>17,000</b>	<b>20,529</b>	<b>29,887</b>	<b>32,530</b>
<b>Number of Housing Units</b>	186	320	769	2,947	5,074	5,992	<b>6,569</b>	<b>7,862</b>	<b>11,495</b>	<b>11,495</b>
<b>Average Household Size</b>	3.43	3.21	3.02	2.89	2.89	2.89	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>2.83</b>

Table 2.1-e

Note: Projections in 'bold' text; 2007 housing units based on building permit data

It is highly likely that the average household size in 2030 will align with the lower number because of national trends, aging households, and the type of housing units likely to be built in the next twenty years based on assumed city land use policy will be more tailored to young couples and empty-nesters. In terms of policy, the city should be sure to remain aware of the interdependency between housing type and total population, as well as regional growth trends. If Suwanee makes the decision that a greater share of regional population is advantageous, it can take steps to achieve this by setting land use policies to effect the change.

The demographic trends discussed above point to an eventual need to consider planning for a growing elderly population in the future, which will likely create priorities regarding housing choices, recreation opportunities, and social services requirements. In addition, the increasingly diverse population that is changing the demographic landscape of Gwinnett County is changing Suwanee as well and must be recognized, planned for, and given a voice in the planning process.