

# 2021 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update For Ben Hill County, and the City of Fitzgerald

Prepared by:  
City of Fitzgerald  
Ben Hill County



Photos courtesy of SGRC staff

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Contents

I. Chapter 110-12-1. Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning	- 2 -
1. Introduction	- 2 -
2. Community Involvement	- 2 -
3. Identification of Stakeholders and Steering Committee	- 2 -
4. Identification of Participation Techniques	- 2 -
5. Participation Program	- 2 -
6. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria	- 2 -
Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan	- 2 -
Chapter 391-3-16, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria	- 2 -
II. Plan Elements	- 2 -
1. Community Goals and Vision	- 2 -
Vision	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2. Needs and Opportunities	- 2 -
3. Analysis of Data and Information	- 2 -
4. Broadband Element	- 2 -
Broadband Maps	- 2 -
5. Consideration of DCA Community Quality Objectives	- 2 -
6. Community Policies	- 2 -
Natural & Cultural Resources	- 2 -
Land Use	- 2 -
Economic Development	- 2 -
Housing	- 2 -
Community Facilities and Services	- 2 -
Intergovernmental Coordination	- 2 -
Broadband Services	- 2 -
7. Community Work Program	- 2 -
Ben Hill County 5-Year Short-Term Work Program Update Report Of Accomplishments	- 2 -
Ben Hill County 5-Year Community Work Program Update	- 2 -
City of Fitzgerald 5-Year Short-Term Work Program Update Report Of Accomplishments	- 2 -
City of Fitzgerald 5-Year Community Work Program Update	- 2 -
8. Economic Development Element	- 2 -
9. Land Use Element	- 2 -
AGRICULTURAL CHARACTER AREA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
COMMERCIAL CHARACTER AREA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL CORE CHARACTER AREA	- 2 -
HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREAL	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
INDUSTRIAL CHARACTER AREA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER AREA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
RURAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER.....	
RURAL VILLAGE CHARACTER AREA.....	
SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA	
10. Transportation Element	- 2 -
11. JLUS Comprehensive Land Use Policies	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
III. Maps	- 2 -
Appendix	- 2 -

## **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.

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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 the 2019 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 were identified. These included local governments' elected officials and staff, .....; local businesses and industries; and the general public.
- b) Participation techniques were identified. Techniques 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. A steering committee was formed to oversee and participate in planned development, including representatives from the stakeholders mentioned above.
- 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 input and feedback.
- d) Community Involvement Activities documented. Include an appendix showing list of stakeholders, overview of participation....( Include photos, sign-in sheets, agendas, minutes, published advertisements, emails, social media posts, etc.)

### **1st Public Hearing – “Kick-Off”**

The public hearing kick off the comprehensive planning process was held on [insert date] at the [County/City address]. It was held to make any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review were now underway; to explain the purpose of the update, and to encourage residents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the plan update.

### **3. Identification of Stakeholders and Steering Committee**

A comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was put together with input from the Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority, elected officials, and residents. A complete list of all the stakeholders is included in this plan in the Appendix. A special acknowledgment for members of the Stakeholders, Steering Committee, and SGRC Staff that dedicated their time and hard work for this project:

#### **Stakeholders**

, City of \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor  
 \_\_\_\_\_ County Chamber of Commerce Director  
 , \_\_\_\_\_ City Main Street Director  
 \_\_\_\_\_ County Board Of Education Assistant Superintendent  
 , \_\_\_\_\_ County Board of Commissioners County Administrator  
 , City of \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant City Clerk  
 , City of \_\_\_\_\_ Councilman

#### **Steering Committee**

Members \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SRGRC Staff**

Elizabeth Backe, Planning Director  
Loretta Hylton, Senior Planner



#### **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 the relatively small population of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald, 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 provided 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. 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. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix along with public hearing notices.

##### **Insert Photo**

1<sup>st</sup> Workshop

(SWOT ANALYSIS)

The Policies and Report of Accomplishments were developed in the second workshop, held on \_\_\_\_\_, along with the draft of the updated Community Work Program. The Community Work Program was developed by the participants to include specific action items and projects that would be feasible for the County and the individual communities to implement should funding become available.

##### **Insert Photo**

2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop

Policies & Work Program Accomplishments



The third workshop was utilized to update the Economic Development Element and the Land Use Element and Maps as desired by the local governments.

**Insert Photo**

3<sup>rd</sup> Workshop

Land Use Element/Character Area

**(ADD ADOPTION PHOTO)**

## 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 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 is within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, which was 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 agroforestry economy of the region).
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 flows.
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.

Also, the Regional Water Plan has adopted several Short-Term Water Quantity and Water Quality Management Practices, which the local comprehensive plan should include to manage 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 supply in regions with surface water 7Q10 low flow concerns and adequate groundwater supply.
6. Identify incentives and a process to sustainably replace a portion of existing agricultural 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):

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

#### 1. Point Sources:

- Support and fund current permitting and waste load allocation process to improve the treatment of wastewater and increase treatment capacity.
- Data collection and research to confirm discharge volumes and waste concentrations as well as receiving stream flows and chemistry

#### 2. 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

#### 3. 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 the protection of 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 that local governments shall 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 the adoption of 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, for the protection of groundwater recharge areas, for the protection of wetlands, and the protection of 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.

## **II. Plan Elements**

### **1. Community Goals and Vision**

**Goal 1:      **Natural Resources****

Conserve and protect the functions and values of the natural resources of Ben Hill County 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 needs and desires of the residents 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 an effective, 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 best maintain Greater Ben Hill County's quality of life and resources.

**Goal 8:      **Broadband****

To encourage coordination of planning efforts with other local service providers and authorities, neighboring communities, and state and regional planning agencies.

**Goal 9:      **Transportation****

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

## Vision Statement

To effectively incorporate the abilities of Ben Hill County and Fitzgerald Economic Development Agencies, natural resources, educational opportunities, existing industrial base, and the community spirit of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County to produce a healthier economy and greater 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 118<sup>th</sup>- the 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

146<sup>th</sup> county. Ben Hill County is one of 25 Georgia counties that still have the original boundaries today.



(Farming/Mid 1900's)

## Fitzgerald

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.



*(Ocmulgee River)*



## General Information

### River Basins

The northwestern corner of Ben Hill County is located in the Alapaha River sub-basin of the Suwannee River basin, while 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.

### Agricultural

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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.





(Timber Harvesting)



(Pecan Grove)

## 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 issues and opportunities is addressed by corresponding policies in the "Community Policies" section.

### **Natural Resources**

#### Needs

- The agricultural and natural resources in the county are not sufficiently marketed.
- The dwindling tree canopy in the City of Fitzgerald needs to be addressed.

#### Opportunities

- Ben Hill County has a good supply of ground/drinking water

### **Cultural Resources**

#### Needs

- Maintenance and rehabilitation of historical and cultural resources are needed.
- Lack of a comprehensive Tourism Master Plan featuring historic preservation.
- Lack of a comprehensive local (historic/cultural/natural) resource guide.

#### 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 Chicken Festival, Pig Pickin' Festival, Blues Festival, Harmony Jubilee, and St. Patrick's Day Air Show
- ☐ The Grand Homecoming
- ☐ Bryant Theological Seminary
- ☐ The Blue & Gray Museum
- ☐ The Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails program
- ☐ Archaeological research is being conducted on a campsite of Hernando de Soto along the Altamaha River; this may yield discoveries that bring visitors to the area.
- ☐ Evergreen Cemetery, Fitzgerald Cemetery, Westwood Cemetery, and Kiokee Cemetery
- ☐ The Ocmulgee River
- ☐ Paulk Park
- ☐ The two wildlife preserves, Horse Creek and Mobley Bluff

## **Land Use**

### Needs

- The county'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.
- 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

- The perception of upward mobility is lacking.
- Lack of a strategy to attract and retain higher-wage jobs.
- Growth and development have slowed considerably due to the global economy.
- The unemployment rate continues to exceed the state average.
- Lack of a retail attraction and retention strategy to increase commercial activity.

### Opportunities

- Develop a public education partnership for workforce development and higher education.
- Reevaluate the Millennium Technology Pointe Park marketing plan.
- Enhance and expand existing industry clusters.
- Enhance the community's quality of life to further economic development.
- Focus on value-added agriculture and forestry products.
- Promote development-ready sites.
- Create seamless coordination between all economic development organizations.

- 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.
- The potential for food processing water treatment plants should be investigated as a way to bring more jobs and optimize resource use.
- The hospital needs to be promoted as a first choice health care provider.
- Comprehensive continuing education and training opportunities and programs need to be increased significantly for the existing workforce in conjunction with the business/industry sector.

## **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 retirement marketing strategy.

## **Community Facilities and Services**

### Needs

- Water and sewer line expansions are needed in the county to serve existing and new developments.
- SR 107 needs to be four-lane as the main access to I-75 to reduce congestion.
- The area lacks recreation opportunities for young people, especially teenagers.
- The railroad line is at capacity, causing freight bottlenecks and traffic backups at railroad crossings.
- A comprehensive community-wide transportation plan addressing all modes of transportation is needed.

