

2021

Joint Comprehensive Plan Update Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald



Prepared by:
City of Fitzgerald
Ben Hill County



Photos courtesy of SGRC staff

A special acknowledgment for the Stakeholders, Steering Committee, and SGRC Staff members who dedicated their time and hard work to this project. They ensured that the plan would become a workable plan and guide the city, county, and citizens.

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I. Chapter 110-12-1. Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning

1. Introduction

The 2021 County Comprehensive Plan was prepared following the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective October 1, 2018.

As required by the Local Comprehensive Planning Standards, the 2021 Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Comprehensive Plan consists of the following elements:

1. Community Goals
2. Needs and Opportunities
3. Community Work Program
4. Broadband Services
5. Economic Development Element (as a community included in 2020 Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 category). Although a separate summarized economic development element is included in this Comprehensive Plan, which by reference adopts the current regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), any economic development goals, policies, needs, opportunities, and objectives of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald have also been integrated directly into their parallel components in this Comprehensive Plan.
6. Land Use Element (as a community with zoning or land development regulations subject to the Zoning Procedures Law).

2. Community Involvement

All of the required elements have been developed with extensive opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders throughout Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald. The following steps were taken to ensure that this plan reflected the full range of needs and opportunities from the many stakeholders and residents in the communities:

- a) Stakeholders and Steering Committee were identified. These included local governments' department heads and staff, tourism and development authority employees, and elected officials.
- b) Participation techniques were identified. Methods used included a kick-off public information meeting, printed public information in local newspapers, and information on the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's website and local government websites.
- c) A participation program was conducted. Identified stakeholders were invited and attended, yielding specific input in plan content. The steering committee held

regular meetings to provide information and feedback. The final draft of the plan was reviewed by all the stakeholders/steering committee.

- d) Community Involvement Activities documented. Included in this document is a list of stakeholders and an overview of participation. (Photos, sign-in sheets, published advertisements, emails, social media posts, etc.)

1st Public Hearing – “Kick-Off”

The public hearing kick-off for the comprehensive planning process was held on July 7, 2020, at the Ben Hill County Annex, located at 324-B East Pine Street, Fitzgerald, Georgia. It was held to make any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review were now underway, explain the purpose of the update, and encourage residents and other stakeholders to participate in the plan update actively.

3. Identification of Stakeholders and Steering Committee

A comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was put together with input from the Development Authority, elected officials, and city and county department heads. A complete list of all the stakeholders is included in this plan.

The Steering Committee consisted of elected officials, the Chamber of Commerce Director, and the Development Authority Director.

4. Identification of Participation Techniques

The following participation techniques were utilized during the update process:

Public Hearings

Workshops

Extensive e-mail correspondence with stakeholders

SGRC website as well as Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald websites

Dissemination of information in the newspaper

5. Participation Program

A foundational principle utilized by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in all of its planning projects is public and stakeholder participation from, and coordination with, multiple and diverse interest groups. Due to Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald's relatively small population, the entire stakeholder group was utilized as the steering committee, ensuring the broadest buy-in and diversity of input into the comprehensive plan update. Outreach to the public, local governments, and other stakeholders and interested parties was accomplished by e-mail correspondence, direct communication, Facebook postings, the project website, and updates at workshops and other group meetings. Opportunity for public comment was provided at public hearings and city and county commission meetings. In addition to the two required public hearings, SGRC held a series of three workshops to discuss several elements of the plan. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix, along with public hearing notices.

First Workshop

The first workshop was used to review the existing goals, issues, and opportunities; in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, participants updated the list of goals, issues, and opportunities to meet current needs. This workshop was held on October 8, 2020, at City Hall in Fitzgerald.



2nd Workshop

The Policies and Report of Accomplishments were developed in the second workshop, held on November 12, 2020, along with the updated Community Work Program draft. The participants developed the Community Work Program to include specific action items and projects that would be feasible for the County and the individual communities to implement should funding become available. This workshop was also held at City Hall in Fitzgerald.



3rd Workshop

The third workshop was utilized to update the Land Use Element and Maps as desired by the local governments. This was done through open discussion and viewing of the maps in a setting where all attendees could make notes on the maps for suggested changes to the character areas. Notes from the meeting made by SGRC staff, and notes made on the maps, were then used by SGRC GIS staff to update the character area maps and incorporate the workshop's input.

2nd Public Hearing - Transmittal Hearing

The second public hearing was held on April 6, 2021, before the Ben Hill County Commission, at the Ben Hill County Annex located at 324-B East Pine Street, Fitzgerald, Georgia.

Insert Photo

(ADD ADOPTION PHOTO)

DRAFT

6. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the local governments must review both the Regional Water Plan covering its area and the GDNR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria, as laid out in Chapter 391-3-16, to determine whether any local

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implementation practices or development regulations need to be adapted to be consistent with both.

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are within the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, adopted in September 2017.



Source: CDM Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

The Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan has identified 13 goals, listed below, to implement its vision of managing water resources sustainably under Georgia’s regulated riparian and reasonable use laws to support the state’s and region’s economy, protect public health and natural resources, and enhance the quality of life for all citizens; while preserving the private property rights of Georgia’s landowners, and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Goals:

1. Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, industrial water needs, and agricultural water needs, including all agricultural sectors (this includes the region’s agroforestry economy).
2. Manage groundwater and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.

3. Manage the region's and state's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.
4. Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs while protecting environmental resources.
5. Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies and water and wastewater infrastructure.
6. Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
7. Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
8. Protect, maintain, and where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality and river base flow.
9. Protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities.
10. Identify opportunities to manage stormwater to improve water quantity and quality.
11. Identify and implement cost-effective water management strategies.
12. Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens of the region.
13. Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

The Regional Water Plan has also adopted several Short-Term Water Quantity and Water Quality Management Practices. The local comprehensive plan should include managing water resources sustainably through the planning period and beyond. The most significant issues in the Suwannee-Satilla Region are surface water availability gaps driven by agricultural usage. As such, the majority of water supply management practices are intended to address agricultural surface water use.

Short Term Water Quantity Management Practices (0-10 Years)

1. Utilize surface water and groundwater sources within the available resource capacities
2. Water conservation.
3. Data collection and research to confirm the frequency, duration, severity, and drivers of surface water gaps (forecast methodology assumptions and Resource Assessment modeling).

4. Evaluate and ensure that current and future surface water permit conditions do not contribute to 7Q10 low flow concerns.
5. Encourage sustainable groundwater use as a preferred supplier in regions with surface water 7Q10 low flow concerns and adequate groundwater supply.
6. Identify incentives and a process to replace a portion of existing agricultural sustainably surface water use with groundwater use to address 7Q10 low flow concerns.
7. Evaluate the potential to use existing storage to address 7Q10 low flow concerns.
8. Education to reduce surficial aquifer groundwater use impacts to 7Q10 low flow Concerns.

Short-Term Water Quality Management Practices (0 – 10 Years):

- Point Sources:
 - Support and fund current permitting and waste load allocation processes to improve wastewater treatment and increase treatment capacity.
 - Data collection and research to confirm discharge volumes and waste concentrations as well as receiving stream flows and chemistry
- Non-Point Sources:
 - Data collection to confirm the source of pollutants and causes; encourage stormwater ordinances, septic system maintenance, and coordinated planning
 - Ensure funding and support for local and state Best Management Practices programs, including urban/suburban, rural, forestry, and agricultural Best Management Practices
- Non-point Source Existing Impairments:
 - Total maximum daily load listed streams: Improve data on the source of pollutant and length of impairment; identify opportunities to leverage funds, and implement non-point source Best Management Practices
- Longer-Term (20 – 40 years) water quantity and quality management practices include:
 - Improve the infiltration and management of wetlands
 - Evaluate incentive-based programs to manage, increase, and restore wastewater and stormwater returns

- Identify potential/feasibility of a multi-purpose reservoir
- Identify the feasibility of regional inter-basin transfer
- Continue wastewater and stormwater master planning

Chapter 391-3-16, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria

The Environmental Planning Criteria that are part of the Minimum Planning Standards deal specifically with protecting water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains, the last of which is not applicable in this region. These criteria were developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as mandated in Part V of the Georgia Planning Act and the Mountains and River Corridor Protection Act.

The criteria require local governments to identify existing and future water supply watersheds and adopt a water supply watershed protection plan for their jurisdiction.

Some uses may be grandfathered, such as land uses existing before adopting a watershed plan, mining activities permitted by DNR, certain utility placements, special forestry, or agricultural services.

The environmental guidelines also spell out criteria for the delineation of small and large water supply watersheds, the protection of groundwater recharge areas, the protection of wetlands and river corridors. These criteria shall be incorporated into this comprehensive plan and addressed specifically and in more detail through local ordinances and land development code regulations.

SGRC ENVIRONMENTAL SUGGESTIONS FOR BEN HILL COUNTY

Lake Beatrice Improvements Feasibility Study

- SGRC Awarded funding from GA EPD in January 2021
- We are awaiting word from the Army Corps of Engineers that they have secured funding to complete the project.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), representatives from the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council, and Georgia EPD have been meeting on a near-monthly basis since November 2017 to discuss conducting an exploratory study to address the reduction of surface water flow gaps in the Alapaha River by improving the dam at Lake Beatrice. Initially, estimated calculations indicate flow augmentation from an improved Lake Beatrice could reduce flow gaps at the downstream Statenville Node in both frequency and magnitude. This proposed study would gather data to determine improvements needed at the dam and lake that will reduce gaps and consider what operational and ownership models will be required for the improvements. *(Complete report is attached as Appendix #1)*

II. Plan Elements

1. Community Goals

Goal 1: Natural Resources

Conserve and protect the functions and values of Ben Hill County's natural resources for future generations' appropriate use and enjoyment.

Goal 2: Cultural Resources

Protect, preserve, and promote the historic and cultural resources of Ben Hill County through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, and tourism and education programs focused on historic preservation.

Goal 3: Land Use

Ensure the highest quality living environment possible through a mixture of compatible land uses and character areas reflecting the residents' needs and desires and their vision for Ben Hill County.

Goal 4: Economic Development

Improve the Ben Hill County economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, diversify the local economy, and help Ben Hill County compete in the regional economy.

Goal 5: Housing

Provide opportunities for homeownership and housing resources for all residents of Ben Hill County through public/private partnerships.

Goal 6: Community Facilities and Services

Ensure that needed community facilities such as water, sewer, solid waste, police, fire, EMS, and hospitals/healthcare are provided in a practical, environmentally sound, safe, and economic system, consistent with present demand and future growth.

Goal 7: Intergovernmental Coordination

Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public entities to maintain the best Greater Ben Hill County's quality of life and resources.

Goal 8: Broadband

Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met.

Goal 9: Transportation

To promote transportation facilities, protect our community resources, promote efficient infrastructure use, and support quality economic development while supporting quality economic development.

Vision Statement

To effectively incorporate Ben Hill County and Fitzgerald Economic Development Agencies' abilities, natural resources, educational opportunities, existing industrial base, and the community spirit of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County to produce a healthier economy and a superb quality of life for the residents of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County.



HISTORY

Ben Hill County 1906

Ben Hill County

Covering over 254 square miles, with 250 of that being land and 3.8 square miles is water. Ben Hill County is the 118th largest county in Georgia by area.



The county was created by constitutional amendment on November 6, 1906, and named after Benjamin Harvey Hill, a former Confederate, state representative, and United States Senator. The county was created from Irwin and Wilcox counties and was Georgia's 146th county. Ben Hill County is one of 25 Georgia counties that still have the original boundaries today.



Fitzgerald was founded in 1895 by Philander H. Fitzgerald. Mr. Fitzgerald was a newspaperman from Indiana. The land was a 50,000-acre tract owned by the non-profit American Tribune Soldiers Colony Company. The county seat is located in Fitzgerald, and its courthouse was built in the first decade and renovated during the 1950s. The courthouse, built-in 1909, is still in use and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The jail is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic District on South Lee and South Main streets in Fitzgerald is listed on the National Register. The old railroad depot is now home to the Blue/Gray Museum.

(Farming/Mid 1900's)

Fitzgerald



Agricultural

In the early 20th century, the timber industry was important in Ben Hill County. After the market changed, people began moving to other locations for work. Agricultural has always been important to the county, and there is a higher than average percentage of employment in the manufacturing workforce. Major crops within the county are cotton, poultry, peanuts, timber, and tobacco.

General Information

River Basins

Ben Hill County's northwestern corner is located in the Alapaha River sub-basin of the Suwannee River basin. In contrast, the southwestern corner is located in the Satilla River sub-basin of the St. Marys-Satilla River basin. Other portions of the county are located in the Ocmulgee River basin.



(Ocmulgee River)



2. Needs and Opportunities

The Needs and Opportunities listed in this section were developed through discussions with stakeholders and residents; from the experiences of stakeholders and residents; through analysis of statistical data and information; and through review and revision as applicable of the issues and opportunities identified in the Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald's current plan. Each of the following Needs and Opportunities is addressed by related policies in the "Community Policies" section.



Natural Resources

Needs

- Continue to market the agricultural and natural resources in the county.
- The dwindling tree canopy in the City of Fitzgerald needs to be addressed.
- A feasibility study is needed for Lake Beatrice.
- Create a Rural Regional Water Management agency.
- Encourage more use of local rivers for recreational use.

Opportunities

- Ben Hill County has a good supply of ground/drinking water.
- A walking trail and bird sanctuary located behind the hospital can be enjoyed by visitors.

Cultural Resources

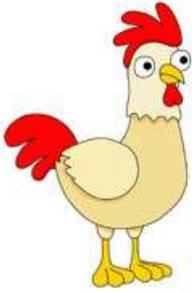
Needs

- Maintenance and rehabilitation of historical and cultural resources are needed.
- Continue to update the Comprehensive Tourism Master Plan featuring Historic Preservation.
- Continue to update the comprehensive local (historic/cultural/natural) resource guide and virtual video on website.



Opportunities

- Capitalize on history, arts, and private attractions with a Tourism Master Plan, including but not limited to:

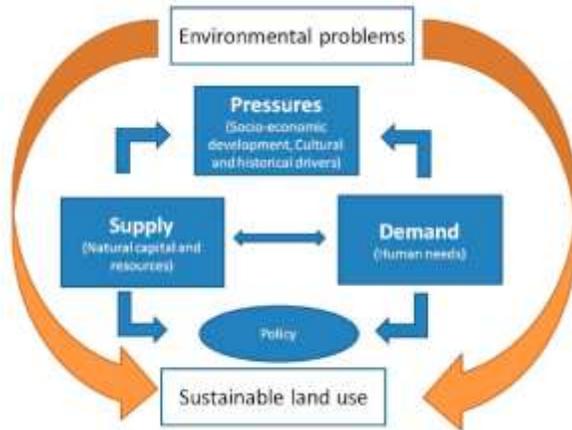


- The Arts Council
- The Grand Theatre and Fox Historic Theatre Group
- The Grand Theatre Barton Organ Society
- The Carnegie Center
- The Blues Festival, Chasing Jefferson Davis Marathon 3rd Thursday, Snow Day, the Fitzgerald Sky Dive Boogie, and the Wild Chicken 100 Mile Bike Ride
- The Grand Homecoming (every three years)
- The Blue & Gray Museum
- The Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails program
- Archaeological research is being conducted on a campsite in Hernando de Soto along the Altamaha River; this may yield discoveries that bring visitors to the area
- Ben Hill County Cemeteries
- The Ocmulgee River
- Paulk Park – RV park, campground, and ballfields.
- The two wildlife preserves, Horse Creek and Mobley Bluff
- Ocmulgee River Water Trail
- The Big Chicken structure with Air B and B
- Historical Kitchen Museum
- African Art Museum (opening in 2021)
- Survey all historic properties and cultural resources within the Community
- Continue to update the current Tourism Master Plan
- Signs can be installed at the Ocmulgee River, which would help to guide tourist

Land Use

Needs

- Continue to support the quality of land use rather than quantity to create higher land values and grow the tax base.
- A plan to reduce incompatible uses is needed.



Opportunities

- The City and County should collaborate to plan for future utilities as needed.
- Maintain the rural quality of life.
- Annually reassess the zoning code to ensure it meets the communities' needs.

Economic Development

Needs

- Continue to work towards a strategy to attract and retain higher-wage jobs.
- A plan for retaining retirees needs to be marketed.
- Monitor the unemployment rate not to exceed the state average.
- Lack of a retail attraction and retention strategy to increase commercial activity.



- The hospital needs to coordinate with the city and county for funding with SPLOST
- Continue to support comprehensive continuing education and training opportunities and programs that are needed to be increased significantly for the existing workforce in conjunction with the business/industry sector.
- Ensure that the overall community growth and development benefits all segments of the population. Education and training the the younger population would retain them in the community.

- Continue implementing programs that will provide upward mobility for our peers within the community.
- Continue to promote strategies for new construction.
- Remain competitive in a global economy.
- Establish a retail attraction and retention strategy to increase commercial activity.
- Extend all utilities in the industrial park to attract new industry.
- Support small businesses within the community to help utilize the use of vacant buildings.

- Research the use of a building for technology training.
- Continue to expand the current Comprehensive Tourism Plan.
- Promote allocation of approximately 3,000 acres of vacant land that could be used as an inland port.

Opportunities

- Continue to partnership for workforce development and higher education.
- Continue to support and expand the College Career Academy.
- Reevaluate the Millennium Technology Pointe Park marketing plan.
- Continue to enhance and expand existing industry clusters.
- Continue to enhance the community’s quality of life to further economic development.
- Continue to focus on value-added agriculture and forestry products.
- Continue to promote development-ready sites.
- Continue to create seamless coordination between all economic development organizations.
- Continue to promote the airport as an asset for the community, bringing visitors, and facilitating the movement of goods.
- A public transportation system could be an asset to the community, allowing people to access jobs and other destinations without a personal vehicle.
- Work with the SGRC in developing a regional transportation system.
- Comprehensive continuing education and training opportunities and programs need to be increased significantly for the existing workforce in conjunction with the business/industry sector.
- Expand the College/Peachtree Corridor to enhance Industrial Park.
- Freight connections to the Ports of Brunswick and Savannah should be investigated to increase the community’s role in freight movement.

Housing

Needs

- Blighted residential properties continue to exist.
- The zoning ordinance needs regular assessment that ensures adequate housing for the community’s needs.



Opportunities

- Continue the removal of blighted old homes under the Redevelopment Plan.
- Create a marketing strategy for housing, such as “Aging in Place.”
- Create a workforce for safe and affordable housing opportunities.

Community Facilities and Services

Needs

- Water and sewer line expansions are needed in the county to serve existing and new developments.
- The area lacks recreation opportunities for young people, especially teenagers.
- Explore increasing the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant.



Opportunities

- Ben Hill County has water and sewer lines in place for future development.
- Promote the community's high-quality education system.
- The county has a state-of-the-art senior citizens' center, making the community an attractive area for retirement.
- Coordinate with the SGRC to develop a bicycle and pedestrian safety plan.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Needs

- The city, county, and the school system need to look for opportunities to partner.

Opportunities

- Collaboration with surrounding counties concerning essential/emergency services through inter-local agreements.
- Establish regional partnerships for mutual and emergency services, training, and education.
- Continue to study functional consolidation of services.



Broadband Services

Needs

- Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met.

Opportunities

- Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and the business community.
- Encourage partnership of providers to allow better broadband services.
- Public/private partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive broadband coverage consistent, reliable, and equitable.
- Broadband infrastructure may be included during road project development to increase project efficiencies and outcomes.



Transportation

Needs

- There are roads within the community that need to be paved or resurfaced.
- Extend airport runway 500 feet.
- A silent crossing zone is needed to run through the City of Fitzgerald.
- SR 107 needs to be four-lane as the main access to I-75 to reduce congestion.



- The railroad line is at capacity, causing freight bottlenecks and traffic backups at the railroad crossings.
- A comprehensive community-wide Transportation Plan addressing all modes of transportation is needed.
- A bicycle and pedestrian safety plan is needed.
- Develop a project list for SPLOST and TSPLOST.

Opportunities

- Grants are available through CBGS, LMIG, GDOT, etc., for funding costs.
- SPLOST and T-SPLOST will also allow funding for many improvements, including resurfacing the main arterial roads.



3. Analysis of Data and Information

Population by Race

Ben Hill County

The 2019 population of Ben Hill County is 17,033, indicating a 3.7 percent decrease in population since 2014. There are 6,443 households and 4,019 families, with an average of 3.39 people per household. 59.7 percent of the population is White, and 36.6 percent are Black; other races make up 2.7 percent of the population. 6.1 percent are of Hispanic/Latino origin.

City of Fitzgerald

The 2019 population of the City of Fitzgerald is 8,812, indicating a 2.5 percent decrease in population since 2015. There are 3,346 households and 1,932 families, with an average of 3.53 people per household. 39.4 percent of the population is White, and 57.3 percent are Black; other races make up 2.3 percent of the population. 1.3 percent are of Hispanic/Latino origin.

Population by Age

Ben Hill County

28.3 percent of the county's population is 19 years of age or younger. Fifty-five percent are between 20 and 64, and 16.6 percent are 65 or older. The median age is 39.9 in Ben Hill County, compared with a median US age of 38.1.

City of Fitzgerald

30.6 percent of the county's population is 19 years of age or younger. 54.5 percent are between 20 and 64, and 14.6 percent are 65 or older. The median age is 35.3 in the City of Fitzgerald.

