

City of Cordova  
**Economic  
Development  
Strategic  
Plan**  
2022



City of Cordova

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

February 2023

Prepared by

Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham  
Walker Area Community Foundation



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Section I: Needs Assessment**.....5

**Chapter 1: Existing Conditions**.....6

*Population Characteristics*

*Educational Characteristics*.....11

*Income Characteristics*.....12

*Labor and Employment Characteristics*.....14

*Housing Characteristics*.....20

**Chapter 2: Market Assessment**.....22

*Consumer Behavior*

*Retail Gap Analysis*.....28

*Segmentation Profile*.....30

**Chapter 3: SWOT Assessment**.....33

*SWOT Responses Overview*

*Priority Goals*.....41

**Section II: Development Initiatives**.....43

**Chapter 1: Outdoor Recreation**.....44

**Chapter 2: Broadband Connectivity**.....50

**Section III: Cordova Action Plan**.....59

**Part 1: Cordova City Action Plan**.....61

**Part 2: Outdoor Recreational Economy Plan**.....64

# INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) program was designed by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to assist its member governments in developing long-term strategies that capitalize on the city's economic strengths and address its challenges. The EDSP presents data useful for determining advantages and weaknesses through data analysis and stakeholder input, as well as potential opportunities and obstacles for economic development within the selected market area. The EDSP is divided into three sections:

- **Section I: Background Summary**—This section identifies the historic trends and current characteristics of Cordova's workforce and market and is composed of two primary chapters: the Existing Conditions and the Market Analysis.

**Existing Conditions**— Provides the background and baseline data trends necessary to help understand the city's current conditions

**Market Analysis**— Evaluates community's consumer spending habits to establish supply and demand patterns and market trends

**SWOT Assessment**— Outlines the responses given through community engagement and input, identifying residents' perspectives of Cordova's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

- **Section II: Development Initiatives**— Assesses the Outdoor Recreation potential and Broadband connectivity of the city as primary development initiatives for the city.
- **Section III: Action Plan**— The Action Plan for the EDSP was developed in accordance with the responses of the SWOT survey published in September 2022 and guidance of local officials. The Action Plan offers economic goals and objectives for future implementation, and its contents were created to correspond with the goals described in the RPCGB's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), as well as the targets of Walker County and the City of Cordova as a collective.

The purpose of this document is to outline the existing economic conditions of the city, as well as use data trends and SWOT responses to develop an Action Plan to meet their development goals. For more information about this plan or its contents, please contact Jesslan Wilson, Director of Economic Development, at [jwilson@rpcgb.org](mailto:jwilson@rpcgb.org).



# SECTION I: **Needs Assessment**



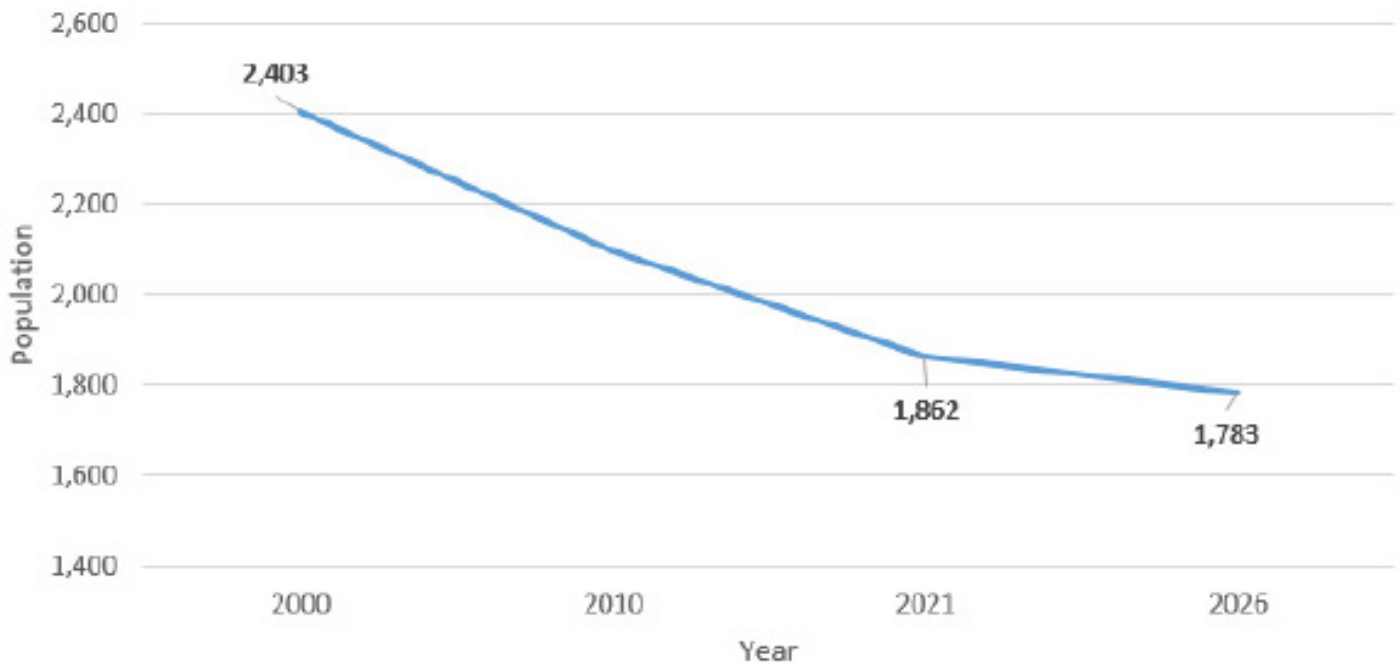
# CHAPTER 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

### *Population and Household Trends*

As of 2021, the City of Cordova has a total population of 1,862. The number of residents has steadily decreased by an average of over 25 people per year since 2000, and it is expected to fall to 1,783 in 2026. Overall, between 2000 and 2021, Cordova’s population decreased by 22.5 percent. This population decline has impaired the city’s ability to collect sufficient tax revenue and make the public expenditures necessary to retain and attract residents.

Figure 1: Population Change, 2000 to 2026

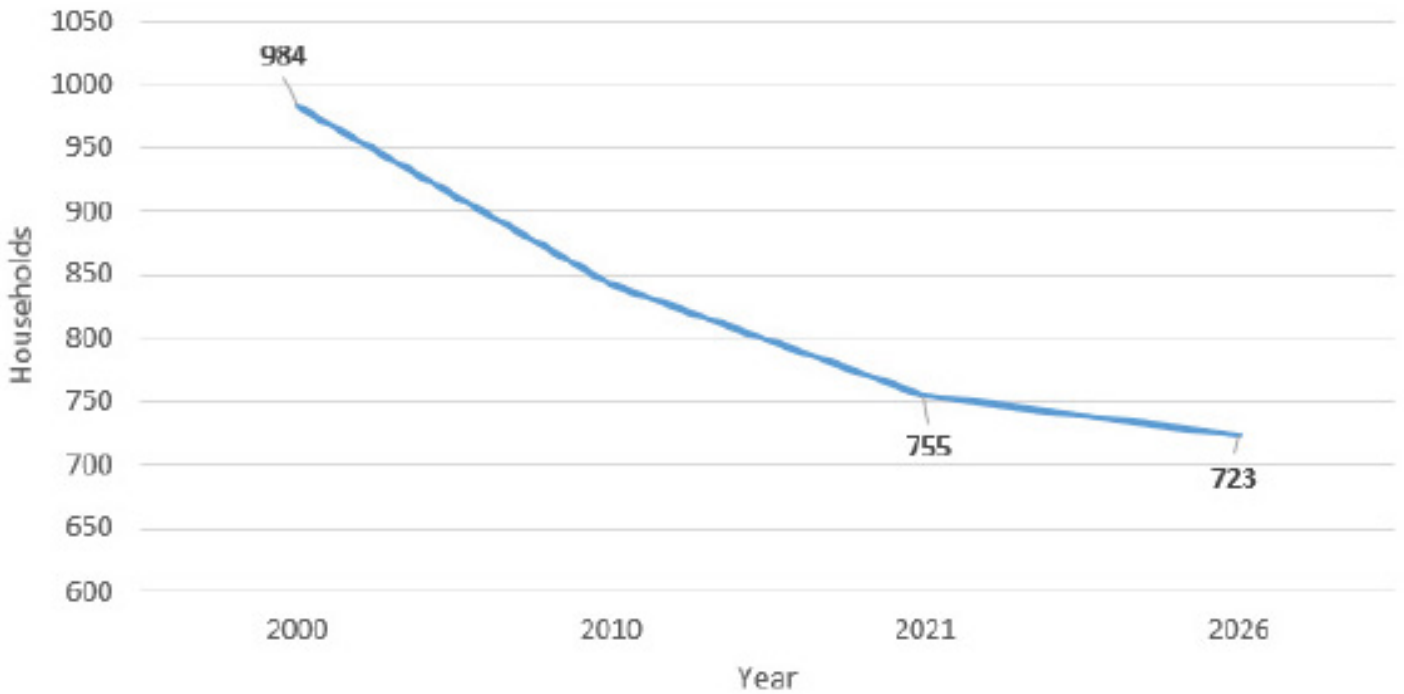


Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

The population decline since 2000 is further reflected by a decrease in the number of households within the city. In 2021, there were 755 households in Cordova, a 10.3 percent decline from 2010 and a 23.3 percent decline from 2000. The number of households are expected to further decline to 723 by 2026.

Despite low population rates, the city’s daytime population was 2,015, meaning that an additional 153 people were present in Cordova during regular business hours. Because a daily influx of nonresidents can boost the consumer base for local businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, and gas stations, this net positive daytime population provides an opportunity for increased sales tax revenues beyond what the city’s residents can provide.

Figure 2: Number of Households, 2000 to 2026



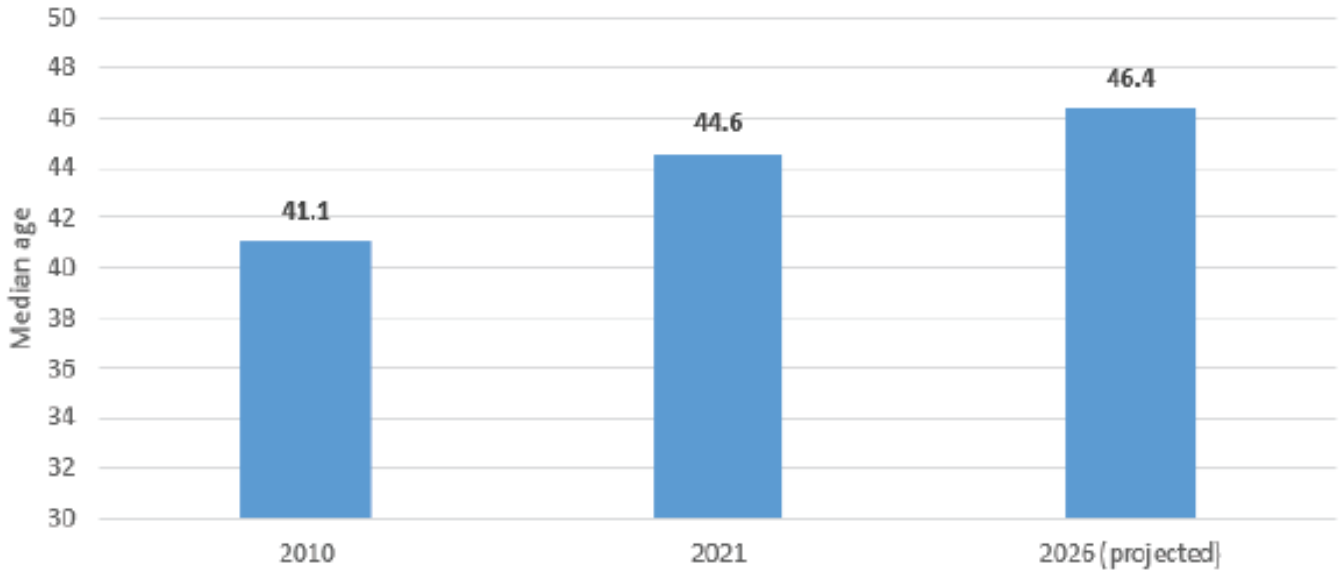
Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

### Age and Sex Distribution

The median age within the City of Cordova was 44.6 in 2021, higher than Alabama’s median age of 39.8. This gap signifies that Cordova’s population is older and aging at a faster pace than the average Alabama rate. Cordova has also been aging more rapidly than the U.S. population – since 2010, the city’s median age has increased by 3.5 years, while the median age of the nationwide population increased by only 1.5 years from 2010 to 2020. The city’s median age is expected to grow to 46.4 by 2026 (See Figure 3).

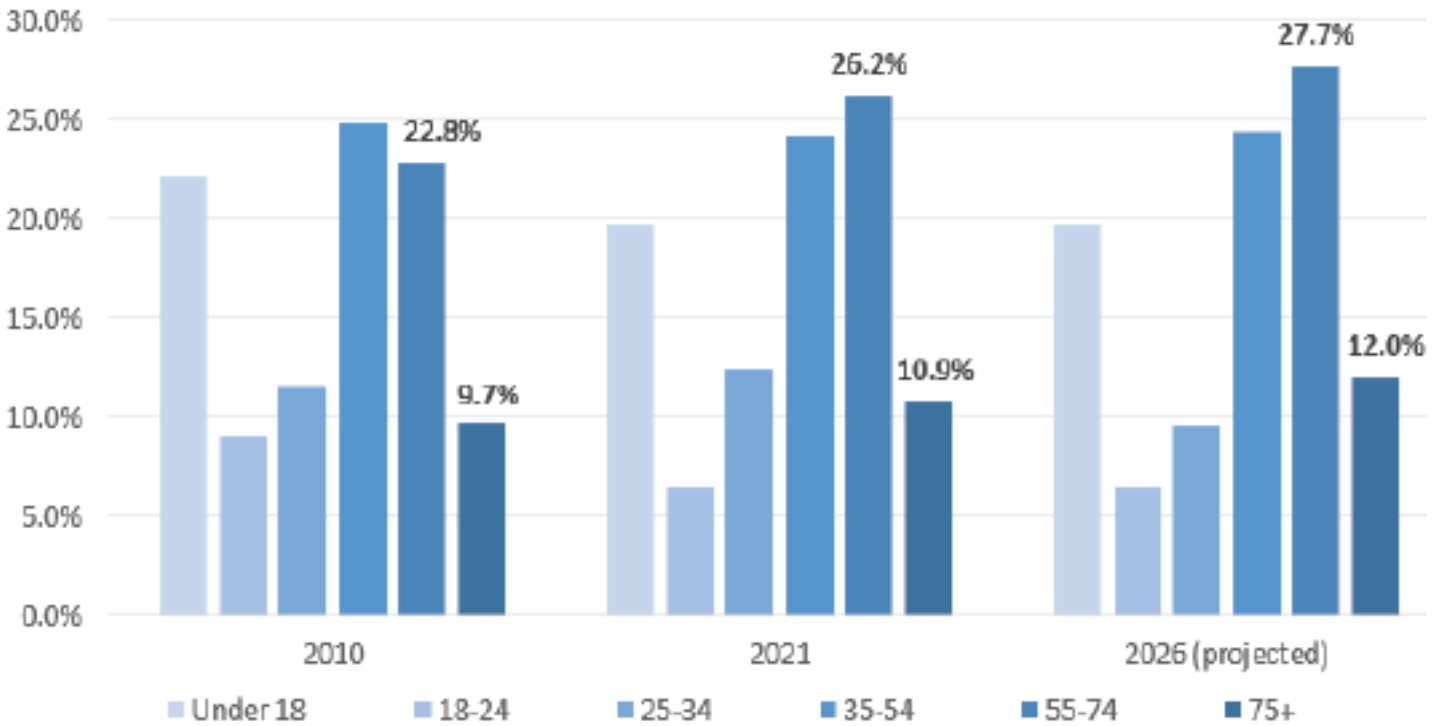
The largest source of Cordova’s population decline is within young and working-age individuals, or those 35 years and younger. The total number of people in each of the age cohorts under 55 has declined steadily, while the total number of people over 55 has slightly increased, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 3: Cordova Median Age. 2012 to 2026



Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

Figure 4: Age Distribution by Percentage, 2010 to 2026



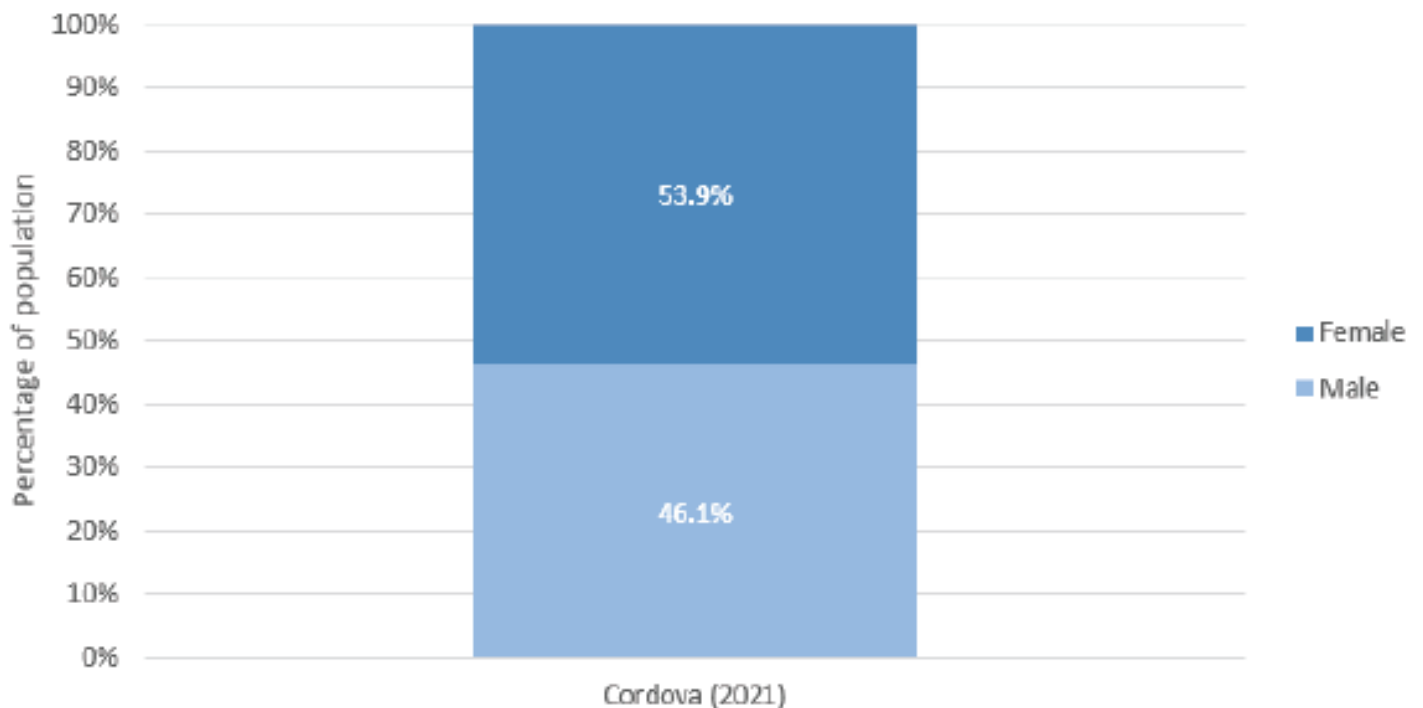
Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021



This trend poses a potential challenge for the city’s current and future workforce, as well as business recruitment efforts. As more of the population reaches retirement age, the declining levels of young professionals and middle management tier workers indicate a potential future gap in the workforce, leaving fewer working-age people in the economy. This could lead to a shortage of qualified workers, making it more difficult to recruit new industries and more challenging existing businesses to fill available jobs.

In terms of sex distribution, Cordova has slightly more females than the US population. 53.1 percent of Cordova’s population is female, compared to slightly under 51 percent of the nationwide population.