### Opportunities

- Ben Hill County has a large water capacity, allowing for future development.
- 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.
- The railroad spur connections are good for the area, stimulating the economy and allowing for the movement of goods.
- Opportunities for an inland port should be investigated; this would stimulate the economy.
- Freight connections to the Ports of Brunswick and Savannah should be investigated to increase the community's role in freight movement.

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

#### Needs

- The city, county, and school system need to look for opportunities to partner.
- Opportunities for consolidation/unification of services should be considered to increase efficiency and lower costs to residents.

#### Opportunities

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

### **Broadband Services**

#### Needs

- 
- 
- 
- 
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#### Opportunities

- 
- 
- 

### **Transportation**

### **3. Analysis of Data and Information**

#### **Ben Hill County**

##### ***Population by Race***

The 2018 population of Ben Hill County is 17,154, indicating a small decrease in population, since 2014. There are 6,569 households and 4,375 families, with an average of 2.56 people per household. *60.5 percent* of the population is White and *36.6 percent* are Black; other races make up *1.7 percent* of the population. *6.1 percent* are of Hispanic/Latino origin.

##### ***Population by Age***

*28.2 percent* of the county's population is 19 years of age or younger. *55.6 percent* are between 20 and 64, and *16.2 percent* are 65 or older. The median age is 39.7± in Ben Hill County, compared with a median US age of 39.7.

##### ***Housing***

There are 7,978 housing units in Ben Hill County. About *63.3 percent ±* of all homes in Ben Hill County are valued at less than \$100,000, about *26 percent ±* are valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and only about *10.7 percent±* of the housing stock is valued at more than \$200,000. *59.4 percent* of housing units are owner-occupied, *40.6 percent* are rentals, and *17.7 percent* of the housing stock is vacant. The median home value is \$80,100.

##### ***Household Income***

In 2018, the median household income in Ben Hill County was \$32,705 and the per capita income was \$17,563. In 2015 the household income was \$29,994, an increase of *9 percent*, and per capita income was \$15,316, an increase of *14.67 percent*. The poverty level in Ben Hill County for 2018 was *31.6 percent*.

##### ***Education Attainment***

According to the 2018 Census estimates, among people age 25 or older in BenHill County, *7.4 percent* have a bachelor's degree or higher degree; *8.4 percent* have an associate's degree; *44.2 percent* have a high school diploma or GED but no higher degree and *17.4 percent* have no high school; diploma or GED.

##### ***Workforce and Commute to Work***

Among workers age 16+ in Ben Hill County, *2.2 percent* have a commute that takes 60 minutes or more each way; *14.6 percent* take between 30 to 59 minutes to get to work; *62.7 percent* take between 10 and 29 minutes to get to work, and *20.4 percent* have a commute lasting less than 10 minutes. *85 percent* of workers drive alone to work, *9.7 percent* carpool, and *1.5 percent* walk or bike to work. The average commute time to work in Ben Hill County is 16.9 minutes.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor force in Ben Hill County was 6,634 in 2018, and the unemployment rate was *4.7 percent*.

## **City of Fitzgerald**

### ***Population by Race***

The 2018 population of the City of Fitzgerald is 8,865, indicating a small decrease in population, since 2014. There are 3,465 households and 2,111 families, with an average of 2.46 people per household. *44.1 percent* of the population is White, and *53.0 percent* are Black; other races make up 1.2 percent of the population. *2.4 percent* are of Hispanic/Latino origin.

### ***Population by Age***

*29.5 percent* of the county's population is 19 years of age or younger. *54.2 percent* are between 20 and 64, and *16.2 percent* are 65 or older. The median age is 39.7± in the City of Fitzgerald.

### ***Housing***

There are 4,235 housing units in the City of Fitzgerald. About *61.9 percent ±* of all homes in the City of Fitzgerald are valued at less than \$100,000, about *27 percent ±* are valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and *11 percent* of the housing stock is valued at more than \$200,000. *48.3 percent* of housing units are owner-occupied, *51.7 percent* are rentals. The median home value is \$83,000.

### ***Household Income***

In 2018, the median household income in the City of Fitzgerald was \$25,151, and the per capita income was \$14,758. In 2015 the 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 *40.1 percent* in 2018.

### ***Education Attainment***

According to the 2018 Census estimates, among people age 25 or older in the City of Fitzgerald, *15.1 percent* have a bachelor's degree or higher degree. *9.4 percent* have an associate's degree; *43.2 percent* have a high school diploma or GED, but no higher degree and *16.7 percent* have no high school; diploma or GED.

### ***Workforce and Commute to Work***

Among workers age 16+ in the City of Fitzgerald, *3.4 percent* have a commute that takes 60 minutes or more each way; *13 percent* take between 30 to 59 minutes to get to work; *59.7 percent* take between 10 and 29 minutes to get to work, and *23.9 percent* have a commute lasting less than 10 minutes. *82 percent* of workers drive alone to work, *10.4 percent* carpool, and *0.4 percent* walk or bike to work. The average commute time to work in the City of Fitzgerald is 16.6 minutes.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor force in the City of Fitzgerald was 2,870 in 2018, and the unemployment rate was *5.3 percent*.

#### **4. Broadband Element**

Broadband service in Ben Hill County, including the City of Fitzgerald, is provided through DSL and satellite. There are six internet providers with 3 of those offering residential services. Viasat, HughesNet, and Mediacom, mainly serve the communities.

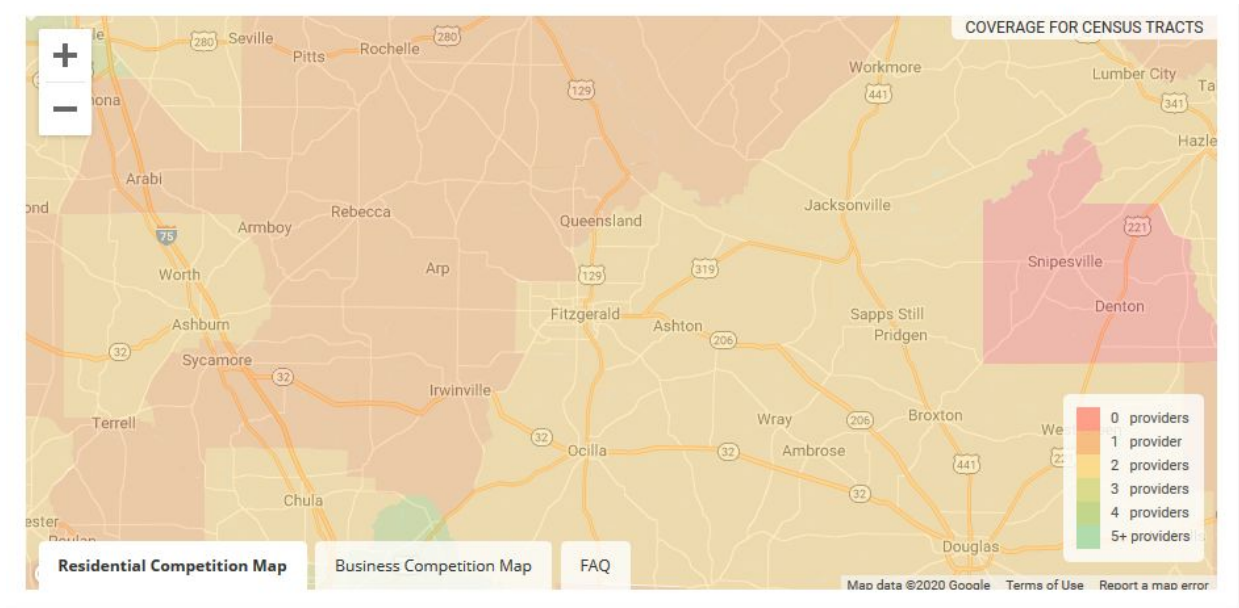
Other providers have coverage in limited areas. The average download speed is *21.5 Mbps*, which is *almost the average* in Georgia (*22 Mbps*) and 12.6% slower than the national average of 34.1 Mbps. Mediacom offers speeds up to 1,000 Mbps, Viasat offers speeds of 100 Mbps, and HughesNet offers 25Mbps for residential services. Mediacom offers up to 1000 Mbps for businesses. Around 73.29% of consumers County-wide have access to cable service. Approximately 43.8% of people in the County and 48.4% in the City don't have access to DSL service. Around 98.7% of consumers have access to mobile broadband services, approximately 8.88% of consumers have access to the fiber-optic service, and multiple wired providers service approximately 80.19% of residents in the County and the City.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's 2014 Digital Economy Plan called for expanded broadband access in the Region along with strategies for the Region to remain competitive and maintain a qualified workforce in an increasingly digitized economy.