Housing

Ben Hill County

There are 8,001 housing units in Ben Hill County. Approximately 58.6 percent ± of all homes in Ben Hill County are valued at less than \$100,000, about 30.6 percent ± are valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and only approximately 10.8 percent± of the housing stock is valued 8 \$200,000 or more. Roughly 58.8 percent of housing units are owner-occupied, 41.2 percent are rentals, and 19.5 percent of the housing stock is vacant. The median home value is \$83,400.

City of Fitzgerald

There are 4,2147 housing units in the City of Fitzgerald. About 59.6 percent ± of all homes in the City of Fitzgerald are valued at less than \$100,000, about 39.6 percent ± are valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and 4.9 percent of the housing stock is valued at \$200,000 or more. 46.0 percent of housing units are owner-occupied, 54 percent are rentals. The median home value is \$81,700.

Household Income

Ben Hill County

In 2019, the median household income in Ben Hill County was \$32,229, an increase of *10.7 percent since 2015*. Per capita income was \$17,774. In 2014 the median household income was \$29,994, and per capita income was \$15,316. The poverty level in Ben Hill County for 2019 was *22.8 percent*.

City of Fitzgerald

In 2019, the median household income in the City of Fitzgerald was \$24,885, a decrease of *1.3 percent since 2015*, and the per capita income was \$14,992. In 2015 the median household income was \$25,203, and per capita income was \$13,228. Median income decreased, but per capita income increased. The poverty level for the City of Fitzgerald was *13.3percent* in 2019.

Education Attainment

Ben Hill County

According to the 2019 Census estimates, among people age 25 or older in BenHill County, it is estimated that *3.6 percent* have a bachelor's degree or higher degree; *44.1 percent* have some college or associate's degree; *38.5 percent* have a high school diploma or GED, but no higher degree and *13.8 percent* have no high school; diploma or GED.

City of Fitzgerald

According to the 2019 Census estimates, among people age 25 or older in the City of Fitzgerald, *4.5 percent* have a bachelor's degree or higher degree. *34.1 percent* have some college or associate's degree, *46.1 percent* have a high school diploma or GED, but no higher degree and *15.4 percent* have no high school; diploma or GED.

Workforce and Commute to Work

The largest industries in Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County are **Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Education Services**. The highest paying industries are **Finance and Insurance, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing, and Education Services**.

Ben Hill County

Among workers age 16+ in Ben Hill County, *1.5 percent* have a commute that takes 60 minutes or more each way; *15.4 percent* take between 30 to 59 minutes to get to work; *60.9 percent* take between 10 and 29 minutes to get to work, and *22.3 percent* have a commute lasting less than 10 minutes. *88.6 percent* of workers drive alone to work, *7.8 percent* carpool, *0.2 percent* walk or bike to work, *2.6 percent* use taxicab, motorcycle, or other means, and *0.8 percent* work from home. The average commute time to work in Ben Hill County is 16.2 minutes. Among workers age 16+ in the City of Fitzgerald, *95.6%* have access to vehicles to work.

According to the United States Census, the population of 16 years and older, Ben Hill County's labor force was 6,566 in 2019, and the unemployment rate was 5.8 percent.

City of Fitzgerald

Among workers age 16+ in the City of Fitzgerald, 1.0 percent have a commute that takes 60 minutes or more each way; 15.7 percent take between 30 to 59 minutes to get to work; 55.6 percent take between 10 and 29 minutes to get to work, and 27.6 percent have a commute lasting less than 10 minutes. 86.2 percent of workers drive alone to work, 7.1 percent carpool, 0.4 percent ride bikes to work, 5.7 percent use taxicab, motorcycle, other means, and 0.5 percent work from home. The average commute time to work in the City of Fitzgerald is 14.9 minutes. Among workers age 16+ in Ben Hill County, 92.4% have access to vehicles to work.

According to the United States Census, the population of 16 years and older, the labor force in the City of Fitzgerald was 3,011 in 2019, and the unemployment rate was 7.4 percent.

(Analysis Chart are shown in Appendix #2)

{The unemployment rate increased in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only did it increase within the City of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County, but it also increased within the State of Georgia.}

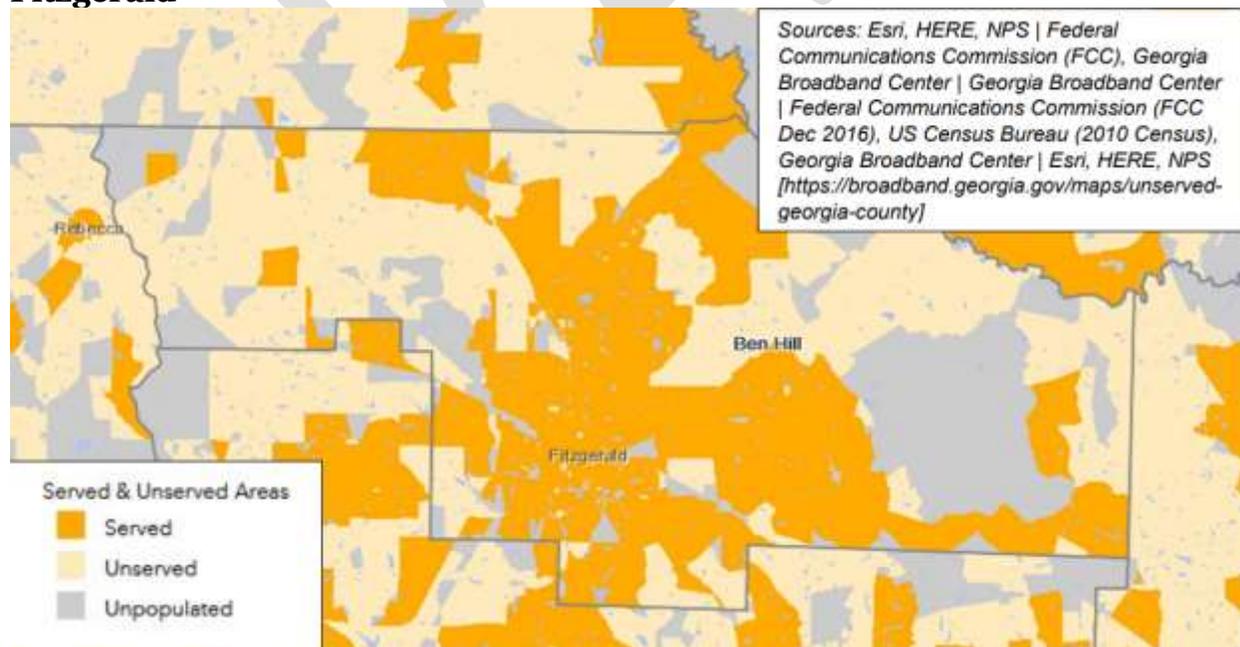
4. Broadband Element

In recognition of broadband infrastructure's importance to the vitality of communities, the Georgia legislature passed the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act (SB 402) in 2018. The Act provides for broadband services¹ planning, deployment, and incentives, along with other purposes. It also requires comprehensive plans to include the promotion of the deployment of broadband services. Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald recognize the importance of broadband expansion by including this Element in their Comprehensive Plan and becoming a Broadband Ready Community.

The provision of broadband services enables residents to access several vital services such as healthcare, economic opportunity, and education. Expansion of rural broadband and improvement in the provision of broadband services can address resident out-migration concerns. Effective and efficient broadband enables internet-based businesses to succeed in the global economy. It is challenging to educate upcoming generations of students in web literacy and digital skills training without adequate broadband speed and connectivity.

The latest data shown in Map 1 below identifies 11% of Ben Hill County locations as unserved. However, it has been noted the technique of classifying unserved areas is too broad. A Census block is categorized as “served” if at least one consumer in a Census block has broadband service available to them. As more granular data becomes available, more accurate classification is expected, and the percentage unserved is anticipated to rise.

Map 1: Served & Unserved Areas in Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald



¹ As defined in O.C.G.A. §50-40-1. Definitions. “Broadband services” means a wired or wireless terrestrial service that consists of the capability to transmit at a rate of not less than 25 megabits per second in the downstream direction and at least three megabits per second in the upstream direction to end-users and combination with such service provides: (A) Access to the Internet; or (B) Computer processing, information storage, or protocol conversion.

County statistics are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 megabits per second down and three megabits per second up. The broadband service is available to more than 80% of locations (residential and business) in a census block. Populated census blocks that did not meet this definition are delineated in Map 1 (above) as 'Unserved.'

70.7% of households in Ben Hill County have a computer, compared to 87% of households statewide. ² Broadband internet subscriptions in the County are held by 59.5% of households. ³ During the analysis of broadband services provision in Ben Hill County, an electronic poll was distributed to businesses, hospitals, government bodies, libraries, and educational facilities. 83% of respondents indicated their Internet service options are not adequate (non-residential). 67% indicated the internet speeds and reliability do not sufficiently meet their needs. *(The results of the poll are included as Appendix #3)*

Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald constructed a fiber network to connect City and County facilities approximately 20 years ago. The network was sold to the Georgia Public Web before 2015. The long-term assumption is that the network will connect to the hospital to facilitate telemedicine services and ultimately connect to the school system. In terms of other internet service providers, City and County industry representatives have found the current providers insufficient in their services and unresponsive in meeting their high-quality and dependable internet service expectations.

The County and City do not have full penetration by cellular service providers. Verizon is available in much of the County; however, T-Mobile and Sprint are not presently available. This impacts tourism as visitors to Fitzgerald cannot, depending on their cellular service provider to utilize navigation applications to reach the City from I-75. There is the potential for public safety impacts as there are a few dead spots within the County where emergency management professionals cannot communicate with one another.

Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald recognize many barriers for private broadband services providers to effectively roll-out necessary broadband infrastructure in the State's rural areas. City and county leaders recognize the importance of broadband quality for industry retention and recruitment within this small, rural community. Community leaders continuously seek improvement in the quality of life for Ben Hill/Fitzgerald's rural residents. Industry relocation and business creation are dependent on the necessary infrastructure being in place. The lack of high-quality broadband infrastructure is a major impediment to recruitment and expanding the established local industry. The Broadband Ready Community and Site designation has been established to incentivize private investment in rural broadband services. The County and City plan to apply for these designations and signal to the State and private Internet Service Providers their prioritization of rural broadband improvement and expansion in their community.

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, Households with a computer, percent, 2013-2017

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2013-2017

5. Consideration of DCA Community Quality Objectives

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has crafted a series of objectives dealing with a broad range of issues that concern local governments. The objectives listed below are only recommendations but provide local governments with a tool to assess their needs and opportunities and develop their implementation activities. Used as such a tool by many local governments in their planning efforts, these objectives can also result in consistent planning projects and goals, which may translate into greater efficiency and a better quality of life for the residents.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has crafted a series of objectives dealing with a broad range of issues that concern local governments. The objectives listed below are only recommendations but provide local governments with a tool to assess their needs and opportunities and develop their implementation activities. If local governments use objectives in their planning efforts, it will result in consistent planning projects and goals. These tools may translate into greater efficiency and a better quality of life for the residents. This section contains an analysis of the consistency of the community's current policies, activities, and development patterns with the Quality Community Objectives and recommends related best practices as provided by DCA.

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald
<p>1. Economic Prosperity Encourage the development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the area's resources, and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet a diverse local workforce's needs.</p>	<p>Community activities, including economic development efforts, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Access Georgia Assistance Programs ❖ Business Incubator ❖ Public/Private Partnership
<p>2. Resource Management Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. Achieve this by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation, encouraging green building construction and renovation, utilizing appropriate waste management techniques, fostering water conservation and reuse, or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.</p>	<p>Land use elements and goals, and policies related to natural resources are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Green Space Plan ❖ Conservation easements ❖ Water resource protection
<p>3. Efficient Land Use Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the community's periphery. Achieve this by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the community's traditional core, designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed, carefully planning the expansion of public infrastructure, or maintaining open space for agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.</p>	<p>The land use elements and infrastructure-related goals and policies of this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Adaptive reuse ❖ Brownfield redevelopment ❖ Preserve agriculture land use

<p>4. Local Preparedness Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. Requirements might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support or direct new growth, ordinances, and regulations to manage growth as desired. Leadership and staff would be capable of responding to opportunities and addressing new challenges or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan consistent with this objective and leadership and staff capability.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan consistent with this objective and leadership and staff capability. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ All-hazards strategy ❖ Capital Improvement Program ❖ Codes for animal control and street/sidewalk standards
<p>5. Sense of Place Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. The qualities may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as the focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the standard features of the community, or protecting scenic and natural elements that are important to define the community's character.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Revisions to Zoning Ordinance ❖ Code Enforcement
<p>6. Regional Cooperation Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. Achieve this by actively participating in regional organizations identifying joint projects that will increase efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer or develop collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protecting shared natural resources, developing the transportation network, or creating a tourism plan.</p>	<p>There is a high level of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Regional Economic Development Efforts ❖ Regional Roundtables
<p>7. Housing Options Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. Achieve this by encouraging the development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure the availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Georgia Initiative for Community Housing ❖ Home Loan Assistance ❖ Housing for the disadvantage ❖ Housing for the elderly ❖ Mixed-Income Housing ❖ Land Bank
<p>8. Transportation Options Address the transportation needs, challenges, and</p>	<p>Transportation goals, policies, and projects are consistent with this objective.</p>

<p>opportunities of all community residents. Achieve by fostering transportation alternatives by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit, employing calming traffic measures throughout the community, requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments, or coordinating transportation and land-use decision-making within the community.</p>	<p>Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Flexible Street Design Standards ❖ Sidewalk/trail network ❖ Improving street connectivity ❖ Safe Routes to School ❖ Public Transportation
<p>9. Educational Opportunities Make educational and training opportunities available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. Achieve this by expanding and enhancing local educational institutions or programs. Provide access to other institutions in the region. Institute programs to improve local graduation rates, develop vocational education programs, or coordinate with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.</p>	<p>The goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective.</p> <p>Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Public internet access ❖ Transportation to educational facilities ❖ Work Ready Program ❖ Experience Work Programs-help older workers ❖ Educational Resource Center
<p>10. Community Health Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and excellent work opportunities. Achieve this by providing services to support disadvantaged residents' basic needs, including the disabled, instituting programs to improve public safety. Promote programs that foster better health and fitness by providing all residents the opportunity to improve their life circumstances and fully participate in the community.</p>	<p>The goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective.</p> <p>Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Transportation to services ❖ Community Health Resource Center

6. Community Policies

The following policies, numbered to align with the Community Goals, were developed in conjunction with all stakeholders and are intended to provide qualitative guidance to address the Needs and Opportunities identified in this Plan and provide a framework for the development of the Community Work Program. The Community Work Program then addresses the Needs and Opportunities through specific projects, for each of which the participants, anticipated cost, and time frame are identified.

Development Patterns

Natural Resources

Goal 1: Conserve and protect the functions and values of the natural resources of Greater Ben Hill County for future generations' appropriate use and enjoyment.

Needs & Policies

Need: *Continue to market the agricultural and natural resources in the county.*

Policy 1.1: Develop a page on the county website to highlight the agricultural lands and products and the county's natural resources.

Policy 1.2: Develop a comprehensive Natural and Cultural Resources Guide describing the recreational opportunities within Ben Hill County, and distribute the guide throughout the region.

Need: *Replacement of the tree canopy that has been lost in the City of Fitzgerald.*

Policy 1.3: Investigate the requirements for developing a Green Space Master Plan for the City of Fitzgerald.

Policy 1.4: Re-evaluate a local Tree Canopy Preservation Ordinance for the City of Fitzgerald.

Policy 1.5: Encourage a tree-planting program for common space areas throughout the city.

Need: *There is a need for farm pond storage.*

Policy 1.6: Based on the Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, utilize incentives and collaborative partnerships to examine opportunities that allow for farm pond storage to augment existing and future river flows during shortages in dry/gap years as at Lake Beatrice.

Cultural Resources

Goal 2: **Protect, preserve, and promote the historic cultural resources of Ben Hill County through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, and tourism and education programs focused on historic preservation.**

Needs & Policies

Policy 2.1: Continue to seek grant and loan opportunities for rehabilitation projects.

Policy 2.2: Consider placing major rehabilitation projects in the next SPLOST.

Policy 2.3: Partner with local churches and the private sector for minor rehabilitation and upkeep projects.

Need: *Update the City of Fitzgerald Tourism Master Plan featuring Historic Preservation.*

Policy 2.4: Develop a comprehensive Tourism Master Plan featuring historic preservation.

Need: *We need a local historical/cultural/natural resource guide.*

Policy 2.5: Develop a comprehensive Natural and Cultural Resources Guide describing Ben Hill County's recreational opportunities distributes the guide throughout the region and maintains the virtual video on the city's website.

Policy 2.6: Help identify and encourage private rehabilitation through awards or recognition programs for rehabilitation and maintenance projects.

Policy 2.7: Seek funding to develop a countywide historic resources inventory.

Land Use

Goal: 3 Ensure the highest quality living environment possible through a mixture of compatible land uses and character areas reflecting the needs and desires of the residents and their vision for Ben Hill County.

Needs & Policies

***Need:** The City's small size requires development to concentrate on the quality of land use rather than quantity to create higher land values and grow the tax base.*

Policy 3.1: Allow higher density and intensity in appropriate areas with adequate services.

Policy 3.2: Identify and map areas suitable for various types of land development.

***Need:** A plan to reduce inappropriate uses is needed.*

Policy 3.3: Amend the land development regulations, including the the zoning ordinance, to require buffers and transitional zones between incompatible uses.

Policy 3.4: Encourage the protection of existing farmland.

Policy 3.5: Research grant and funding sources to develop a property purchase program to avoid significant adverse impacts from adjacent developments and uses.

Policy 3.6: Ensure adequate education and notification are provided to uses adjacent or close to high-intensity development.

Economic Development

Goal 4: Improve the Ben Hill County economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, diversify the local economy, and help Ben Hill County compete in the regional economy.

Needs & Policies

Need: *To continue implementing programs that will provide upward mobility for our peers within the community.*

Policy 4.1: Building on the collaborative success of introducing the college and career academy model into the Ben Hill County School System, the community should continue implementing new ideas to fuel its entrepreneurial ecosystem, ensure resources are available to train and retrain adults entering into the workforce, and continue to partner with public education to Improve College and Career Ready Performance Index.

Need: *The continuation of strategies that promote new construction from existing employers will remain a top priority.*

Policy 4.2: Continued enhancement and expansion of the existing industry clusters to protect and retain current jobs and further anchor employers' presence in Ben Hill County

Policy 4.3: Focus action items on growing and improving infrastructure and site improvements that will fuel new industrial construction.

Policy 4.4: The potential for food processing water treatment plants should be pursued to bring more jobs and optimize resource use.

Policy 4.5: Focus on strategies that will leverage community resources to grow the Ben Hill County Tax Digest.

Need: *Remain competitive in a global economy.*

Policy 4.6: Continue coordination between all local economic development organizations to ensure Ben Hill County is fully capitalizing the ability to grow and retain existing employers, diversifying the local economy, supporting regional industry clusters, and fueling our entrepreneur ecosystem.

Policy 4.7: Build upon recent successes of public/private partnerships to

leverage community resources to promote new construction, new business growth, retain employees and increase prosperity.

Policy 4.8: Continued collaboration with Irwin County and the city of Ocilla to repurpose and rebrand Millennium Technical Park.

Policy 4.9: Collaborate with all local economic development organizations to market Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County as an attractive location for those relocating from metro areas, retirees, and those returning to south Georgia.

Policy 4.10: Partner with the SGRC and local stakeholders to implement policies (like Complete Streets), programs (Aging, Walking, Bicycling Friendly Communities), and projects (sidewalks, bike lanes/trails) that support Aging in Place to promote healthy, livable communities.

Housing

Goal 5: Provide opportunities for homeownership and housing resources for all residents of Ben Hill County through public/private partnerships.

Needs & Policies

Need: *Blighted residential properties continue to exist.*

Policy 5.1: Continue to participate in community redevelopment and code enforcement programs.

Policy 5.2: Encourage safe neighborhood designs and active police and neighborhood patrols and watches.

Need: *The zoning ordinance needs regular assessment that ensures adequate housing for the community's needs.*

Policy 5.3: Conduct a regular assessment of the zoning ordinance.

Community Facilities and Services

Goal 6: Ensure that needed community facilities such as water, sewer, solid waste, police, fire, EMS, and hospitals/healthcare are provided in an effective, environmentally sound, safe, and economic system, consistent with the current demand of the future growth.

Needs & Policies

Need: *Water and sewer line expansions are needed in the county to serve existing and new developments.*

Policy 6.1: Continue to identify and prioritize all water and sewer infrastructure needs.

Policy 6.2: Continue to research all state and federal grant opportunities, including the Georgia Fund Loan Program, the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund, the One Georgia Grant, and the Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan fund for infrastructure funding opportunities.

Need: *The area lacks recreation opportunities for young people, especially teenagers.*

Policy 6.3: Seek ways to combine parks and recreation projects with other public services and facilities projects.

Policy 6.4: Continue to upgrade and maintain existing recreational and entertainment opportunities and services and provide additional facilities and services such as parks, fields, daycare services, etc.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal 7: Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public, i.e., Lanier County School System, Development Authority, and other entities to best maintain Greater Ben Hill County's quality of life and resources.