Figure 5: Distribution of Population by Sex



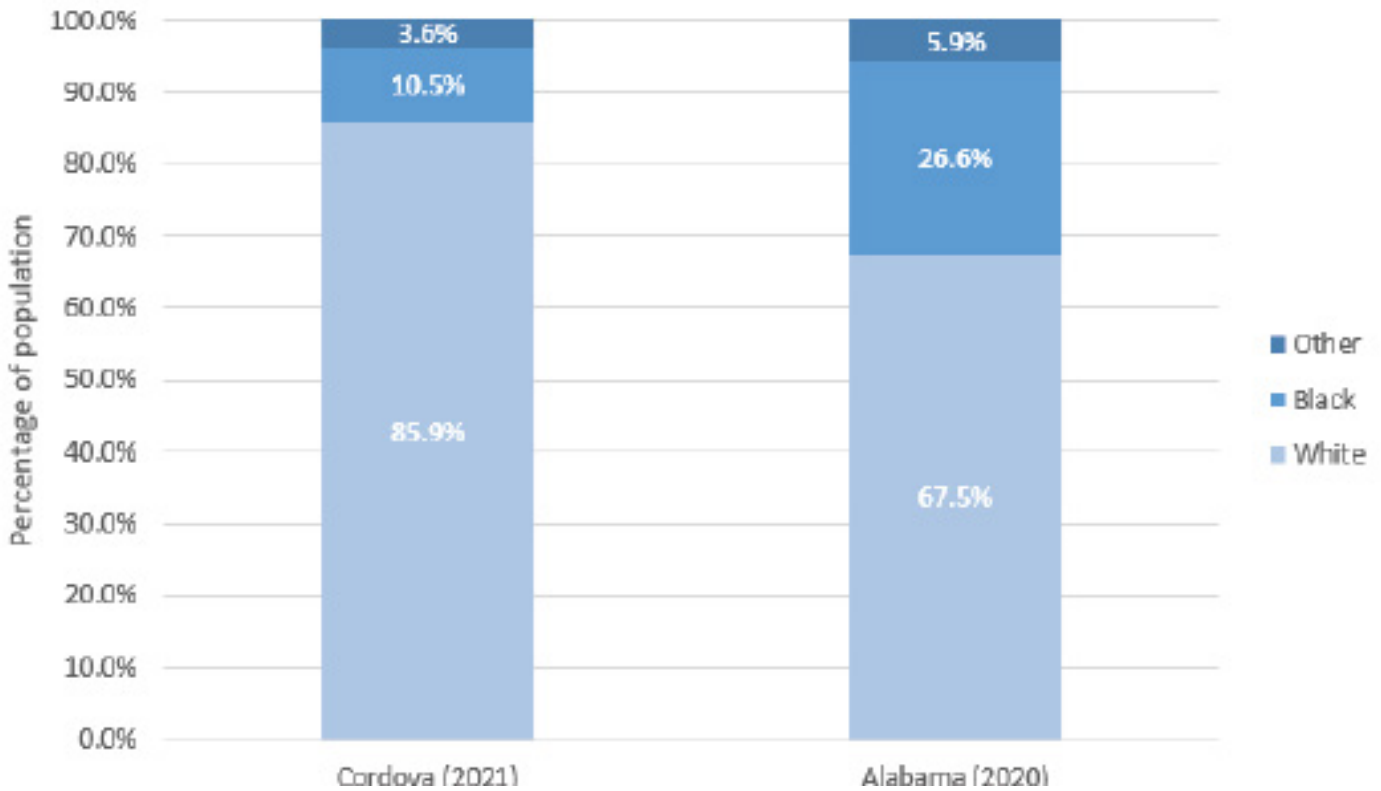
Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

### Racial Distribution

Cordova’s population is more demographically homogenous than the statewide population. In 2021, nearly 86 percent of Cordova’s population was white while only 10.5 percent was black, compared to 2020 statewide percentages of 67.5 percent and 26.6 percent, respectively. No other single race accounted for more than 1.3 percent of Cordova’s population in 2021.

The city’s disproportionately white population is reflected in its 2021 Diversity Index percentage, a metric used by the U.S. Census Bureau which measures the chance that two people chosen at random will be from different racial and ethnic groups. In 2021, Cordova’s Diversity Index was 27 percent, nearly half of Alabama’s 2020 Diversity Index of 53.1 percent.

**Figure 6:** Distribution of Population by Race in Cordova (2021) and Alabama (2020)



Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

**Table 1:** Cordova Diversity Index Score (2021) and Alabama (2020)

Region	Diversity Index Score
Cordova (2021)	27.0
Alabama (2020)	53.1

Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

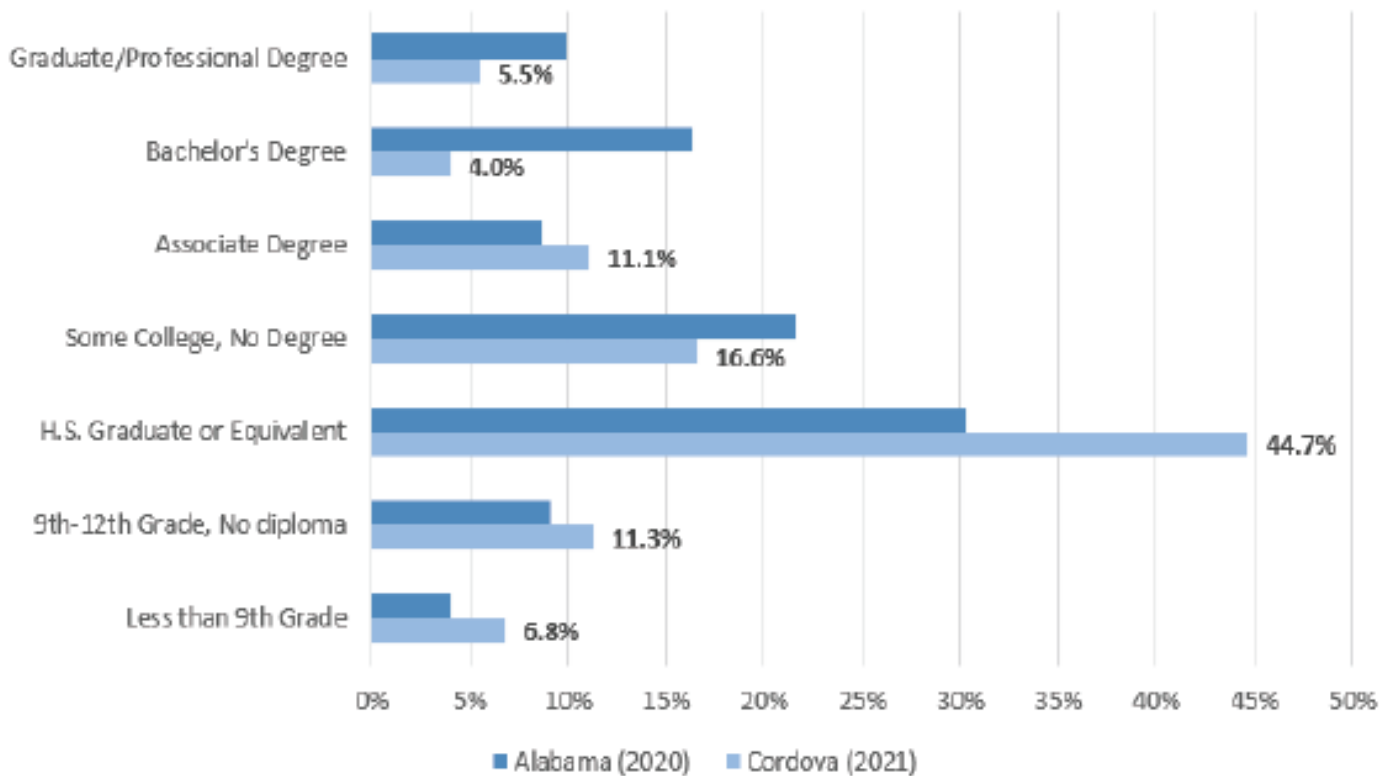
# EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

## Educational Attainment

Nearly 36 percent of Cordova’s working age population, or those ages 25 and older, have a high school diploma as their highest level of education. This is the city’s largest education level, followed by those with an associate degree, at nearly 9 percent. However, 18 percent do not have a high school degree or equivalent, which is higher than the Alabama rate of 13 percent. This higher percentage can potentially be attributed to the relatively older ages of Cordova’s population rather than current dropout rates.

In addition, 16.6 percent have some college experience but without a college degree. Cordova has a relatively small proportion of individuals over 25 with a bachelor’s degree as their highest credential, at 4.0 percent compared to 16.3 percent of the statewide population. Even graduate and professional degree holders, at 5.5 percent, eclipse bachelor’s degree holders in Cordova. Figure 7 compares the educational attainment of Cordova and the state.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment in Cordova (2021) and Alabama (2020)



Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

### Public School Enrollment

Cordova’s public schools include Cordova Elementary School (pre-K through 4th grade), Bankhead Middle School, and Cordova High School. The school district covers the entirety of Walker County, excluding the City of Jasper, creating a large pool of potential students. In 2021, 1,162 students were enrolled in these schools: 347 in elementary school, 322 in middle school, and 493 in high school.

Table 2: Public School Enrollment, 2016 and 2021

School	Enrollment Year	
	2016	2021
Cordova Elementary	393	347
Bankhead Middle School	320	322
Cordova High School	521	493
Total	1,234	1,162

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2021) and AL State Dept. of Education (2016)

## INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

### Household Income

Cordova’s median household income and per capita income remain low compared to county and statewide levels. These terms are defined below:

- **Median Household Income:** This metric is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families, including those with no income, to describe the “middle” of the income range of household earnings within Cordova. The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median.<sup>1</sup>
- **Per Capita Income:** This measure represents the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child within the city and is derived by dividing the aggregate income earned from the city’s income-earning population by the city’s total population.<sup>2</sup> Per capita income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population.<sup>3</sup>

1 U.S. Census, QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC110220>

2 U.S. Census, QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC910220>

3 Kenton, Will. “What Is Income Per Capita? Uses, Limitations, and Examples”.

The city’s median household income in 2021 was \$34,449, compared to \$45,833 in Walker County and \$52,035 in the State of Alabama in 2020, and is expected to increase to just \$37,914 by 2026. Though significantly lower than the county and state medians, the median household income in Cordova is not at the poverty level, according to 2022 U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines. These guidelines provide income thresholds which scale up depending on the size of the household – as the number of people in a given household increases, the minimum amount of income necessary for that household to remain out of poverty also increases.

The average household size in Cordova in 2021 was 2.34 persons, which requires between \$18,310 and \$23,030 of household income to stay above poverty levels, according to these guidelines. The city’s median household income of \$34,449 is above this threshold and would meet the income requirements necessary for a household as large as five persons (\$32,470).

Cordova’s 2021 per capita income was \$18,238 and is projected to be \$20,353 by 2026. Neither figure surpasses the 2020 Walker County per capita income of \$25,330 or the 2020 statewide per capita income of \$28,934. Table 4 lists Cordova’s median household and per capita income rates, compared to Walker County and Alabama levels.

Table 3: Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for City, County, and State

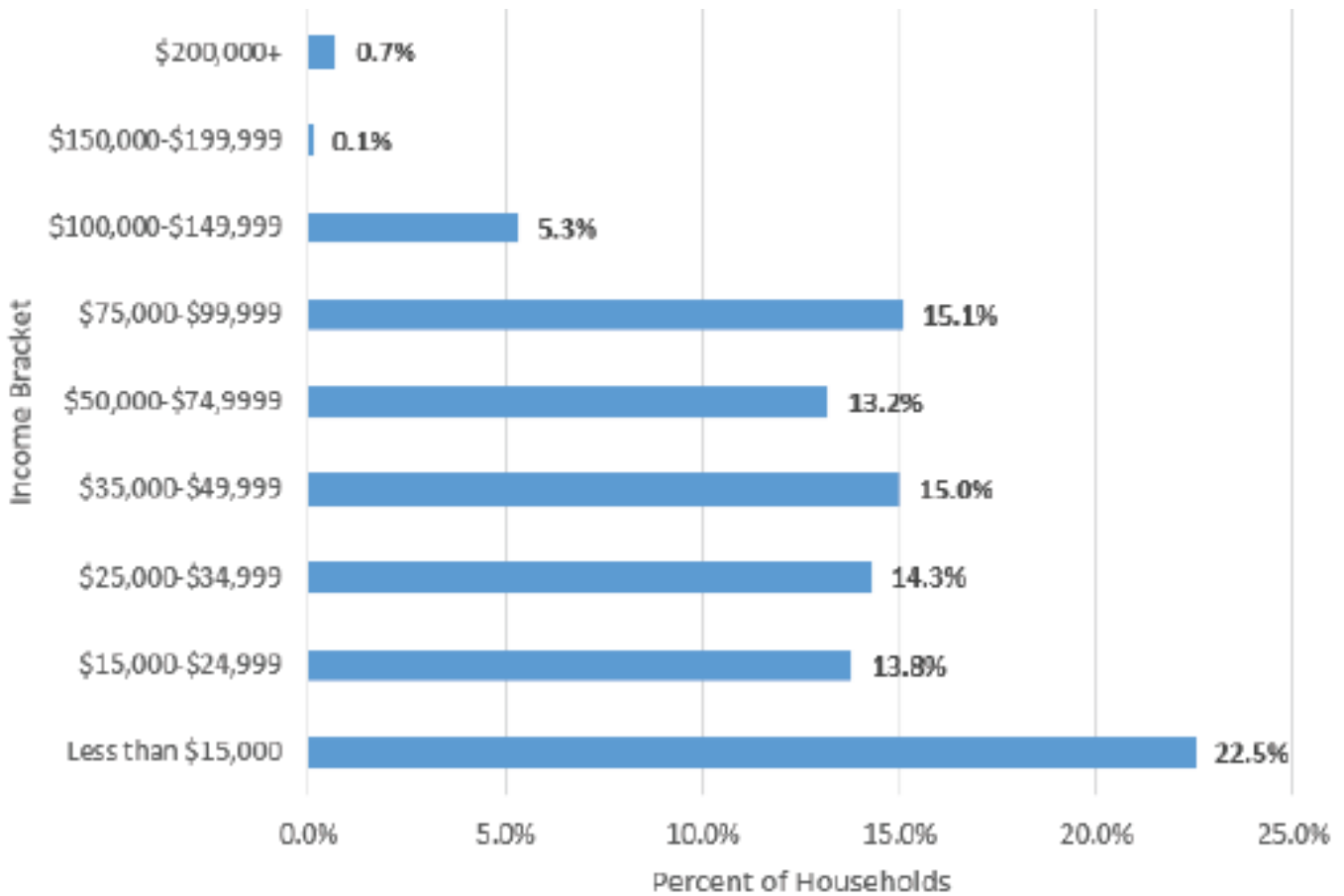
Region	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Cordova (2021)	\$34,449	\$18,238
Walker (2020)	\$45,833	\$25,330
Alabama (2020)	\$52,035	\$28,934

Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2020 to 2021

### Household Income Distribution by Bracket

The largest income bracket in Cordova was “Under \$15,000,” in 2021, with 22.5 percent of the households in the city earning less than \$15,000. The next largest bracket, income ranging from \$15,000 to \$24,999, included nearly 14 percent of households. These numbers show, despite Cordova’s median income exceeding the federal guideline poverty level, many of its households likely remain in poverty. The smallest income bracket is the \$150,000 to \$199,999 range, with only 0.1 percent of households falling in that range. In addition, those earning more than \$200,000 make up less than 1 percent of households. Figure 8 outlines the percentages of Cordova households within each income bracket.

Figure 8: Household Distribution by Income Bracket



Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2021

## LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

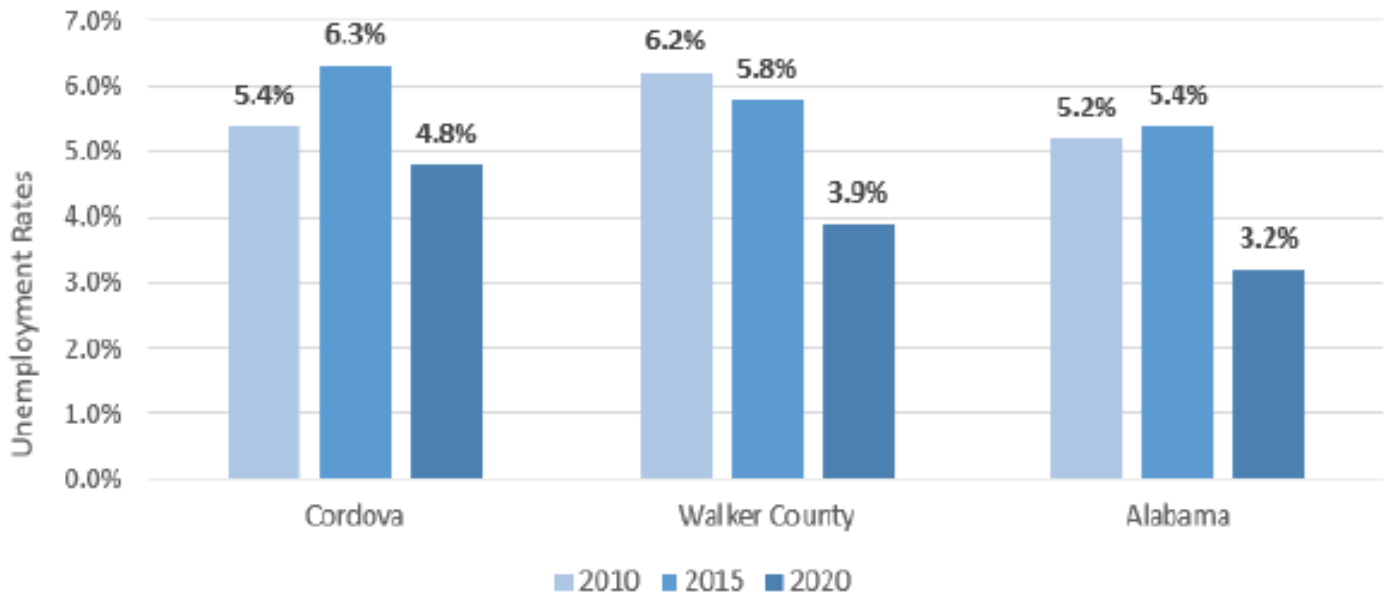
### Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate in Cordova was 4.8 percent in 2020. Although the city’s unemployment rate has fallen in recent years, it has trended higher than county and state since 2015. Figure 9 compares Cordova’s unemployment rate trends to those at the Walker County and state levels.

### Employment by Home Area

Measuring employment by home area identifies the industries residents of Cordova are employed in, regardless of where their job is located. In 2019, the most recent year this data was available, Health Care and Social Assistance was the largest employment category for residents, with over 18 percent employment. The next largest was Manufacturing, with nearly 14 percent. The smallest industries per employment were Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, both with less than 1 percent, while the Information industry had no employment in 2019.

Figure 9: Unemployment Rate in Cordova, Walker County, and Alabama, 2010 to 2020



Source: U.S.Census, 2020 to 2021

Table 5 outlines the employment levels of each industry for 2010 and 2019, and then calculates the percent change in employment between the two years in the last column. Ten industries have declined in terms of residential employment since 2010, with the largest decrease occurring in Information, though that industry was not a strong employment area to begin with. The industry with the largest decline in both percent change and percentage of employment was Retail Trade, which decreased by 17 percent. The reductions in employment in these industries may be impacted by the recent pandemic, as trends in declining employment in retail establishments have been felt across the country.

However, nine industries have increased over the past decade. Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing technically experienced the largest growth, but with only making up 1 percent of total employment, the jobs in this industry are still relatively low. The industry with the largest advancement in both percent change and percentage of employment was Manufacturing, followed by Wholesale Trade.

### Employment by Working Area

Measuring employment by working area identifies the employment opportunities within the City of Cordova; in other words, this analysis measures the industries people who work in Cordova are employed in, regardless of where they live. As shown in Table 6, nine of the twenty measured industries are not present within the city, yielding no jobs in those industries. However, a component of economic growth is analyzing what the community’s strengths and assets are and capitalizing on those, so just because an industry is not present does not mean it should be. It may not be viable in the area, and resources would be better spent supporting industries that are.

Table 4: Industry by Home Area

Industry	2010	2019	Percent Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.6%	0.3%	-54.7%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	2.7%	2.7%	-2.2%
Utilities	3.6%	1.6%	-57.0%
Construction	7.9%	6.8%	-13.7%
Manufacturing	11.1%	13.6%	22.2%
Wholesale Trade	4.5%	5.8%	29.0%
Retail Trade	14.5%	12.0%	-17.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	3.6%	4.4%	21.1%
Information	0.9%	0.0%	-100.0%
Finance and Insurance	3.4%	3.0%	-11.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.5%	1.0%	98.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3.1%	3.0%	-4.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.5%	1.0%	-33.9%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	3.6%	3.8%	5.5%
Educational Services	9.1%	8.9%	-2.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	16.0%	18.2%	14.2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.7%	0.7%	-5.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	7.7%	7.9%	2.3%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1.2%	2.4%	92.6%
Public Administration	3.6%	3.0%	-18.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics



Table 5: Industry by Working Area

Industry	2010	2019	Percent Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.5%	0.2%	-50.2%
Utilities	1.7%	0.9%	-43.1%
Construction	1.2%	0.0%	-100.0%
Manufacturing	2.6%	2.1%	-18.6%
Wholesale Trade	0.7%	0.0%	-100.0%
Retail Trade	7.3%	13.2%	79.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Information	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Finance and Insurance	0.5%	0.9%	99.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.9%	0.9%	-0.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.2%	0.0%	-100.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	0.7%	0.0%	-100.0%
Educational Services	35.9%	36.0%	0.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	39.5%	37.2%	-5.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	0.2%	0.5%	99.1%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	0.2%	0.7%	198.6%
Public Administration	7.8%	7.3%	-6.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

The most significant growth in terms of percent change and percentage of employment was Retail Trade, which increased by nearly 80 percent over the past decade. Educational Services employment has remained stable, and Healthcare and Social Assistance experienced a slight decline, which may have occurred due to the pandemic. No industry present within the city took a significant hit in terms of the percentage of jobs, with the most loss occurring with Utilities, and total jobs available within the city only decreased by two jobs.

### Labor Flows

Cordova’s 2021 daytime population was 2,015, meaning that 153 more people came to Cordova than exited it during regular business hours. A net positive daytime population indicates that a flow of nonresidents regularly come into the city for work.