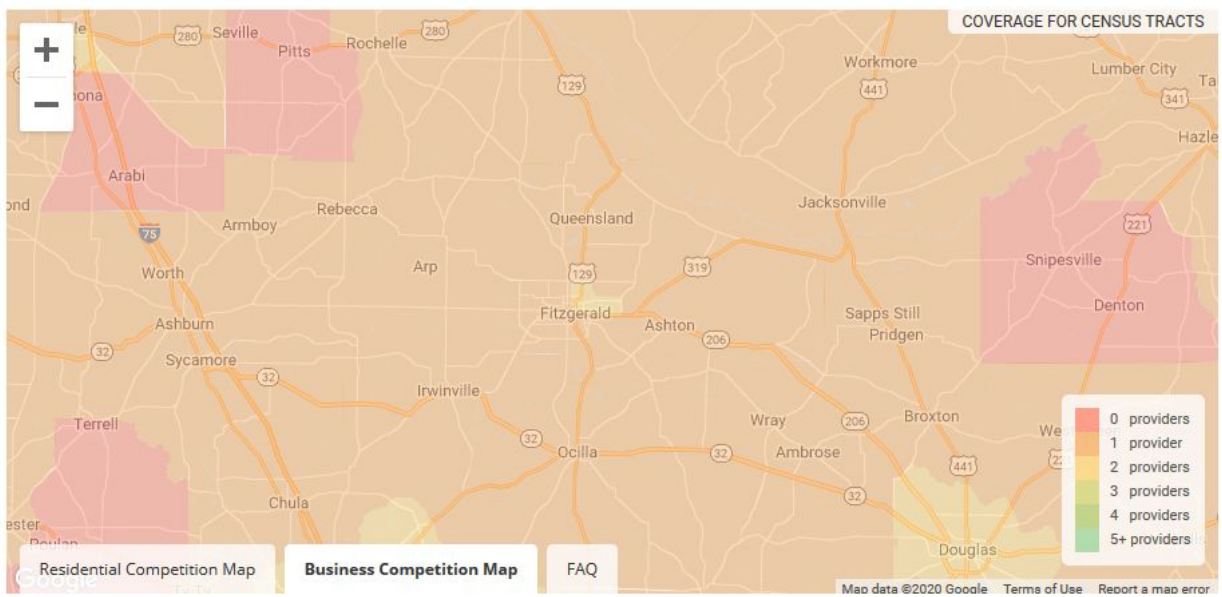
The infrastructure through which broadband is provided, and the condition of that infrastructure, widely varied throughout the Region. DSL service is provided through telephone lines. Cable broadband is delivered through cable lines that often share poles with telephone and electric wires. As such, cable and DSL broadband infrastructure is vulnerable to damage from storms. Fiber-optic lines are typically buried.