Needs & Policies

Need: *The city, county, and school system need to look for opportunities to partner.*

Policy 7.1: Establish regional partnerships for mutual and emergency services, training, and education.

Need: *Opportunities for consolidation/unification of services should be considered to increase efficiency and lower costs to residents.*

Policy 7.2: Continue to explore the potential for functional consolidation.

Broadband Services

Goal 8: Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met.

Needs & Policies

Need: *Lack of sufficient digital broadband coverage in large areas of Ben Hill County limits educational and economic development opportunities and causes communication problems for police, fire, and EMS.*

Policy 8.1: More robust broadband services may enable greater opportunity for citizens and businesses.

Policy 8.2: Include consideration of broadband infrastructure in roadway projects where the necessary infrastructure may be included in the right-of-way.

Need: *More affordable, accessible, consistent, and higher-speed broadband access with additional bandwidth is needed throughout all of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald to serve residential, commercial, and industrial users*

Policy 8.3: Public/Private Partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

Need: *Technological product development is outpacing the availability of broadband infrastructure; medical centers, schools, libraries, and businesses need to keep up with product developments yet are unable due to the limits of the infrastructure in rural areas.*

Policy 8.4: The County and City should seek certification as Broadband Ready Communities and support a more robust provision of broadband infrastructure.

Transportation

Goal 9: **Promote transportation facilities, protect our community resources, promote efficient use of infrastructure, and support quality economic development while supporting development.**

Needs & Policies

Need: *Continue to resurface roads within the community, including paving dirt roads.*

Policy 9.1: Pursue funding for resurfacing and paving through grants, etc.

Policy 9.2: Develop a project list for SPLOST and TSPLOST.

Need: *A silent crossing zone is needed to run through the City of Fitzgerald.*

Policy 9.3: Form a working relationship with CSX to make the railroad system more appealing to the community.

Need: *A comprehensive community-wide Transportation Plan addressing all modes of transportation is needed.*

Policy 9.4: The SGRC can offer technical assistance with funding through GDOT.

Need: *A bicycle and pedestrian safety plan is needed.*

Policy 9.5: Complete a countywide assessment of the condition of

streets and roads to determine bike-ability and pedestrian safety.

Policy 9.6: SPLOST and TSPLOST can assist with funding.

Need: *SR 107 needs to be four-laned as the direct access to I-75 to reduce congestion.*

Policy 9.7: Pursue development of a comprehensive community-wide transportation plan.

Policy 9.8: Continue emphasizing the need to four-lane SR 107 to the Georgia Department of Transportation, and seek opportunities to meet with state officials.

Policy 9.9: Encourage the provision of interconnectivity, shared access, and pedestrian connections along all roads.

Need: *The railroad line is at capacity, causing freight bottlenecks and traffic backups at railroad crossings.*

Policy 10.1: Continue to work with the railroad companies to ensure that the crossing is more accessible during peak travel times.

Need: *A comprehensive community-wide transportation plan addressing all modes of transportation is needed.*

Policy 10.2: Pursue the development of a comprehensive community-wide transportation plan.

7. Community Work Program

Ben Hill County 5-Year Short-Term Work Program Update Report Of Accomplishments (2015 - 2019)

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
CULTURAL RESOURCES		CULTURAL RESOURCES					
Complete renovation of Federal Building and integrate into Grand/Carnegie Complex	Continue	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for five years	x	x	x	x	X
Develop a Master Resource Guide	Complete		x	x			
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
Prepare and maintain an inventory of incentives, business programs, housing stock, and available sites to accommodate new businesses and business expansions, and provide the list on the county website	Continue	Continue for three years	x	x	x	x	
Develop a guidebook for development that describes the local development process and provides useful information to potential new businesses regarding zoning, site plan approval, permitting, and potential incentives.	Continue	Continue for 3 years	x	x	x	x	
Approve and implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan through the coordinated efforts of all economic development organizations	Complete	Re-word to read: Continue to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan through the coordinated efforts of all economic development organizations	x	x	x	x	x
Develop a /Retire Marketing Strategy	Continue	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for five years	x	x	x	x	x

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Develop a Comprehensive Tourism Master Plan to incorporate under the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan	Continue	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for five years	x	x	x	x	x
HOUSING							
Construct The Village at Ben Hill Phase 1	Completed	This was a city project, not the county, as shown in the 2016 Ben Hill County Comp Plan	x	x	x		
Construct The Village at Ben Hill Phase 2	Deleted	No demand for Phase 2			x	x	
LAND USE							
None listed							
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES							
Repair and resurface 82.1 miles of roads	Continue		x	x	x	x	x
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge	Continue	Continue with TSPLOST		x			
Replace Tulip Road Bridge	Continue	Continue with TSPLOST			x		
Complete renovations to Monitor gym, auditorium, and classroom building at recreation service complex	Continue	The gym has been completed	x	x	x	x	x
Implement airport improvements as listed in 5-year CIP for 2016-2020	Continue		x	x	x	x	x
Complete Peachtree Corridor Industrial Transportation District	Continue	Continue with TSPLOST	x	x	x	x	x
Develop Comprehensive Mobility Plan	Deleted		x	x	x		
Complete façade maintenance on Grand Theater	Continue	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for five years	x	x	x	x	x

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Construct covers for existing outdoor performances space (downtown and Paulk Park)	Completed	General funds were used			x	x	
Complete Grand Theater ADA improvements, Phase 2	Completed	Completed by City of Fitzgerald		x	x		
Construct a multi-use recreational facility, offices, gymnasium, and swimming pool	Continue				x	x	x
Construct Merrimac Rd sidewalks from Merrimac Village Apartments to Central Ave	Continue	Reword to: Construct Merrimac Dr sidewalks from Central Ave to Roanoke Dr. Continue in TSPLOST		x	x		
Construct Dewey McGlamry Road (SR90) sidewalks from Jack Allen Rd to Sultana Ave	Deleted			x	x		
Construct Benjamin H Hill Drive SE sidewalks and culvert extension & pedestrian bridge from SR90 to Walmart (with pedestrian signals)	Deleted				x	x	
Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Jefferson	Continue	Reword to: Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Sherman Street to Merrimac Drive. Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for five years and continue with TSPLOST			x	x	
Recruit two physicians per year at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company		x		x	
Renovate emergency room at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company		x		x	

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Implement Hospital Cosmetic Upgrades at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company	x	x	x		
Replace front of Masee Building at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company	x				
Upgrade medical equipment and computer at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company	x	x	x	x	
Replace Hospital Elevator at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company		x			
Replace three chillers at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted	Reorganization by a privately owned company	x		x		
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION							
Research opportunities for intergovernmental agreements with surrounding counties to better facilitate emergency services	Continue		x	x	x	x	x
BROADBAND		Added by Broadband amendment on 11/11/19					
Provide adequate high-speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses	Continue						x
Adopt a Broadband Ordinance	Completed						x
Apply for Broadband Ready Certification	Completed						x

Ben Hill County 5-Year Community Work Program Update

(2021 - 2025)

PROJECT S	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
NATURAL RESOURCES									
Develop a page on the county website to promote the agricultural lands and products, and natural resources within the county	Staff Time	County	General Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x
CULTURAL RESOURCES									
Continue to seek grant and loan opportunities for rehabilitation projects	Staff Time	County	CDBG SPLOST	2, 4	x	x	x	x	x
LAND USE									
Continue to enforce codes within the county to ensure the highest quality of land use	Staff Time	County	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
Continue to update Zoning Ordinance	Staff Time	County SGRC	General Fund	3	x	x	x		
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT									
Prepare and maintain an inventory of incentives, business programs, housing stock, and available sites to accommodate new businesses and business expansions, and provide the list on the county website	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	City and County Joint Service Funds	4	x	x	x		
Develop a guidebook for development that describes the local development process and provides useful information to potential new businesses regarding zoning, site plan approval, permitting, and potential incentives	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	City and County Joint Service Funds	4	x	x	x		

PROJECT S	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
Approve and implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan through the coordinated efforts of all economic development organizations	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	City and County Joint Service Funds	4	x	x	x	x	
HOUSING									
Continue to participate in community redevelopment and enforce codes	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Fund	3, 5	x	x	x	x	x
Seek funding for housing redevelopment in blighted areas	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Funds	3, 5	x	x	x	x	x
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES									
Complete renovations for the auditorium and classroom building at Recreation Services complex	\$200,000	County, City	City, County, SPLOST (pending SPLOST approval)	3, 6	x	x	x		
Implement airport improvements as listed in 5- year CIP for 2016-2020	\$4.66 million	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Airport Commission	Federal, State, and Local	3, 6	x	x	x		
Construct a multi-use recreational facility, offices, gymnasium, and swimming pool	\$1.5 million	County, City	General fund, SPLOST (pending SPLOST approval)	3, 6	x	x	x		
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION									
Continue to research opportunities for inter-governmental agreements with surrounding counties to better facilitate emergency services	Staff Time	County, City	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x
BROADBAND									
Provide adequate high-speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses	\$10 million	County, City Public/Private Partnership	General Fund, SPLOST, grants, Private funding	8	x	x	x		

PROJECT S	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
TRANSPORTATION									
Repair and resurface 82.1 miles of roads	\$8.2 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge at House Creek	\$1.5 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge at Otter Creek	\$1.5 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Replace Tulip Road Bridge	\$700,000	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Complete Peachtree Corridor realigning, widening, in intersection improvements	\$5.913 million	County, City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	
Construct Merrimac Drive sidewalks from Central Ave to Roanoke Drive	\$250,000	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x			
Resurface Evergreen Road	\$523,500	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x	x		
Resurface and widen Fitzgerald Perimeter Rd	\$5.165 Million	County, City	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x	x		
Resurface Appomattox Road	\$415,400	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x	x		

City of Fitzgerald 5-Year Short-Term Work Program Update Report Of Accomplishments
(2015 - 2019)

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
CULTURAL RESOURCES		CULTURAL RESOURCES					
Develop Downtown Master Plan	Continue	Move to Economic Development	x	x			
Re-evaluate existing tree ordinance and develop a replanting strategy	Continue		x	x			
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
None							
HOUSING							
None							
LAND USE							
None							
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES							
Complete Jaycee Stadium improvements	Completed	Completed by Board of Education	x	x	x	x	
Renovate A & B Depot for preservation and flexible space	Completed			x	x	x	x
Resurface approximately 15 miles of city streets; associated transportation improvements; sidewalks, parking, and storm drainage right-of-way	Completed	Continue to resurface and maintain streets, add sidewalks, parking, and storm drainage	x	x	x	x	
Review and implements improvements to ADA compliance plan by adding facilities annually	Continue		x	x	x	x	
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION							
None							
BROADBAND		Added by Broadband amendment on 11/11/19					
Provide adequate high-speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses	Continue						x
Adopt a Broadband Ordinance	Completed						x

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Apply for Broadband Ready Certification	Completed						x

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City of Fitzgerald 5-Year Community Work Program Update
(2021 - 2025)

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
NATURAL RESOURCES									
Re-evaluate existing Tree Ordinance and develop a replanting strategy	Staff Time	City	General Fund	1, 2	x	x			
Closeout MSW site at landfill	Staff Time	City, County, Landfill Authority	Fees, Closeout Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x
CULTURAL RESOURCES									
Develop Synagogue Interpretive Center Project	\$100,000	City	General Funds, Grants, SPLOST & others	2, 4	x	x	x		
Complete renovation of Federal Building And integrate into Grand/Carnegie Complex	\$40,000	City	General Fund, Grants, SPLOST	2, 4	x	x	x		
LAND USE									
Develop and adopt a Tiny House Ordinance	\$3,000	City SGRC	General Fund	3, 5	x	x	x		
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT									
Continue construction of Topiary Chicken	\$200,000	City	SPLOST	1,2,4	x				
Develop a Downtown Master Plan	Staff Time	City	General Fund	2,3,4	x	x			
Complete Monitor Enrichment Construction	\$880,000	City	CDBG, SPLOST	2, 3, 4	x	x			
Continue to evolve and implement a Comprehensive Tourism Master Plan	Staff Time	Convention and Visitor's Bureau	General Fund	4	x	x	x		
Partner w/ ABAC Rural Studies program for	Staff Time	City	General Fund	4, 6	x	x	x		

meaningful curriculum										
Develop a Senior/Retiree Marketing Strategy	Staff Time	Convention & Visitor's Bureau	General Fund	2, 4, 5, 7	x	x				
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES										
Review and implement improvements to ADA compliance plan by adding facilities annually	\$25,000	City	General Funds	1,7	x	x				
Renovate Masonic Lodge for African-American Art Museum	\$175,000	City	General Fund, SPLOST, Donations	2, 4, 5	x	x				
HOUSING										
Utilize the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) programs for redevelopment or renovation of housing	Staff Time	City	General Fund CDBG, Grants	2, 5	x	x	x	x	x	x
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION										
None										
BROADBAND										
Provide adequate High speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses	\$10,000,000	County, City, Public/Private Partnership	General Fund, SPLOST, grants, private funding	8	x	x	x			
TRANSPORTATION										
Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Sherman Street to Merrimac Drive	\$600,000	City	TSPLOST	6,9	x	x				
Complete TAP Engineering for Main & Central Corridors and apply for construction funding	\$1,300,000	City	SPLOST TAP Grant	4, 6, 9	x	x	x	x	x	x
Reconfigure Peachtree Road	\$6,000,000	City	General Fund, SPLOST, and LMIG	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x	X
Resurface Airport Rd.	\$74,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x	x

Resurface Evergreen Rd	\$523,500	City	General Fund TSPLOST	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface Monitor Drive	\$150,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface Frank Rd	\$74,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface Norman Dorimny Drive	\$19,200	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface JC Hunter Dr	\$550,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6, 9	x	x	x	x	x

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8. Economic Development Element

The 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), as developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission under a grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, is hereby incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan to serve as the Economic Development Element for Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was designed to bring together the public and private sectors to create an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The SGRC CEDS analyzed the regional economy and serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, and investment priorities and funding sources.

As a performance-based plan, this CEDS plays a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the region's unique advantages to maximize the economic opportunity for its residents by attracting private investment that creates jobs. The SGRC CEDS is a regionally owned strategy resulting from a continuing economic development planning process developed with the regional public- and private-sector participation. This plan sets forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the Southern Georgia region's economic development problems and clearly defines success measures.

The Southern Georgia CEDS gives an overview of the region, briefly describing the geography, population, economy, labor and workforce development and use, education, transportation access, environment, and regional resources. It reviews the state of the regional economy. It provides a list of achievable Goals and Objectives for the region, a Plan of Action to ensure success, and Performance Measures used to evaluate the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's successful development and implementation of the 2018-2022 CEDS. Implementation of the goals identified in this plan is significant to the economic future of the SGRC District.

Policies, issues, and opportunities, and Short-term Work Program implementation strategies located in the current Comprehensive Plans for each jurisdiction in our 18-county region were used extensively to develop the CEDS Goals and Objectives, Vital Projects, and Problems and Opportunities.

Included below are goals and objectives from the CEDS, which are aligned with the current economic development goals of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald:

Goal 1: Promote economic development strategies that encourage entrepreneurship, support existing industries, attract new employers, and stimulate tourism.

Objectives:

Promote regional collaboration for even stronger networks between 18 counties.

Strategies:

- Strengthen and expand existing entrepreneurial support networks in rural areas.
- Strengthen communication between education and job creators through educator/job creator luncheons, advisory councils, annual education summit, and other Economic Development professional facilitation.
- Promote business and entrepreneur learning opportunities.
- Focus on ways to encourage and facilitate regional tourism.

Goal 2: Protect, expand, and enhance critical infrastructure and connectivity for existing and future community growth.

Objectives:

Improve broadband access in rural communities.

Strategies:

- Develop small cells in communities without reliable broadband access.
- Provide incentives for broadband.

Goal 3: Facilitate the growth and development of an educated, skilled, prepared workforce by utilizing available programs and resources.

Objectives:

Develop a well-trained professional, technical, and skilled workforce capable of accommodating new industries and maintaining existing industries.

Strategies:

- Improve educational attainment by reducing high school dropout rates.
- Support educational institutions to provide learning/skill development opportunities.
- Market workforce development programs that enable youth and adults to pursue higher education opportunities.
- Recognize societal issues impacting the workforce and partner with programs seeking to address them, i.e., Communities In Schools, Monitor Enrichment, Head Start, Youth Build, volunteer programs, etc.
- Emphasize community literacy to become a Certified Literate Community.

Launch workforce initiatives to align training and educational opportunities to target industries for critical, in-demand occupations.

Strategies:

- Facilitate the incorporation of applied economics, soft skills, and work ethics in the middle and high school classrooms to prepare students with job-ready knowledge.
- Work with employers to incentivize educational achievement both at hiring and after that.

- Develop strategies to get non-completers and unemployed citizens to school to receive training for the workforce of this community

Improve efforts to prepare workers for available jobs.

Strategies:

- Support educational institutions to provide learning/skill development opportunities.
- Work closely with business and industry to ensure that the system is not only producing workers to meet their immediate needs but making adjustments in the anticipation of future needs and technological changes.

Goal 4: Create an inviting sense of place through rural renewal and other strategies to retain the population and to attract new members to our community.

Objectives:

Revitalize downtowns throughout the region.

Strategies:

- Collaborate to develop county-wide historic preservation plans.
- Promote downtown areas for tourism and recreation.
- Increase code enforcement in communities surrounding downtown areas.

Facilitate vibrant, attractive communities. Strategies:

- Rehabilitate dilapidated housing throughout the region.
- Encourage local governments to participate in CHIP, CDBG, and USDA housing programs.

Develop strategies for creating and sustaining a diverse population.

Strategies:

- Seek additional funding streams to address senior population program sustainability.
- Market unique aspects of communities to attract a younger population.

See Appendix 4 - Economic Development Element MAPS

1. Industrial Parks and Existing Industries
2. Historic Districts
3. Tourism Resources (to be determined under tourism plan)
4. Agricultural and Timber Lands

See Appendix 5 - Economic Development Element Site Inventory and Infrastructure Baseline 2020

See Appendix 6 - Economic Development Element Industrial Jobs by Employer Baseline 2020

See Appendix 7 - Economic Development Element Tourism Inventory Baseline 2020

See Appendix 8 – Economic Development Element Cooperative Workforce Educational Baseline 2020

See Appendix 9– Economic Development Element Farm Gate Values

See Appendix 10 - Economic Development Element Tier 1 Indicators Baseline 2020

See Appendix 11 – Economic Development Element Tax Credit Tier

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9. Land Use Element

Character Areas

In keeping with State Minimum Planning Standards, every part of the Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Community was delineated into specific Character Areas. Character areas are intended to serve as guidance for future land use and land development. Each of the following character area narratives were developed based on stakeholder input, existing land uses, anticipated development, planned infrastructure improvements and expansions, and guidance found in the *State Planning Recommendations*. As with the Plan in general, these character area descriptions and goals should not be considered final. As the community gains a greater understanding of character areas' roles and values, their descriptions should be fine-tuned. Additionally, as the community continues to grow, specific character area depictions may need adjusting.

Each Character Area narrative has a unique **Description** stating either the existing or desired qualities for that area. (Please note the associated picture for each area represents the specific area's current state and should not be construed to necessarily represent the desired state, although this may be the case for some descriptions.) The stated **Development Strategy** should serve as a guide for all development and redevelopment in the Character Area. Adherence to these development strategies will ensure consistent and complementary growth, promoting a greater sense of place and overall improved quality of life. The listing of **Permitted Zonings** guides as to the type of land uses encouraged within each Character Area. While many of the differences between uses can be masked through site design and development standards, specific uses are incompatible with surrounding uses and should not be permitted. As required by the State, the **Quality Community Objectives** demonstrate the unique ideals established for each Character Area. While there is certainly a value to regional planning, planning on the neighborhood (or character area) level allows for greater implementation of specific objectives, which ultimately promotes an improved quality of life. The **Implementation Measures** are the specific activities or programs that could occur within each of the Character Areas. While the suggested list of measures may or may not currently exist in the Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Community, their implementation in appropriate areas would help achieve the established objectives and overall development strategy for each Character Area. In most cases, these measures should be considered joint efforts between the local government, development community, and citizens alike.

CHARACTER AREAS

Agriculture Character Area



Description

The Agriculture character area designation in Greater Ben Hill County is intended for those areas outside of the urban area which is associated with agricultural farm operations and related activities, forestry, natural resource conservation, groundwater recharge areas, and very low-density residential development accessory to agricultural or farm operations of varying sizes. Many of these agriculturally utilized lands are under the 10-year conservation designation through the Tax Assessor, and therefore will not be available for development for those years

Predominant Land Use

Land uses are agriculture and related activities, forestry, conservation, groundwater recharge areas, and very low-density residential development.

Development Strategy

Preserve farming and conservation options as a viable and vital part of the Ben Hill County industry by maintaining very low-density residential development primarily accessory to farm operations and right-to-farm principles. The use of conservation easements to protect environmentally sensitive areas should be encouraged. Roadways in these areas should be widened only when required to meet public safety standards.