**Table 6:** Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for City, County, and State

Population	Number of Individuals
Daytime population	2,015
Residential population	1,862
Difference between daytime and residential population	153

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

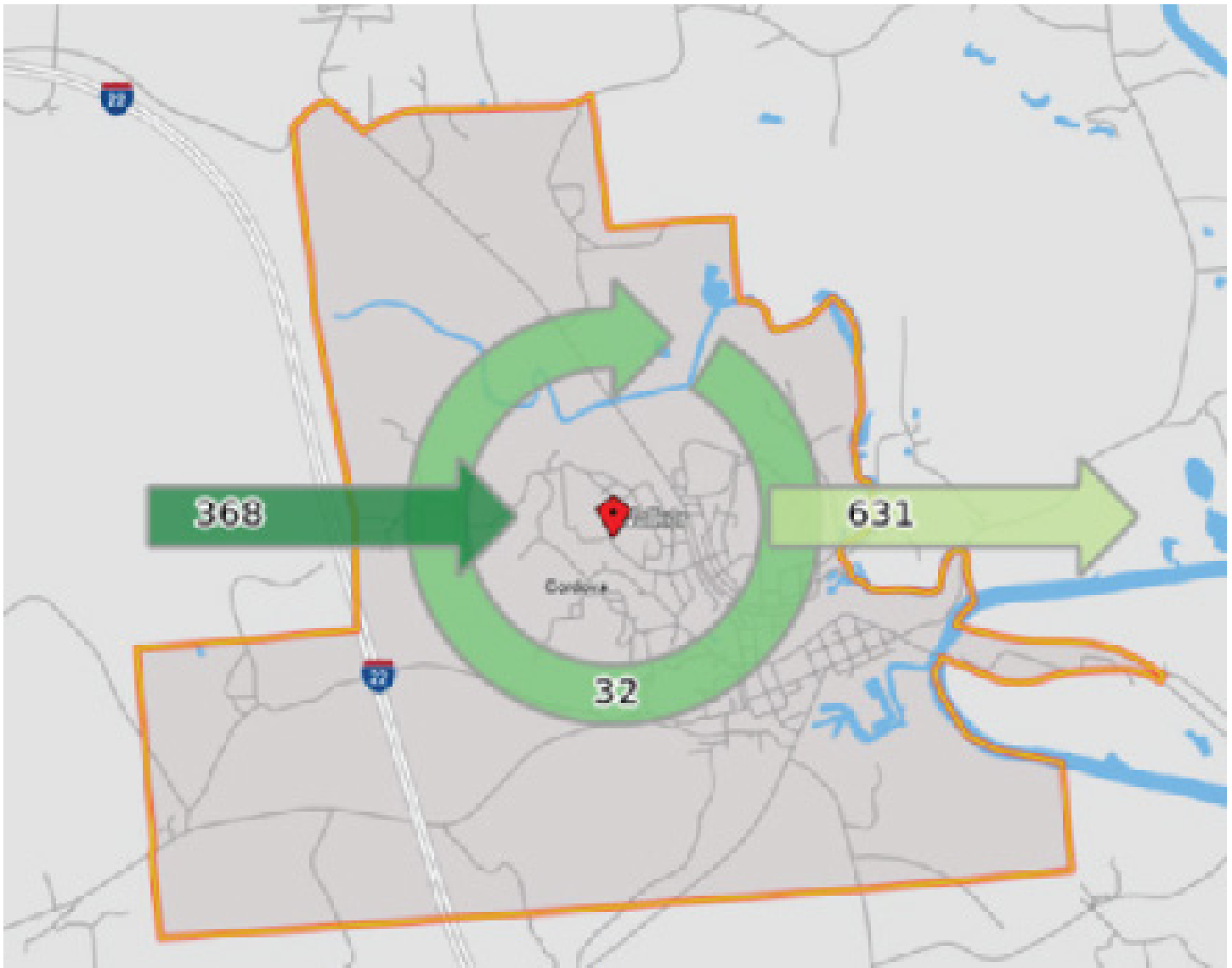
**Table 7:** Net Labor Flow for Cordova, AL

Selection Area Characteristic	Individuals
Employed in the selection area	400
Employed in the selection area but living outside	368
Employed and living in the selection area	32
Living in the selection area	663
Living in the selection area but employed outside	631
Living and employed in the selection area	32
Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	-263

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application

U.S. Census data from 2019 data shows that 368 nonresidents were employed in Cordova that year. According to this data point, non-Cordova workers were employed in 92 percent of the jobs available within the city. As listed in Table 7, 631, or 95 percent, of Cordova’s working residents were employed outside of Cordova and are considered “outflow” workers. However, since 663 workers were living in Cordova and only 400 job opportunities for both residents and nonresidents were employed within Cordova, the city had a net job inflow/outflow of -263. This net loss of workers was driven largely by low interior flow, or the number of Cordova residents who are also employed within the city. Cordova’s interior flow in 2019 consisted of only 32 employees. Figure 10 illustrates these numbers below.

Figure 10: Net Labor Flow, Cordova, Alabama



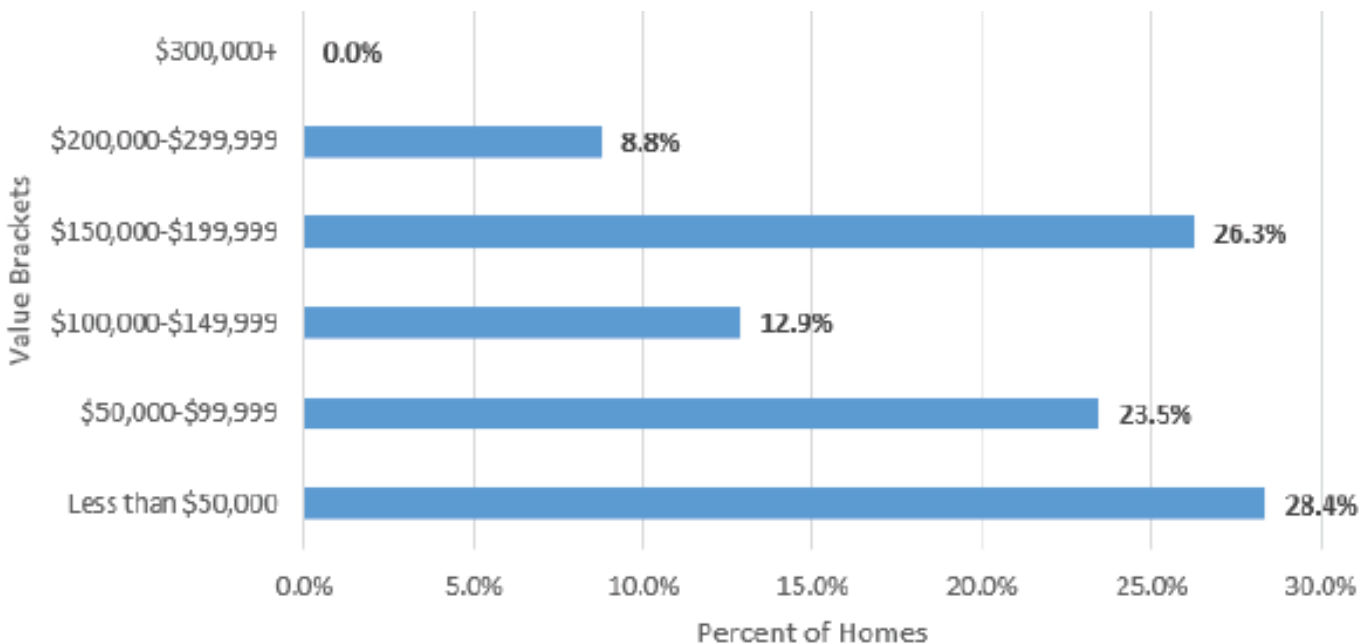
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application

# HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

## Housing Affordability

The median value of homes in Cordova is \$95,833, slightly lower than the \$109,600 median home value in Walker County between 2016 and 2020. Although the largest share of homes in Cordova is valued below \$50,000, the share of homes valued between \$150,000 and \$199,999 is nearly the same size. Another significant portion of homes are valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999, followed by a large drop off in the share of homes valued between \$100,000 and \$149,999. Only 8.8 percent of homes are valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999, and no home values exceed \$300,000.

Figure 11: Housing by Market Value, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

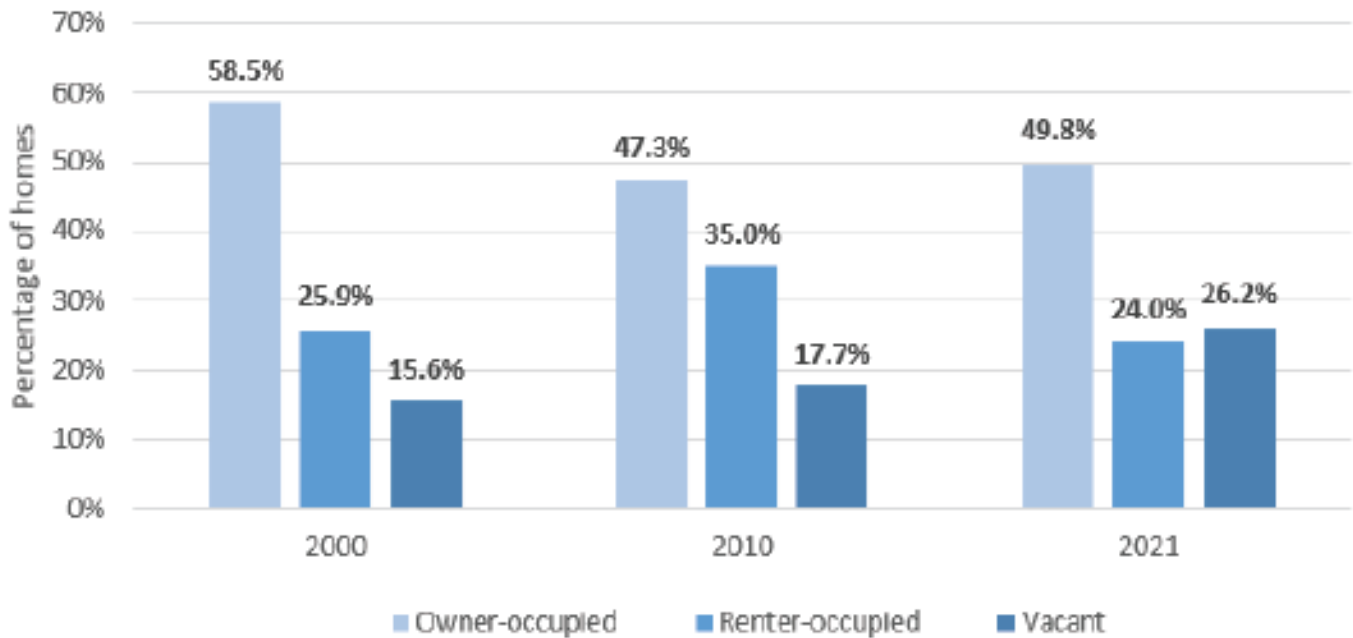
## Housing Age

According to the most recent U.S. Census data, residents of Cordova are spending only 11.7 percent of their income on their mortgages. As a result, the population’s overall housing affordability index value of 230 is extremely high, indicating that families earning the median income have more than enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan on a median-priced home. However, these affordability numbers are potentially inflated due to the prevalence of older homes, many of which may be vacant and/or in poor condition. The median year in which all housing units in Cordova were built is 1963, almost two decades older than the countywide median of 1982 and the statewide median of 1984.

### Housing Occupancy

Only 49.8 percent of homes in Cordova are owner-occupied, and the vacancy rate is extremely high, at 26.2 percent. A sharp increase in the vacancy rate from 17.7 percent in 2010 coincided with a decrease in the percentage of renter-occupied units from 35 percent in 2010 to 24 percent in 2021. However, the vacancy rate remains high even when accounting for unfilled rental units, indicating continued ownership of relatively old, unused family homes.

Figure 12: Housing Units by Status, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

## CHAPTER 2: MARKET ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Market Analysis is to evaluate Cordova's local market and give local officials and stakeholders a better understanding of how it can be expanded. This section is divided into three different subsections.

1. The Consumer Behavior subsection presents data showing consumer spending and preferences.
2. The Retail Gap Analysis subsection shows supply and demand estimates across individual industries, including surplus/leakage data indicating the ratio of nonresident spending in Cordova to resident spending outside Cordova.
3. The Segmentation Profile subsection describes the socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle preferences of the city's residents.
4. The Innovation Index Analysis subsection will assess Cordova's innovative capacity, an all-encompassing measure of a region's strengths, weaknesses, and potential for growth.

Although the economic terms used in this section will be clarified within the narrative, Table 8 provides definitions of each term for ease of reference.

### CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

#### *Consumer Spending*

Table 9 shows consumer spending for Cordova in 2021 across various spending categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are broad enough to capture a more complete depiction of expenses. Both the total and average amount spent per household represent annual figures. Although this table represents spending by Cordova households, each value includes money spent outside of Cordova as well as within the city.

The Spending Potential Index (SPI) represents the dollar amount spent in the area relative to the national average, which is represented by a value of 100. Any increase or decrease from 100 indicates how much more or less spending occurs in Cordova compared to the national average. For example, an SPI of 110 for a certain category of goods or services would indicate that consumers in Cordova spend 10 percent more than the national average on that category. Knowing the goods and services that are in high demand in an area is a critical component of successful investment prioritization and market development.

Cordova residents spent most on Shelter, which includes expenses such as mortgages and rent payments. The lowest amount of consumer spending, approximately \$322 thousand, went toward Personal Care Products & Services. Notably, all spending categories have an SPI at least 29 points lower than the national average, indicating that consumers who reside in Cordova spend at least 29 percent less in every category than the average amount spent nationally. This could be an indication of lower prices of goods as well as lower population levels than the average national measure.

Table 8: Definition of Terms Used

Term	Definition
Business Dynamics	An “input” subindex gauging the competitiveness of a region by investigating the entry and exit of individual firms (i.e., the “creative destruction” measures)
Business Profile	An “input” subindex measuring local business conditions and resources available to entrepreneurs and businesses
Economic Well-Being	An “output” subindex exploring standard of living and other economic outcomes
Employment and Productivity	An “output” subindex describing economic growth, regional desirability, or direct outcomes of innovative activity
Headline Index	An overall measure of the innovative capacity and economic health of a region
Human Capital and Knowledge Creation	An “input” subindex suggesting the extent to which a region’s population and labor force have the collective cognitive capacity and know-how to engage in innovative activities
LifeMode Group	A market category that generally describes an area’s residents based on shared common experiences or relevant demographic traits
Market Potential Index (MPI)	A measure of the likelihood of adults or households in a market area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the US average.
Retail Gap	The difference between Retail Potential (demand), and Retail Sales (supply). If the difference is positive, then demand outweighs supply, creating a “retail leakage.” If the difference is negative, then supply outweighs demand, creating a “retail surplus.”
Retail Potential	The amount of spending by an area’s residents on retail goods and services. Includes spending both within and outside the trade area in which they reside.
Retail Sales	The number of sales of retail goods and services by establishments in area.
Retail Surplus/Leakage	A retail surplus occurs when establishments in a community are selling more than is demanded in the community. A retail leakage occurs when residents of a community are spending on retail goods and services at establishments located outside the community.
Spending Potential Index (SPI)	A comparison of local spending to US averages. Any increase or decrease from a value of 100 indicates difference in spending compared to the national average.
Surplus/Leakage Factor	A measure of the balance between the volume of supply (Retail Sales) generated by an industry and the demand (Retail Potential) in the same industry, within a geographic trade area.
Tapestry Segments	A measure that provides greater detail into a community’s distinctive characteristics, including residents’ lifestyle choices and consumer purchasing preferences.

Table 9: Consumer Spending by Residents of Cordova, AL in 2021

Spending Category	Total	Average Spending per Household	SPI
Shelter	\$6,442,464	\$8,533	42
Health Care	\$2,863,084	\$3,792	61
Food at Home	\$2,403,480	\$3,183	58
Food Away from Home	\$1,465,269	\$1,941	51
Entertainment/Recreation	\$1,369,644	\$1,814	56
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind	\$1,006,757	\$1,333	56
Household Furnishings & Equipment	\$879,462	\$1,165	52
Travel	\$807,001	\$1,069	42
Apparel & Services	\$773,783	\$1,025	48
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs	\$513,038	\$680	61
Education	\$487,801	\$646	37
Personal Care Products & Services	\$321,941	\$426	48
<b>Total Spending/Average SPI</b>	<b>\$19,333,724</b>	<b>\$25,608</b>	<b>51</b>

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Surveys

### Consumer Behavior

Another important component of market development is analyzing consumer behaviors and identifying specific products and industries supported by local consumers. One way to analyze consumer behavior is by measuring the percentage of the population that consumes specific goods and services. The higher the percentage of the population that bought a certain product or consumed a specific resource, the more in demand those items are in the area. Tables 10 through 13 detail the five most and least prevalent consumer purchases and behaviors for adults and households in Cordova.

However, even if a large portion of the population consumes a product, the purchased product is not necessarily desired over another, potentially unavailable, option. This phenomenon is the reason the Market Potential Index (MPI) is an important indicator for actual demand in an area. The MPI measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in a specific trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the United States average, which is represented by an MPI of 100. It provides details about the products and services consumers want and the civic attitudes they have, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the different investments that are prospering or could eventually prosper in an area. The products and behaviors with the five highest and lowest MPI scores are also shown below in Tables 14 and 15.



Consumer behavior is shown for both individuals and households because individuals tend to consume different goods and services than households. Additionally, separating individual consumer behavior from household consumer behavior allows for more accurate data and helps limit problems with data collection such as double counting.

## INDIVIDUALS

Individuals in Cordova have a strong demand for fast food establishments, as 90.3 percent of the population have gone to a fast food or drive-in restaurant in the last 6 months. Nearly 90 percent of the population bought gasoline in the last 6 months, indicating that individuals generally use their vehicles for travel. Smartphone ownership is also prevalent, at 89.4 percent of individuals; in addition, this behavior has an MPI score of 121, indicating that individuals in Cordova are slightly more inclined to have smartphones than the U.S. population in general. This could also indicate that a higher percentage of residents have smartphones when compared to the average national measure. The remaining top consumer preferences had MPI scores close to the U.S. average.

Table 10: Top Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Went to fast food/drive-in restaurant in last 6 months	1,282	90.3%	100
Bought gasoline in last 6 months	1,276	89.9%	101
Have a smartphone	1,269	89.4%	121
Read any magazine (paper/electronic version) in last 6 months	1,207	85.1%	96
Carry medical/hospital/accident insurance	1,109	78.2%	96

Source: IMPLAN Data

Individuals in Cordova had the least demand for travel and vacation spending out of all examined goods and services. Each of the five consumer preferences with the lowest rate of engagement was travel related, and three of them had to do with taking vacations, both foreign and domestic. These categories also had low MPI scores, indicating that Cordova’s population has a low demand for such services compared to the general U.S. population. These numbers could also be impacted by the pandemic, as travel in general has declined over the past couple of years.

**Table 11: Bottom Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals**

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Took 3+ foreign trips by plane in last 3 years	24	1.7%	21
Domestic travel in last 12 months: used general travel website	28	2.0%	33
Spent on domestic vacations in last 12 months: \$1,500-\$1,999	30	2.1%	56
Spent on foreign vacations in last 12 months: \$1,000-\$2,999	31	2.2%	57
Spent on domestic vacations in last 12 months: \$3,000+	34	2.4%	37

Source: IMPLAN Data

## HOUSEHOLDS

The goods and services with the highest demand from households in Cordova were mainly staple grocery items that are similarly prevalent in households throughout the U.S., as indicated by their MPI scores.

**Table 12: Top Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Households**

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Households used bread in last 6 months	692	94.7%	100
Households owns/leases any vehicle	648	88.6%	99
Households used fresh milk in last 6 months	602	82.4%	99
Households used fresh fruit/vegetables in last 6 months	584	79.9%	91
Households owns a computer	500	68.4%	84

Source: IMPLAN Data

The bottom two household consumer preferences were technology related. Only 1.8 percent of households subscribe to fiber optic Internet services, and only 4.9 percent purchased a video game system in the last 12 months. These categories also had low MPI scores, with fiber optic subscription particularly far below the U.S. average, at 33.

Table 13: Bottom Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Households

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Households subscribes to fiber optic	13	1.8%	33
Households purchased video game system in last 12 months	36	4.9%	64
Households used any maid/professional cleaning service in last 12 months	88	12.0%	59
Households used turkey (fresh or frozen) in last 6 months	104	14.2%	98
Households bought any large kitchen appliance in last 12 months	110	15.0%	97

Source: IMPLAN Data

### MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)

MPI measures the relative likelihood of consumers in a trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the United States average. Consumers in Cordova are much more likely than the rest of the U.S. population to buy cigarettes at convenience stores, spend at convenience stores generally, only use coupon brands, and place importance on buying American. However, these rates do not necessarily indicate a large portion of the residents are purchasing these products, only that the percentage of the population that are making these purchases is larger than U.S. average.