## Broadband Maps

### Residential

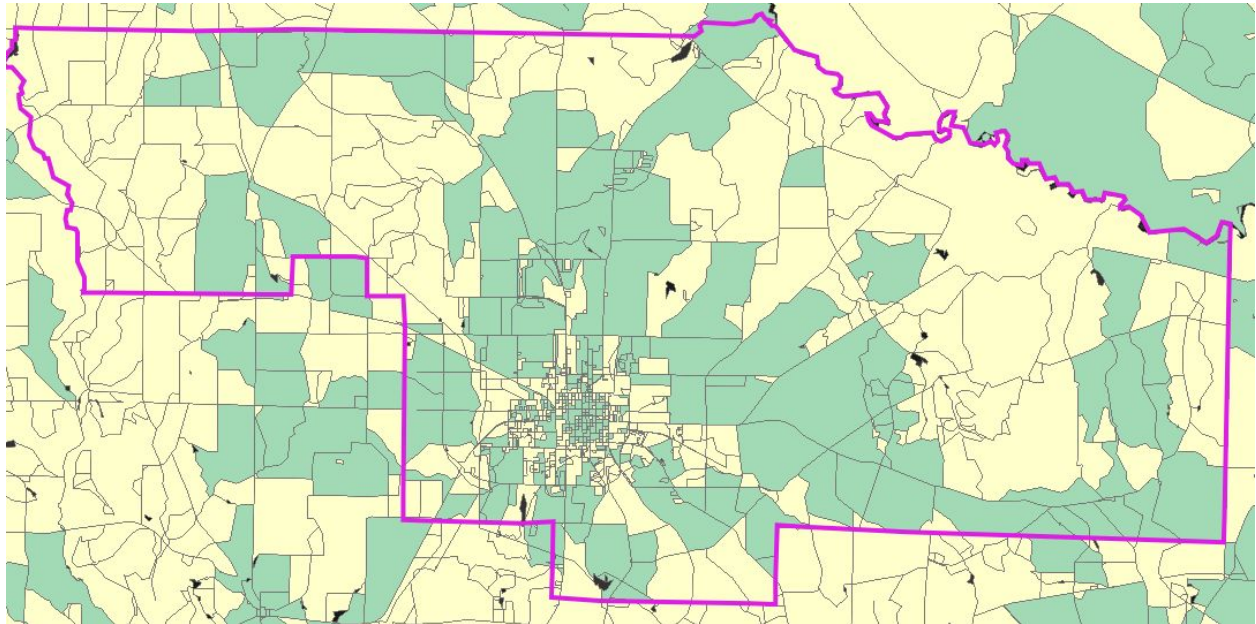


### Business





**ADSL, Other**



## Ben Hill County, GA



### Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



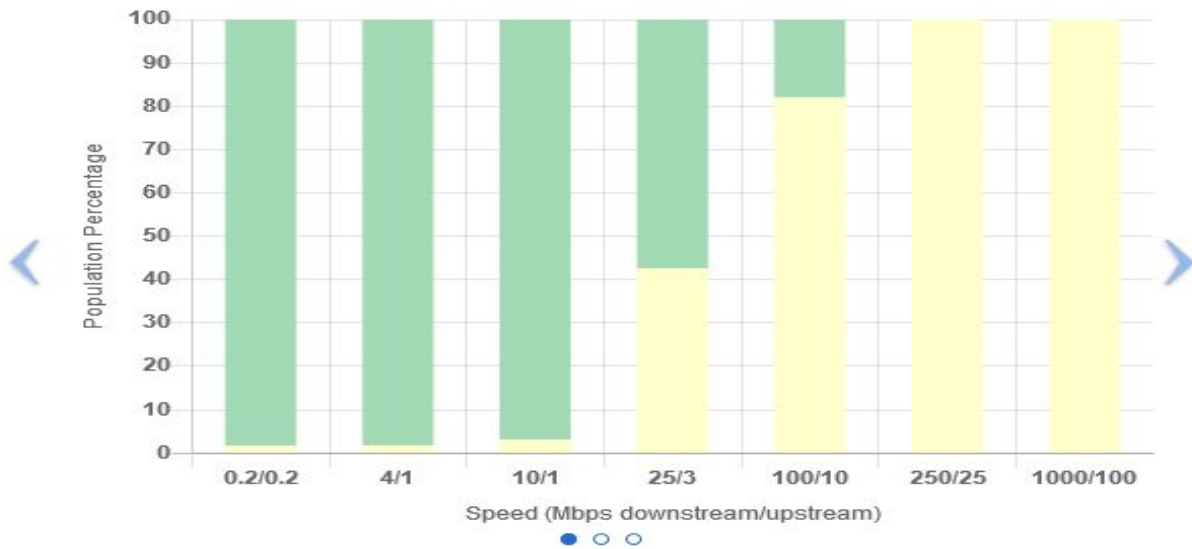
### Broadband



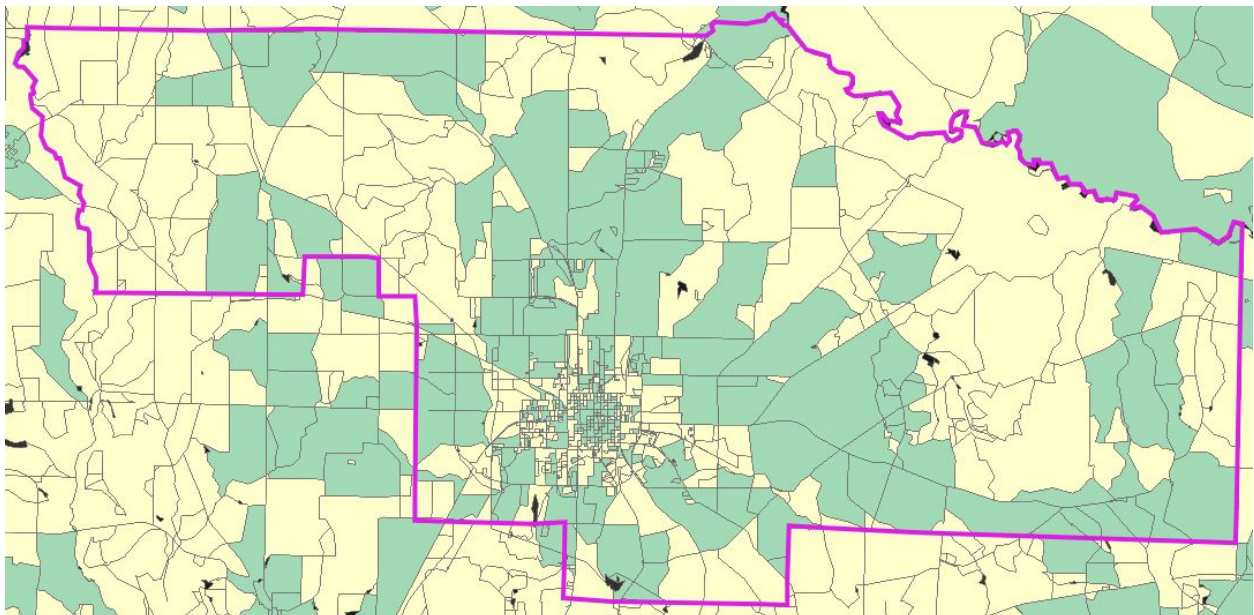
**Technology** ADSL, Other

**Speed** ≥ 25/3 Mbps

**Date** June 2019 (latest public release)



### CABLE



## Ben Hill County, GA



### Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



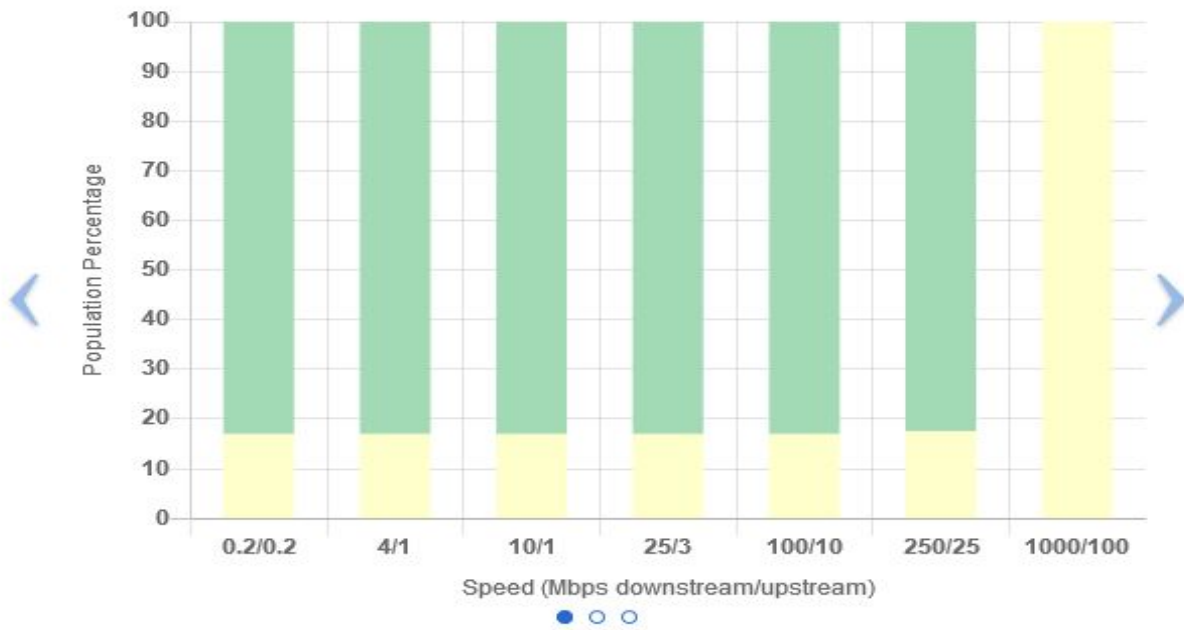
### Broadband



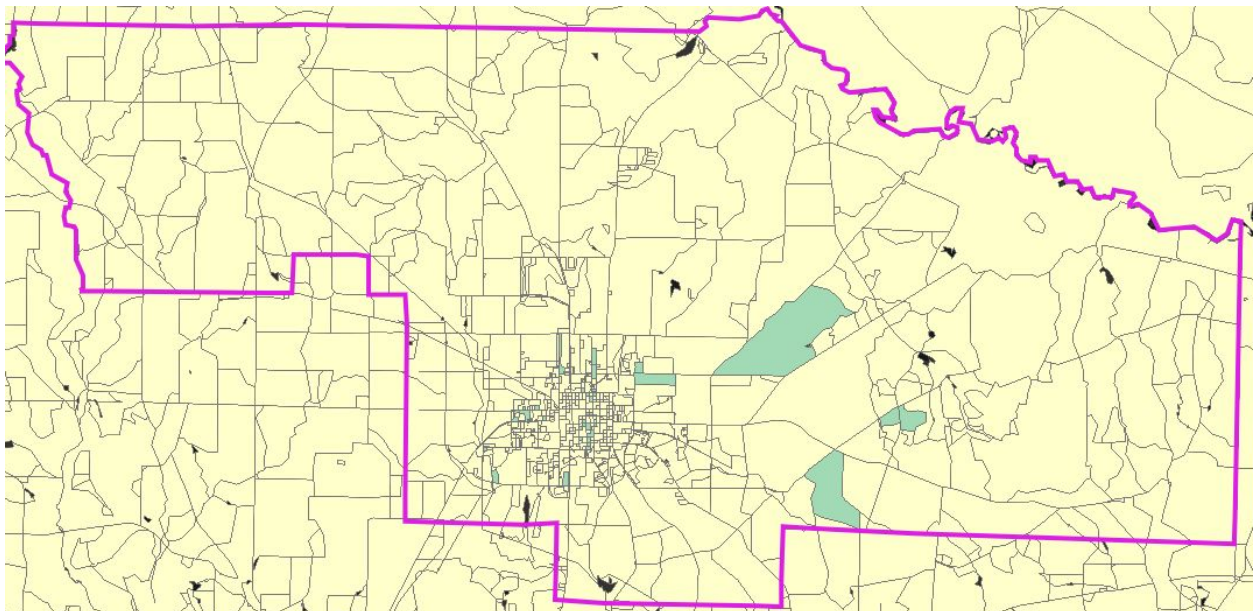
**Technology** Cable

**Speed**  $\geq 25/3$  Mbps

**Date** June 2019 (latest public release)



### Fiber



Ben Hill County, GA



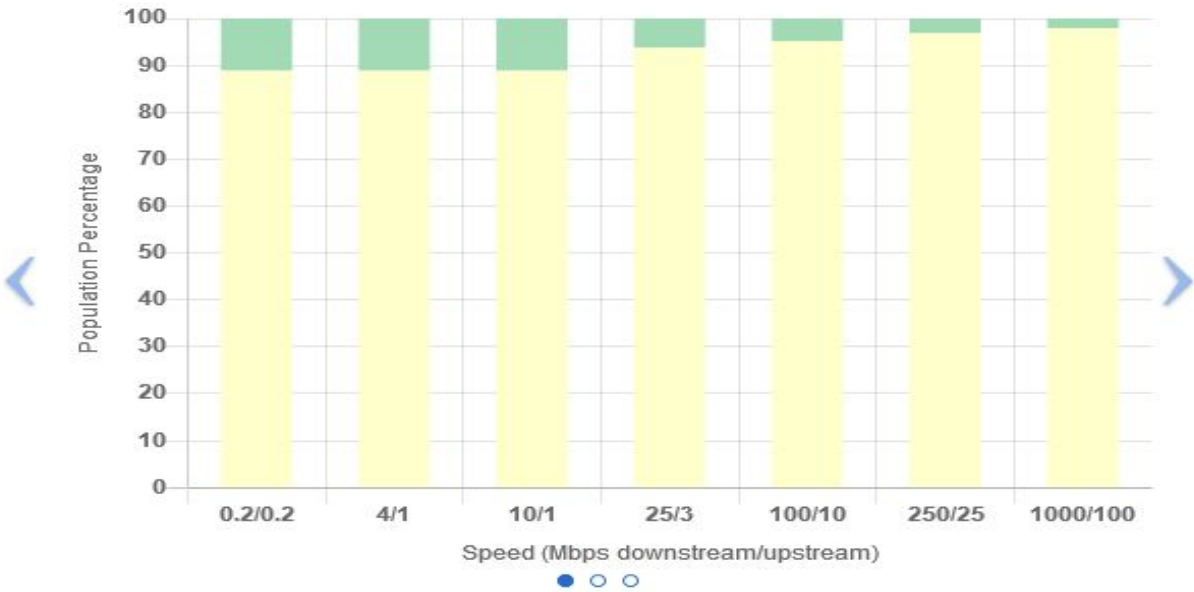
Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