Permitted Zoning Districts

G-F – General Farming
R-R – Rural Residential
R-1, R-1A - Residential

Quality Community Objectives

Economic Prosperity
Resource Management
Sense of Place

Implementation Measures

Conservation Easements

Encourage owners of key properties (such as those in environmentally sensitive areas, included in the local greenspace plan, or designated for agricultural use in the comprehensive plan) to utilize conservation easements or sale of development rights to preserve their land from future development. Conservation easements allow private landowners to donate their property's development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency in exchange for tax savings. The sale of development rights is an arrangement whereby private landowners sell their property's development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency. In both cases above, giving up the development right protects the property permanently from development and ensures that it remains green space or farmland.

Creating a Network of Greenways and Trails

Landscaping and buffer requirements and guidelines: Require planting areas to mask unattractive land use or provide a visual and sound barrier between incompatible adjacent uses, increase aesthetic values, and protect water and quality of rivers and streams. Communities should consider adopting a tree protection ordinance in addition to landscaping and buffer regulations. Inappropriate landscaping can degrade the natural environment's quality by requiring excess water and pesticides or creating unnecessary conflicts with sewers, sidewalks, and vehicle access. It is essential to promote environmentally sound landscaping, including the use of low-maintenance, drought-resistant, and native or non-invasive plants, and to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place.

Water Resource Management:

Managing and protecting water supply and watersheds; providing safe drinking water and wastewater treatment services.

Storm Water Management

Mitigating the impact of development on watersheds, aquatic habitat, streamflow and geometry, and water quality.

Preserve Agriculture Land Use

Help contain sprawl development by preserving agricultural lands in your community. This may be accomplished by combining the following:

- 1) Establish an agriculture zoning district with substantial minimum lot size requirements (at least 20 acres).
- 2) Require an agricultural buffer for all new non-agricultural development adjacent to designated agricultural land. This will minimize future potential conflicts between ag and non-ag land uses.
- 3) When a land use permit or building permit is applied, and the land is abutting, or within 1,000 feet of agricultural land, the applicant will be required to sign a waiver. The waiver shall indicate that the applicant understands that agricultural land exists near

the subject property and that a farming operation is ongoing adjacent to his existing or proposed use.

4) Develop a program to assist local farmers in selling their products or otherwise profiting from their farms. These include agri-tourism, farmers' markets, farm festivals, and related activities.

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Commercial Character Area



Description

The Commercial character area consists mainly of larger-scale commercial uses, which are less compatible with residential areas due to the size of lots and buildings located on major roadways and heavy traffic volumes created by the businesses' regional draw.

Development Strategy

The focus should be on reinforcing stability by encouraging maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for the infill development of new, architecturally compatible buildings. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided.

Predominant Land Use

These areas include a wide variety of both established and newer commercial uses.

Permitted Zoning Districts

CC - Community Commercial
G-B - General Business
P - Professional
WLI - Wholesale-Light Industrial

Quality Community Objectives

Economic Prosperity
Resource Management
Efficient Land Use
Sense of Place

Implementation Measures

Conservation Easements

Encourage owners of key properties (such as those in environmentally sensitive areas designated for agricultural use in the comprehensive plan) to utilize conservation easements or sale of development rights to preserve their land from future development. Conservation easements allow private landowners to donate their property's development

rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency in exchange for tax savings. The sale of development rights is an arrangement whereby private landowners sell their property's development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency. In both cases above, giving up the development rights protects property permanently from development and ensures that it remains green space or farmland.

Water Resource Protection

Adopt water resource management policies such as requiring the use of WaterSense certified high-efficiency toilets and faucets in all new buildings, greywater for irrigation, use of drought-tolerant landscaping.

Greyfield Redevelopment

Provide assistance and incentives for redevelopment of greyfield areas. A greyfield is a declining or abandoned shopping mall or strip and has the advantage that infrastructure is already in place and lacks the environmental cleanup issues of a Brownfield. Ideally, these areas can be converted into walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments.

Brownfield Redevelopment

To encourage redevelopment and reuse of abandoned Brownfields (old industrial properties) in your community, develop a program that includes any of the following elements:

- 1) Inventory all of the Brownfields in your community.
- 2) Have each Brownfield site assessed to determine the likely cost of cleaning up or containing any residual on-site contaminants.
- 3) Offer financial incentives (or at least information of financial assistance available from other sources) for remediation and redevelopment of these sites since the clean-up and containment of Brownfields is often costly.

Downtown Commercial Core Character Area



Description

This is the area within the City of Fitzgerald where the public, institutional, and commercial development originally occurred due to its location along major transportation corridors and at a major intersection. The Downtown Fitzgerald area is located along US Highways 129 and 319 at the intersection of GA Highway 107 and GA Highway 90. As the original site of city development, this area contains most of the county's major cultural and historic buildings and sites and requires special attention to ensure its preservation.

Development Strategy

Preserve, restore, and reuse historic buildings. Improve the environment for private investment and development. Expand green and civic spaces. Mix land uses and controls building typology. Implement a balance of transportation options and design.

Predominant Land Use

City services, entertainment, commercial recreation, traditional Main Street businesses, mixed-use buildings, business support services, urban neighborhoods, and traditional older, stable neighborhoods.

Permitted Zoning Districts

D-C – Downtown Commercial
C-C - Community Commercial
G-B - General Business
P - Professional
MR - Multi-Family Residential

Quality Community Objectives

Economic Prosperity
Efficient Land Use
Sense of Place

Implementation Measures

Economic Development Strategy

Develop a collaborative, public/private local economic development strategy by involving stakeholders such as local business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority. Enlist stakeholder input to reveal what training or expertise exists within the community workforce, what types of businesses or industries need to be developed, and what constraints exist on the community's business growth.

Flexible Parking Standards

Revise land development regulations to remove rigid parking requirements to reduce unnecessary spaces in the community. This may include reducing the number of required parking spaces or allowing shared parking between adjacent facilities.

Greyfield Redevelopment

Provide assistance and incentives for redevelopment of greyfield areas. A greyfield is a declining or abandoned shopping mall or strip and has the advantage that infrastructure is already in place and lacks the environmental cleanup issues of a Brownfield. Ideally, these areas can be converted into walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments.

Brownfield Redevelopment

To encourage redevelopment and reuse of abandoned Brownfields (old industrial properties) in your community, develop a program that includes any of the following elements:

- 1) Inventory all of the Brownfields in your community.
- 2) Have each Brownfield site assessed to determine the likely cost of cleaning up or containing any residual on-site contaminants.
- 3) Offer financial incentives (or at least information of financial assistance available from other sources) for remediation and redevelopment of these sites since the clean-up and containment of Brownfields is often costly.

Historic Residential Character Area



Description

Located within the historic city 16-by-16-block square, this area comprises predominantly older residential structures dating back to the 1930s and beyond. The houses, buildings, and properties of these areas are often of historical and architectural significance and are located on small lots in a grid pattern.

Development Strategy

Protect existing historic structures through the use of incentives and requirements for review and approval of modifications. Promote the preservation of deteriorating historic structures through rehabilitation programs. Ensure neighboring uses do not diminish the area's historic character through setback and buffering requirements for new development.

Predominant Land Uses

Residential, with some smaller schools and churches mixed in, and some very limited neighborhood commercial.

Permitted Zoning Districts

R-6, R-9 - Residential
MR – Multiple Residential
CC – Community Commercial

Quality Community Objectives

Sense of Place
Housing Options

Implementation Measures

Rehabilitation Codes

Adopt building codes with standards appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes help keep costs down, thereby encouraging rehabilitation of older properties

Promote infill housing

Develop incentive and rewards programs to utilize abandoned properties and demolish vacant unsuitable housing to construct new homes.

Promote clean up and improved maintenance of existing properties and buildings

Consider working with Code Enforcement and the City Police to encourage clean-up and develop incentive and rewards programs to foster voluntary participation.

Creating a Network of continuous sidewalks

This will increase the safety of neighborhoods and provide a more coherent look to the neighborhood.

Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Guidelines

Sign regulations

Language should be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to regulate all exterior signs and the lighting of signs. Attempt to control the aesthetic impact of signage on the community by restricting the location, size, and appearance of advertising signs.

Tree protection ordinance

Require preservation of a significant portion of the trees on a new development site, particularly the larger, more mature specimens. As a supplement to tree protection measures, a community may choose to adopt specimens or “heritage” tree protections, which protect individual trees considered necessary because of unique characteristics.

Industrial Character Area



Description

This area consists of predominantly industrial uses, with some public/institutional and agricultural mixed in. Of particular note is the historic Evergreen Cemetery location at Evergreen and Ben Hill Drive within this character area. Overall, the site serves as the City's primary industrial land. The Ocilla Highway, Frank Road, Evergreen Road, and the old railroad lines run through the area.



Development Strategy

Encourage development, redevelopment, and infill within the area to ensure it continues to be a vital part of the local economy. Continue to provide adequate infrastructure and public services to the site to help local businesses succeed while minimizing adverse impacts on neighborhoods and the environment. Protect and preserve the historic Evergreen Cemetery.

Predominant Land Uses

Agricultural Industries, Construction Services, Manufacturing, Millwork, Motor Freight Transportation and, Warehousing, Wholesale Trades, and other similar uses.

Permitted Zoning Districts

WLI – Wholesale-Light Industrial

HI – Heavy Industrial

G-F – General Farming

P – Professional

Quality Community Objectives

Economic Development

Implementation Measures

Targeted Industry Analysis

Strategically choose which types of business to recruit and support using relevant community characteristics to determine which will be the best fit for local job needs, workforce skills, or to complement existing businesses. Also, consider growth rates, for various industries, in the region, the state, and the U.S.

Access Control Measures

To ensure neighborhoods and commercial properties are interconnected to allow for greater traffic circulation and increased public safety.

Design guidelines

Evaluates buildings' appropriateness, properties, and land use to create an architecturally and physically cohesive area of a specified character.

Flexible parking standards

Revising land development regulations to remove rigid parking requirements typically result in an oversupply of unnecessary parking spaces. Revisions may include reducing the number of required parking spaces or allowing shared parking between adjacent facilities. Flexible parking standards enable developers to be more efficient and innovative in providing parking and reduce the amount of land consumed by parking lots.

Infill Development Program

A comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill development in particular areas of the community while also regulating this development ensures the protection of life quality in affected neighborhoods. An effective program will include both: a) development incentives, improvements to public facilities and services, and streamlined regulations to encourage infill development; b) guidelines for appropriate design, density, and location of new infill projects.

Landscaping and buffer requirements and guidelines

Require planting areas to mask unattractive land use or provide a visual and sound barrier between incompatible adjacent uses, increase aesthetic values, and protect water and quality of rivers and streams. Communities should consider adopting a tree protection ordinance in addition to landscaping and buffer regulations. Inappropriate landscaping can degrade the natural environment's quality by requiring excess water and pesticides or creating unnecessary conflicts with sewers, sidewalks, and vehicle access. It is essential to promote environmentally sound landscaping, including the use of low-maintenance, drought-resistant, and native or non-invasive plants, and to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place.

Sign regulations

Language should be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to regulate all exterior signs and the lighting of signs. Attempt to control the aesthetic impact of signage on the community by restricting the location, size, and appearance of advertising signs.

Streamlined Development Permitting

Revising the local development review process makes it easier to obtain necessary approvals, particularly for innovative quality growth types. Revisions may include removing or combining unnecessary approval steps or publishing a step-by-step guide to the review process.

Brownfield Redevelopment

To encourage redevelopment and reuse of abandoned Brownfields (old industrial properties) in your community, develop a program that includes any of the following elements:

- 4) Inventory all of the Brownfields in your community.
- 5) Have each Brownfield site assessed to determine the likely cost of cleaning up or containing any residual on-site contaminants.
- 6) Offer financial incentives (or at least information of financial assistance available from other sources) for remediation and redevelopment of these sites since the clean-up and containment of Brownfields is often costly.

Reuse of Greyfields

Redevelopment of greyfields can occur through programs such as the State's Redevelopment Fund. This fund gives local governments access to flexible financial assistance to implement projects that cannot be undertaken with the usual public sector grant and loan programs. The Redevelopment Fund finances locally initiated public/private partnerships to leverage investments in commercial, downtown, and industrial redevelopment and revitalization projects that wouldn't proceed otherwise.

Utility relocation

Relocating overhead utilities out of view either below ground or at the rear of lots. This is intended to improve the appearance of commercial strip corridors that typically include tangles of overhead power and telephone lines stretching across and along the roadways.

Stormwater Management

Develop and implement a local stormwater management plan that includes: 1) Incentives for low impact development (LID), which uses innovative site design techniques to collect and drain or evaporate stormwater runoff onsite, rather than routing it into a typical stormwater collection system. LID techniques include bioretention, permeable pavers, tree box filters, rain barrels, disconnected downspouts, narrower streets, infiltration swales, rooftop gardens, bioretention cells, and rain gardens. 2) Requirements that impervious surfaces do not exceed a certain maximum percentage of total lot size, in particular sections of the community, particularly those that drain most directly into water supply streams or reservoirs.

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Public/Institutional Character Area



Description

This area consists of particular state, federal, or local government uses and institutional land uses. Government uses include government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, and other similar uses. Examples of other institutional land use include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, and other similar uses.

Development Strategy

Preserve, restore, and reuse historic buildings. Implement a balance of transportation options and design. Encourage the development of essential facilities in locations where they can be conveniently accessed. Encourage the development of new public/institutional uses at a scale that is compatible with surrounding uses.

Predominant Land Uses

Government facilities (City, County, state, federal), schools and other educational facilities, places of worship, health care facilities, and other similar uses.

Permitted Zoning Districts

P- Professional
C-C – Community Commercial
G-B – General Business

QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

Regional Cooperation
Educational Opportunities
Community Health

Implementation Measures

Buffering

Provide adequate buffering and setbacks between different land uses.

Infill Development Program

A comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill development in particular areas of the community while also regulating this development ensures the protection of life quality in affected neighborhoods. An effective program will include both: a) development incentives, improvements to public facilities and services, and streamlined regulations to encourage infill development; b) guidelines for appropriate design, density, and location of new infill projects.

Regulations

Provide land use regulations that ensure that any proposed zoning will be compatible with the underlying Land Use designations as shown in the Comprehensive Plan

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Residential Character Area



Description

These areas are located within the City of Fitzgerald, with small- to medium-size residential lots in a more suburban setting. They typically include single-family residential, and the density ranges from low to medium with predominantly single-family homes and very few commercial uses.

Development Strategy

These areas focus on reinforcing the neighborhoods' stability by encouraging higher rates of homeownership and maintenance or upgrading existing structures.

Predominant Land Use

The predominant use is residential, with some smaller schools and churches and some very limited neighborhood commercial.

Permitted Zoning Districts:

R-6, R-9, R-15, R-20 - Residential
R-R – Rural Residential
MR – Multiple Residential
C-C - Community Commercial

Quality Community Objectives

Efficient Land Use
Local Preparedness
Sense of Place
Housing Options

Implementation Measures

Rehabilitation Codes

Adopt building codes with standards appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes help keep costs down, thereby encouraging the rehabilitation of older properties

Promote infill housing

Develop incentive and rewards programs to utilize abandoned properties and demolish vacant unsuitable housing to construct new homes.

Promote clean up and improved maintenance of existing properties and buildings

Consider working with Code Enforcement and the City Police to encourage clean-up and develop incentive and rewards programs to foster voluntary participation.

Creating a Network of continuous sidewalks

This will increase the safety of neighborhoods and provide a more coherent look to the neighborhood.

Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Guidelines**Sign regulations**

Language should be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to regulate all exterior signs and the lighting of signs. Attempt to control the aesthetic impact of signage on the community by restricting the location, size, and appearance of advertising signs.

Tree protection ordinance

Require preservation of a significant portion of the trees on a new development site, particularly the larger, more mature specimens. As a supplement to tree protection measures, a community may choose to adopt specimens or “heritage” tree protections, which protect individual trees considered necessary because of unique characteristics.

Rural Residential Character Area



Description

These rural land areas are likely to face development pressure for large-lot, low-density residential subdivisions. Such developments typically consist of sizeable residential lot subdivisions and open space. The majority of the Rural Residential areas can be found on the City of Fitzgerald's outer periphery, along major collector roads leading into the city. The density ranges from low to medium, with mostly single-family homes and very few commercial uses mixed in.

Development Strategy

Provide connecting green space and recreational areas to maintain the area's low-density rural character, emphasizing rural residential rather than agricultural activities. Include conservation subdivision planning

Predominant Land Use

The predominant uses are agricultural and large-lot single-family residential.

Permitted Zoning Districts

G-F – General Farming

R-R – Rural Residential

R-1, R-1A, R-6M - Residential

C – Community Commercial

Quality Community Objectives

Sense of Place

Efficient Land Use

Housing Options

Implementation Measures

Rehabilitation Codes

Adopt building codes with standards appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes help keep costs down, thereby encouraging the rehabilitation of older properties.

Agricultural Buffers

To minimize future potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and protect public health, safety, and general welfare, all new non-agricultural development adjacent to designated agricultural land shall be required to provide an agricultural buffer.

Agriculture Use Notice and Waiver

The use of Notices and Waivers to residential and potential residential landowners in this area will help to minimize potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses.

Cluster Development

Provides for small lot residential development in agricultural, forestry, and rural residential districts. Local governments that wish to consider the preservation of open space more extensively will want to discuss issues involving land trusts and providing conservation easements.

Conservation Easements

An arrangement where private landowners donate their property's development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency in exchange for tax savings. This permanently protects the property from development and thereby ensures that it remains as open space or farmland.

Rural Village Character Area



Description

The “rural villages” in Ben Hill County are small, and most historic communities have developed in the unincorporated county away from Fitzgerald. These are compactly developed areas with varied lot sizes that generally share a historical background, are formed around a natural or cultural feature, or grew around an old intersection. Each community has been given a name (usually of historical origins) and labeled on the associated map. The areas are:

- Player Cemetery
- Queensland
- Bethlehem
- Lulaville
- Brahman
- Bowen’s Mill
- Blackshear
- Plantation
- Dickson Mill
- Westwood
- Cotton Mill

Development Strategy

Promote these historic communities' continued existence with good communication, coordination, and active protection and guidance. Encourage the development of small, local businesses that will meet the communities' needs so that the residents will not have to make long, frequent vehicular trips. Ensure adequate enforcement of existing codes to prevent the decline of any of these “villages.”

Predominant Land Use

The predominant uses are agricultural and single-family residential

Permitted Zoning Districts

R-R – Rural Residential
R-1, R-1A, R-9, R-22 - Residential
MR - Multiple Residential
MHP – Manufactured Housing Park
P – Professional
CC - Community Commercial

Quality Community Objectives

Efficient Land Use
Local Preparedness
Sense of Place
Housing Options

Implementation Measures

Housing

Encourage the construction of quality and affordable housing for all age and economic groups.

Codes and Ordinances.

Review the regulations that permit substandard structures in the city and the county to assure that they will be maintained or demolished.

Community Businesses

Encourage the location of support businesses supporting a neighborhood to attract quality housing.

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SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA



Description

These areas are predominantly smaller-lot residential areas outside the historic city, mainly in unincorporated Ben Hill County, with newer and denser development than in the surrounding agricultural areas and older residential communities. These areas are characterized by traditional subdivision development on lots ranging from 10,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet. There is not much pedestrian activity, and most commercial development is automobile-oriented and centered around grocery stores. Typical Suburban Neighborhood areas are located at the north, northeast, and southwest edges of the City of Fitzgerald.

Development Strategy

The suburban neighborhood areas should be encouraged to develop at lower densities as master-planned developments, emphasizing connectivity and walkability. Also, care should be taken to control growth and ensure that any development will occur concurrently with the provision of necessary infrastructure and equitable distribution of project-created infrastructure costs to the new developments. The areas should provide for interconnectivity between subdivisions and encourage alternate modes of transportation. These areas should also provide for open space within and outside subdivisions to offer additional green space and passive and active recreation areas to serve the residents.

Predominant Land Use

The predominant land use is low- to medium-density residential with scattered strip commercial development and civic or institutional uses such as convenience stores, waste collection sites, and churches.

Permitted Zoning Districts

R-R – Rural Residential
R-1, R-1A, R-22 – Rural Residential
M-R – Multiple Residential
P – Professional
CC – Community Commercial

Quality Community Objectives

Efficient Land Use
Local Preparedness

Housing Options
Transportation Options

Implementation Measures

Housing

Encourage the construction of quality and affordable housing for all age and economic groups.

Rehabilitation Codes

Encourage the construction of quality and affordable housing for all age and economic groups.

Community Businesses.

Encourage the location of support businesses supporting a neighborhood to attract quality housing.

DRAFT

Ben Hill County Zoning Districts

G-F General Farming: The purpose of this district is to permit agricultural uses, to encourage the maintenance of the rural countryside, to preserve forests and other undeveloped lands away from areas of population growth, and to allow residents to retain their traditional ways of life. The preferred land use in the district is agricultural, either active in crops or passive in forest management or pasture lands. The G-F district should be utilized as a land use designation where more intensive land use is unlikely to occur soon. The district's requirements are designed to encourage a rural character's maintenance until more intensive development is feasible.

R-R Rural Residential: This district's purpose shall be to allow residential development on lots of less than three acres in appropriate areas designated in the Comprehensive Plan in unincorporated Ben Hill County. With Health Department approval, such districts may use individual water supply and sewerage disposal systems. The minimum gross floor area per dwelling unit in this district shall be a minimum of 800 square feet.