Table 14: Top Five Consumer Preferences/Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals/ Households	Percent of Individuals/ Households	MPI
Bought cigarettes at convenience store in last 30 days	203	14.3%	200
Spent at convenience store in last 30 days: \$100+	390	27.5%	135
Only use coupons brands: usually buy	261	18.4%	135
Spent at convenience store in last 30 days: \$51-\$99	109	7.7%	127
Buying American is important	636	44.8%	127

Source: IMPLAN Data

In addition, residents in Cordova are far less likely to take foreign trips and take expensive domestic vacations, subscribe to fiber optic Internet services, and own mutual fund stocks. Many of these consumer behaviors are likely explained by lower income levels in Cordova compared to the general U.S. population, and therefore might not reflect underlying preferences.

**Table 15: Bottom Five Consumer Preferences/Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI**

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals/ Households	Percent of Individuals/ Households	MPI
Took 3+ foreign trips by plane in last 3 years	24	1.7%	21
HH subscribes to fiber optic	13	1.8%	33
Domestic travel in last 12 months: used general travel website	28	2.0%	33
Owns shares in mutual fund (stock)	58	4.1%	37
Spent on domestic vacations in last 12 months: \$3,000+	34	2.4%	37

Source: IMPLAN Data

## RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

The retail gap and its corollary leakage/surplus factor can help identify opportunities for local retail expansion or provide evidence that retail expansion could hurt local businesses in specific industries. The retail gap represents the difference between Retail Potential, or demand, and Retail Sales, or supply. Therefore, it statistically measures whether a given industry is experiencing a leakage or surplus.

If demand is greater than supply, the retail gap will be positive, indicating that a leakage is occurring, and residents of the community are spending on retail goods and services at establishments located outside the community. In this case, expansion of industry may be beneficial to the area by encouraging local consumers to remain in the community to shop and by drawing in consumers from other areas. If supply is greater than demand, the retail gap will be negative, indicating that a surplus is occurring, and establishments in the community are selling more goods and services than what is demanded within the area. This can mean that consumers from outside the community are coming to the community to buy certain goods and services. Therefore, expansion may hurt local businesses operating in this industry, as customers and profits will only spread thinner. In other words, expanding an industry that is experiencing a retail surplus in an area will likely dilute the consumer base for businesses which currently exist there .

Overall, the community’s supply of goods and services outweighs its current demand. The total Cordova market area possesses approximately \$18.8 million in Retail Potential (demand) and \$22.2 million in Retail Sales (supply), resulting in a negative overall retail gap of about \$3.4 million.

Table 16: Retail Gap Analysis

	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
<b>2017 Industry Summary</b>						
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	44-45,722	\$46,874,854	\$23,221,378	-\$23,653,476	-50.3	9
Total Retail Trade	44-45	\$37,332,036	\$21,707,257	-\$15,624,779	-41.8	6
Total Food & Drink	720	\$9,542,818	\$1,514,121	-\$8,028,697	-84.1	3
<b>2017 Industry Group</b>						
Motor Vehicle B. Parts Dealers	411	\$4,382,364	\$0	-\$4,382,364	100.0	0
Automobile Dealers	4401	\$3,282,089	\$0	-\$3,282,089	100.0	0
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$521,418	\$0	-\$521,418	100.0	0
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$578,857	\$0	-\$578,857	100.0	0
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$336,424	\$0	-\$336,424	100.0	0
Furniture Stores	4401	\$288,071	\$0	-\$288,071	100.0	0
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$48,353	\$0	-\$48,353	100.0	0
Electronic & Appliance Stores	442	\$421,710	\$0	-\$421,710	100.0	0
Electronics Stores	4421	\$421,710	\$0	-\$421,710	100.0	0
Flower, Nursery, Garden Supply & Supply Stores	444	\$1,387,994	\$0	-\$1,387,994	100.0	0
Flower, Nursery & Garden Supply Stores	4441	\$1,387,994	\$0	-\$1,387,994	100.0	0
Lawn & Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	4442	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$2,646,271	\$15,350,548	\$12,704,277	-72.3	3
Grocery Stores	4451	\$2,455,554	\$15,350,548	\$12,894,994	-72.3	3
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$25,630	\$0	-\$25,630	100.0	0
Brew, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$65,087	\$0	-\$65,087	100.0	0
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$1,807,098	\$2,323,393	\$516,295	-28.4	1
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$2,300,331	\$4,387,584	\$2,087,253	-28.0	2
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$488,835	\$0	-\$488,835	100.0	0
Clothing Stores	4481	\$370,574	\$0	-\$370,574	100.0	0
Shoe Stores	4482	\$118,261	\$0	-\$118,261	100.0	0
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$423,235	\$0	-\$423,235	100.0	0
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr. Stores	4511	\$423,235	\$0	-\$423,235	100.0	0
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$3,058,707	\$0	-\$3,058,707	100.0	0
Department Stores Excluding Leasehold Dept.	4521	\$2,073,298	\$0	-\$2,073,298	100.0	0
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$985,409	\$0	-\$985,409	100.0	0
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$705,408	\$45,534	-\$659,874	89.3	1
Florists	4531	\$26,478	\$45,534	\$19,056	-26.8	1
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$115,266	\$0	-\$115,266	100.0	0
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$437,205	\$0	-\$437,205	100.0	0
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$544,455	\$0	-\$544,455	100.0	0
Amusement Places	490	\$147,551	\$0	-\$147,551	100.0	0
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
Food Services & Drinking Places	720	\$1,512,838	\$14,761	-\$1,500,077	-99.2	3
Special Food Services	7203	\$0	\$0	\$0	100.0	0
Drinking Places - Alcohol Beverage	7204	\$17,278	\$0	-\$17,278	100.0	0
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7205	\$1,512,838	\$14,761	-\$1,498,077	-99.0	3

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2020

However, this surplus is overwhelmingly driven by Grocery Stores, which contribute \$12.8 million of surplus alone, and have a large surplus/leakage factor of -72.3. A likely explanation for the Grocery Stores surplus is that the Piggly Wiggly at 79 Mill Street is drawing customers from unincorporated Walker County. The low ratio of businesses to households in Cordova likewise suggests that a small number of industries are inflating the high overall supply, because state residents have no choice but to leave Cordova for many goods and services. Therefore, the city likely has several opportunities for expansion even though its overall leakage/surplus value is negative, indicating a surplus.

Only four industries or subsectors in Cordova possess a surplus: Grocery Stores, Health & Personal Care Stores, Gasoline Stations, and Florists. As noted above, Grocery Stores possess by far the biggest surplus, and are therefore Cordova’s biggest market revenue assets, as they not only meet local demand but also provide resources for many consumers outside the community.

Health & Personal Care stores have a surplus of \$1.2 million, with a leakage/surplus factor of -35.4, and Gasoline Stations have a surplus of \$1.8 million, with a leakage/surplus factor of -28.0. Florists have a modest surplus of \$19,156 and a surplus/leakage factor of -26.6.

Every other industry in Cordova possesses a positive retail gap, indicating a leakage. In addition, nearly all these industries have leakage/surplus factors of 100, indicating that no businesses in those industries exist in the community. The largest retail gaps exist in the Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers, General Merchandise Stores, Building Materials, Garden Equipment & Supply Stores, and Food Services & Drinking Places industries. The Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers industry’s \$4.2 million in leakage is mostly driven by the Automobile Dealers subsector, which contributes \$3.2 million in leakage. General Merchandise Stores have \$3.1 million in leakage, most of which comes from \$2.1 million in leakage in the Department Stores subsector. Nearly the entire Food Services & Drinking Places industry leakage of \$998,097 is due to the Restaurants leakage of \$961,616. However, the Restaurants subsector is the only industry discussed here with a surplus/leakage factor under 100, at 48.3, due to the local presence of three such businesses.

Due to their large retail gaps and surplus/leakage factors, increasing the number of local businesses in these industries would likely benefit Cordova’s market area. However, while these industries represent the greatest opportunities for expansion, they do not necessarily represent industries in which investment is most attainable. Other industries presented in Table 17 with similarly high surplus/leakage factors, but smaller dollar-amount leakages may serve as lower-hanging fruit for investment.

## SEGMENTATION PROFILE

The Segmentation Profile illustrates characteristics of Cordova’s residents that cannot be derived from quantifiable factors alone. To show these characteristics, the population is arranged into different LifeMode Groups and Tapestry Segments. LifeMode groups arrange individuals into different markets based on shared common experiences or significant demographic traits. Tapestry Segments are subcategories of LifeMode Groups that provide greater detail and specificity into a particular community’s distinctive characteristics. These characteristics give insight into residents’ general lifestyle choices, consumer purchasing preferences, and preferred leisure activities, and are therefore used by analysts to more effectively market goods and services within a market area.

**Table 17:** Population of Cordova, AL by LifeMode Group and Tapestry Segment

LifeMode Group / Tapestry Segment	Percentage of Population	Percent of Individuals/ Households	MPI
LifeMode Group 1: Rustic Outpost	74.1%	1.7%	21
Tapestry 1: Rural Bypasses	69.5%	1.8%	33
Tapestry 2: Rooted Rural	4.6%	2.0%	33
LifeMode Group 2: Hometown	25.8%	4.1%	37
Tapestry 1: Small Town Sincerity	25.8%	2.4%	37

Source: ESRI, 2021

## *Life Mode Group 1: Rustic Outpost*

Communities defined as “Rustic Outpost” are characterized by country living. They are typically comprised of older families living in older homes, and their local economies are often dependent on manufacturing, retail, and healthcare industries, with pockets of mining and agricultural jobs. Most residents own their homes as well as at least one vehicle, live within their means, prefer to pay their bills in person, and like to read the newspaper, rather than rely on a digital source of news. Residents in Rustic Outpost areas are also likely outdoor enthusiasts, who grow their own vegetables, love their pets, and enjoy hunting and/or fishing. However, labor force participation is usually low within these areas, and jobs are usually concentrated in skilled and service occupations.

### *Rustic Outpost Tapestry Segments:*

#### **1. RURAL BYPASSES**

Open space, undeveloped land, and farmland characterize Rural Bypasses. These families live within small towns along country back roads and enjoy the open air in these sparsely populated neighborhoods. Their country lifestyle focuses on the outdoors, gardening, hunting, and fishing. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than a home computer. Although most households do have a connection to the internet, use is very limited. Those who are not yet retired work in blue-collar jobs in the agriculture or manufacturing industries.

Other characteristics include:

- An older housing market, with more married couples without children and single households, the average household size is slightly lower at 2.55 and most residents own single-family homes.
- Residents primarily live in rural areas, and this tapestry segment is almost entirely located within the South.
- Labor force participation is less than 50 percent, so income is primarily derived from wages and supplemented with Social Security and Supplemental Security Incomes.

#### **2. ROOTED RURAL**

Rooted Rural is heavily concentrated in the Appalachian Mountain range as well as in Texas and Arkansas. Employment in the forestry industry is common, and Rooted Rural residents live in many of the heavily forested regions of the country. This group enjoys time spent outdoors, hunting, fishing, or working in their gardens. Indoors, they enjoy watching television with their spouse and spending time with their pets. When shopping, they look for American-made and generic products. These communities are heavily influenced by religious faith and family history.

Other characteristics of Rooted Rural communities include:

- The housing market is dominated by married couples, few with children at home, and around 80% of homes are owner-occupied.
- Residents have a “do-it-yourself” mentality, and they grow their own produce, work on their cars, and own a riding lawn mower. They also tend to avoid the internet with payment transactions, preferring to pay bills in person.
- The consumer base views clothes as a necessity, not a fashion statement, so they tend to only buy new clothes when old clothes wear out.

### *Life Mode Group 2: Hometown*

Communities defined as “Hometown” are comprised of residents who grew up in the area and stayed close to home. Residents are owners of old, single-family houses, or renters in small multiunit buildings. They visit discount stores and clip coupons and purchase used vehicles to get to and from nearby jobs. Religion is the cornerstone of many of these communities, and these areas tend to be close-knit.

### *Hometown Tapestry Segment:*

#### **1. SMALL TOWN SINCERITY**

Small Town Sincerity includes young families and senior householders that are bound by community ties. The lifestyle is down-to-earth and semirural, with television for entertainment and news, and emphasis on convenience for both young parents and senior citizens. Residents embark on pursuits including online computer games, renting movies, indoor gardening, and rural activities like hunting and fishing. Residents keep their finances simple— paying bills in person and avoiding debt.

Other characteristics include:

- These communities are comprised of small towns or semirural neighborhoods with an older housing market.
- These communities have large elderly populations who are price conscious consumers, likely impacted from incomes that are primarily garnered from Social Security or other retirement funds.
- These areas feature a semirural lifestyle, complete with domestic trucks and SUVs, ATVs, and vegetable gardens. Residents enjoy outdoor activities like hunting and fishing as well as watching NASCAR and college football and basketball on TV.



## CHAPTER 3: SWOT ASSESSMENT

The EDSP planning process included an assessment of Cordova's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) using surveys and public meetings. Part of the analysis was an online survey provided to local stakeholders to identify the most pressing economic issues facing the city's economic trajectory. The purpose of the SWOT Assessment section is to outline the input provided by Cordova's residents and stakeholders, as well as identify the overall priority goals identified by survey respondents.

### SWOT RESPONSES OVERVIEW

#### *SWOT Summary*

#### STRENGTHS

- Natural Environment/Location
- K-12 Schools
- Cost of Living
- Lifestyle and Quality of Life
- Transportation Infrastructure

#### WEAKNESSES

- Limited Career Opportunities/Trajectories
- Business Environment
- Business Sites/Real Estate
- Limited/Lack of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives
- Limited Entrepreneurial Engagement

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve Critical Infrastructure (such as Roads, Water/Sewer, and Broadband)
- Focus on Programs to Recruit/Attract Business
- Provide More Business Support
- Improve Outdoor Recreation Initiatives

#### THREATS

- Inability to attract or retain population/workforce
- Limited/Lack of job growth/opportunities
- Vacant downtowns/lack of resources for downtown development
- Overreliance on one industry or employer
- Presence of brownfields/blight/dilapidated buildings

#### RESIDENTS ARE MOST SATISFIED WITH:

Commuting Times to Work and School | Local and Regional Leadership | Cost of Living  
Water and Sewer Infrastructure Conditions | Future Economic Growth Potential

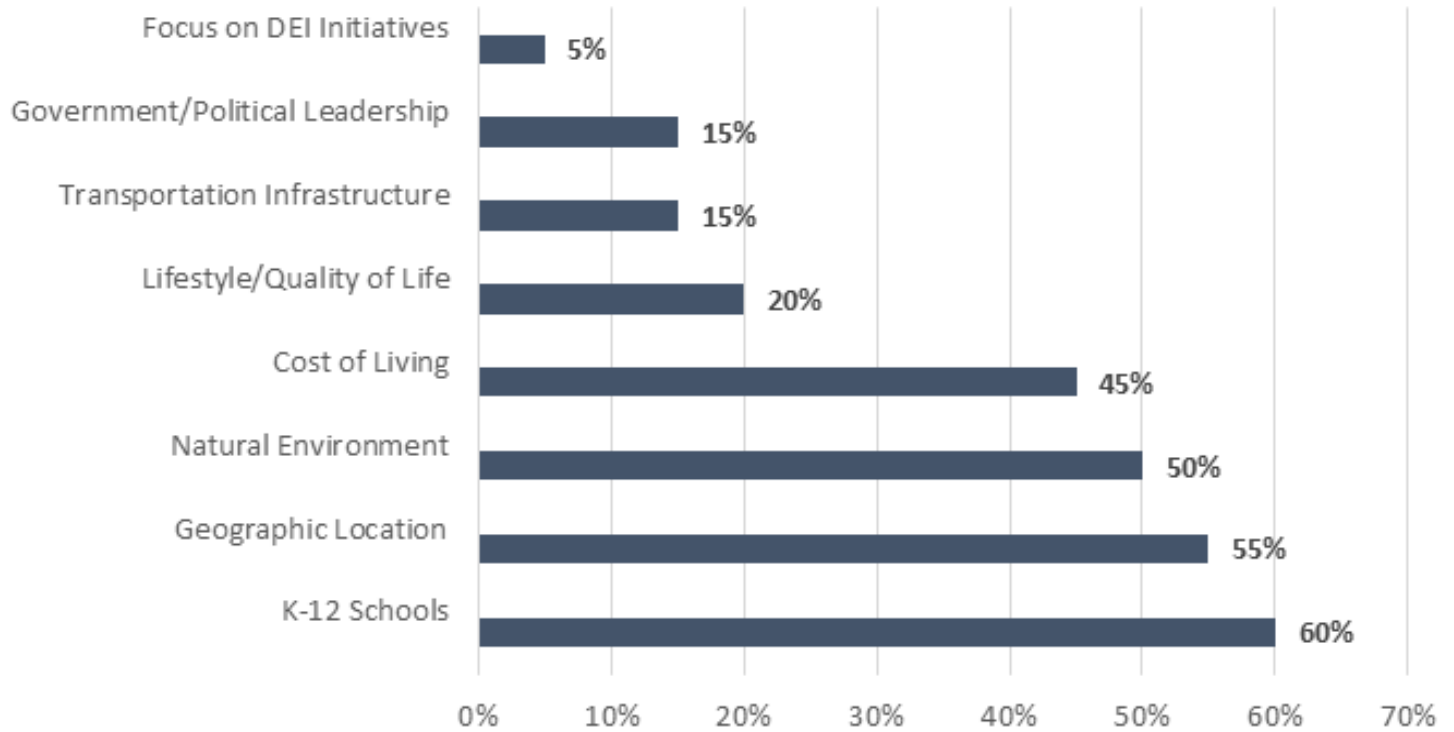
#### RESIDENTS ARE LEAST SATISFIED WITH:

Public Transportation Accessibility | Road and Highway System Conditions | Entrepreneurial Support  
Appeal to Young Professionals | Apprenticeship Availability

### Strengths Summary

The strengths identified by respondents included strong consensus around K-12 schools, the city’s location and natural environment assets, and the cost of living within the area. Figure 13 outlines the responses recorded for the question “What are the city’s top three competitive strengths, or assets?” Respondents were allowed to choose up to three answers.

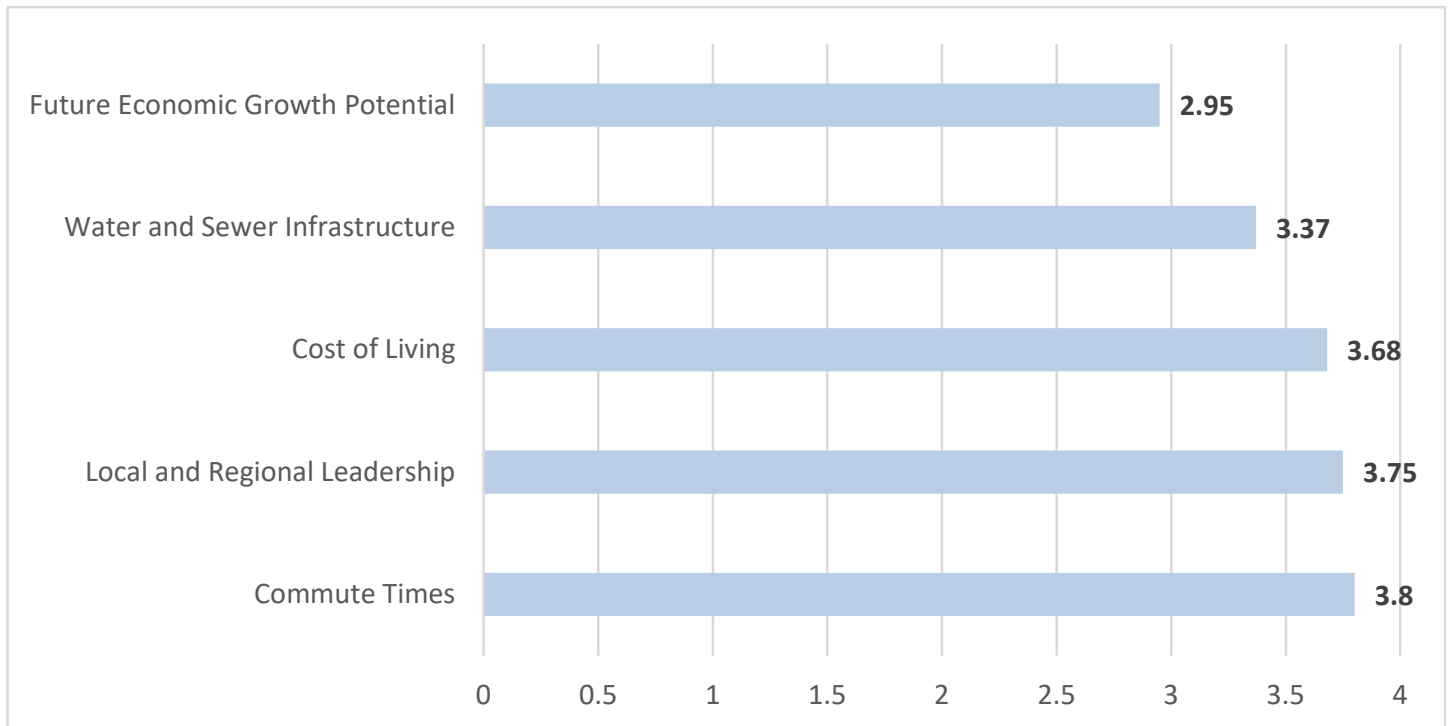
Figure 13: Cordova SWOT Survey, “What are the city’s top three competitive strengths, or assets?”