Broadband

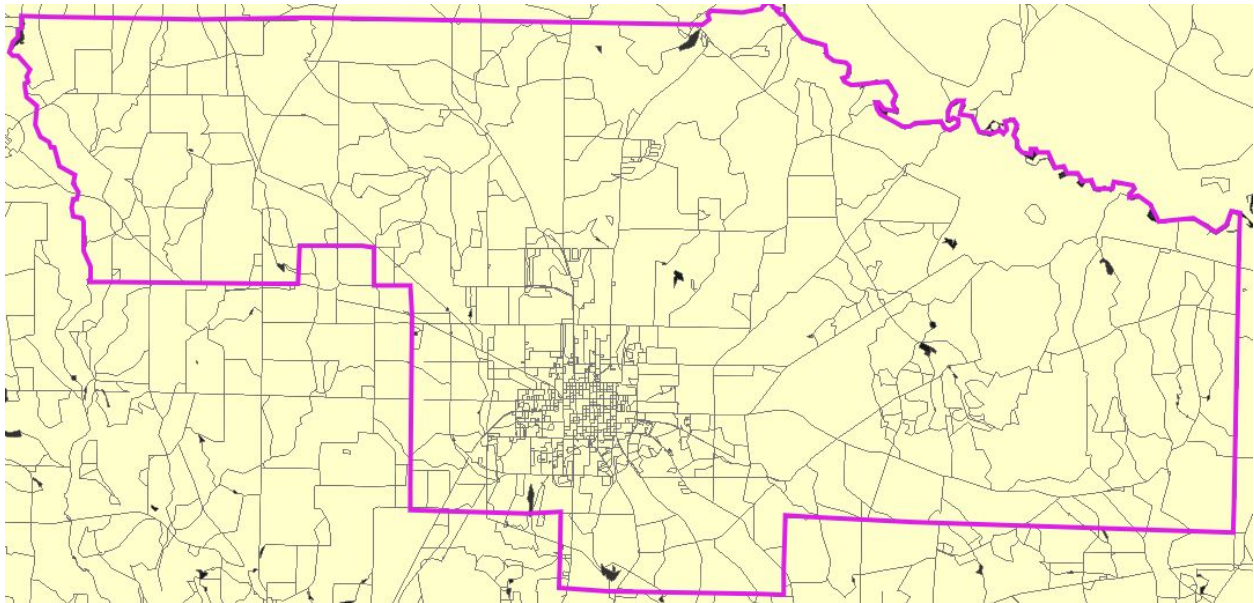


**Technology** Fiber, Other  
**Speed** ≥ 25/3 Mbps  
**Date** June 2019 *(latest public release)*



Fixed Wireless





## Ben Hill County, GA



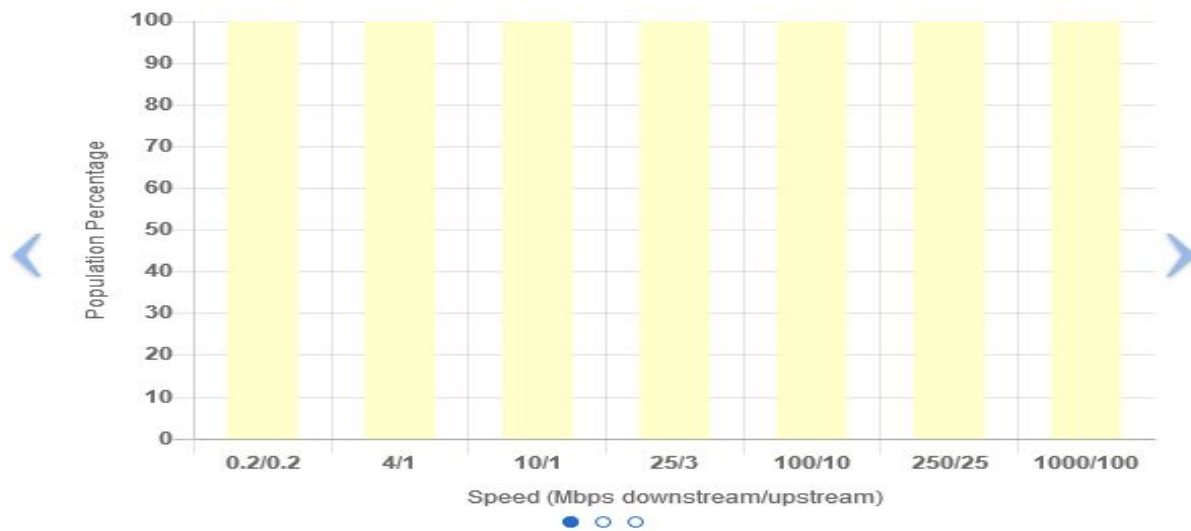
### Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



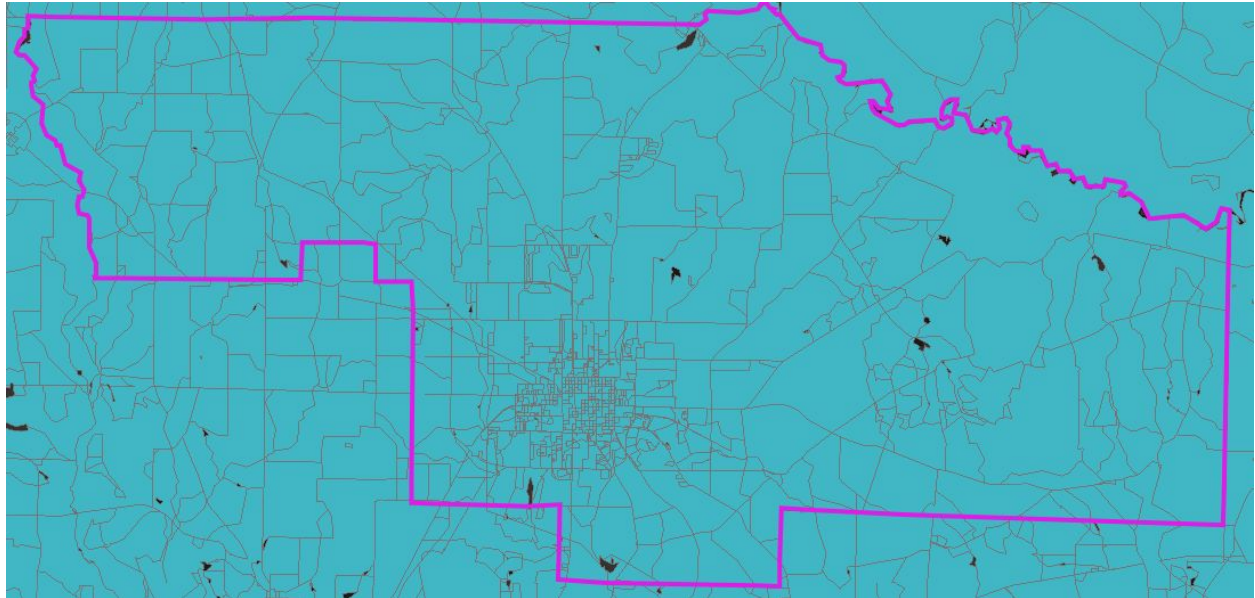
### Broadband



**Technology** Fixed Wireless, Other  
**Speed**  $\geq 25/3$  Mbps  
**Date** June 2019 (latest public release)



Satellite



## Ben Hill County, GA



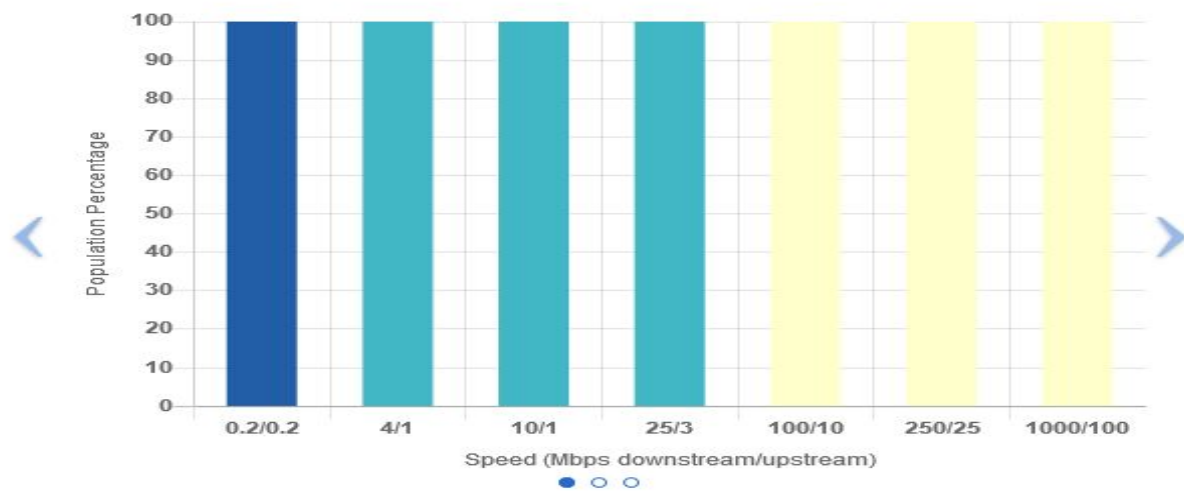
### Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



### Broadband



**Technology** Satellite  
**Speed**  $\geq 25/3$  Mbps  
**Date** June 2019 (latest public release)



## Broadband Action Plan

A vital goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that needed community facilities, including broadband, are provided effectively, consistent with present demand and future growth (see Section II of this plan, Goal 8). Moreover, this plan lists the following Needs and Opportunities related to broadband in Section 2:

### Need

- **More affordable, accessible, consistent, and higher-speed broadband access is needed throughout all of Ben Hill County.**

### Opportunities

- Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.
- Encourage partnership of providers to allow better broadband services.
- Public/Private Partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

Furthermore, the following community policies in this plan relate to broadband:

Policy 1.1:	Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.
Policy 1.2:	Technology Infrastructure. Community-wide technology infrastructure should be considered a primary community facility and, as such, should be adequately planned for and implemented.
Policy 1.3:	Agriculture Services. Investigate opportunities to improve broadband to meet precision agricultural needs.
Policy 1.4:	Public/Private Partnership. Pursue the development of public/private partnerships to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.
Policy 1.5:	Include consideration of broadband infrastructure in roadway projects where such infrastructure may be included in the right-of-way.