R-1 Single Family Residential: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of one acre (43,560 square feet), said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of these uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. With Health Department approval, such districts may use individual water supply and sewerage disposal systems. The minimum gross floor area per dwelling unit in this district shall be a minimum of 1,500 square feet.

R-1A Single Family Residential: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of one acre (43,560 square feet), said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of these uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. With Health Department approval, such districts may use individual water supply and sewerage disposal systems. The minimum gross floor area per dwelling unit in this district shall be a minimum of 1,200 square feet.

R-22 Single-Family Residential: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of twenty-two thousand (22,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. Consideration for designation for the district requires a minimum of public water service.

R-9 Single-Family Residential: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of nine thousand (9,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and

excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. Consideration for designation for the district requires a minimum of public water and public sewer service.

R-6 Residential: This district's purpose is to provide residential areas with a minimum lot size of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said areas being protected from uses that are incompatible with a desirable residential environment. Consideration for designation for the district requires a minimum of public water and public sewer service.

M-R Multiple Residential: The purpose of this district is to provide orderly development of higher density residential areas for one (1), two (2), three (3), and multi-family dwellings, with minimum lot sizes of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. Consideration for designation for this district requires a minimum of public water and public sewer service.

R-6-M Residential: The purpose of this district is to create an area that, in addition to conventional housing, allows manufactured homes as a matter of right in a traditional subdivision. Lots in this district must have a minimum of 6,000 square feet. These districts shall be protected from the encroachment of incompatible uses detrimental to a sound residential environment. Consideration for designation for this district requires a minimum of public water and public sewer service.

M-H-P Manufactured Housing Park: This district's purpose is to provide for the development of property that is suitably located and planned for manufactured housing park use. Property developed in this district is to remain in single ownership for rental or leasing purposes only. Manufactured housing parks shall be developed only in strict accordance with the Manufacturing Housing Park provisions of this ordinance.

P Professional: The purpose of this district shall be to create an area in which residential, professional, educational, and institutional uses can be compatibly mixed while maintaining a healthy living environment for the residents of the district and at the same time preventing the development of blight and slum conditions. The minimum lot size in this district shall be six thousand (6,000) square feet.

C-C Community Commercial: The purpose of this district is to provide for and protect areas that can accommodate a variety of sales and services that the Ben Hill County citizens commonly need.

G-B General Business: The purpose of this district shall be to provide for and encourage the proper grouping and development of uses which include a wide variety of sales and services that will best accommodate the needs of the county and the traveling public to reduce highway traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and blight along the public streets and highways of the county.

WLI Wholesale-Light Industrial: The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect areas for those wholesale and light industrial uses which do not create excessive noise, odor, smoke, dust, and which do not possess other objectionable characteristics that might be detrimental to surrounding neighborhoods, or the other uses permitted in the district.

H-I Heavy Industrial: This district's purpose shall be to provide and protect areas for those industrial uses that cannot comply with the WLI District's regulations.

NOTE:

During the Comprehensive Plan update, it was noted that Ben Hill County is in the process of adopting a revised zoning ordinance, and zoning district R1A will be deleted from the ordinance.

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CITY OF FITZGERALD ZONING DISTRICTS

G-B General Business: The purpose of this district shall be to provide for and encourage the proper grouping and development of uses which include a wide variety of sales and services that will best accommodate the needs of the city and the traveling public to reduce highway traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and blight along the public streets of the city.

C-C Community Commercial: The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect convenient areas for community shopping facilities consisting of a wide variety of sales and services.

N-C Neighborhood Commercial: The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect convenient areas for neighborhood shopping facilities consisting of sales and services oriented to the adjacent neighborhoods.

D-C DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL: The purpose of this district shall be to provide a higher density commercial development will include a wide variety of sales that should be located in the city's historic Central Business District.

P Professional: The purpose of this district shall be to create an area in which residential, professional, educational, and institutional uses can be compatibly mixed while maintaining a healthful living environment for the residents of the district and, at the same time, preventing the development of blight and slum conditions. The minimum lot size in this district shall be six thousand (6,000) square feet.

WLI Wholesale Light-Industrial: The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect areas for those wholesale and light industrial uses that do not create excessive noise, odor, smoke, and dust and do not possess other objectionable characteristics that might be detrimental to surrounding neighborhoods or the other uses permitted in the district.

H-I Heavy Industrial: The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect areas for those industrial uses which cannot comply with the requirements of the WLI district.

M-R Multiple Residential: The purpose of this district is to provide orderly development of higher density residential areas for one (1), two (2), and multi-family dwellings, with minimum lot sizes of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

MHP MOBILE HOME PARK: The purpose of this district is to provide for the development of property that is located and planned for mobile home use. Property developed in this district is to remain under single ownership for rental

purposes only. Mobile home parks shall be developed only in strict accordance with the Mobile Home Park provisions of this ordinance.

R-6 RESIDENTIAL: The purpose of this district is to provide residential areas with a minimum lot size of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said area being protected from incompatible uses with a desirable residential environment.

R-6-M RESIDENTIAL: The purpose of this district is to create an area that, in addition to conventional housing, allows mobile homes as a matter of right in a conventional subdivision. Lots in this district must have a minimum size of six thousand (6,000) square feet. These districts shall be protected from the encroachment of incompatible uses detrimental to a sound residential environment.

R-9 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential area with minimum lot sizes of nine thousand (9,000) square feet, said area being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and the encroachment of these uses that are incompatible with a desirable residential environment.

R-15 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential area with minimum lot sizes of fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet, said area being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and the encroachment of these uses that are incompatible with a desirable residential environment.

R-20 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL: The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential area with minimum lot sizes of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet, said area being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and the encroachment of these uses that are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

10. Transportation Element

The 2018 Ben Hill County Transit Development Plan (TDP) can be used as an informational guidebook to address its transit needs. The SGRC Transportation Department prepared this plan. It was also shared with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). There is also a third-party (TPO) operator within the county. Below are the related goals and objectives and a 5-year Capital and Operating Plan included in the TDP.

Goals and Objectives for Transit

GDOT lays out several goals and objectives for rural public transit in Georgia. Many of them are straightforward and are discussed here. The Southern Georgia Regional Commission has additional goals that impact rural public transit in Ben Hill County. This section will discuss the goals and objectives and how Ben Hill County Transit is currently meeting them.

1. **Basic Mobility to Serve All Georgians In Ben Hill County**, the transit service is open to all residents. The Georgia Department of Transportation contracts with the Southern Ben Hill Bacon Cook Turner Total 3,753 2,283 3,337 1,988 Male (%) 43% 45% 46% 44% Female (%) 57% 55% 54% 56% No Vehicle Available 14% 6% 7% 8% Georgia Regional Commission to provide coordinated human service transportation for seniors and other clients, these trips are Purchase-Of-Service (POS). POS and public trips are provided on a daily basis for destinations such as jobs, medical appointments, and shopping trips for Ben Hill County residents.
2. **Program Implementation**
Ben Hill County administers the 5311 rural public transit program through coordination with GDOT and its TPO, RMS Inc., meeting or exceeding the FTA program requirements. As is demonstrated through the performance criteria noted before, the Ben Hill County Transit Service meets or exceeds most of these criteria on a daily basis. The SGRC works with Ben Hill County and GDOT to provide technical assistance and analysis of the transit service delivery to inform local and state officials better.
3. **Efficiency and Effectiveness**
The Ben Hill County Transit System is operated in an efficient and effective manner by the county and its TPO. Utilizing POS contracts, the TPO is able to use these funds to match the federal funds used to supplement the public riders. The TPO and Ben Hill County effectively work with GDOT to provide an efficient transit system for its residents.
4. **Safe, Secure Quality Service**
The Ben Hill County Transit System is safe and secure, utilizing a proven training program for drivers and dispatchers. Ben Hill County and its TPO maintain safety and driver records that provide a safe and secure environment for the riders.

5. Accessible Service—Usable by Persons with Disabilities

Ben Hill County Transit is committed to meet the needs of all users of the system. All vehicles are lift-equipped to assist riders in wheelchairs. All drivers have been trained on operating the lifts, assisting riders, and making sure each rider is safely secured aboard the vehicles.

5 Year Operating Budget Estimates

The 5-year operating budget provides estimates in administrative and operational costs and revenue based on projected ridership. Due to the rural public transit system having many factors that could affect these estimations, such as a faster growth rate of public and Purchase-of-Service (POS) trips than projected, the amount that Ben Hill County covers could change. Ben Hill County does currently have another service provider in the area that only services POS trips. The revenue from the other provider was not factored into this 5-year operating budget plan. Please see below.

Operator: Ben Hill County
Date: 6/8/2017

Public and POS
2.32% Inflation Rate

FY2018-2019																																					
Net Operating Summary																																					
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$80,478.22	21%																																			
Operating Total / Ratio	\$300,217.30	79%																																			
Total Operating Budget	\$ 380,695.52																																				
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ 56,525.88																																				
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -																																				
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 324,169.63																																				
LESS: 10% Fare Revenue	\$ 32,416.96																																				
Net Operating Total	\$ 291,752.67																																				
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Vehicles</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Vehicles</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average Trips Per Vehicle</td> <td>2432</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Trips Projected</td> <td>9,729</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Percentage of Public Trips</td> <td>67.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>POS Trips</td> <td>3,187</td> </tr> <tr> <td>POS Amount</td> <td>\$ 56,525.88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rate Per Trip</td> <td>\$ 17.74</td> </tr> <tr> <td>POS Fully Allocated Costs</td> <td>\$ 91.54</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Public Trips</td> <td>6,542</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip</td> <td>\$ 22.38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expected Farebox Per Trip</td> <td>\$ 4.96</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Vehicles		Vehicles	4	Average Trips Per Vehicle	2432	Total Trips Projected	9,729	Percentage of Public Trips	67.00%	POS Trips	3,187	POS Amount	\$ 56,525.88	Rate Per Trip	\$ 17.74	POS Fully Allocated Costs	\$ 91.54			Total Public Trips	6,542	Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 22.38	Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ 4.96									
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Capital Budget Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -																																	
Budget Grand Total	\$ 236,335.02	\$ 146,430.45	\$ -	\$ 89,904.57																																	

FY2021-2022

Net Operating Summary		
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 86,210.48	21%
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 321,600.94	79%
Total Operating Budget	\$ 407,811.39	
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ 60,552.07	
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -	
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 347,259.33	
LESS: 10% Fare Revenue	\$ 34,725.93	
Net Operating Total	\$ 312,533.40	

Vehicles	6
Average Trips Per Vehicle	1736
Total Trips Projected	10,416
Percentage of Public Trips	66.00%
POS Trips	3,412
POS Amount	\$ 60,552.07
Rate Per Trip	\$ 17.75
POS Fully Allocated Costs	\$ 91.60
Total Public Trips	7,004
Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 22.31
Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ 4.96

Budget Summary	Totals	Federal	State	Local
Operating Budget Total	\$ 312,533.40	\$ 156,266.70	\$ -	\$ 156,266.70
POS Local Funds	\$ 60,552.07	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 60,552.07
Excess POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Budget Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Budget Grand Total	\$ 251,981.33	\$ 156,266.70	\$ -	\$ 95,714.63

DRAFT

III. Maps

DRAFT

Appendix

- #1 Ben Hill County SGRC Environmental Suggestions**
- #2 Analysis of Data Information Charts**
- #3 Broadband Constant Contact Survey**
- #4 Economic Development Element MAPS**
- #5 Economic Development Labor Force Demographics**
- #6 Economic Development Element - Industrial Jobs by Employer
Baseline 2020**
- #7 Economic Development Element - Tourism Baseline 2020**
- #8 Economic Development Element - Cooperative Workforce
Educational Program Baseline 2020**
- #9 Economic Development Element - Farm Gate Values**
- #10 Economic Development Element – Tier 1 Indicators Baseline 2020**
- #11 Economic Development Element – Tax Credit Tier**
- #12 Sign In Sheets**
- #13 Public Hearing Notices**
- #14 Transmittal Letters**
- #15 Adoption Resolutions**

APPENDIX #1 - BEN HILL COUNTY SGRC ENVIRONMENTAL SUGGESTIONS

Lake Beatrice Improvements Feasibility Study

- SGRC Awarded funding from GA EPD in January 2021
- They are awaiting word from the Army Corps of Engineers that they have secured funding to complete the project.

Background and Goals

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), representatives from the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council, and Georgia EPD have been meeting on a near-monthly basis since November 2017 to discuss conducting an exploratory study to address the reduction of surface water flow gaps in the Alapaha River by improving the dam at Lake Beatrice. Initially, estimated calculations indicate flow augmentation from an improved Lake Beatrice could reduce flow gaps at the downstream Statenville Node in both frequency and magnitude. This proposed study would gather data to determine improvements needed at the dam and lake that will reduce gaps and consider what operational and ownership models will be required for the improvements.

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Needs to be Addressed:

- Water Quantity Policy 2 that states: “Georgia will manage consumptive uses of surface water...alterations of flows through reservoir operations...and other actions that affect flow regimes, to ensure that current water needs are met without unreasonably foreclosing the ability of future generations to meet their own water needs.”¹
- Management practices to reduce low surface water gaps including conducting an analysis of management practices to reduce the number of more frequent, smaller magnitude gaps (DCAR-8²); and utilizing collaborative partnerships to examine opportunities to optimize farm and other pond operations to augment river flows with releases in dry/gap periods (ASWS-2 & 5³).
- The Plan includes management practices to study and research opportunities associated with improving river flow conditions via the creation/restoration of wetlands and potential water retention structures, including streams (DCAR-10⁴).
- As secondary benefits to improving Lake Beatrice wetland areas will be improved, it can help increase water flowing in the river during shortages (ASWS-7) and help manage stormwater runoff quality and flow rates that will support these river flows (NPSU-2⁵).
- An additional goal of the *Regional Water Plan* is to “protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities”⁶; an expanded Lake Beatrice will be more equipped to promote such opportunities, including recreational hunting and fishing, increasing the economic benefits of this region.

Long-Term Goals

- Reduce low surface water flow gaps in the Alapaha River (part of Suwannee River basin) to mitigate the severity of critical low flow conditions that contribute to “surface water gaps under current and future conditions.”

The SGRC, in partnership with the GA EPD, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County Development Authority, and other regional stakeholders seek to complete a

¹ Georgia State Water Plan, 2008, p 15.

² Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, 2017, p 6-8.

³ Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, 2017, p 6-11.

⁴ Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, 2017, p 6-8.

⁵ Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, 2017, p 6-16.

⁶ Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, 2017, p 1-5.

feasibility study that will evaluate the flow augmentation that can be supplied by an improved Lake Beatrice, develop conceptual design plans for those improvements (including construction cost estimates), address concerns related to flooding, and review ownership and operations models for future implementation. Once complete, this feasibility study will be the foundation to seek funding for implementing the proposed improvements that will continue the implementation of *Regional Water Plan* management practices.

Financial Information

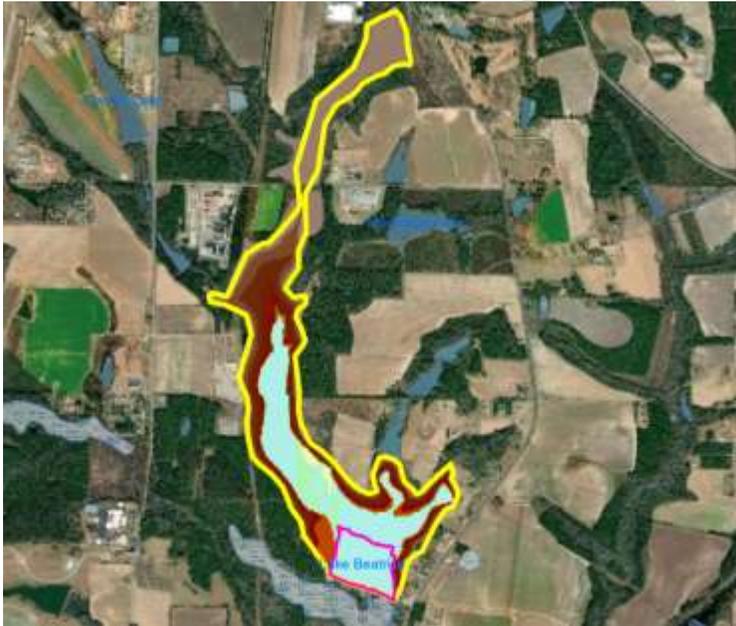
- Grant Amount: \$75,000
- Match Amount: \$151,894.21
- Cash Amount: \$103,131.32
 - **Total: \$330,025.53**

Project Scope (DRAFT- Abridged)

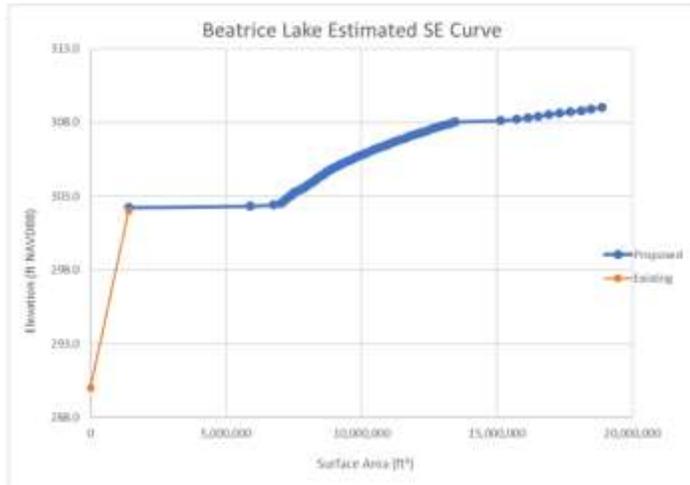
- Data Needed:
 - Modeling, Dam Analysis, Design
 - Historical Data- GIS files, Surveys, Photos, Inspection Records, etc.
- Perform field explorations in the dam and downfield areas to investigate subsurface conditions and identify potential karst features.
 - Two through the crest of the dam and into the foundation soils.
 - Two at the two of the dam sections.
 - Up to two of the above borings will monitor water levels through the existing dam
- Perform studies along the dam and downstream area, including up to four transect locations: one at the dam crest, two perpendicular to the dam crest extending into the downstream areas, and one parallel to the spillway channel.
- Review the project and confirm regulatory requirements for dam improvements.
 - Complete a dam break study for the determination of dam hazard classification.
- Review the project and confirm regulatory requirements for dam improvements.
- Complete an analysis to develop a Simplified Inundation Map for the identification of potential downstream impacts.
- Improve the existing HEC-RES model for flow modeling, hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, and analysis for existing and proposed design features, as well as flood mapping/comparisons of various alternatives.
- Complete analysis to develop estimates to augment flow from Lake Beatrice with the proposed condition to reduce flow gaps in both frequency and magnitude downstream at the Statenville and Jennings nodes.
 - Conduct additional modeling that includes supplemental pump flow from Willacoochee Creek into Lake Beatrice to supply the needed augmented flow downstream.
- Delineate the approximate drainage basin boundary (~45 sq. mi.) using available data collected as part of Project Activity 1 (topographic data and prior survey information).
 - The hydrologic model (HEC-HMS) will consist of basin-specific data, including soils and overland flow path characteristics.
- Develop a hydraulic model (HEC-RAS) of the Lake Beatrice Dam, including the dam, spillways, and downstream areas on Turkey Creek, Willacoochee Creek, and Willacoochee River to the Alapaha River Confluence near Willacoochee, GA, at US HWY 82.
- Perform analysis and develop flood models based on historical flooding impacts and the proposed project to areas immediately upstream from Lake Beatrice.
- Analyze and report on proposed mitigation measures to immediately reduce future flooding impacts from the proposed improvements to Lake Beatrice.
- Perform preliminary geotechnical design analysis for the current dam structure, the proposed rehabilitation design, and supplemental pump flow from Willacoochee Creek.
 - The analyses will include slope stability, seepage, and karst potential.

- Perform a preliminary design analysis for the current dam structure, including slope stability, seepage, and karst potential.
- Perform a preliminary design analysis for the proposed dam rehabilitation design, including slope stability, seepage, and karst potential.
- Perform a preliminary design analysis for the proposed supplemental pump flow from Willacoochee creek
- Engage USACE to develop one conceptual design in plan view, cross-section view, and one detail sheet for this concept.
 - This will include the needed repairs to the existing dam as well as any other improvements identified from other analysis in this project (including but not limited to: increasing the height of the dam, installation of dam and spillway control structures, dredging of the lake to achieve needed storage capacity, and flood mitigation measures)
- Develop one conceptual design in plan view, cross-section view, and one detail sheet.
- Develop a technical report that includes a summary of permitting requirements and opinion of probable construction costs anticipated for the proposed improvements to Lake Beatrice.
- Prepare a Final Conceptual Engineering Report and design package summarizing the rehabilitation measures, data collection completed, modeling outputs, permitting requirements, opinion of probable construction cost, conceptual design plans, and proposed timeline of implementation.
- Research options for future ownership and operations models of an improved dam structure at Lake Beatrice.
- Research secondary usage of an improved and enlarged Lake Beatrice, including examples of revenue generation potential and economic return on investment.
 - Analysis and comments will include regional economic benefit or lack of implementation of the proposed project to augment flows in the Alapaha River basin.
- Research future operations models including but not limited to: long-term lease, public-private partnership, purchase, etc., and ownership by local governments, local/regional authority, state, private, public-private partnership, etc.
- Research secondary usage of other similar reservoirs in the southeast United States, including recreational fishing, hunting, or similar uses. Include examples of the revenue generation potential of the site.
- Research examples of regional economic benefit for implementing similar regional reservoirs, including discussing the economic costs of not augmenting the Alapaha River basin's flows.
- Develop a project website to act as a central educational resource for information about the project.
- Staff will provide for public education and outreach events (either in-person or virtually) to gather input on the proposed project and educate citizens on surface water flows, water quantity, and quality.