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

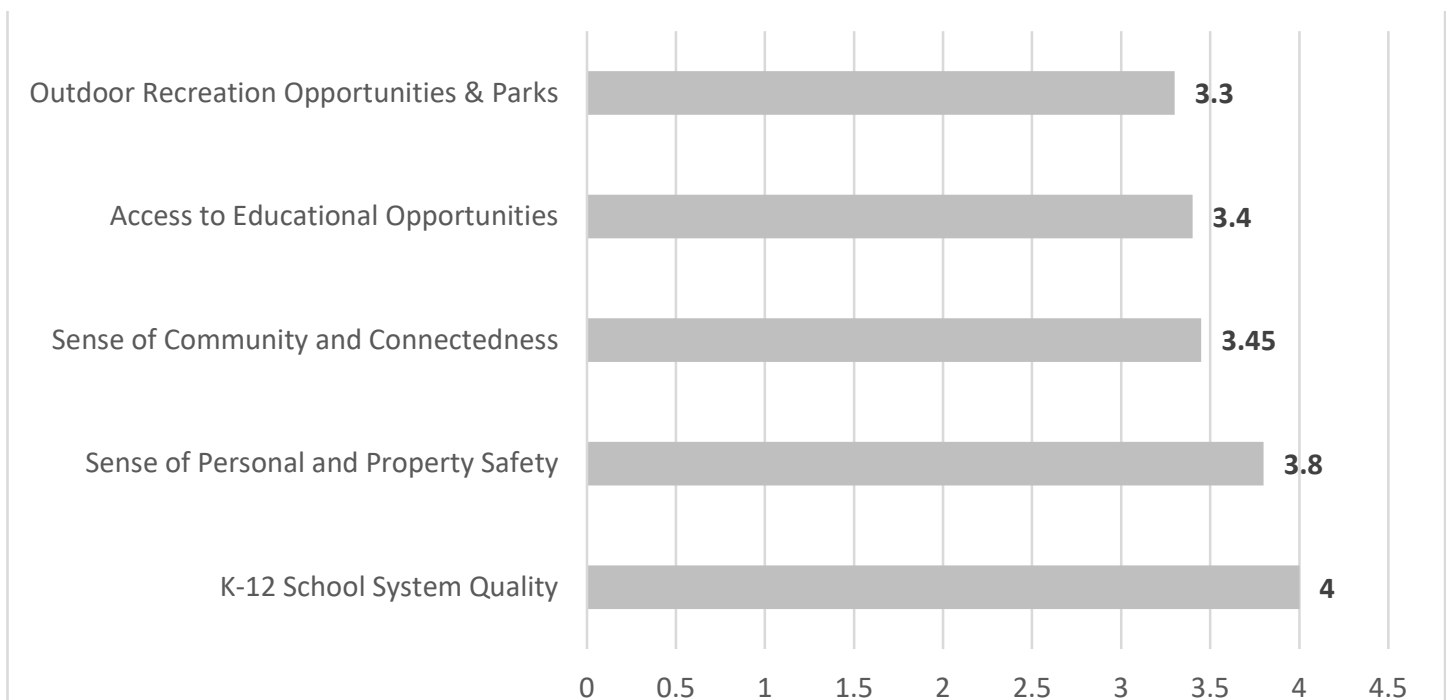
Residents and stakeholders were also asked to record their perspectives on how well their expectations were met regarding a variety of interest areas. The top five weighted responses for Economic Areas are depicted in Figure 14. Commuting times and local and regional leadership were the highest ranked areas, followed by the cost of living and the conditions of critical infrastructure. The five ten weighted responses for Quality-of-Life Areas are depicted in Figure 15.

Figure 14: Cordova SWOT Survey, “How well does the city meet your expectations in the following areas?”; Top Five Ranked Economic Areas



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

Figure 15: Cordova SWOT Survey, “How well does the city meet your expectations in the following areas?”; Top Five Ranked Quality-of-Life Areas

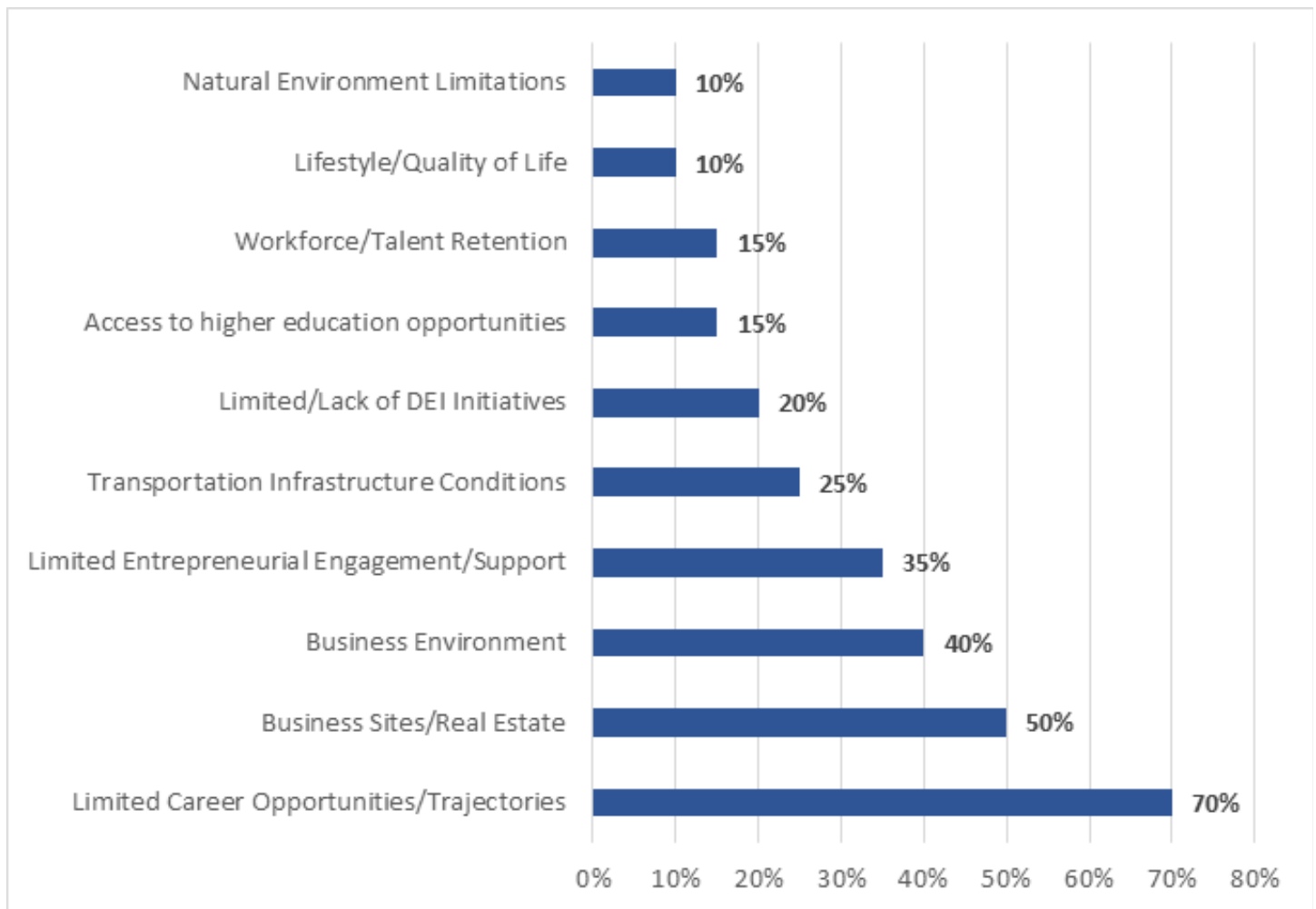


Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

### Weaknesses Summary

Regarding weaknesses, respondents ranked limited career opportunities or trajectories, business sites, business environment, and limited entrepreneurial engagement as support as the city’s main drawbacks. The list of the top ten weaknesses is illustrated in Figure 16.

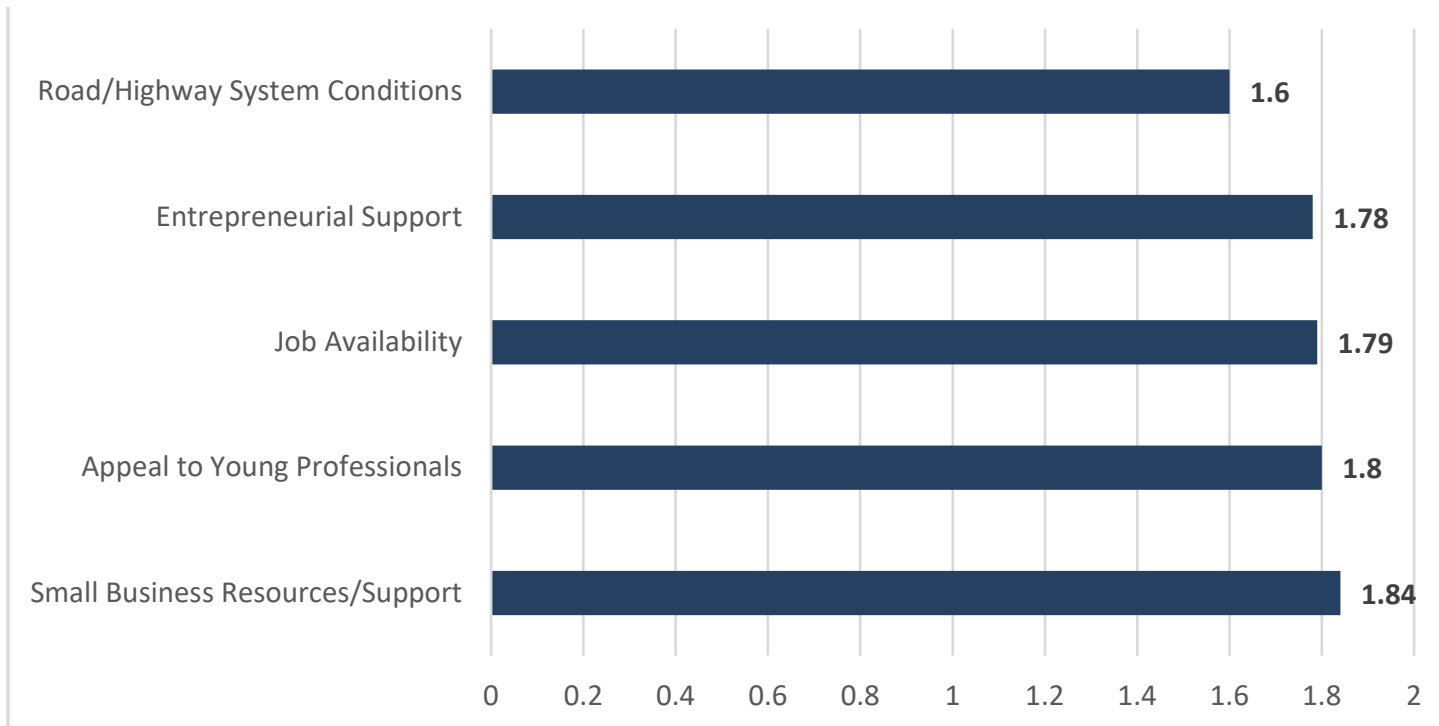
Figure 16: Cordova SWOT Survey, “What are the city’s top three weaknesses, or constraints?”



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

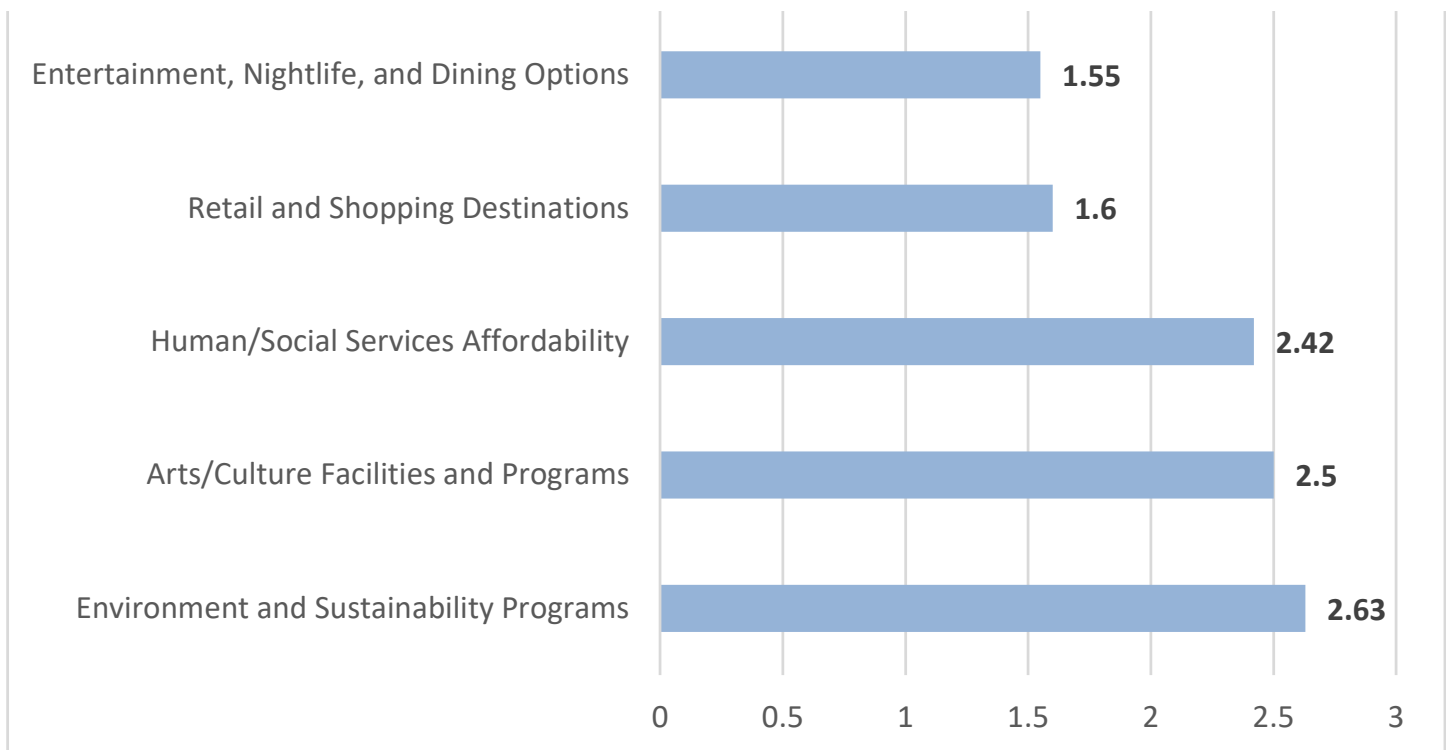
Residents and stakeholders were also asked to record their perspectives on how well their expectations were met regarding a variety of interest areas. The ten least weighted responses for Economic Areas are depicted in Figure 17. Roads and highway system conditions were listed as the worst-ranked area, followed by entrepreneurial support and job availability. The five least weighted responses for Quality-of-Life Areas are depicted in Figure 18, in which “Entertainment, Nightlife, and Dining Options” ranked lowest.

Figure 17: Cordova SWOT Survey, “How well does the city meet your expectations in the following areas?”; Last Five Ranked Economic Areas



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

Figure 18: Cordova SWOT Survey, “How well does the city meet your expectations in the following areas?”; Last Five Ranked Quality-of-Life Areas



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

### Opportunities Summary

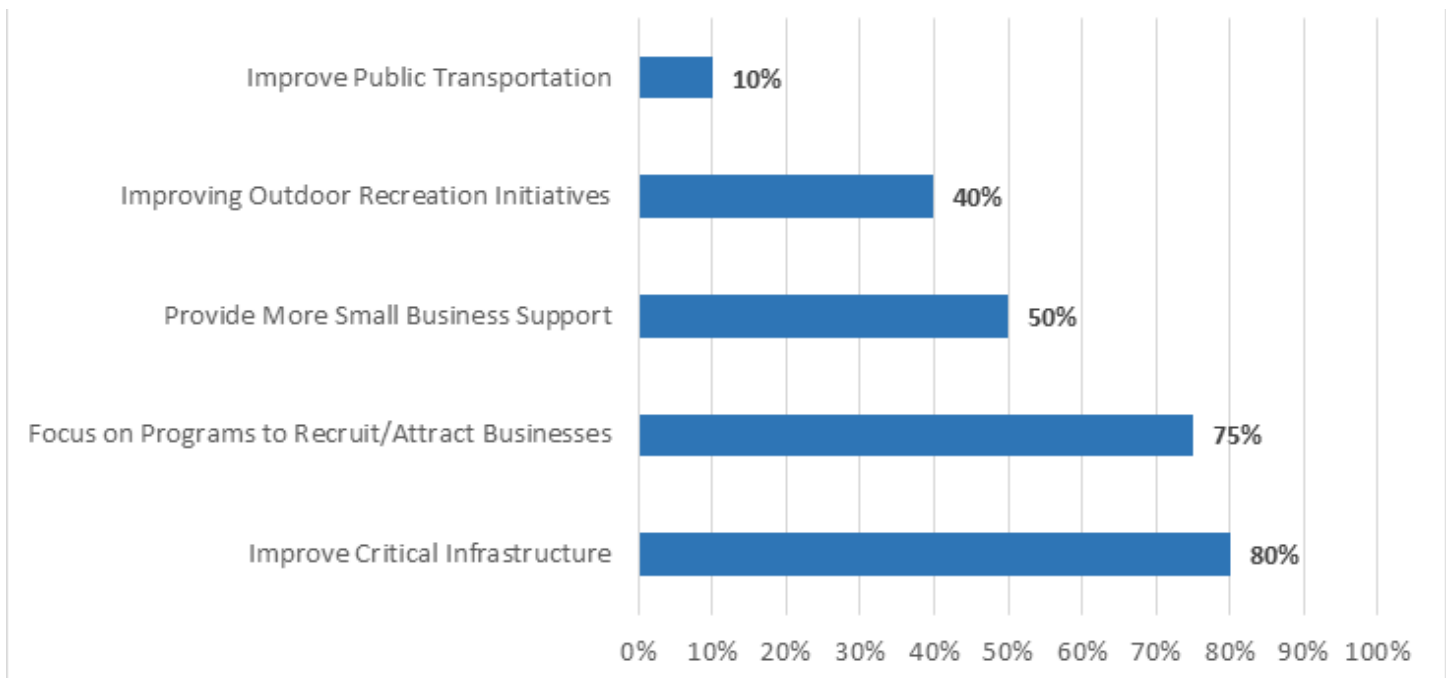
Residents and stakeholders identified an array of opportunities for Cordova’s future development. This open-ended question received an array of responses; however, most were centered on initiatives the city could make to increase residential and business populations. This included a focus on the creation or expansion of outdoor recreational assets in Cordova, as well as property and site development.

Some specific responses are listed below:

- “City is doing a good job of obtaining grants to get the infrastructure up to par.”
- “The CEIDA events bring more people to Cordova in a positive light and can eventually lead to more people moving here or starting business here.”
- “ We have rail and water access. We need more outdoor recreation.”
- “We have an enormous amount of potential within the city for business once some of the property is developed. We have several nonprofit groups that are working to improve the quality of life. We will need more defined parking for businesses upon development. We need cleaner waterways in order to enjoy different opportunities that our community has to offer.”

In addition, residents were asked to select their top three most important development priorities for the city. A wide majority, or 80 percent, ranked improving critical infrastructure in the top three most important development needs, followed on focuses to business attraction and retention and small business support. Figure 19 lists the top 5 selected development priorities for SWOT survey respondents.