The above needs, opportunities, and policies have been used to inform an action plan for the promotion of the deployment of broadband services into unserved and underserved areas of Ben Hill County. The specific action items in the action plan are listed below and are cross-listed in the Community Work Program for the county (see Section 7).

## Broadband Action Steps

Activity	Estimated Cost	Responsible Party	Funding Source	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
Develop a public industrial park with infrastructure (roads, water, sanitary sewer broadband, etc.)	\$500,000	Ben Hill County, the City of Fitzgerald and Development Authority	EIP, One Georgia and USDA Grants	x	X	x	X	
Research ways to enhance the communication network for the county, including establishing a Wireless Network Center	Staff	Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald	General Funds	x	X	x		
Establish broadband coverage for the county (including hot spots) and participate in Regional efforts in cooperation with GTA	\$500,000	Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald	General Funds, SPLOST, Grants	x	X	x		
Review local ordinances and amend as needed to eliminate barriers to broadband deployment and encourage greater broadband coverage	Staff	Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald		x	X	x	X	x



## 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, which are listed below, are only recommendations, but provide local governments with a tool to guide them in assessing their needs and opportunities and the development of their implementation activities. Used as such a tool by many of the local governments in their planning efforts, these objectives also have the potential to 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, which are listed below, are only recommendations, but provide local governments with a tool to guide them in assessing their needs and opportunities and the development of their implementation activities. If local governments use objectives in their planning efforts, it will have the potential to result in consistent planning projects and goals. The use of 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
<b>1. Economic Prosperity</b> 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 resources of the area, and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.	Community activities, including economic development efforts, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Access Georgia Assistance Programs</li> <li>❖ Business Incubator</li> <li>❖ Public/Private Partnership</li> </ul>
<b>2. Resource Management</b> 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	Land use elements and goals and policies related to natural resources are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Green Space Plan</li> <li>❖ Conservation easements</li> <li>❖ Water resource protection</li> </ul>

techniques, fostering water conservation and reuse, or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.	
<b>3. Efficient Land Use</b> Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. Achieve this by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community, designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed, carefully planning the expansion of public infrastructure, or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.	The land use elements and infrastructure-related goals and policies of this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Adaptive reuse</li> <li>❖ Brownfield redevelopment</li> <li>❖ Preserve agriculture land use</li> </ul>

<b>Quality Community Objective</b>	<b>Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Echols County</b>
<b>4. Local Preparedness</b> 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 managing 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 that is consistent with this objective and capable leadership and staff.	Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan that is consistent with this objective and capable leadership and staff. Recommended best practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ All-hazards strategy</li> <li>❖ Capital Improvement Program</li> <li>❖ Codes for animal control, and street/sidewalk standards</li> </ul>
<b>5. Sense of Place</b> 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 traditional features of the community, or protecting scenic and natural elements that are important to define the community's character.	Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Revisions to Zoning Ordinance</li> <li>❖ Code Enforcement</li> </ul>
<b>6. Regional Cooperation</b> Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to	There is a high level of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions.

address shared needs. Achieve this by actively participating in regional organizations identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer, or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.	<p>Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Regional Economic Development Efforts</li> <li>❖ Regional Roundtables</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Housing Options</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Georgia Initiative for Community Housing</li> <li>❖ Home Loan Assistance</li> <li>❖ Housing for the disadvantage</li> <li>❖ Housing for the elderly</li> <li>❖ Mixed-Income Housing</li> <li>❖ Land Bank</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Community Objective</b>	<b>Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Echols County</b>
<p><b>8. Transportation Options</b></p> <p>Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents. Achieve by fostering alternatives to transportation 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>Transportation goals, policies, and projects are consistent with this objective.</p> <p>Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Flexible Street Design Standards</li> <li>❖ Sidewalk/trail network</li> <li>❖ Improving street connectivity</li> <li>❖ Safe Routes to School</li> <li>❖ Public Transportation</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Educational Opportunities</b></p> <p>Make educational and training opportunities available to enable all community residents to</p>	<p>Goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective.</p> <p>Recommended best practices:</p>

<p>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, expanding vocational education programs, or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Public internet access</li> <li>❖ Transportation to educational facilities</li> <li>❖ Work Ready Program</li> <li>❖ Experience Work Programs-help older workers</li> <li>❖ Educational Resource Center</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Community Health</b> 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 the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, 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 circumstances in life and to participate in the community entirely fully.</p>	<p>Goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Transportation to services</li> <li>❖ Community Health Resource Center</li> </ul>

## 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 to 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 & Cultural Resources**

#### **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:** The agricultural and natural resources in the county are not sufficiently marketed.

**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:** The dwindling tree canopy in the City of Fitzgerald needs to be addressed.

**Policy 1.3:** Investigate the requirements for the development of 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.

#### **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**

**Need:** Maintenance and rehabilitation of historical and cultural resources are needed.

**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:** We need a comprehensive 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 the recreational opportunities within Ben Hill County, and distribute the guide throughout the region.

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

**Policy 2.7:** Evaluate how the county may fund and 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 County'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 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:** The perception of upward mobility is lacking.

**Policy 4.1:** Develop a public education partnership for workforce development and higher education.

**Need:** Lack of a strategy to attract and retain higher-wage jobs.

**Policy 4.2:** Encourage the enhancement and expansion of existing industry clusters.

**Policy 4.3:** Focus action items on value-added agriculture and forestry products.

**Policy 4.4:** The potential for food processing water treatment plants should be investigated as a way to bring more jobs and optimize resource use.

**Need:** Growth and development have slowed considerably due to the global economy.

**Policy 4.5:** Coordinate with all local economic development organizations to identify new target industries that will help diversify the local economy, and work together to recruit those businesses to the area.

**Policy 4.6:** Encourage the formation of public/private partnerships between the City, the County, local businesses, and the School Board for the creation of new businesses in the area and the retention of existing businesses.

**Policy 4.7:** Develop target marketing strategies for Millennium Technology Pointe and other industrial areas within the county.

**Policy 4.8:** Elevate the quality of life as an essential economic development issue and tool.

**Need:** The unemployment rate continues to exceed the state average.

**Policy 4.9:** Develop a public education partnership for workforce development and higher education.

**Policy 4.10:** Enhance and expand existing industry clusters.

**Policy 4.11:** Promote development-ready sites.

**Policy 4.12:** Implement and continuously refine the comprehensive strategic economic development plan.

**Need:** We need a retail attraction and retention strategy to increase commercial activity.

**Policy 4.13:** Promote development-ready sites.

**Policy 4.14:** Develop retail attraction and retention strategies.

**Policy 4.15:** Develop an online marketing campaign and update the county and city websites.

**Need:** The hospital needs to be promoted as a first choice health care provider.

**Policy 4.16:** Coordinate public and private resources to promote the use of the Dorminy Medical Center as the provider of the first choice.



**Need:** Comprehensive continuing education and training opportunities and programs need to be increased significantly for the existing workforce in conjunction with the business/industry sector.

**Policy 4.17:** Develop a public education partnership for workforce development and higher education.

## **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.

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

**Policy 5.2:** 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 present demand and future growth.

### **Needs & Policies**

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

**Policy 6.1:** 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, and the Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan fund for infrastructure funding opportunities.

**Need:** SR 107 needs to be four-laned as the main access to I-75, to reduce congestion. (Community Work Program?)

**Policy 6.3:** Pursue development of a comprehensive community-wide transportation plan. (Community Work Program?)

**Policy 6.4:** Continue emphasizing the need to four-lane SR 107 to the Georgia Department of Transportation, and seek opportunities to meet with state officials.

**Policy 6.5:** Encourage the provision of interconnectivity, shared access, and pedestrian connections along all roads.

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

**Policy 6.6:** Seek ways to combine parks and recreation projects with other public services and facilities projects.

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

**Policy 6.7:** Pursue development of a comprehensive community-wide transportation plan. (Community Work Program?)

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

**Policy 6.8:** Pursue development of a comprehensive community-wide transportation plan.

**Need:** There is a need to renovate an old bank building to house the City of Fitzgerald's Police Department headquarters.

**Policy 6.9:** Pursue funds through CDBG's or SPLOST.

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

**Goal 7:** Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public 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 in order to increase efficiency and lower costs to residents.

**Policy 8.2:** Explore the potential for functional consolidation.

### **Broadband Services**

**Goal 8:** To encourage coordination of planning efforts with other local service providers and authorities, neighboring communities, and state and regional planning agencies.

#### **Needs & Policies**

**Need:** To encourage coordination of planning efforts with other local service providers and authorities, neighboring communities, and state and regional planning agencies.