Supporting Maps and Charts



	Storage Capacity (Acre-Feet)	Elevation (ft)	Surface Area (ft ²)
Lake Bottom	0	290	0
Existing Condition	1,104	302	1,410,072
Proposed Condition	2,529	309	18,871,252



Regional Water Quality Assessment Project

- Awarded to SGRC in January 2020

Background Information

Of the region's 1,500 miles of waterways, 1,178 do not support their designated use (Georgia Environmental Protection Division, 2018). Problems with nonpoint source pollution have been ongoing. They are addressed in the Georgia Water Plan, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Nonpoint Source Pollution Plan, the Suwannee Satilla Regional Water Plan, the SGRC Regional Plan, and the Comprehensive Plans for all 18 counties within the region. Furthermore, as identified in their Comprehensive Plans, many counties in the region seek to utilize waterways for recreation and economic growth. To this end, water quality and health are important to all stakeholders.

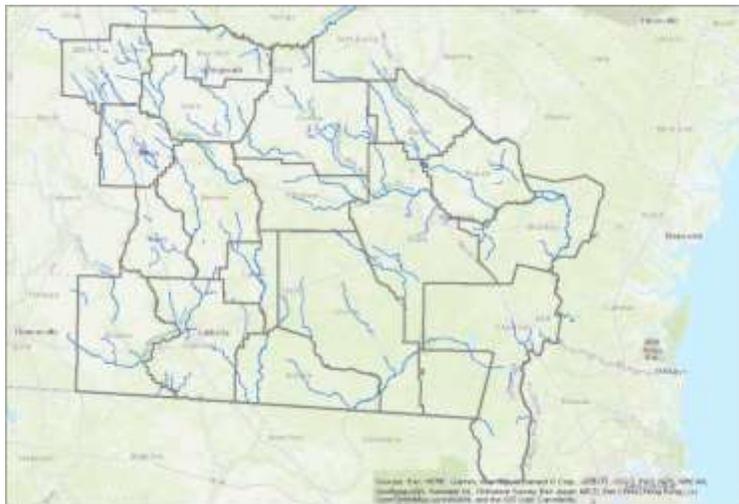
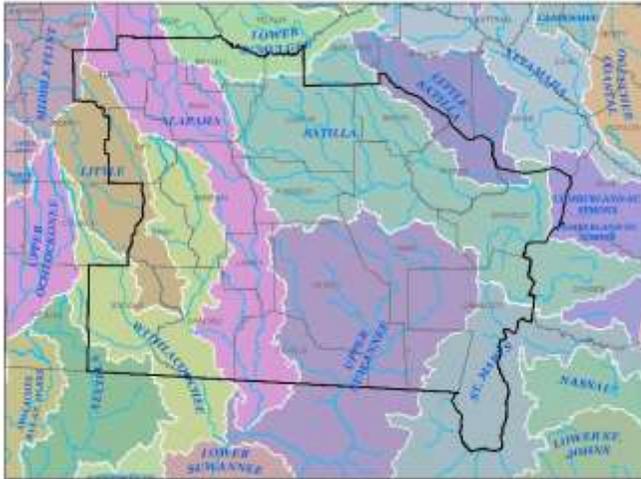
Regional organizations seeking to address the nonpoint source FC pollution within impaired waterbodies will benefit from understanding the significant contributing sources. Specific data will be useful when considering BMP types, locations, and interested parties when requesting funding, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the EPD's 319(h) grants.

Project Goals

- This project's long-term goal is to improve regional water quality, funding efficiency, and best management practice (BMP) efficacy.
- This project involves a comprehensive review of the region's fecal coliform (FC) impaired waterbodies using data analysis, water quality sampling, Steering Committee input, and an oversight Citizen Scientist involvement and public education and engagement.
- Regional outreach and education will include Georgia Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) training events for chemical and bacterial protocols. Nonpoint source pollution workshops will be held in communities near FC impaired waterbodies to help inform residents of the changes they can make to improve water quality.

- The resulting product will be a list of significant nonpoint sources of FC pollution in each impaired water body. The project will provide prioritized BMP implementation areas, recommended BMP types, and homeowners/landowners/business owners interested in future BMP funding opportunities. The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) will develop a publicly available, user-friendly Geographic Information Systems (GIS) web-map showing the 303(d) listed waters from 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 reports.

Supporting Maps and Charts



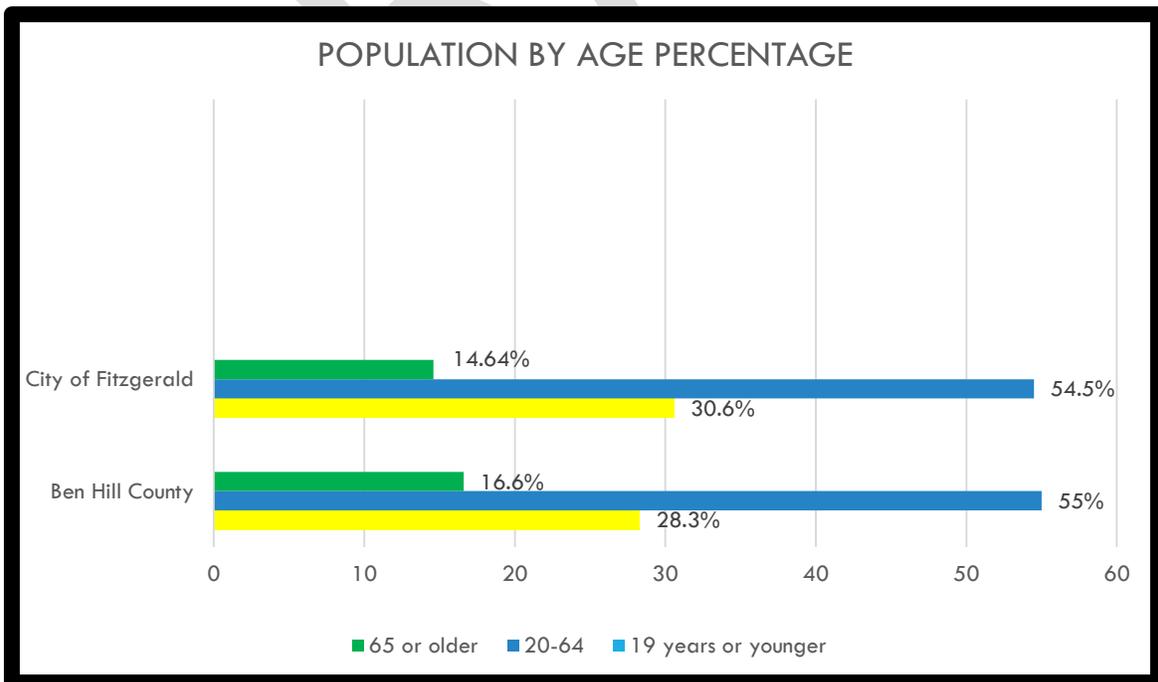
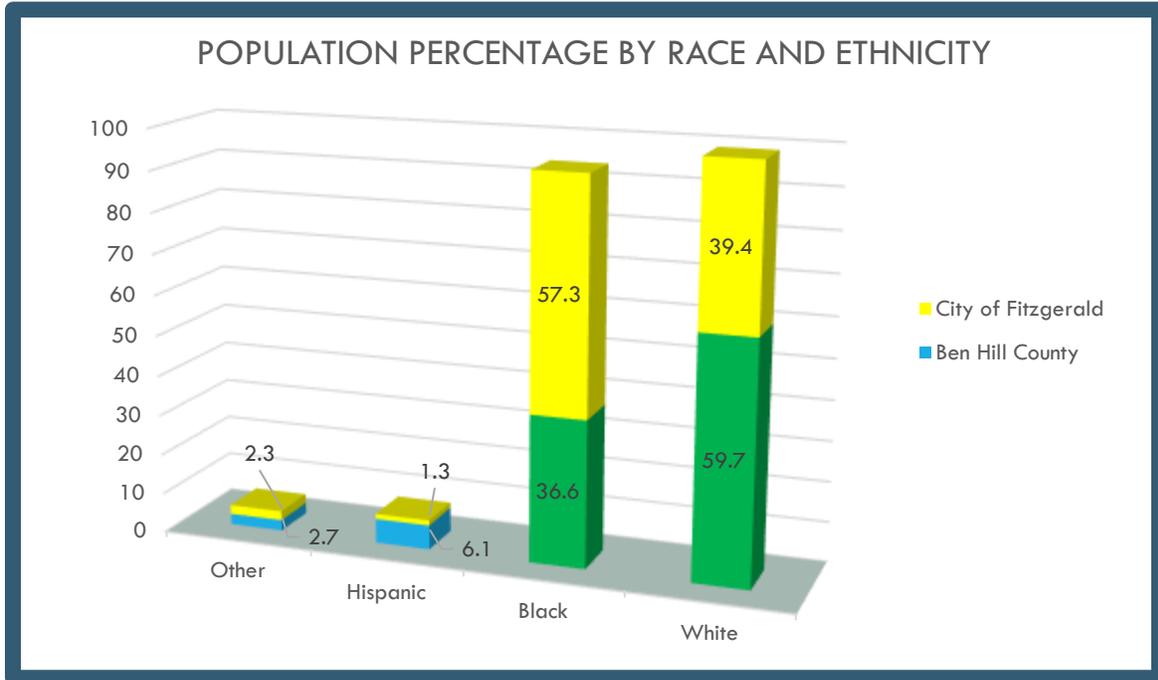
319(h) Grant Cycle

- FY21 Grant Cycle Opening Jan/ Feb 2021 → Applications Due around March 2021
- FY22 Grant Cycle Opening Jan/Feb 2022 → Applications Due around March 2022

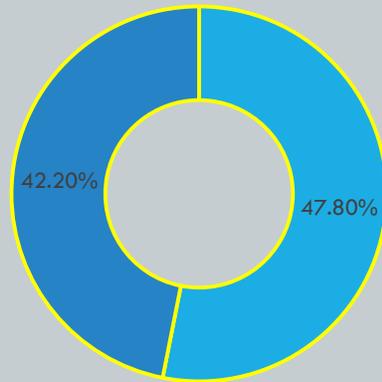
Appendix #2 - Analysis of Data Information Charts

(Data Sources: U.S. Census and Statistical Atlas)

POPULATION

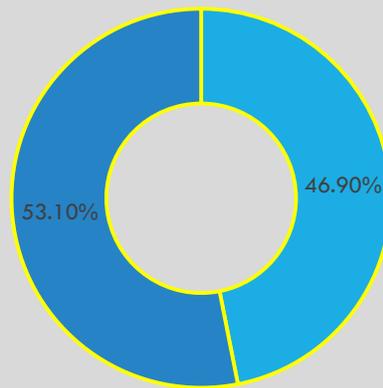


POPULATION BY SEX
Ben Hill County



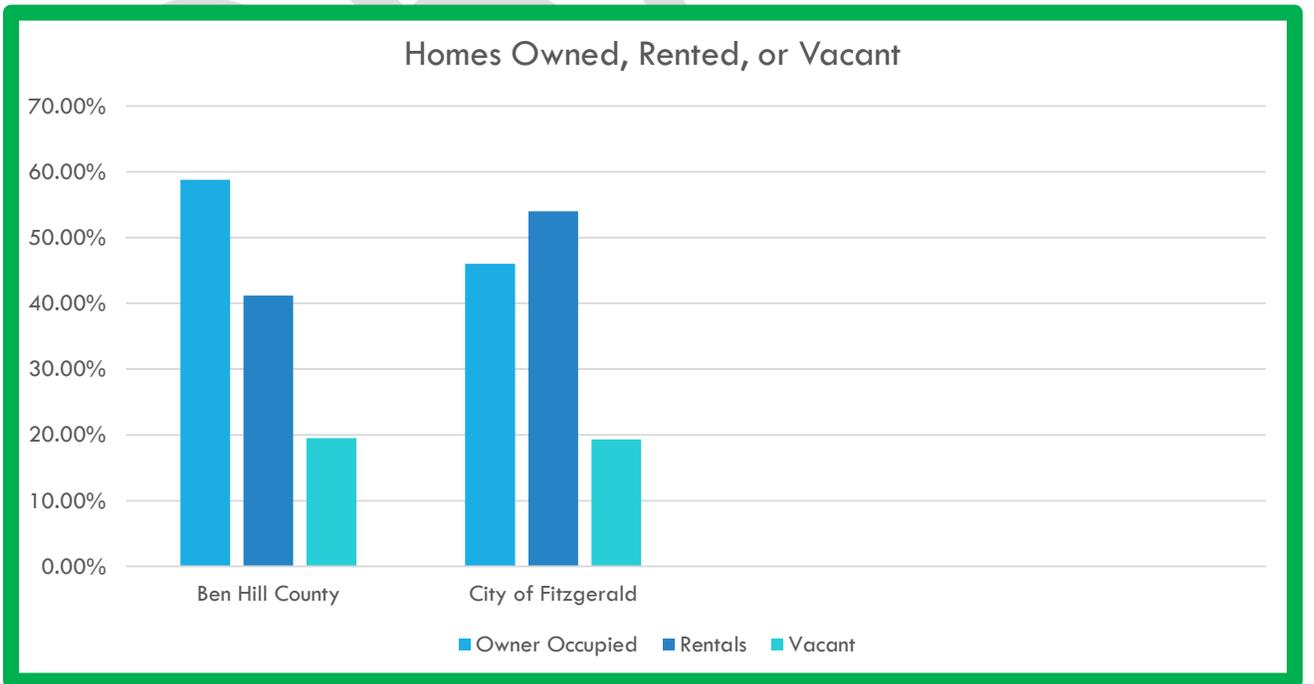
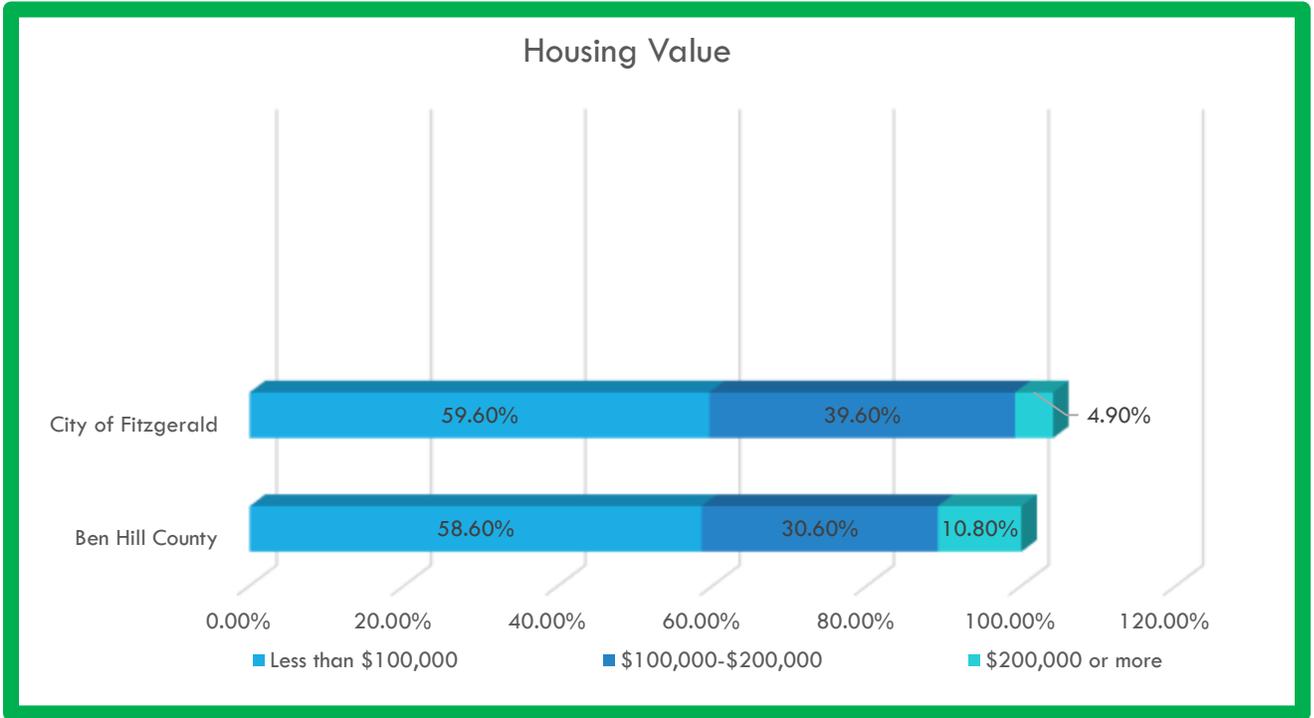
Male Female

POPULATION BY SEX
City of Fitzgerald

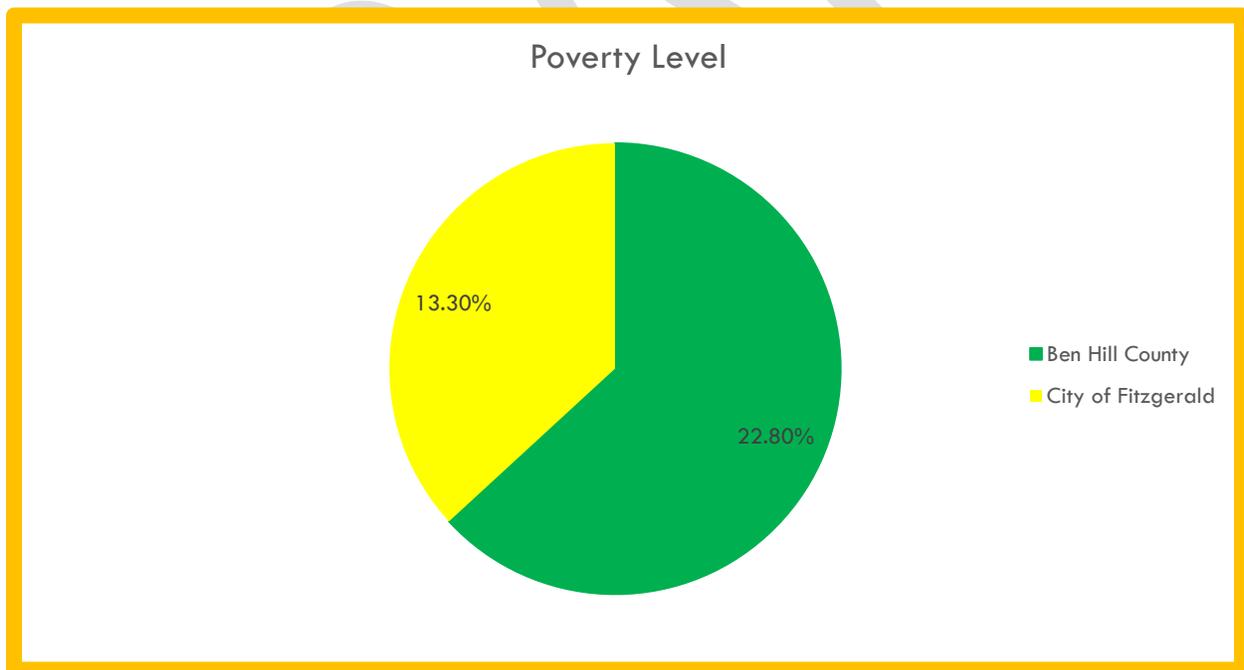
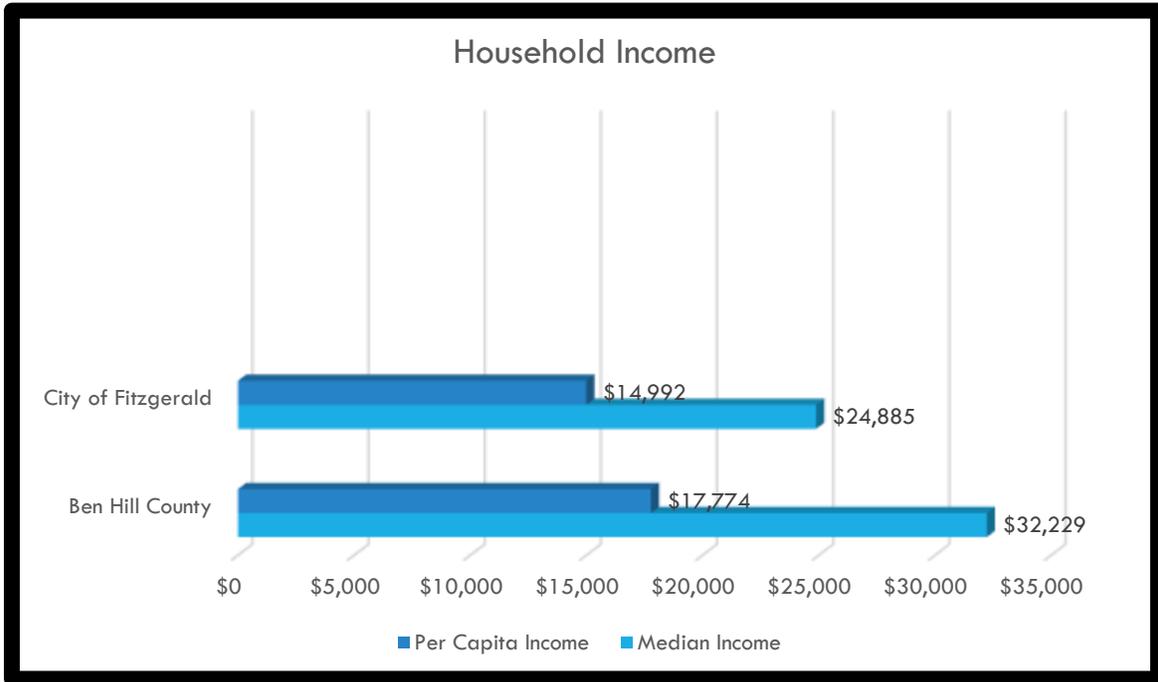