Figure 19: Cordova SWOT Survey, “What are the top three most important project areas necessary to improve/enhance the city’s development?”; Top Five Development Priorities

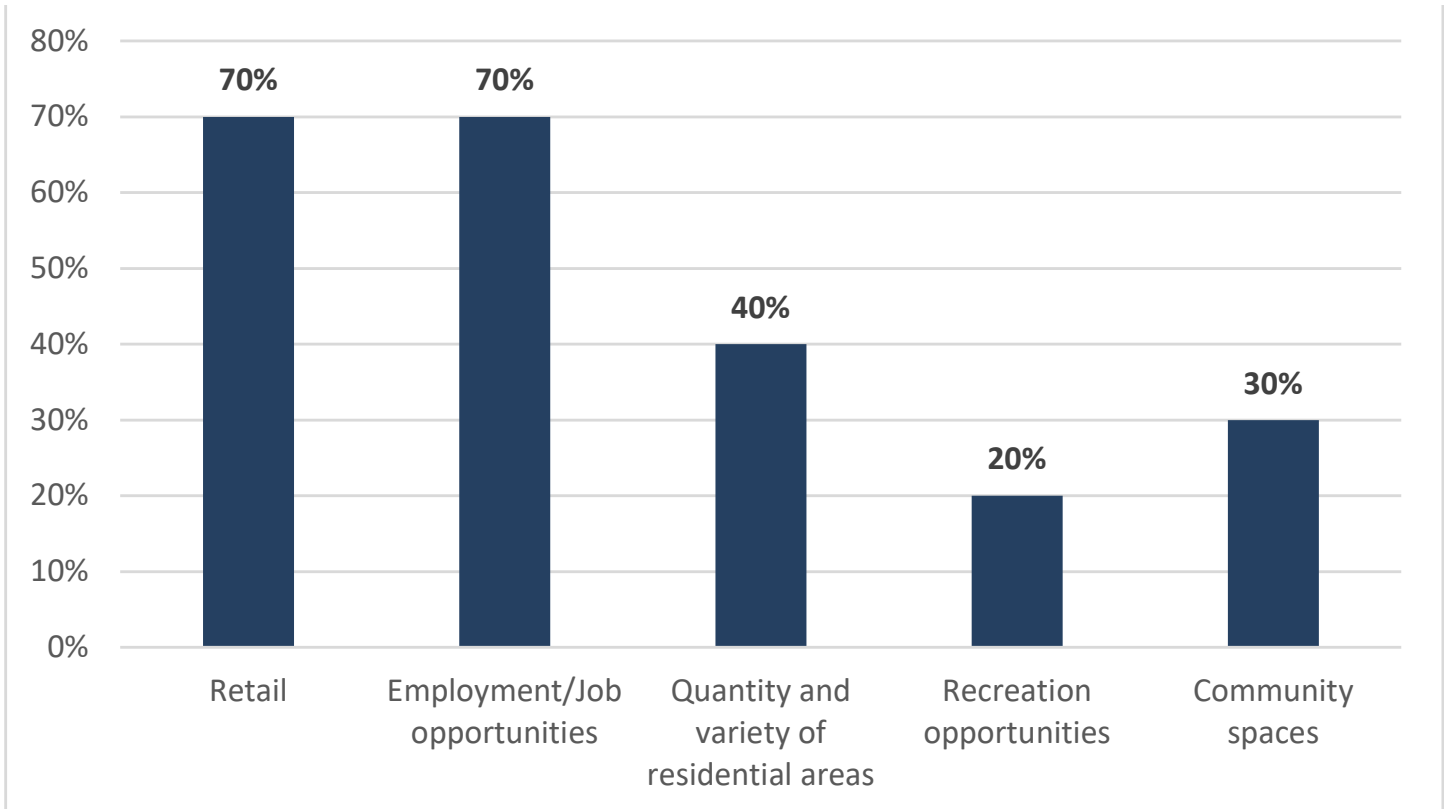


Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

### Threats Summary

Respondents assisted in the identification of risks and threats to the local economy, too. One of the questions in the SWOT survey asked respondents to identify the economic assets where Cordova was lacking in comparison with other cities nearby. Figure 20 lists the top five development gaps selected for Cordova.

Figure 20: Cordova SWOT Survey, “Where is the City lacking in development when compared to other City’s nearby?”; Top Five Development Gaps

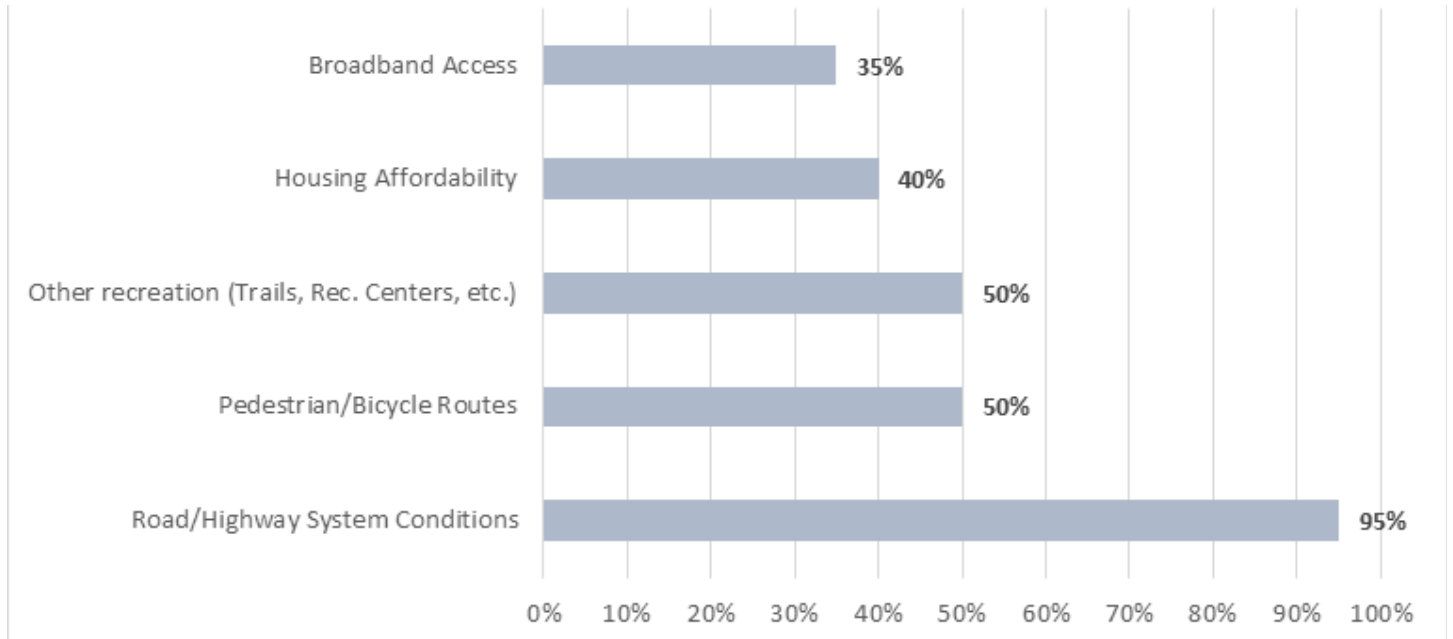


Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

Residents and stakeholders also ranked the infrastructure development improvements the city needs in order to grow. The largest improvements areas were related to transportation. Road and highway system conditions, followed by were ranked highest by respondents, followed by pedestrian and bicycle routes as well as other recreational infrastructure (such as trails and recreation centers).

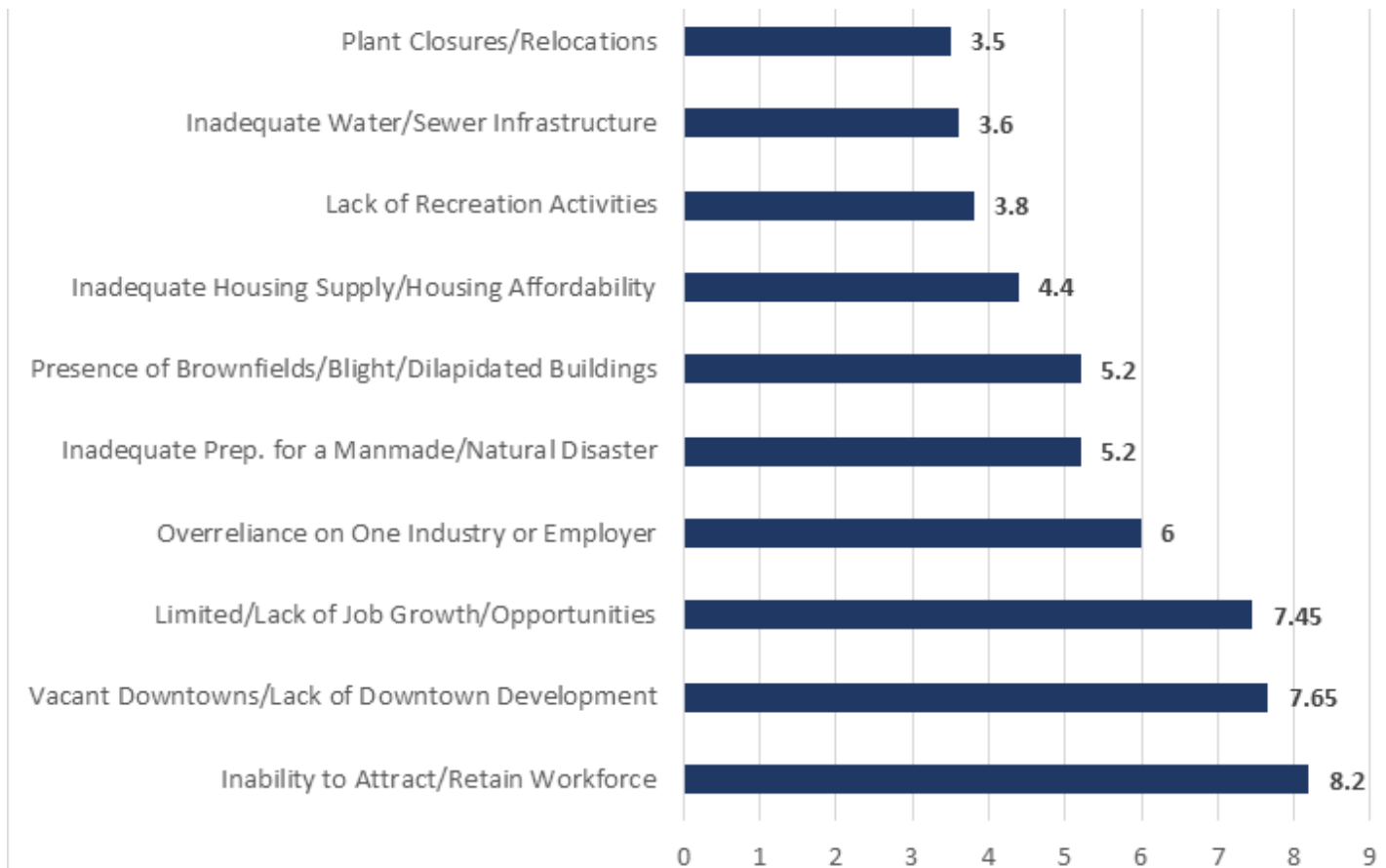
As shown in Figure 21, Broadband Access was also identified as one of the top five infrastructure needs within the city. Having access to reliable broadband is critical to economic and community development, and more information on Cordova’s current broadband infrastructure as well as future plans is included in Section II.

Figure 21: Cordova SWOT Survey, “What are the top three infrastructure development issues facing your jurisdiction/area?”; Top Five Infrastructure Needs



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022

Figure 22: Cordova SWOT Survey, “Please rank the following list of economic resiliency threats from largest to least threatening to the city”; Resiliency Threats Rankings



Source: Cordova SWOT Survey, 2022



## PRIORITY GOALS

The feedback and input provided through the SWOT survey were compiled into three central goals, and these goals provided the foundation for the development of the Cordova Action Plan.

### 1 *INCREASE ECONOMIC VIABILITY & RESILIENCY*

The feedback and input provided through the SWOT survey were compiled into three central goals, and these goals provided the foundation for the development of the Cordova Action Plan. The city's central development focus is around bolstering the local economy, and this goal aims to focus on ways the city can attract new industry as well as support locally grown businesses. This area also includes site development tasks and ways to harness the city's external labor flow to diversify its tax base and increase tax revenues.

#### SWOT AREAS ADDRESSED:

- Outdoor Recreation Initiatives
- Limited Job Growth and Opportunities
- Programs to Recruit/Attract Business
- Business Environment and Site Development
- Resources for Downtown Development
- Overreliance on One Industry

### 2 *STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE & QUALITY-OF-LIFE*

The connection between workforce, population levels, and industry development is inherent: The quality of an available workforce drives business recruitment and retention in an area, and the presence and conditions of the local business environment is an indicator in population growth. This goal was developed in response to the city's workforce and business retention needs. The focus of this priority area is to enhance the city's ability to attract, retain and continually develop a highly skilled workforce that meets current and future industry demand. This goal includes strategies associated with supporting population growth and industry diversification, as well as quality of life aspects of development, such as outdoor recreation and downtown vibrancy.

#### SWOT AREAS ADDRESSED:

- K-12 Schools
- Lifestyle/Quality of Life
- Limited Job Growth/Opportunities
- Lack of Resources for Downtown Development
- Programs to Recruit/Attract Business
- Lack of DEI Initiatives
- Outdoor Recreation Initiatives

### 3 IMPROVE & ENHANCE CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Cordova has been focused on rehabilitating its existing infrastructure in recent years, as noted by the city's progress in gaining grant funding to support these programs. However, the city is also ambitious with creating an outdoor recreational economy, which will not only include improving existing infrastructure, but also developing new types of infrastructure to increase walkability and develop trail systems. This goal includes improvements to existing critical infrastructure, planning for prioritizing future rehabilitation needs, and development outdoor recreation and other connective infrastructure throughout the city.

#### SWOT AREAS ADDRESSED:

- Critical Infrastructure
- Presence of Brownfields, Blight, and/or Dilapidated Buildings
- Business Environment and Site Development
- Lack of Resources for Downtown Development



SECTION II:  
**Development Initiatives**



# DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

This section identifies and evaluates two primary initiatives the City of Cordova has prioritized for their municipality: Outdoor Recreation Development and Broadband Expansion. Outdoor Recreation has been identified as the main industry the city wants to create and harness for economic opportunity and growth. However, the growth and expansion of outdoor recreation hinges on the connectivity and accessibility of the city's broadband. This section will analyze the city's assets and challenges, as well as describe the potential implementation measures, regarding these two factors.

## CHAPTER 1: OUTDOOR RECREATION

### *Industry Overview*

The Outdoor Recreation industry is comprised of the entire supply and value chains associated with outdoor activities. This includes consumer spending on gear and equipment for participation in outdoor pursuits, but it also includes the costs and demand for travel and lodging associated with these activities. Outdoor recreation covers a wide variety of interests and activities, from boating and fishing to hiking and bicycling. The flexibility offers communities a sustainable and resilient community development tool that can utilize an area's natural assets, making it a strong economic development option, especially for areas where industrial and commercial development options and assets are few and far between.

This industry has made significant gains in rural areas in recent years, as long-term sustainability of more remote communities has been threatened by economic downturns and declines in major industries. Outdoor recreation can provide a resilient avenue for small communities to develop for increased economic diversification, which can bolster communities and leave them less susceptible to economic fluctuations, while retaining things like heritage and culture, which are traditionally important to these rural towns and cities.

Investing in outdoor recreation not only bolsters local economies by increasing consumer spending through tourism, enhancing property values, and attracting new talent, it also has proven to improve health outcomes and overall quality of life for the local community. Having access to outdoor recreational assets increases physical activity, and having safe, reliable alternative modes of travel lowers emissions, which can be harmful to the environment and human population. Improving these health outcomes can also lead to lower healthcare costs and have positive impacts on the overall well-being of residents.

The overall quality of life of residents is imperative for not only the current community, but also in recruitment efforts for future businesses and residents. It is also a priority for Cordova's citizens. When asked what successful development means in the SWOT survey, 70 percent of SWOT survey respondents listed "Improving Quality of Life/Lifestyle Amenities" as their answer choice. It is clear this is an initiative that has overwhelming support from the community and is a priority for the future growth and development of the city.

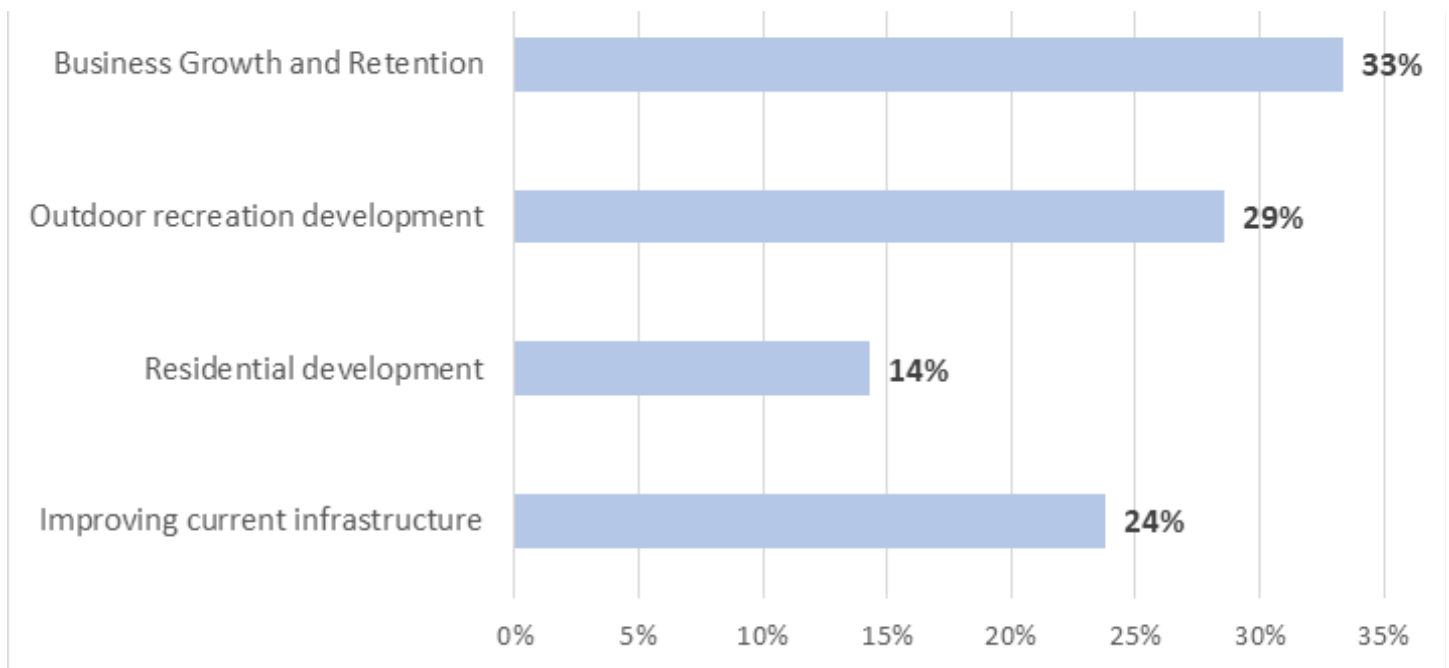
## Background

Outdoor recreation opportunities exist throughout the City of Cordova and surrounding areas. Walker County as a whole has acknowledged this asset and, through partnerships with organizations like the Walker Area Community Foundation (WACF), have created a county-wide initiative to develop and sustain this industry throughout the jurisdiction. This chapter will focus solely on the outdoor assets and potential within the City of Cordova as a means to identify strategies to increase this industry within the city, which will contribute to the success of county and state initiatives.

Cordova officials and leaders have recognized the city’s potential for growth and sustainability through the development and investment of outdoor recreation, and the city has taken a proactive approach to growing this industry within the city. This has included the development of a city-wide trails plan, an outdoor recreation branding initiative, and investments in locally owned parks.

The expansion of this industry is not only important to the city, but local residents and stakeholders also recognize the need for these outdoor opportunities. In a local community meeting held in September 2022, over 70 percent of respondents felt that having outdoor amenities available was “Very Important” to keep current residents and attract new ones (the other 30 percent of respondents voted it was “Somewhat Important”). In addition, nearly 30 percent of respondents ranked “Outdoor Recreation” as the number one priority goal for the city, tied with the number of respondents who ranked “Business Growth and Retention” as the number one priority (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Cordova Community Meeting Input, “What should be the city’s #1 development priority goal?”



Source: City of Cordova Community Meeting, September 2022

This section will identify the city’s outdoor recreation assets, as well as major projects and priority activities the city has identified as next steps for the implementation of this industry.

## Current Assets

Cordova has an array of naturally occurring assets and competitive advantages that could be utilized to develop and support an outdoor recreation economy, including location, natural waterways, and park areas.

### 1. LOCATION

The location of the city is one of its largest assets. According to the Cordova SWOT survey, 55 percent of respondents listed the location of the city as one of the top three assets within the community. With two access points to Interstate 22, which connects Birmingham, Alabama to Memphis, Tennessee, the city is highly connective and in close proximity to major cities, such as Birmingham (32 miles), Cullman (47 miles), and Tuscaloosa (57 miles). The proximity to other city hubs is an asset not only for drawing in recreational visitors, but it also gives Cordova leverage to brand itself as a residential bedroom community for workers who may desire to live in a small-town atmosphere but require a shorter commuting time to work or other necessities. In addition, as remote working becomes more popular, it is likely more residents will begin to move farther outside the hubs of major cities as rising housing costs within major areas continues to increase.

### 2. NATURAL WATERWAYS

Cordova is surrounded on three sides by 60 miles of navigable waterways. The Warrior River, Cane Creek, and Little Frog Ague Creek are major assets to the community's outdoor recreation initiative and could be used for a range of recreational activities, such as kayaking, fishing, canoeing, and boat access. In addition, the city is home to Disney Lake, situated directly adjacent to the main avenue running through the city. The lake has a beachfront access point that could be developed for swimming, and several parcels surrounding the lake have the potential to be developed into recreational areas and campgrounds. Currently, the lake serves as a boat launch for Cane Creek and can accommodate power boats, flat-bottom boats, kayaks, and canoes. Cane Creek then provides access to Mulberry Fork, a tributary of the Black Warrior River. These waterways, including Disney Lake, offer the city a host of development opportunities for outdoor recreation and connection points to other outdoor interest areas.

### 3. PARKS

Cordova also houses two publicly owned parks: Indian Head Mills Park and Reservoir Park. The city has prioritized planning and development within these areas in recent years; this planning has paid off, as Cordova has been the recipient of over \$140,000 of grant funds through a partnership with the WACF to make improvements to these assets.