**Policy 8.1: Services.** Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and the business community.

**Policy 8.2: Technology Infrastructure.** Community-wide technology infrastructure should be considered a primary community facility and, as such, should be adequately planned for and implemented.

### **Transportation**

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

#### **Needs & Policies**

**Need:**

**Policy 9.1:**

**Policy 9.2:**

## 7. Community Work Program

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

OBJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	COMMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>							
Complete renovation of Federal Building and integrate into Land/Carnegie Complex	Continued	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for 5 years	x	X	x	x	X
Develop a Master Resource Guide	Completed		x	X			
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>							
Prepare and maintain an inventory of incentives, business programs, existing stock and available sites to accommodate new businesses and business expansions, and provide the list on the county website	Continued	Continue for 3 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 financial incentives.	Continued	Continue for 3 years	x	X	x	x	
Improve and implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan through the coordinated efforts of all economic development organizations	Completed	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	Continued	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for 5 years	x	X	x	x	X
Develop a Comprehensive Tourism Master Plan to incorporate under Comprehensive Economic Development Plan	Continued	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for 5 years	x	X	x	x	X
<b>HOUSING</b>							
Construct The Village at Ben Hill Phase 1	Completed	This was a city project, not	x	X	x		

		county as shown in the 2016 Ben Hill County Comp Plan					
Construct The Village at Ben Hill Phase 2	Deleted	No demand for Phase 2			x	x	
<b>END USE</b>							
one listed							
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>							
Repair and resurface 82.1 miles of roads	Continued		x	x	x	x	x
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge	Continue	Continue with TSPLOST		x			
Replace Tulip Road Bridge	Continued	Continue with TSPLOST			x		
Complete renovations to Monitor gym, auditorium, and classroom building at recreation service complex	Continued	Gym has been completed	x	x	x	x	x
Implement airport improvements as listed in 5-year CIP for 2016-2020	Continued		x	x	x	x	x
Complete Peachtree Corridor Industrial Transportation District	Continued	Continue with TSPLOST	x	x	x	x	x
Develop Comprehensive Mobility Plan	Deleted						
Complete façade maintenance on Grand Theater	Continued	Move this item to City of Fitzgerald's Projects and continue for 5 years	x	x	x		x
Construct covers for existing outdoor performances space (downtown 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/or 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 to Sultanna Ave	Deleted			x	x		
Construct Benjamin H Hill Drive SE sidewalks and/or culvert extension & pedestrian bridge from SR90 to WalMart (with pedestrian signals)	Deleted				x	x	

Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Jefferson	Continued	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 5 years and continue with TSPLOST			x	x	
Recruit 2 physicians per year at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted			x		x	
Renovate emergency room at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted			x		x	
Implement Hospital Cosmetic Upgrades at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted		x	x	x		
Replace front of Massee Building at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted		x				
Upgrade medical equipment and computer at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted		x	x	x	x	
Replace Hospital Elevator at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted			x			
Replace 3 chillers at Dorminy Medical Center	Deleted		x		x		
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>							
Search opportunities for intergovernmental agreements with surrounding counties to better facilitate emergency services	Continued		x	x	x	x	x

**Ben Hill County 5-Year Community Work Program Update**  
(2021 - 2025)

PROJECTS	ESTIMATE D COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Develop a Master Resource Guide	\$50,000		CDBG, Grants, General Funds	2,4,5	x	X	x		
Maintain and rehabilitate historical and cultural resources within the county		County	CBDG, Grants, General Funds	2					
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
Prepare and maintain an inventory of incentives, business programs, existing stock and available sites to accommodate new businesses and business expansions, and provide the information 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		
Improve 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	
<b>HOUSING</b>									



continue to participate in community development and enforce codes	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Funds	3,5	x	x	x	x	X
seek funding for housing development in blighted areas	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Funds	3,5	x	x	x	x	X
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>									
develop a page on the county website to promote the agricultural lands and products, and natural resources within the county	Staff Time	County	General Funds	1	x	x	x	x	X
<b>LAND USE</b>									
continue to enforce codes within the county to ensure the highest quality land use	Staff Time	County	General Funds	3	x	x	x	x	X
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>									
complete renovations to auditorium, and classroom building at the Recreation Service Complex	\$200,000	County/City	City, County, SPLOST	3,6	x	x	x	x	
implement airport improvements as listed in 7-year CIP for 2016-2020	\$4.66 million	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Airport Commission	Federal, State, and Local funding	4,6	x	x	x		
construct a multi-use recreational facility, offices, gymnasium, and/or swimming pool	\$1.5 million	County/City		3	x	x	x		
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>									
search opportunities for intergovernmental agreements with surrounding counties to better facilitate emergency services	Staff Time	County/City	General Funds	7	x	x	x		
<b>ROADBAND</b>									
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>									
repair and resurface 82.1 miles of roads	\$8.2 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	X
replace Bethlehem Church Rd	\$2 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6	x	x			
replace Tulip Road Bridge	\$700,000		TSPLOST	6	x	x			
complete Peachtree Corridor Industrial Transportation Project	\$8 million	County/City	TSPLOST	4,6	x	x	x		
construct Merrimac Drive sidewalks from Central Ave to Roanoke Drive	\$250,000	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	6	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
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>							
Develop Downtown Master Plan	Continued		x	x			
Evaluate existing tree ordinance and develop a replanting strategy	Continued		x	x			
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>							
ne							
<b>HOUSING</b>							
ne							
<b>LAND USE</b>							
ne							
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>							
Complete Jaycee Stadium improvements	Completed	Completed by Board of Education	x	x	x	x	
Innovate 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 cut-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 updating facilities annually	Continued		x	x	x	x	
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>							

ne listed							

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

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	F Y 21	F Y 22	F Y 23	F Y 24
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>								
Develop a Master Resources Guide	\$50,000	County, City, Ben Hill Development Authority, Conventions & Visitor's Bureau and Family Connections	General Funds Grants	1,2,4	x	x	x	x
Develop Downtown Master Plan	Staff Time	City	General Funds	2,3,4,7	x	x		
Re-evaluate existing Tree Ordinance and develop a replanting strategy	Staff Time	City	General Funds	1,2,4	x	x		
Complete renovation of Federal Building and	\$400,000	City, Development Authority, Convention &	Grants General Funds	2,4	x	x	X	x

egrate into Grand/Carnegie Complex		Visitor's Bureau, and Family Connections							
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
Continue construction of Topiary Chicken	\$200,000	City	SPLOST	1,2,4	x				
<b>HOUSING</b>									
Reorganize the Department of Community Affairs (CA) programs for redevelopment or innovation of housing	?????	City	CDBG, Grants, General Funds	4,5					
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Adopt a Tree Ordinance that would address the needs of the dwindling tree canopy and create a program for common spaces	Staff/SGRC	City	Grants General Funds	1					
<b>LAND USE</b>									
Develop and adopt Tiny House Ordinance		City/SGRC	General Funds	3,5					
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>									
Review and implement improvements to CA compliance plan by adding facilities annually	\$25,000	City	General Funds	1,7	x	x			
Rehabilitate/renovate existing old bank building for the Police Department headquarters	\$1.6 million	City	SPLOST	1,6					
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>									
Conduct a comprehensive Line Item Evaluation for the Service Delivery Strategy (OS)	Staff/Elected Officials Time	City/County	General Funds	7	x	x	X	x	
<b>ROADBAND</b>									

<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>					
Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Sherman Street to Merrimac Drive	\$300,000	City	SPLOST	6,9	
Resurface approximately ???? miles of city streets; associated transportation improvements; sidewalks, parking, and storm drainage	\$1.5 million	City	General Funds, SPLOST, and LMIG	6,9	

## **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 in the creation of 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 that is the result of 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 economic development problems of the Southern Georgia region and clearly defines the measures of success.

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 and 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 industry and maintaining existing industry.

Strategies:

- Improve educational attainment by reducing high school dropout rates.
- Market workforce development programs that enable youth and adults to pursue higher education opportunities.
- Recognize societal issues impacting 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 with the goal of becoming 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 thereafter.
- 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 in order to retain 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.