Male Female

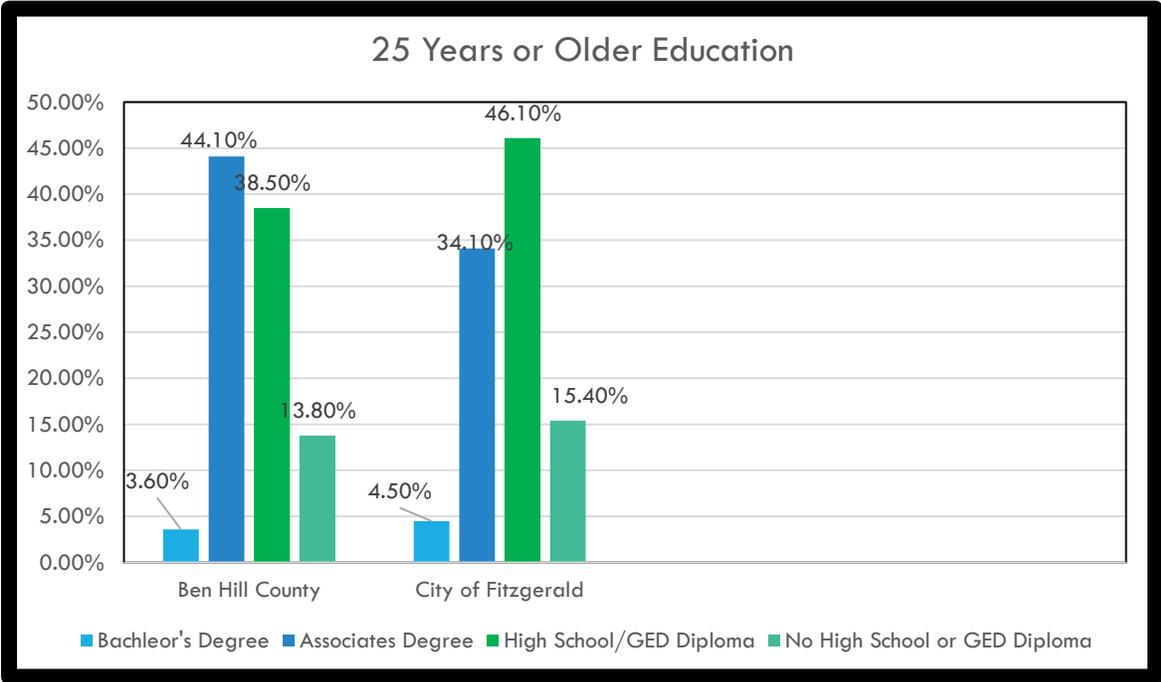
HOUSING



INCOME

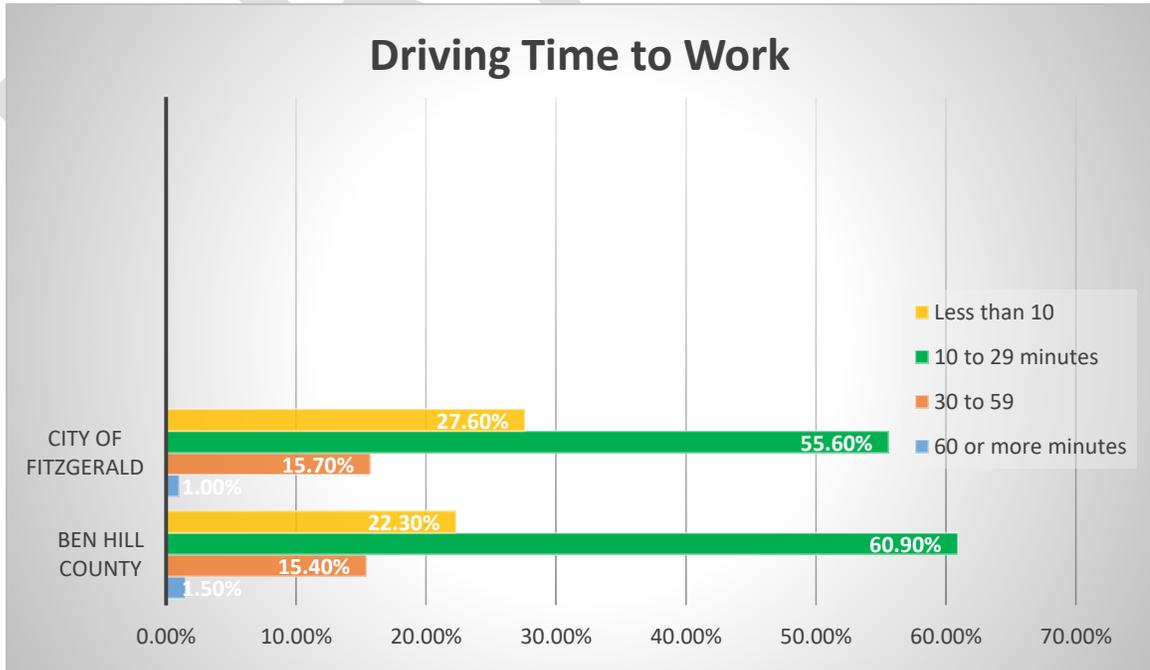
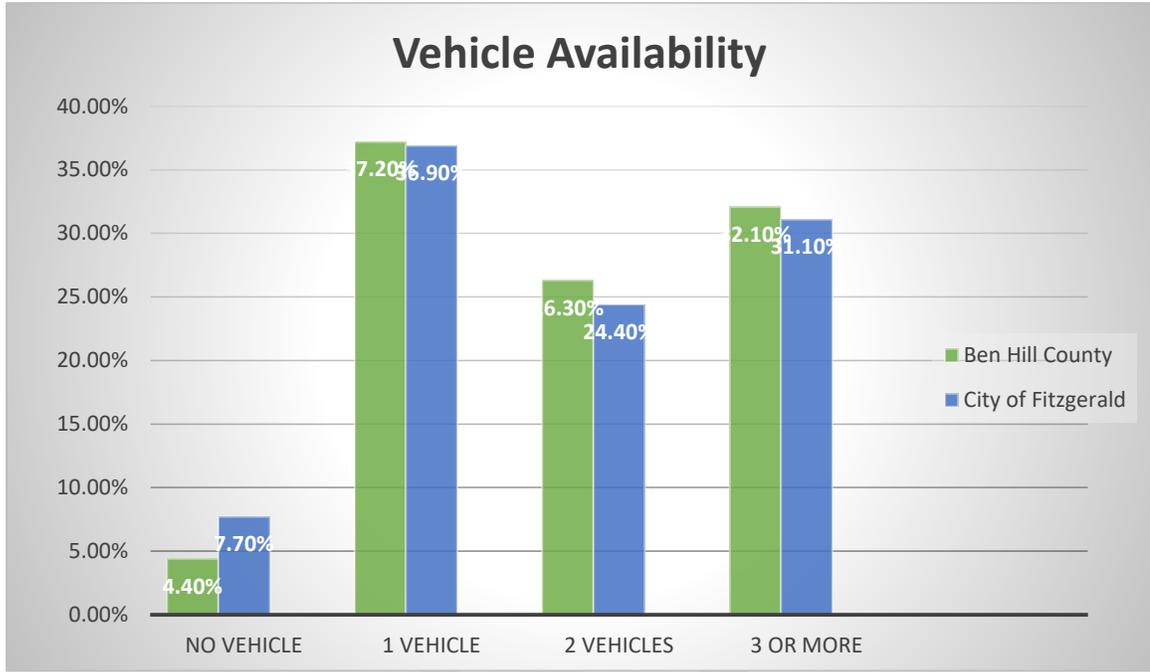


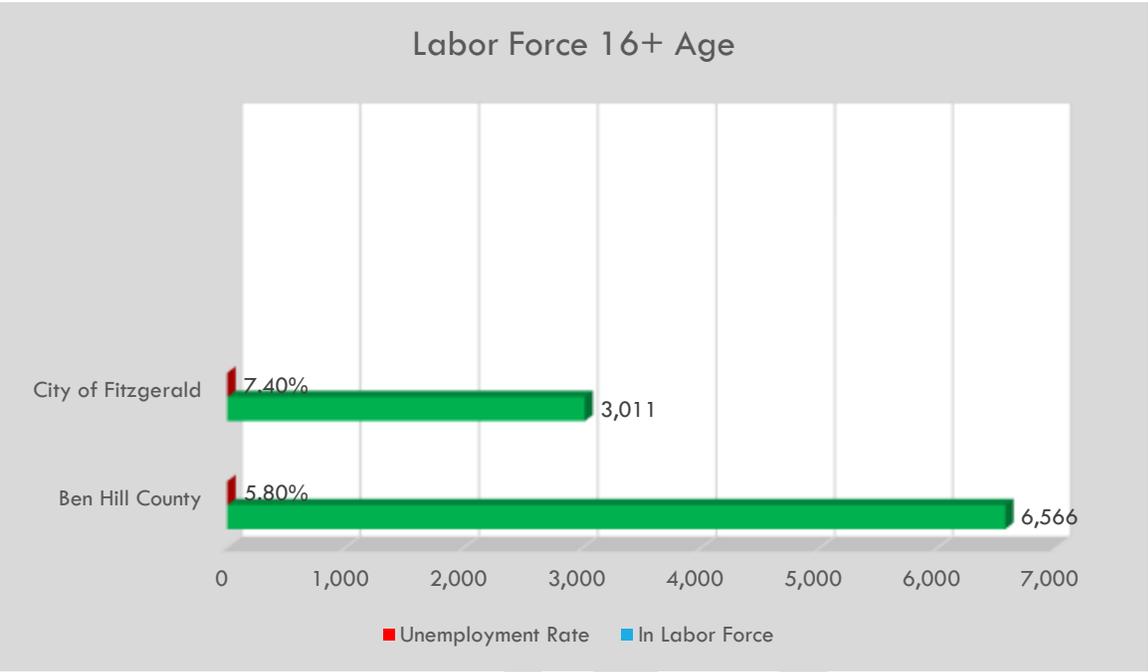
EDUCATION ATTAINMENT



WORKFORCE

Commute to Work Ben Hill County





DRAFT

Appendix #3 - Broadband Constant Contact Survey

Constant Contact Survey Results

Survey Name: Aug 12 2019 Survey
Response Status: Partial & Completed
Filter: None
Sep 09, 2019 1:15:28 PM

1. What address are you reporting for? Please note, this survey is only for non-residential addresses (this includes businesses, governments, libraries, schools, and hospitals/medical centers).

6 Response(s)

2. Which of the following Internet access options are available at this address (check all that apply)?:

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
No access	0	0.0%
DSL (Dial Up)	1	16.6%
Cable Modem	2	33.3%
Fiber	4	66.6%
Mobile/Wireless	1	16.6%
Satellite	0	0.0%
Other	1	16.6%
Total	6	100%

2 Comment(s)

DK

3. Are the Internet service options at this address adequate?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	1	16.6%
No	5	83.3%
No Responses	0	0.0%
Total	6	100%
2 Comment(s)		

4. Which of the following uses would Internet service at this address be for (check all that apply)?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Business	3	50.0%
School	1	16.6%
Medical	1	16.6%
Government	3	50.0%
Library	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	6	100%

5. Is your Internet service consistently reliable for the address you are reporting on?

DR

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	2	33.3%
No	4	66.6%
No Responses	0	0.0%
Total	6	100%
3 Comment(s)		

6. Are the internet speeds sufficient to meet your needs for the address you are reporting on?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	2	33.3%
No	4	66.6%
No Responses	0	0.0%
Total	6	100%
3 Comment(s)		

7. Does the internet service cost seem appropriate for the service speed and reliability received at the location you are reporting on?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	1	16.6%
No	4	66.6%
No Responses	1	16.6%
Total	6	100%
1 Comment(s)		

8. By submitting my contact information, I consent to receive communications regarding this survey data.

First Name	6
Last Name	6
Company Name	6
Work Phone	4
Email Address	6
Address 1	4
Address 2	3
City	5
State/Province (US/Canada)	6
Postal Code	5

Appendix #4 - Economic Development Element: MAPS

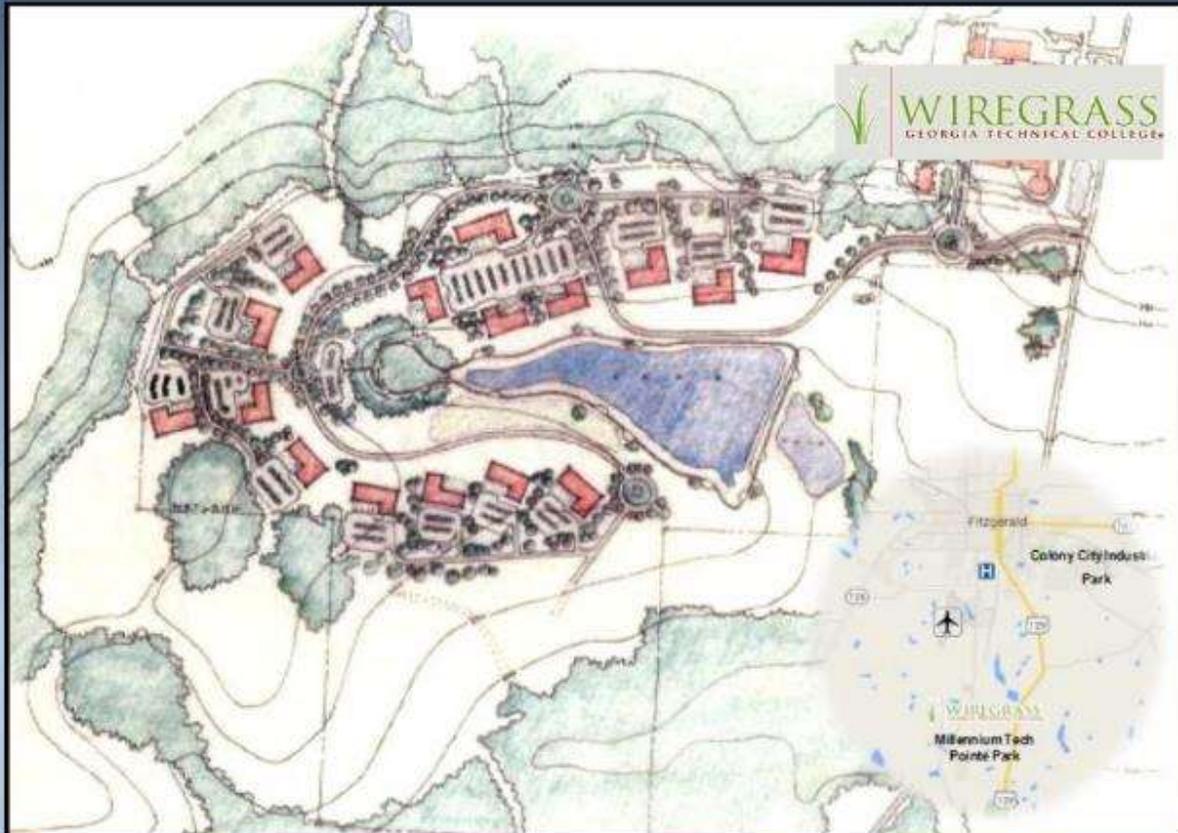
Colony City Industrial Park



Home to most of Fitzgerald's leading industries, Colony City Industrial Park encompasses approximately 1425 acres and is the nucleus for Fitzgerald's industry growth and expansion. The park contains a balanced mixture of users that support the forest, peanut, metal fabrication, cargo trailer, and transportation industry. Complete with all needed infrastructure, direct access to several state highways, and rail service from CSX, the park offers users tracts ranging from 1 to 165 acres, or simply put, we can cater to the users' goals and priorities.