## Major Projects

In addition to assets, the City of Cordova has prioritized outdoor recreation projects, capitalizing on the already assisting features the city has at its disposal. A summary of these projects are listed in this section to provide an overview of Cordova's efforts to establish this new industry so far.

### 1. TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Cordova's Economic and Industrial Development Authority was awarded a grant through the Walker Area Community Foundation to complete a city-wide landscape architecture recreational trail plan. The purpose of this plan is to effectively identify desired recreational trail routes and prioritize connectivity of such routes throughout the city's downtown and to existing outdoor recreation assets. This plan is being completed by Kelly Landscape Architects in Homewood, Alabama, and partnership in the planning process with leadership from the Walker Area Community Foundation, and the RPCGB.

### 2. INDIAN HEAD MILL PARK

Indian Head Mill Park is located on an abandoned mill site in downtown Cordova. Once a large driver of industry in the area, Indian Head Mill effectively spurred both economic development and substantial population growth in Cordova. The location and several of the remaining facilities at Indian Head Mill Park have been retrofitted to serve as open air pavilions and aesthetic assets at the park. Original plans for the park were also completed by Kelly Landscape Architects, funded by a grant provided by the Walker Area Community Foundation. Cordova also significantly improved the park through the phasing of the project and continued dedication to the project across leadership shifts in the area.

### 3. DISNEY LAKE DEVELOPMENT

Disney Lake is a critical asset to the city's outdoor recreation portfolio. This location has beach access that can be reestablished for swimming, as well as an existing facility that the city plans to redevelop into a bait and tackle shop. Several levels of renovation are required to get this property up to its potential; however, Cordova has several tasks identified to redevelop this property, and it has prioritized this asset for investment.

In addition, the city has identified a 15-acre parcel of land located across from the lake that has the potential to be developed into a campground site for primitive and elevated camping. The land connects to the lake through creek access, which could also be used as a kayak/canoe launch for those at the camp site. The City was awarded a \$5,000 grant through the CAWACO Resources Conservation and Development (RC & D) Council to conduct the necessary sitework.

### 4. RESERVOIR PARK EXPANSION AND REHABILITATION

Located in the middle of a residential neighborhood, the Reservoir Park was established through a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) project, which dedicates parcels of land for conservation for perpetuity. The park currently houses an old baseball field in need of renovations and lighting, as well as parking expansion and updates. In light of these needs and the costs associated with them, the city has developed plans to enhance this property into a pocket park for local residents in the surrounding area, complete with lighted connecting walking trails, playground equipment.

## 5. FROG ACRE CREEK DEVELOPMENT

Frog Acre Creek has been identified by the city as an asset for a historic community museum, pockets for safe fishing, kayak and canoe launches, and a location for a natural botanical garden with elevated, connecting boardwalks. This site is rich with natural resources, but the low elevation coupled with the increases in water flow makes the sites closest to the creek potentially unsafe during certain seasons. Installing elevated pathways would ensure the site could be used year-round by residents and visitors to enjoy the location's scenery and add to the city's outdoor recreation potential.

## 6. BIKES FOR SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The Walker Area Community Foundation, Walker County Cooperative Extension Co, and Walker County Schools Board of Education collaborated beginning in early 2022, to build a program tasked with bringing bikes into every high school PE program in Walker County. In the beginning of 2022, a trailer of bikes acquired by the Walker County School System through a Federal PE Program grant was located at the Walker County Center for Technology. A plan was established for use of the bikes alongside School System Leadership, but in order to get them ready for use significant work was put into the maintenance and storage requirements for the bikes. The maintenance and storage requirements were made possible by the support of granted funds from the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, donated to the program by the Jasper Area Mountain Bikers. All partners come together once a semester to host a bike safety and education rodeo with each high school that hosts the program. The bikes are then held at the school for the duration of the semester and properly maintained by a bike mechanic before moving to the next school.

### *Priority Activities*

During a community engagement meeting held for the city in September 2022, community members were asked to rank outdoor recreation developments in order of preference. Four options were given as potential options: Hiking and Bicycling Trails, Kayaking and Paddle Boating Areas, Fishing Areas, and Multi-use Sports Complex Development. Respondents ranked Hiking and Bicycling Trails as their highest priority, while the Multi-use Sports Complex was ranked lowest, as respondents noted other similar facilities existed within the area.

In addition to these priorities, the city has identified a variety of different outdoor recreation activities the city could implement to enhance and support, based on the municipality's assets and advantages. City officials and Cordova's Economic Development Authority created the following list of project ideas during the outdoor recreation planning process:

- Creation of multi-use sporting center for volleyball, soccer, basketball, and tennis courts
- Identify area for Archery Range and Shooting Range
- Identify area for ATV/OHV Park
- Identify area for Dog Park
- Identify area for Natural Botanical Gardens
- Develop an amphitheater at Indian Head Mill Park
- Create a Disc Golf track within recreation areas



## *Themes*

Although a wide range of potential development capacities exist within the city, several themes are identifiable based on the city's current outdoor recreation goals, as well as community feedback. The themes derived through the planning process were the basis of the formation of the goals and strategies created in the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.

### **1. IDENTIFICATION OF ASSETS AND GAPS**

The city has several assets and natural advantages for outdoor recreation development. Identifying and organizing these sites and resources will help with strategy development for the prioritization and implementation of the city's outdoor recreation goals.

### **2. DESIRE FOR CONNECTIVITY**

There is a desire for the city to be walkable and connected, and for the trail system to be organized. The downtown area of the city serves as the city's anchor, and as the downtown area is further developed with retail and restaurants, there is a need for the trail system to include connections to Mainstreet. In addition, with the plethora of assets available, connecting outdoor recreational assets to each other will ensure accessibility, usage, and clarity.

### **3. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY**

The vision for the city is not to simply have outdoor recreation options, but instead to develop an outdoor recreation economy. The long-term goal for Cordova is to be an outdoor recreation destination, as well as contain the supply and value chains needed to sustain this industry internally, leading to job growth and sustainable economic resources.

### **4. THREAD OUTDOOR RECREATION WITH CORDOVA'S DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS AND CULTURE**

The City of Cordova has a unique history and culture that sets this community apart. The city wants to not only ensure that Cordova's roots are heavily considered in this new development venture, but also create avenues to educate visitors about what makes Cordova the community it is.

# CHAPTER 2: BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

## *Introduction*

The importance of broadband infrastructure has been highlighted in recent years, especially through the COVID-19 Pandemic, as both employment and education opportunities have required more access to reliable internet. With unprecedented federal funding being allocated to broadband initiatives, most notably through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding programs, there has been no better time for local governments to analyze connection gaps and plan for broadband connectivity projects.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) commissioned a strategic plan for the agency's new Digital Expansion Division. This study identified strategies for facilitating high-speed broadband expansion, addressing obstacles for broadband adoption, considering the special needs for rural areas, and developing plans for funding for middle-mile projects. This section will use this report as a basis for analyzing the gaps and challenges for Cordova's current broadband capacity.

## *Broadband Definitions*

### **BROADBAND: OVERVIEW**

As defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), broadband is high speed internet access that allows users to access the Internet or Internet-related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through "dial-up" services. The speed of broadband is determined by megabits per second (mbps), which measures the download and upload speed of the internet connection.

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

Broadband can be accessed through a variety of transmission technologies, including satellites, fiber, cable, wireless, or a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL). However, the technology used in a given area depends on several factors, including locality, availability, and cost. Faster speeds are often associated with cable broadband and fiber when compared to satellite and DSL connections.

### **CONNECTION SPEEDS**

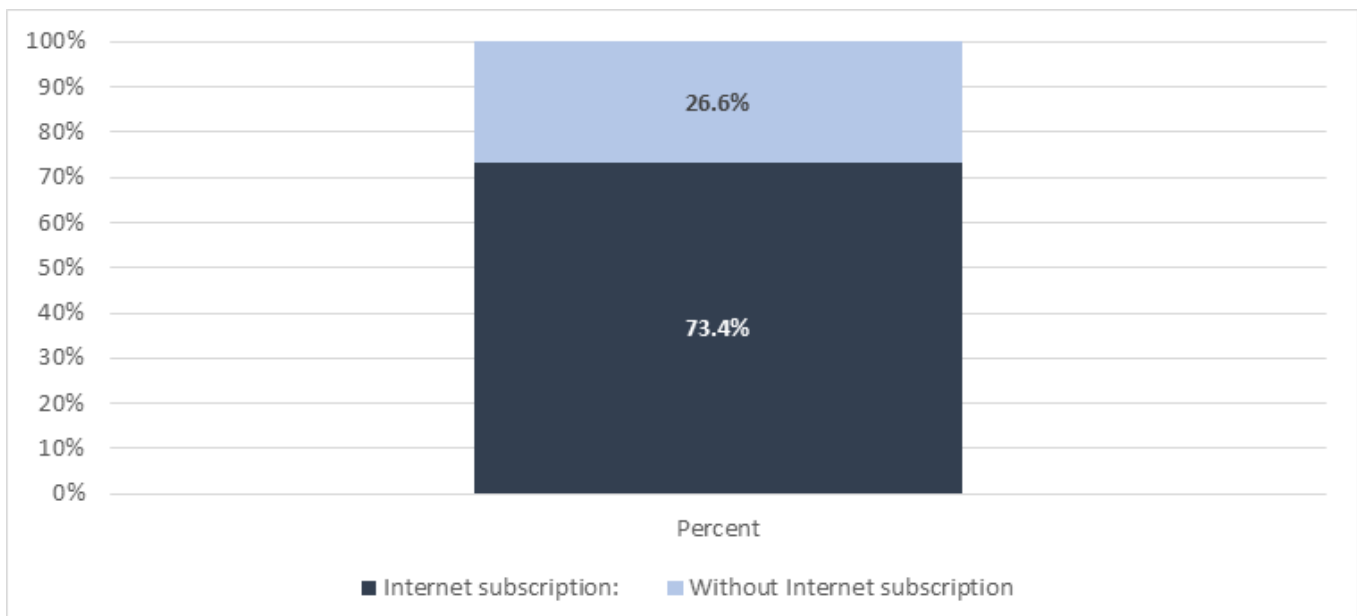
The FCC's current minimum standard set for broadband is 25/3 mbps, or the ability to download 25 megabits per second and upload 3 megabits per second. However, as technology progresses, an emerging definition for broadband connection among Internet Service Providers (ISPs) has been 100/20 mbps, which is significantly faster than the 25/3 mbps standard. This definition has been set by new federal funding programs for broadband, which programs provide support for areas without 100/20 mbps.

### Cordova: Current Broadband Conditions

Currently, nearly 74 percent of total households within the city have internet subscriptions of some type, while nearly 27 percent of households do not have access to internet service at their homes (see Figure 22). This rate is higher than state averages, where about 20 percent of total Alabama households do not currently subscribe to internet services.<sup>1</sup> Though a relatively large number of households have access to the internet, the types of connection technology vary, most likely depending on factors such as cost and availability. The majority of households utilize their cellular data plans for internet access, followed by either cable, fiber, or DSL connections. The least number of users are connected to broadband via satellite services, as illustrated in Figure 24.

1 The Alabama Connectivity Plan, ADECA, page 3

Figure 24: Internet Subscriptions by Total Household, 2020



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2020

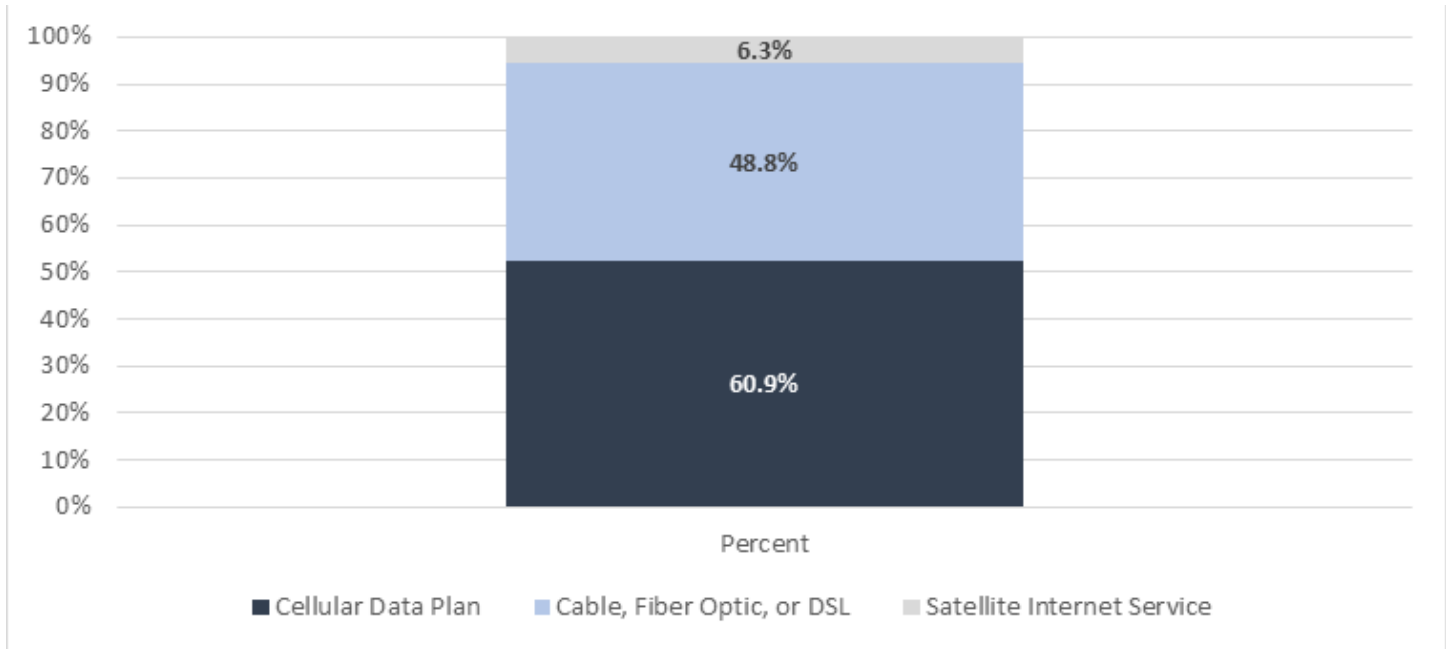
In addition, broadband connectivity is directly linked to income in Cordova. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau analyzed broadband subscriptions between three income groups. The income groups, the percentage of total households within each income group, and the percentage of households with an internet subscription within each bracket is outlined in Table 19.

Table 18: Cordova Households by Income Bracket, 2020

Income Level	Percent of Total Households	Percent with Internet Subscription
Less than \$20,000	33.0%	61.2%
\$20,000 to \$74,999	46.1%	70.1%
\$75,000 or More	20.9%	100%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2020

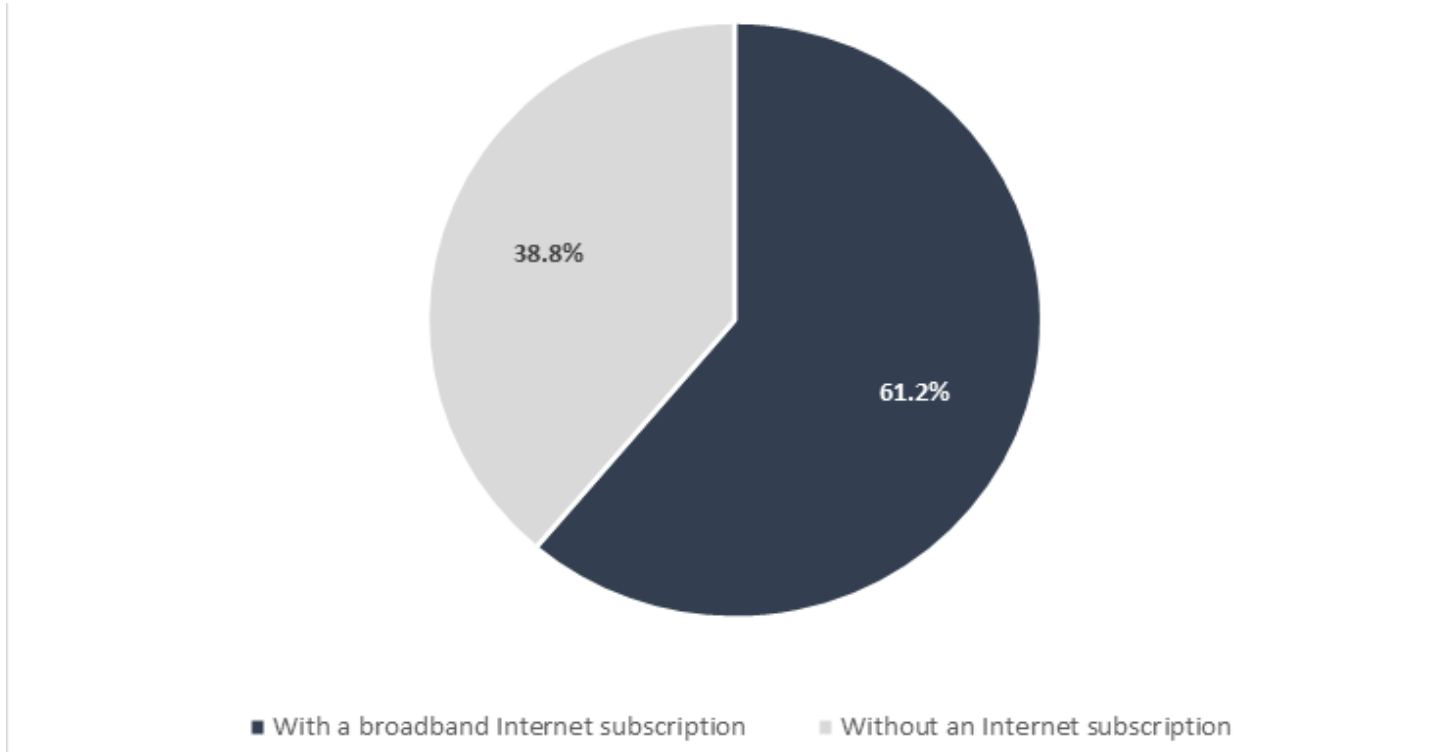
Figure 25: Type of Broadband Connections Utilize by Cordova Households, 2020



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2020

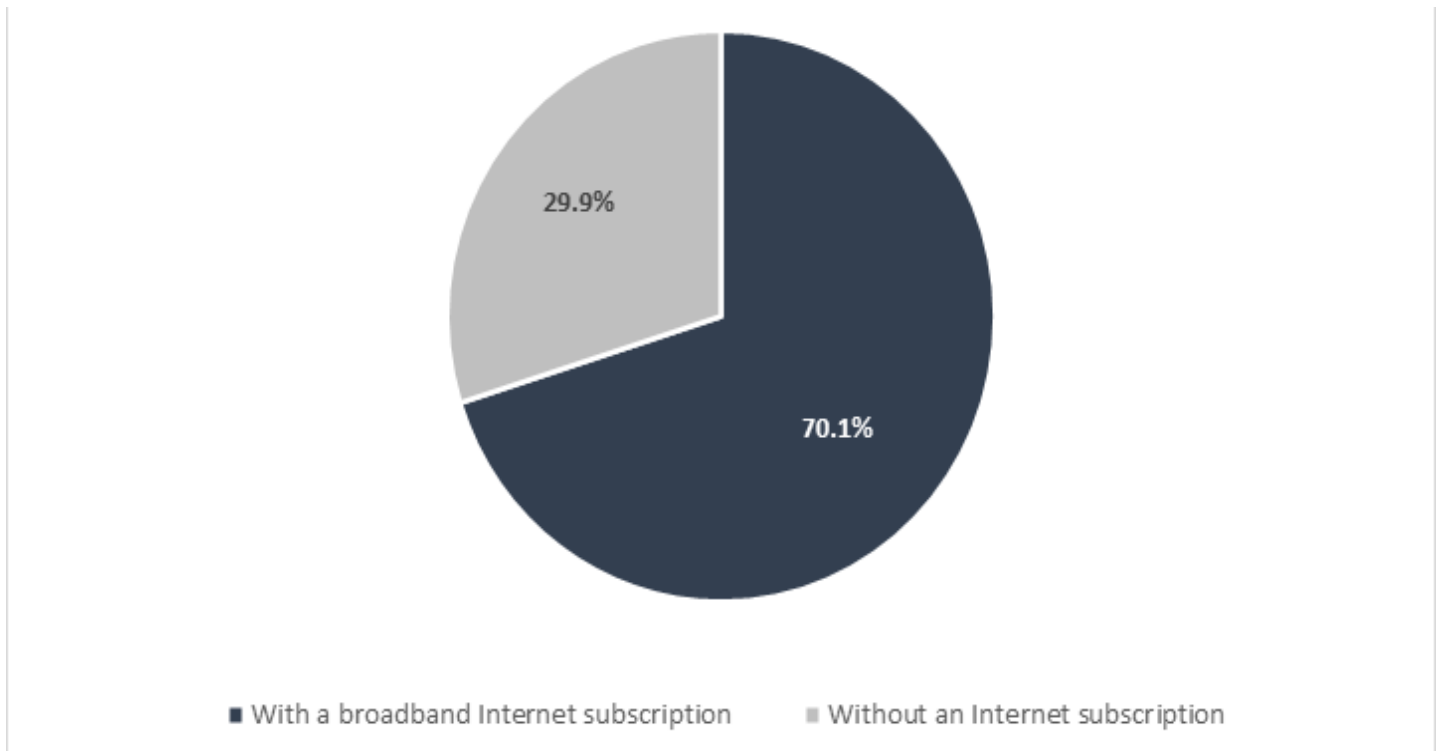
The number of households with internet subscription increased as the household income levels increased. All households earning more than \$75,000, which is only 21 percent of the total households within the city, had subscriptions to internet services. The ratios of each income group are illustrated in Figures 26 to 27.