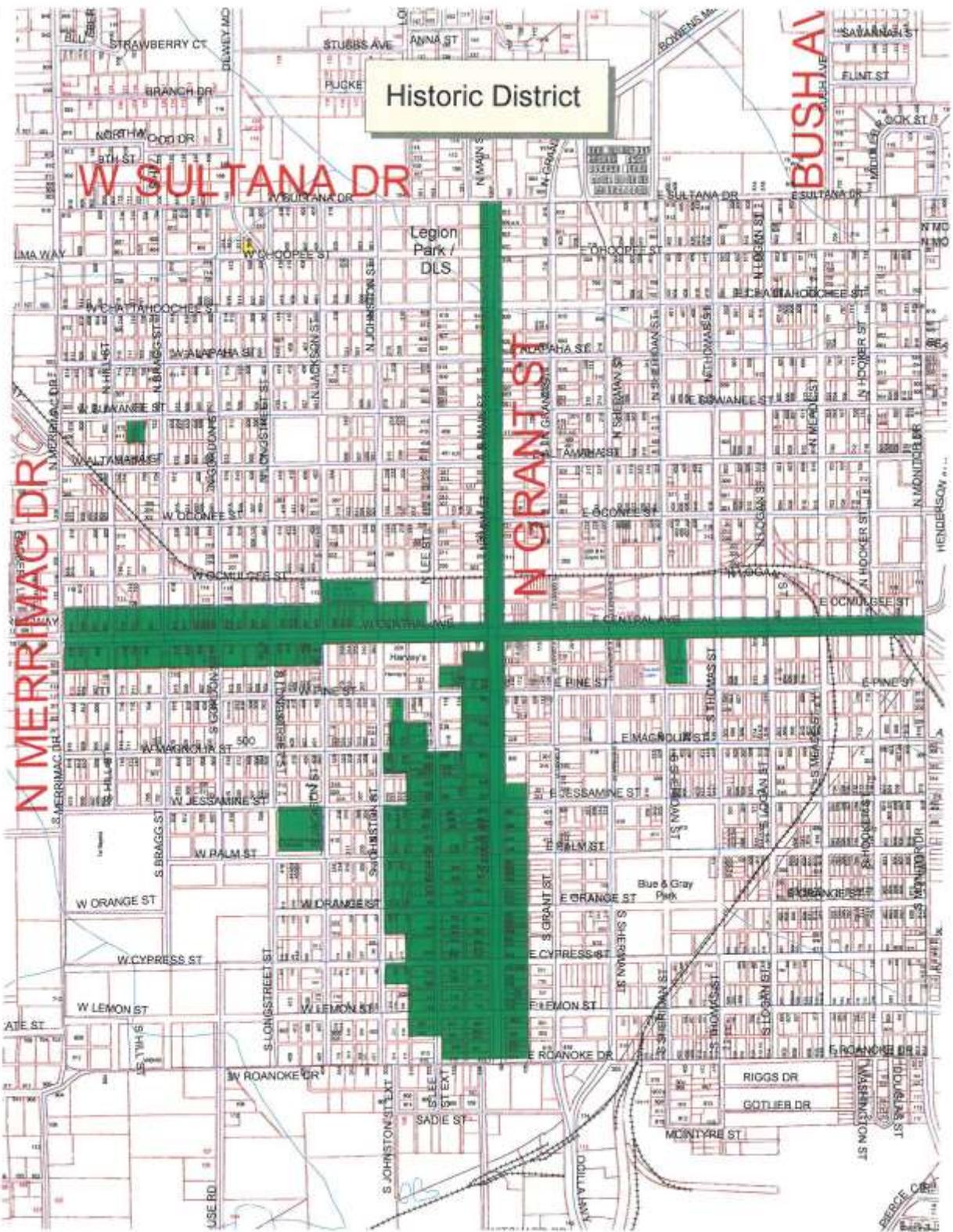


Millennium Technology Pointe



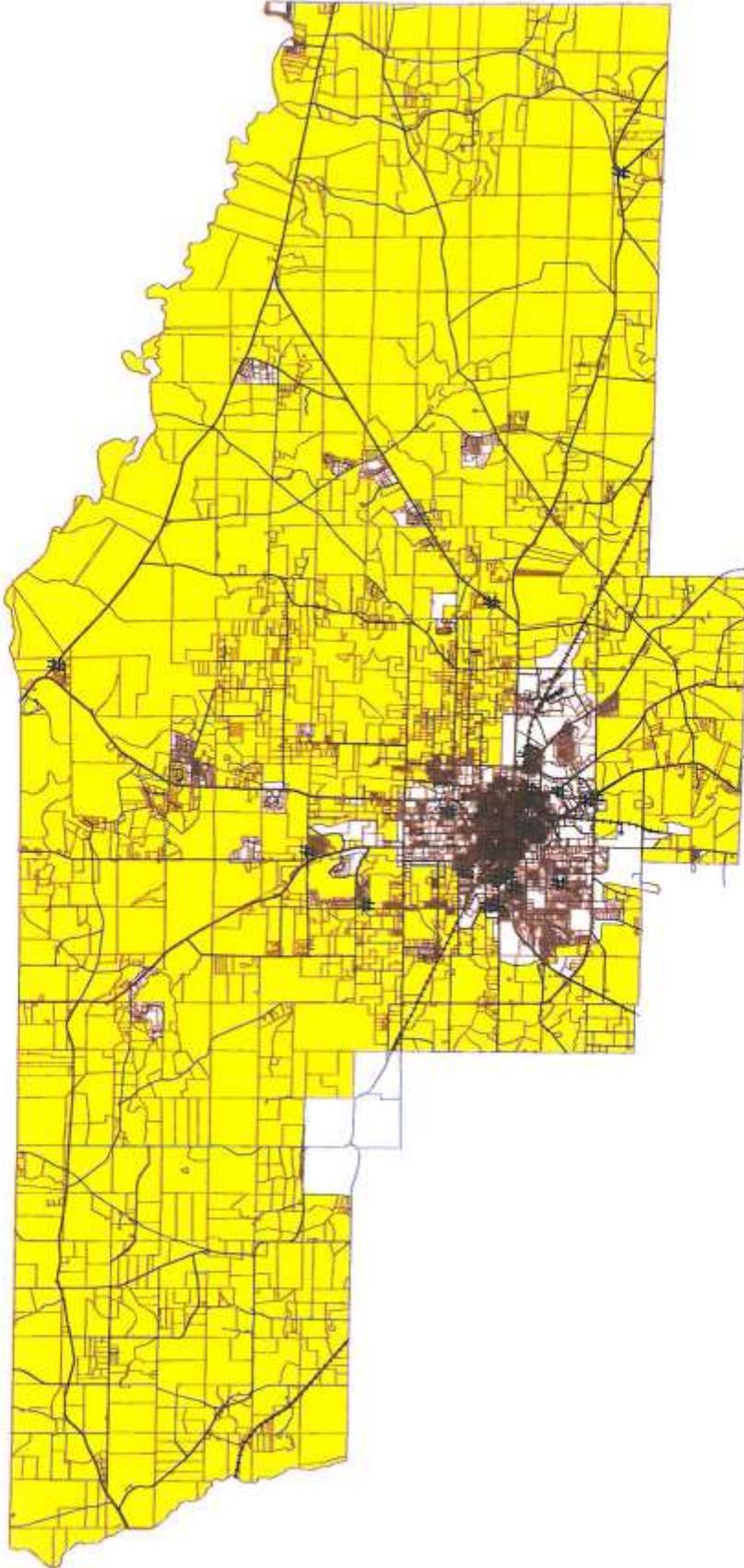
- 214 acre technology park adjoining Wiregrass Technical College
- Conceptual design allows for 17 sites designed specifically for office/light industrial use, yet offers flexibility to meet the users goals and priorities
- Utilities in place (fiber, electric, water, & waste management), wetlands delineated
- Direct access to multiple state routes
- Location provides convenient travel for regional workforce





Historic District

General Farming shown in Yellow



Appendix #5 - Economic Development Element Appendix 2: Labor Force Demographics (Baseline 2019)

Labor Force and Wage Information Totals

Ben Hill County Labor Force	5,427
Unemployment Sept 2019	5.5%

Community Data

Ben Hill County Population	17,336
Ben Hill County 2019 Graduation Rate	88.5%
Median Annual Household Income	\$35,700

Average Weekly

Manufacturing Wage for Ben Hill County	\$799
Wood Product Average Weekly Wage	\$809
Construction Average Weekly Wage	\$694
Food Average Weekly Wage	\$791
Fabricated Metal Product Average Weekly Wage	\$703

(Source: Georgia Department of Labor)

Appendix #6 - Industrial Jobs by Employer

**Manufacturing, Construction & Related Industries/Employers
Provided by the - Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Co. Chamber of Commerce
(229) 423-9357 800-225-7899 www.fitzgeraldchamber.org**

Agri-Products, Inc.
Hardy Maloch
182 Peachtree RD.
423-2367 FAX: 423-2371
Premium pine equine animal
bedding shavings
Employees: 30
www.suncoastbedding.com

Alvin Wynn Electric Co.
David/Ed Wynn
P.O. Box 1002
138 Colony Drive
423-5495 FAX: 423-4268
Electric Motor & Engines
Employees: 12

American Blanching
Jack Warden
P.O. Box 1028
155 Rip Wiley RD.
423-4098 FAX: 423-3842
Peanut Butter Paste
Employees: 450
www.americanblanching.com

Astro Products
Duane Mobley
P.O. Box 964
340 Benjamin H. Hill DR.
423-5409 FAX: 423-6058
Cleaning Chemicals/Equipment
Employees: 7
www.astroproductsinc.com

Arising Industries Johnnie Batten
200 Ed Ward RD.
409-0872
Cargo Trailers
Employers: 70
www.arisingindustries.com

Ben Hill Co. School System
Nancy Whidden
509 W. Palm ST
409-5500 FAX: 409-5513
Education
Employees: 450
www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us

The Cabinet Warehouse
John William Mooney
229 Benjamin Hill Drive 426-7514 FAX:
229-426-7642
Employees: 9
cabinets, countertops, hardware, and led
lighting

Choice Wood, Inc.
Allen Conger, Jr.
209 Glenn Bass RD.
424-0091
Mixed Hardwood Slithers & Kick Outs
Employees: 30

Cleghorn & Sons Home Builders
Matt Cleghorn
708 S. Sherman ST.
423-9573 FAX: 424-0993
Employees: 5

Colonial Iron Works
Tad Schirack
2363 Ironwood RD.
Abbeville, GA 31001
Welding, real estate signs, grills
Employees: 2

Covered Wagon Trailers
142 Benjamin Hill Drive
423-4044 FAX: 423-4052
Cargo Trailers
Employees: 75
www.coveredwagontrailers.com

Custom Profiles Incorporated
Henry Sheffield-Founder
C. Scott Sheffield - President
P.O. Box 279
256 Benjamin H. Hill DR.
423-2929 FAX: 423-3724
Plastic Extrusions
Employees: 28
www.customprofiles.com

CSX Transportation
196 Shop RD.
423-2054
Industrial transportation
Employees: 232

Dalan Trucking Inc.
David & Lanora Conger
200 Ocilla Hwy.
423-4546 FAX: 424-9097
Employees: 19

Dorminy Medical Center
Stacy Mims
200 Perry House RD.
424-7100 FAX: 424-7281
Health Care
Employees: 289

Eaton Corporation
Aeroquip Industrial Plastic
Tommy Ellington-Plant Manager
381 Benjamin H. Hill DR.
423-9376 FAX: 423-7245
Plastic Extrusions
Employees: 17
Parent Company: Cleveland, Ohio
www.eaton.com

E & F Electric, Inc
Allen Etheridge - Owner
115 Etheridge RD
423-9373
Employees: 2
Electric/Wiring

Elixir Industries
Meredith Carver-Div. Mgr.
243 Washington Ave.
423-4311 FAX: 423-6722
Custom Fabrication
Employees: 45
Parent Company: Gardena, California
www.elixirind.com

EnviroLog
Ross McRoy-President
200 Ocilla Hwy
P.O. Box 190
423-7233 FAX: 423-7232
866-34-ENVIRO
Firelog Products
Employees: 35
www.enviro-log.net

Fitzgerald Utilities
Jeff Lewis
P.O. Box 667
426-5400
Utilities
Employees: 85
www.fitzutilities.com

Irwin EMC
Randy Crenshaw
915 West 4th ST.
P.O. Box 125
Ocilla, GA 31774
468-7415
Utilities
Employees: 49
www.irwinemc.com

Kampco Services of Georgia
Jamie Benson
257 Rip Wiley RD.
424-0298 FAX: 423-9063
Steel Fabrications/Trailer Component
Parts/Trailer Fenders
Employees: 11
www.kampco.com

L.E. Harper Construction
Louis Harper
315 Bethlehem CH. RD
423-5840 FAX: 423-5840
Construction/Rental
Employees: 10

Lippert Components
Jason Gray
160 Oriole Rd.
423-7884 FAX: 423-8490
Frames and fabricated parts for RV's Mobile
Homes/Cargo Trailers
Employees: 45
www.lippertcomponents.com

Look Trailers
Johnny Streat
122 Glenn Bass RD.
423-0056 FAX: 423-0039
Cargo Trailers
Employees: 106
www.looktrailers.com

Mana Nutrition
Loris Jarvis
189 Seaboard RD.
423-8700
Nutrition/Food
Employees: 30
www.mananutrition.org

Modern Dispersions South, Inc
Marton Kozma
302 Ed Ward RD.
P.O. Box 787
423-9141 FAX: 423-1015
Mfg. Plastic Pigment
Employees: 200
www.moderndispersions.com

Polar Beverages Southern Bottling
Christopher Maros - GM
P.O. Box 1448
255 Jacksonville Hwy
1-800-872-5675 FAX: 424-9039
Carbonated/Still Beverages
Employees: 110
Parent Company: Worcester, Mass
www.polarbev.com

Protein Plus, LLC
Darrell Donald
129 Kings Borough RD.
P.O. Box 100
229-423-5528 FAX: 229-423-5530
Employees: 23
www.proteinplusflour.com

Rainbow Irrigation
Billy Mann-President
Terry Mann-VP & Sales
P.O. Box 70
One Rainbow DR.
423-4341 FAX: 423-4645
Irrigation Systems/Pumps/Valves-Pipe
Fittings/Aluminum Pipe
Employees: 30
www.rainbowirrigation.com

Scruggs Concrete Company
Eric Spells
131 Appomaddox RD.
423-9504 FAX: 424-0221
229-805-7333
Ready-Mix Concrete-Masonry
Employees: 1

Shapiro Metals
Denny Lewis
151 Glenn Bass RD.
426-0091 FAX: 426-0092
Metal Recycling
Employees: 16
www.shapirometals.com

Shaw Industries M1
Dwight Brown-Plant Mgr.
139 Benjamin H. Hill DR. E
409-5275 FAX: 423-2107
Textile: Yarn Manufacturing
Employees: 229
www.shawfloors.com

Southern Eagle Distributing LLC
Reggie Turner
243 Ocilla Hwy.
P.O. Box 876
423-4679
Fax: 423-8699
Employees: 30
Beer and Ale Merchant Wholesalers

Southern Timber Products
Dan Alexander
115 Dewey McGlamry RD.
P.O. Box 1385
423-3195 FAX: 423-4976
Timber Cutting
Employees: 14

Southern Veneer Products
Kendall Adams
278 Frank RD.
424-0294 FAX: 424-0424
Pine Veneer/Plywood
Employees: 165

T & T Machine Shop
Tony Lanier
444 Evergreen RD.
423-9665 FAX: 424-9719
General Industrial Machinery
Textile Machinery
Specialty Machinery
Employees: 9

VLS Recovery Service
Tim Yeakley – Plant Mgr.
188 Rip Wiley RD.
P.O. Box 540
229-796-0082 FAX: 423-1016
Railcar Cleaning Service
Employees: 31
www.vlsrs.com

GBW Railcar Services
Eric Monahan
P.O. Box 598
222 Rip Wiley RD.
423-5651 FAX: 423-4591
Railcar Repair
Employees: 110
www.watcocompanies.com

Wiregrass Technical College
April McDuffie
667 Perry House RD
468-2000 FAX: 468-5550
Education
Employees: 75
www.wiregrass.edu

Windstream
Steve Pair
P.O. Box 969
152 Benjamin H. Hill Dr. Ext.
423-9321 FAX: 423-2936
Communications
Employees: 20

Walker Printing Company
David Chaney
203 East Pine Street
P.O.Box 720
423-4327 FAX: 423-1200
Printing
Employees: 8

West Frazier
(formerly known as Gilman Building
Products)
Jerone Nails
173 Peachtree RD.
P.O. Box 310
423-8761 FAX: 423-3083
Southern Yellow Pine Lumber
Pine Wood Chips
Pine Bark/Sawdust & Shavings
Employees: 145
Parent Company: Yulee, Florida

Economic Development Element Appendix #7 - Tourism Inventory Baseline 2020

(see strategic tourism plan when complete)

Economic Development Element Appendix 6: Economic Development Agencies

- The Development Authority of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County
- The Development Authority of Ben Hill County
- The Fitzgerald Downtown Development Authority
- The Ben Hill Irwin Joint Development Authority
- The Fitzgerald Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
- The Fitzgerald Ben Hill Chamber of Commerce
- The Fitzgerald Ben Hill Arts Council

Economic Development Element Appendix #8: Cooperative Workforce Educational Program Baseline 2020

Collaborative Programs between Ben Hill County Schools and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College

- Move on When Ready (early college, dual enrollment, joint enrollment, ACCEL courses, and so forth)
- Certified Manufacturing Specialist at FHS taught by Wiregrass
- Work ethics curriculum training at Wiregrass and CTAE courses at FHS
- Wiregrass hosts Get Wired! for middle and high school students to participate in hands-on activities in technical programs

Ben Hill County Schools offers the following career development opportunities:

- FHS implemented the CANES (Courteous, Accountable, Noble, Engage, Self-Motivated) program in all classes to strengthen soft skills
- BHCSS continues to implement strong career development initiatives from P-12. Ben Hill Middle School has career connections curriculum courses; FHS has a career, technical, and AG education career pathways
- BHCSS offers job shadowing, field trips, guest speakers in all grades
- FHS offers work-based learning and youth apprenticeship
- BHCSS implements career awareness lessons in elementary with a career portfolio completed by 5th grade; career plans, assessments, and inventories are developed in middle school; 8th graders complete a graduation plan
- FHS has end of pathway assessments and recognized industry credentials/certifications
- All FHS students complete a career pathway
- Graduation rate exceeds region and state rates at 74.2%
- Ben Hill County CCRPI is 74.6, which exceeds region and state rates; high school CCRPI is 59.4%
- BHCSS has a strong, new initiative focusing on promoting early learning for more students before entering Kindergarten.

Wiregrass Georgia Technical College offers:

- Associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificate of credit programs including allied health, automotive, business administrative technology, business management, computer information systems, cosmetology, criminal justice, early childhood care and education, industrial systems technology, practical nursing, telecommunications, and welding
- Adult education, including adult literacy and GED preparation and testing
- Continuing education and contract training courses for business and industries

Economic Development Element Appendix #9 – Farm Gate Values

Economic Development Element Appendix 8: Ben Hill County Farm Gate Values

Cotton	12,333 acres	\$10,359,720
Broiler Chicken Integrator	24 houses/23,000 Birds	\$9,538,560
Peanuts	5,300 acres	\$6,625,000
Watermelon	358 acres	\$5,155,200
Timber		\$4,787,019
Corn	2,897 acres	\$3,624,147
Pecans	2,100 acres	\$2,856,000
Pine Straw	23,000 acres	\$2,300,000
Greenhouse	128,000 square feet	\$1,920,000
Horses Raised	750 horses	\$1,778,250
Beef Cows	3,100 head	\$1,447,313
Horses Board, Train, Breed	400 horses	\$1,400,000
Cucumber	36 acres	\$1,350,000
Broiler Chicken Grower	24 houses/23,000 Birds	\$1,144,627
Beef Stockers	2,400 head	\$1,116,000

USDA Emerging Markets

Goats	1 house/1600 Nanny Goats	\$240,000
Olives	None	
Miscanthus Grass	None	

Economic Development Element Appendix #10 - Tier 1 Indicators Baseline 2020

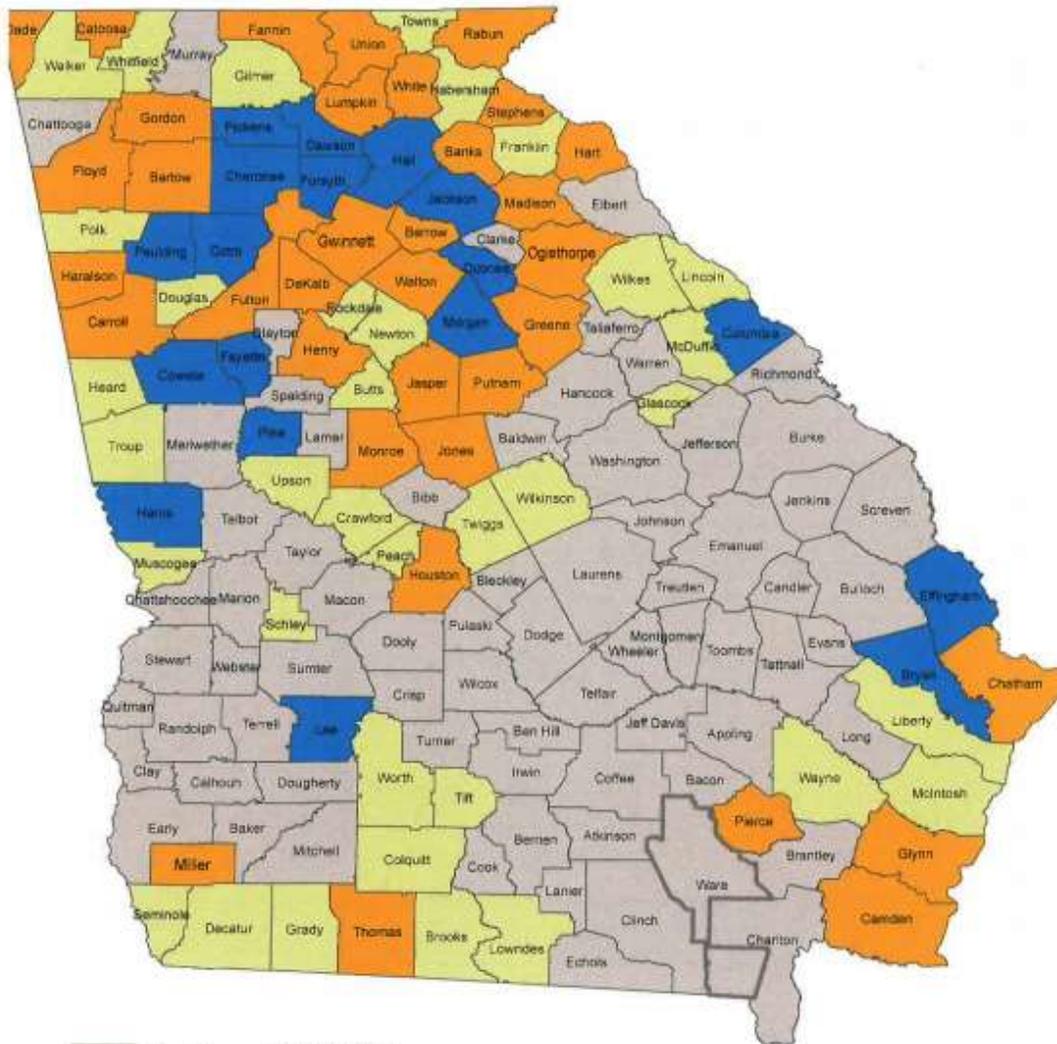
1. Highest Unemployment Rate;
2. Lowest Per Capita Income;
3. Highest Percentage of Residents Whose Incomes Are Below the Poverty Level

Job Tax Credit Rankings 2020

<i>Tier 1</i>					
1. Telfair	13. Irwin	25. Montgomery	37. Bulloch	49. Clarke	61. Decatur
2. Wheeler	14. Webster	26. Baldwin	38. Clayton	50. Tattnall	62. Wilkinson
3. Clay	15. Calhoun	27. Jefferson	39. Bleckley	51. Chattahoochee	63. Long
4. Ben Hill	16. Taliaferro	28. Pulaski	40. Terrell	52. Murray	64. Echols
5. Jenkins	17. Dodge	29. Dougherty	41. Washington	53. Appling	65. McIntosh
6. Stewart	18. Crisp	30. Dooly	42. Screven	54. Laurens	66. Spalding
7. Randolph	19. Treutlen	31. Charlton	43. Johnson	55. Clinch	67. Chattooga
8. Taylor	20. Wilcox	32. Warren	44. Mitchell	56. Coffee	68. Lamar
9. Marion	21. Brantley	33. Lanier	45. Atkinson	57. Candler	69. Early
10. Hancock	22. Sumter	34. Berrien	46. Toombs	58. Meriwether	70. Talbot
11. Emanuel	23. Quitman	35. Burke	47. Twiggs	59. Wayne	71. Brooks
12. Macon	24. Turner	36. Jeff Davis	48. Schley	60. Bacon	

Appendix #11 - Economic Development Element Tax Credit Tier

2021 Job Tax Credit Tiers



	Tier 1	71 Counties
	Tier 2	35 Counties
	Tier 3	35 Counties
	Tier 4	18 Counties

For more information on Tax Credits:
<https://dca.ga.gov/community-economic-development/incentives/job-tax-cre>



Appendix #12– Sign-In Sheets

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Appendix #13 – Public Hearing Notices

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Appendix #14 – Transmittal Letters

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Appendix #15 – Adoption Resolutions

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