Figure 26: Internet Subscriptions for Households Earning Less Than \$20,000



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2020

Figure 27: Internet Subscriptions for Households Earning \$20,000 - \$74,999



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2020

### Census Block Analysis

The Alabama Connectivity Map, designed and implemented by ADECA, categorizes census tracts by broadband connection levels for 25/3 mbps and 100/20 mbps speed. These maps illustrate the percentage of addresses within a census block that have access to the speed that has been selected. The connection levels used for the analysis are divided into four groups: 0% (where no address has connection or access); 1%-49%; 50%-80%; and 81%-100%.

For this section, the Alabama Connectivity Map was used to gauge the amount of connection levels for the census tracts within the city. The connection levels did not change between the two speed groups, likely meaning the current infrastructure can be used to support either speed level. Due to this data note, the 25/3 mbps speed level analysis was used for the basis of this section.

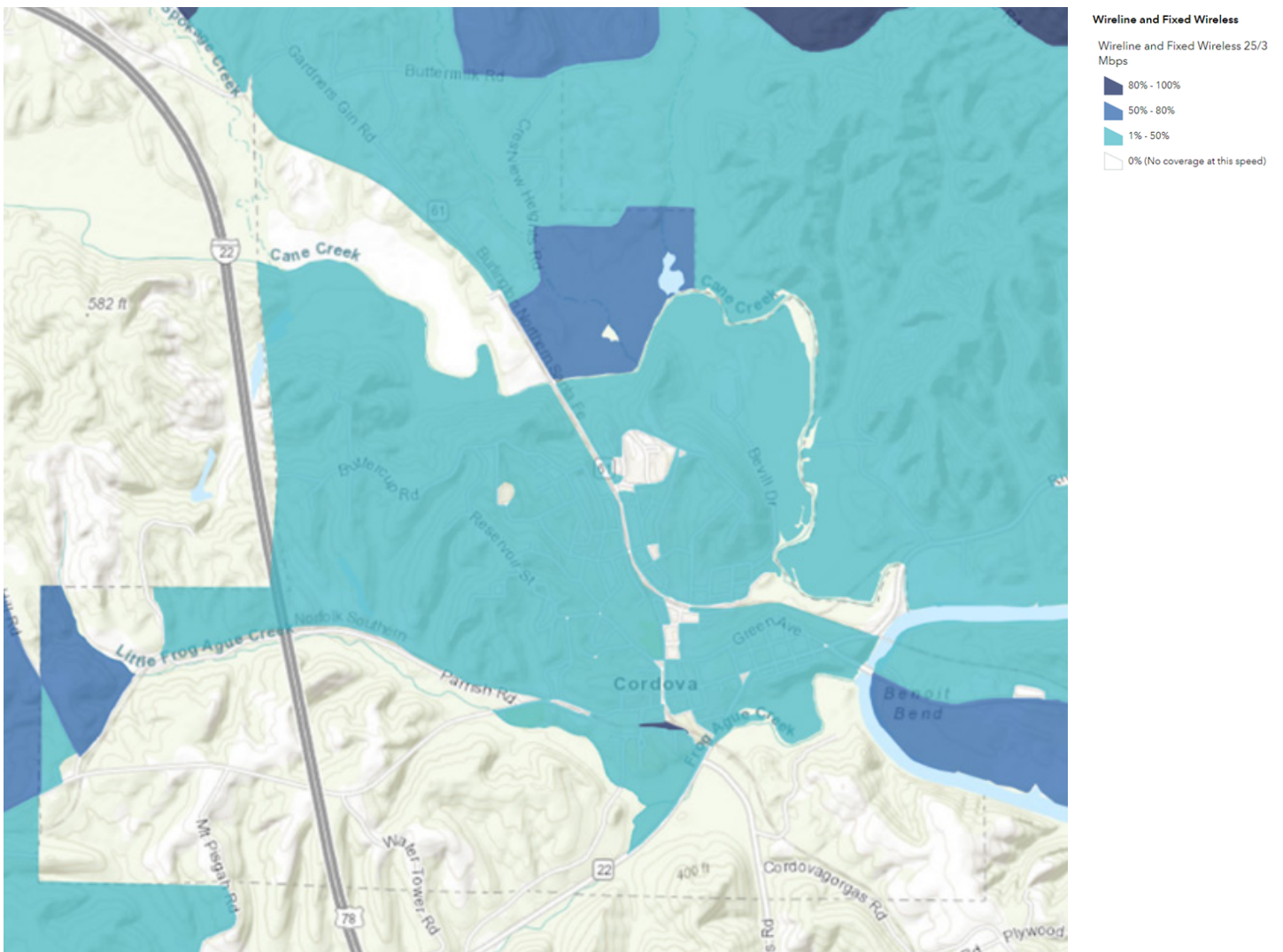
Within the City of Cordova, 34 census tracts (over 30 percent of total tracts) have no connection to broadband. Sixty-five, or 63 percent of the total tracts, ranged between 1 percent and 50 percent, with the average percent per tract being 30 percent. Table 20 shows the percent of census tracts within each connect range. Figure 28 shows the connection levels for the City of Cordova and surrounding area.

Table 19: Cordova Households by Income Bracket, 2020

Income Level	Percent of Total Households	Percent with Internet Subscription
0%	32%	61.2%
1% - 49%	62%	70.1%
50%-79%	5%	100%
80%-100%	1%	

Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA, 2021

Figure 28: City of Cordova and Surrounding Area, AL Broadband Map, 2021



Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA, 2021

## Broadband Challenges

Some inherent challenges exist for municipalities to evaluate when considering expanding and/or improving broadband internet service. This section will be dedicated to outlining those challenges, specifically within the jurisdiction of Cordova.

### 1. INFRASTRUCTURE & AVAILABILITY

The first challenge to consider when evaluating the feasibility of broadband expansion is the conditions and locations of existing infrastructure within the service area. The types of infrastructure available, along with the available connection speeds, determine the costs and feasible expansion alternatives for possible improvements. For the city, the majority (or nearly 61 percent) of residents with an internet subscription used their cellular data plan for service, meaning most households do not utilize cable or fiber connection options. These households most likely use cell phones or tablets to connect to internet services, rather than relying on a router or other cabled alternative. Cellular service is a more accessible option for many households, especially those without cable or fiber access, since only a wireless cellular plan and device are needed. However, as the definition of broadband improves from 25/3 mbps to 100/20 mbps, it is likely cellular data technologies will not be able to keep up, as they are currently not able to provide speeds faster than 25/3 mbps.<sup>1</sup>

However, as noted in Figure 23, nearly 50 percent use other options, like cable or DSL, for their subscriptions, meaning many areas have access to the infrastructure necessary to connect via cable or fiber. Identifying the types and locations of current broadband infrastructure could provide a road map for improvement planning and implementation.

In addition, as listed in Table 20, over 30 percent of parcels within the city limits have no access to broadband. As shown in Figure 26, a large portion of the unconnected parcels are located within the southwestern portion of the city, which is zoned as R2 – Medium Density Residential. The lack of access to broadband capabilities within this area may present a challenge for residential development in the area. The other larger segments with no broadband service are zoned as AG – Agriculture. These parcels likely will not need broadband in the near future, or at least not with as high of priority as the R2 areas.

### 2. COSTS TO UPDATE

Another factor to consider when planning for broadband expansion is the cost of improvements to the city, as well as Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Alabama has estimated that it will cost a range between \$4 to \$6 billion to bridge to rural broadband divide statewide, which includes constructing line extensions from current infrastructure into unserved areas. Due to costs of installation and unguaranteeable number of users, sometimes the returns to internet investment from user fees aren't enough to cover private providers' costs of building out their networks. This is leading many public entities to focus invests within "middle-mile" infrastructure-the hub of fiber connectivity that connects to "last-mile infrastructure, or the connecting lines to homes and businesses. Investing in middle mile infrastructure would enable last-mile networks; however, the costs could be significant. More research needs to be done to analyze the factors, costs, and benefits from middle-mile and last-mile investments.

---

1 The Alabama Connectivity Plan, ADECA, page 22

### 3. AFFORDABILITY

However, the existence and availability of broadband does not necessarily mean broadband is attainable for residents. Affordability refers to residents of the area having the disposable income necessary to purchase and use a broadband service. The Alabama Connectivity plan cited that even though federal subsidies exist for these programs, awareness regarding these programs was low. The consumer’s cost for broadband should also be considered when planning and implementing broadband expansion.

#### Implementation Initiatives

Fortunately, the rural broadband gap is an issue at the front of the broadband expansion conversation, on both state and federal levels. This section will outline some possible funding programs the City of Cordova could utilize during the broadband planning and implementation process. In addition to the resources listed in this section, Congress has passed two notable pieces of legislation-the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)-prioritizes investments in broadband within rural areas, and further research will need to be conducted over the coming months to identify funding opportunities created through those programs. Additionally, as noted previously, the state’s Alabama Connectivity Plan is the roadmap for state funding and investment programs and should be referenced regarding infrastructure expansion projects.

#### FEDERAL RESOURCES

The following table includes a list of possible federal funding sources the city could consider when evaluating broadband planning and infrastructure expansion.

Table 20: Federal Funding Programs for Broadband Projects

Funding Agency	Funding Program	Funding Range	Match Requirements	Typical Due Dates
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative	Up to \$2,000,000	Depends on County Designation; Walker County: 50% Match	April
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)	Community Connect Grant Program	Up to \$3,000,000	15% Match Required	December
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)	ReConnect Loan and Grant Program	Up to \$25,000,000	25% Match Required	November

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)



## STATE RESOURCES

The following table includes a list of possible state funding sources the city could consider when evaluating broadband planning and infrastructure expansion.

Table 21: Federal Funding Programs for Broadband Projects

Funding Agency	Funding Program	Funding Range	Match Requirements	Typical Due Dates
ADECA	ARC Area Development Program	Up to \$200,000	Depends on County Designation; Walker County: 50% Match	August
ADECA	Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant*	Up to \$5,000,000	20% Match Required	November

Source: Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; Appalachian Regional Commission

\*Eligible applicants for the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant are cooperatives, corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, or other private business entities or unit of governments that currently provide broadband services

### Broadband Analysis Conclusions

Broadband expansion will likely be needed within the City of Cordova to improve the quality of life of citizens as well as recruit new businesses and residents. The access to high quality broadband within the city is currently limited, and improvements and increased accessibility will be needed to catalyze economic growth, bolster new industry, and support the city’s outdoor recreation initiatives.

Several challenges are necessary to consider when evaluating the feasibility of infrastructure improvements, such as construction costs and affordability concerns for residents. However, as broadband continues to be an interest area on federal and state levels, support for broadband planning and expansion will remain a prominent focal point for funding programs and technical assistance initiatives.

The city is eligible for several funding programs that could support broadband expansion efforts. In addition to funding, it is recommended that the city establish a connection with ADECA’s new Digital Expansion Division, the department charged with improving broadband connectivity throughout the state. The division periodically has specialized funding available for technical assistance projects for municipalities, which could further aid the city with developing a feasible and sustainable plan for improving broadband.





SECTION III:  
**Cordova Action Plan**



# CITY OF CORDOVA: ACTION PLAN

The City of Cordova Action Plan was developed in accordance with the responses of community engagement efforts, guidance of local officials, and the findings detailed in this report. The purpose of the Action Plan is to offer strategies and specific tasks for planning and implementation efforts, based on the defined priority goals derived throughout the EDSP planning process. The Action Plan is organized between each of the three priority goals, with tailored strategies outlining specific areas of implementation to achieve each goal. The plan includes a wide variety of project types, ranging from infrastructure improvements to industry-specific initiatives, to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving the local economy and to meet the needs of Cordova's current and future residents.

The Action Plan is divided into 2 parts: The Cordova City Plan and the Outdoor Recreational Economy Plan. The City-Centered Plan outlined the goals and initiatives tailored to improving the city's local economy growth and resiliency based on data, local officials input, and the SWOT analysis. The Outdoor Recreational Economy Plan details goals and strategies relating to the establishment and expansion of the outdoor recreation industry within the city to become a fixture of the local economy.

## ACTION PLAN DEFINITIONS:

The following definitions explain the different terms used to develop the action plan:

- **Action Plan:** The strategic direction derived from the SWOT analysis, which is consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans
- **Goal:** The broad outcomes or high-level descriptors of the desired outcomes of the Action Plan. They are described using broad qualitative terms and are often intangible
- **Strategy:** A plan of action designed to achieve or support the achievement of the associated goal
- **Short-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take under than 2 years to complete.
- **Mid-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take 3 - 5 years to fully implement.
- **Long-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take longer than 5 years to complete.

Together, goals, strategies, objectives, and tasks provide a basis for decisions on the use of available resources, as well as benchmarks by which city officials and the community can measure performance.

## PART 1: CORDOVA CITY ACTION PLAN

### PRIORITY GOALS:

#### GOAL 1: INCREASE ECONOMIC VIABILITY AND RESILIENCY

Spurring economic activity and revitalizing the local economic potential is the city’s primary priority. This goal focuses on attracting new industry as well as supporting locally grown businesses through recruitment strategies, site development initiatives, and small business support, as well as harnessing the city’s external labor flow to diversify its tax base and increase tax revenues.

#### GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The quality of a city’s workforce and the employment opportunities accessible to them is a driver in population growth and retention as well as the quality of life available to residents. This goal aims to alleviate current barriers in the city’s ability to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce and focuses on quality-of-life aspects of the community, including the development of outdoor recreation assets.

#### GOAL 3: IMPROVE AND ENHANCE CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Improving and rehabilitating existing infrastructure is critical to any future business development and recruitment effort. This goal includes initiatives for improving existing critical infrastructure, planning for prioritization of future needs, and developing outdoor recreation and other connective infrastructure throughout the city.

### CORDOVA CITY ACTION PLAN:

No.	Actions	SWOT Impact Area	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Goal 1: Economic Opportunities &amp; Resiliency</b>				
1	Increase the City of Cordova’s development capacity and potential through site development and business recruitment.	<b>W:</b> Business Environment, Business Sites/Real Estate; <b>T:</b> Presence of brownfields, blight, dilapidated buildings	Mid-Term	City, RPCGB, WCEIDA, Department of Commerce
2	Diversify the city’s tax base by identifying market opportunities and developing recruitment strategies.	<b>S:</b> Lifestyle and Quality of Life; <b>T:</b> Overreliance on one industry or employer	Short-Term	City, RPCGB, WCEIDA, Department of Commerce

No.	Strategy	SWOT Impact Area	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Goal 1: Economic Opportunities &amp; Resiliency</b>				
3	Develop avenues to increase tax base by harnessing external labor flows and encouraging tourism	<b>O:</b> Improve Critical Infrastructure; Provide More Business Support <b>T:</b> Limited/Lack of job growth/opportunities	Short-Term	City, RPCGB, Department of Commerce
4	Identify target areas for strategic development districts throughout city (such as downtown district or river front areas).	<b>O:</b> Focus on Programs to Recruit, Attract Businesses <b>T:</b> Vacant downtowns, lack of resources for downtown development	Short-Term	City, WACF, RPCGB
5	Enhance the city’s outdoor recreational assets to spur and support an outdoor recreation economy.	<b>S:</b> Natural Environment; Lifestyle/Quality of Life; <b>O:</b> Improve Outdoor Recreation Initiatives	Long-Term	City, WACF, UA Center for Economic Development
<b>Goal 2: Strengthen Workforce and Quality of Life</b>				
1	Increase quality job opportunities within the city by involving local public and private stakeholders in workforce development planning to define private sector needs and existing workforce talent gaps.	<b>W:</b> Business Environment <b>T:</b> Limited/Lack of Job Growth/Opportunities	Long-Term	City, Local Business, Schools, Bevill State
2	Upskill local talent to take advantage of economically desirable jobs through partnerships with local community colleges and high school programs through supporting STEM Center certification programs and external internship opportunities.	<b>S:</b> K-12 Schools <b>W:</b> Limited Career Opportunities, Trajectories	Long-Term	City, Schools, Bevill State

No.	Strategy	SWOT Impact Area	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Goal 2: Strengthen Workforce and Quality of Life</b>				
3	Encourage local entrepreneurs through training programs and start-up business support and investment.	<b>W:</b> Business Environment; Limited Entrepreneurial Engagement	Mid-Term	City, RPCGB, Community Development Finance Institution
4	Identify target areas and demographic age groups for residential expansion to combat population decline and support increases in the local workforce.	<b>T:</b> Inability to attract or retain population, workforce	Short-Term	City, RPCGB, Residential Developers
<b>Goal 3: Improve and Enhance City Infrastructure</b>				
1	Improve critical infrastructure to serve existing and expanding industrial, commercial, and residential development to support job creation and retention.	<b>S:</b> Transportation Infrastructure <b>O:</b> Improve Critical Infrastructure	Mid-Term	City, WACF, RPCGB, ADECA
2	Improve and expand existing transportation infrastructure to improve connectivity within the city and between neighboring communities.	<b>S:</b> Transportation Infrastructure <b>T:</b> Vacant downtowns, lack of resources for downtown development	Long-Term	City, WACF, RPCGB, ADECA
3	Increase broadband accessibility throughout the city, especially in under-invested areas.	<b>O:</b> Improve Critical Infrastructure <b>T:</b> Inability to attract or retain population, workforce	Mid-Term	City, WACF, RPCGB, ADECA

## PART 2: OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ECONOMY PLAN

### PRIORITY GOALS:

#### GOAL 1: IDENTIFY ASSETS AND ESTABLISH A BRAND

Begin the development of the outdoor recreation industry in Cordova by identifying and mapping existing assets and establish branding for Cordova’s eco-tourism destination.

#### GOAL 2: EXPAND CITYWIDE CONNECTIVITY AND ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY

Enhance the connectivity of the city’s outdoors assets by determining the viability and attainability for the implementation of trails, paths, sidewalks, and other alternative infrastructure to encourage the use and increase accessibility.

#### GOAL 3: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION BUSINESS GROWTH

Create, support, and expand outdoor recreation businesses and activities to bolster economic development and enhance quality of life for residents and experiences for visitors.

#### GOAL 4: SUPPORT A LOCALLY GROWN OUTDOOR RECREATION CULTURE

Establish and grow a culture of outdoor recreation in Cordova for long-term development and success through community involvement and participation as well as secure funding sources.

### OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ECONOMY PLAN

No.	Strategy	Timeframe	Potential Partners
<i>Goal 1: Begin the development of the outdoor recreation industry</i>			
1	Create outdoor recreation stakeholder coalition as a means to empower the local community to buy-in to and support the growing outdoor recreation sector	Short-Term	City, WACF, RPCGB UA Center for Economic Development
2	Identify and document existing outdoor recreation assets within the city limits and develop visions for improvement/expansion of those facilities	Short-Term	City, WACF, RPCGB UA Center for Economic Development
3	In light of assets, identify gaps in outdoor recreation infrastructure within the city that corresponds to the service, development needs, and overall vision for the city	Mid-Term	City, WACF, UA Center for Economic Development
4	Develop an outdoor recreation brand, identity, and graphic package for use in all online, print, and signage materials that builds on the unique assets, features and qualities of Cordova and Walker County	Mid-Term	City, WACF



No.	Strategy	Timeframe	Potential Partners
<b>Goal 2: Enhance the connectivity of the city's outdoors assets</b>			
1	Determine connection needs from existing assets and implement improvements	Short-Term	City, WACF, UA Center for Economic Development
2	Prioritize connection needs and develop implementation plan for improvements	Mid-Term	City, WACF
3	Identify possible funding sources for implementing improvements	Mid-Term	City, RPCGB, WACF, ADECA
<b>Goal 3: Create, support, and expand outdoor recreation businesses and activities</b>			
1	Determine which industries to target for recruitment, based on current demand and future investment	Short-Term	City, RPCGB
2	Determine best specific retail businesses (fast food, clothing, coffee shops, etc.) to target to begin building a foundation for outdoor recreation	Mid-Term	City, RPCGB, Recruitment Consultant
3	Identify vacant properties and parcels to market as business destinations for desired companies	Short-Term	City, RPCGB
4	Develop and implement recruitment strategy focused on target industries and sites	Long-Term	City, RPCGB, Recruitment Consultant
<b>Goal 4: Grow a culture of outdoor recreation &amp; secure funding sources</b>			
1	Establish avenues to create opportunities for local residents to participate in city-wide outdoor activities or volunteer with various boards, committees, and events	Mid-Term	City, WACF
2	Create and implement long-term vision for the expansion, management, and protection for natural and outdoor recreation resources	Long-Term	City, WACF, Forever Wild