**Joint Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Community Economic Development 5-Year Work Program**

PROJECTS	EST. COST	RESP. PARTY	FUND SOURCE	GOAL	FY 1
<b>SUB-PLAN DEVELOPMENT</b>					
Create a Workforce Development Plan	Staff time	FBHDA, BHCS, and Wiregrass Tech	Individual entity funds	2,6	*
Create a Business Retention & Expansion (Target) Plan	Staff time	County, City	General fund	2,8	*
Create a Small Business & Entrepreneurial Plan	Staff time	County, City	General fund	1,2	*
Create a Mobility Plan	\$40,000	County, City	General fund	7	*
Create a Real Estate Development & Re-use Plan	Staff time	County, City	General fund	2,7	*
Create a Marketing & Attraction Plan	Staff time	County, City	General fund		*
Create a Tourism Master Plan	Staff time	Convention & Visitors Bureau	General fund	2,3	*
Create a Downtown Master Plan	Staff time	City, DDA	General fund	2,3	*
Create Tiered Incentive Guidelines	Staff time	County, City	General fund	8,9,10	*
Conduct Reassessment of Millennium Technology Pointe	\$20,000	JDA, GA Tech	JDA Members	2,9	*
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT</b>					
Complete construction of the Peachtree Industrial Corridor	\$8 million	County, City	General funds, grants, SPLOST (pending SPLOST approval), loans, contributions	2,7	*
Implement Airport Improvements per the 5-year CIP for 2016-2020	\$4.66 million	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Airport Commission	Federal, State, and Local	2,7	*
Develop Anderson Church Industrial Sites	\$2 million	FBHDA	General funds, grants, contributions	2,7	
<b>BUILDINGS</b>					
Construct a Food Grade Warehouse	\$3-5 million	FBHDA, Private	Private	2,7,8	*
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL</b>					
Create Economic Development Staff Committee	Staff time	All EDOs	General fund	3,10	*
Create Industrial Advisory Group	Staff time	FBHDA	General fund	8,10	*
Create Benchmark Reporting Tool	Staff time	FBHDA	General fund	10	*
<b>EDUCATIONAL</b>					
Combine Headstart and Pre-K	\$6 million	BHCSS	ELOST	1, 7	
Extended to a 3-year Headstart	Staff time	BHCSS	Early learning Grant funding	1, 7	



Seek transportation grant to increase MOWR students	Staff time	BHCSS, Wiregrass	Grant	1, 7	
Work force development initiatives to continue (as listed as Appendix G)	Staff time	BHCSS, Wiregrass	Individual entity funding	1, 7	*

## **Economic Development Element Appendix 1: MAPS**

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



## Colony City Industrial Park

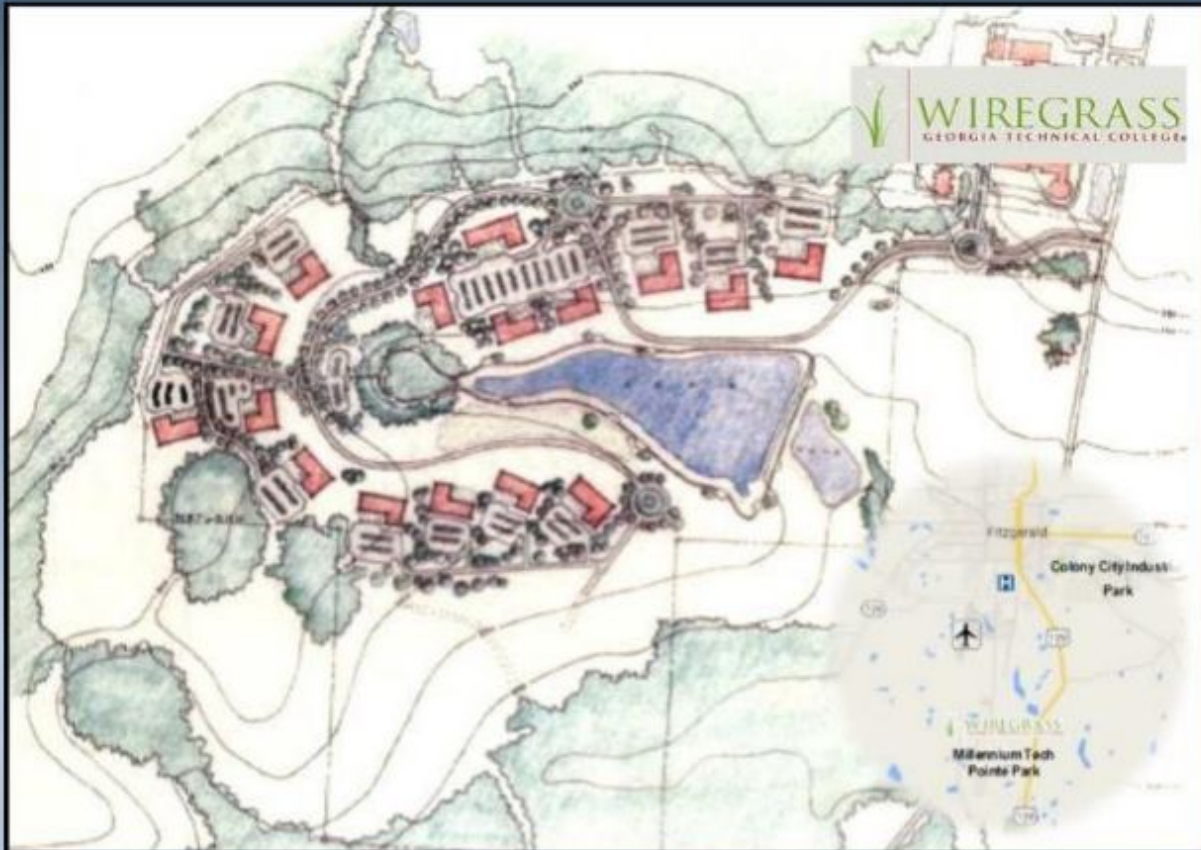


Home to most of Fitzgerald's leading industries, Colony City Industrial Park encompasses approximately 1425 acres and is the nucleus for Fitzgerald's industry growth and expansion. The park contains a balanced mixture of users that support the forest, peanut, metal fabrication, cargo trailer, and transportation 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.





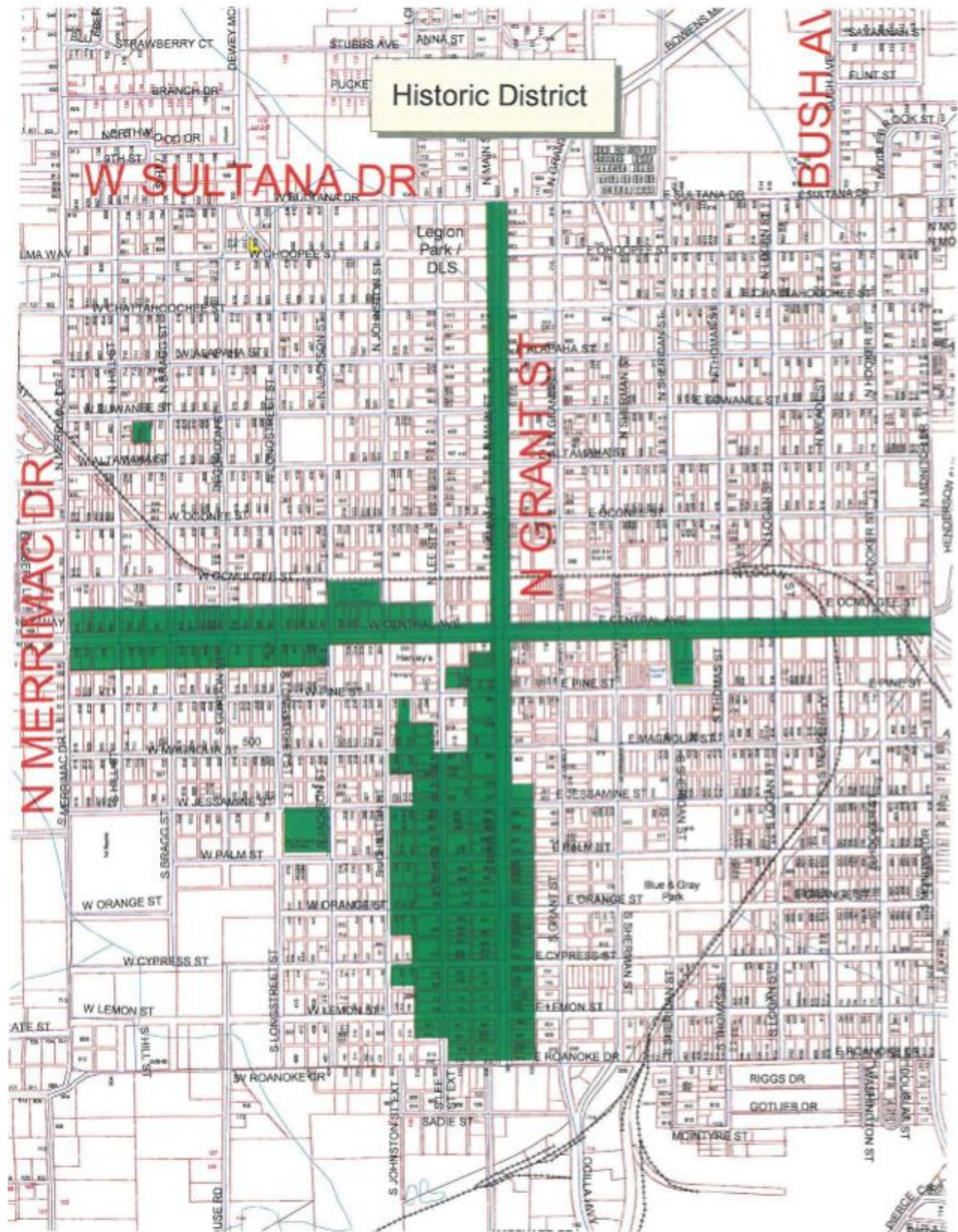
## Millennium Technology Pointe



- 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

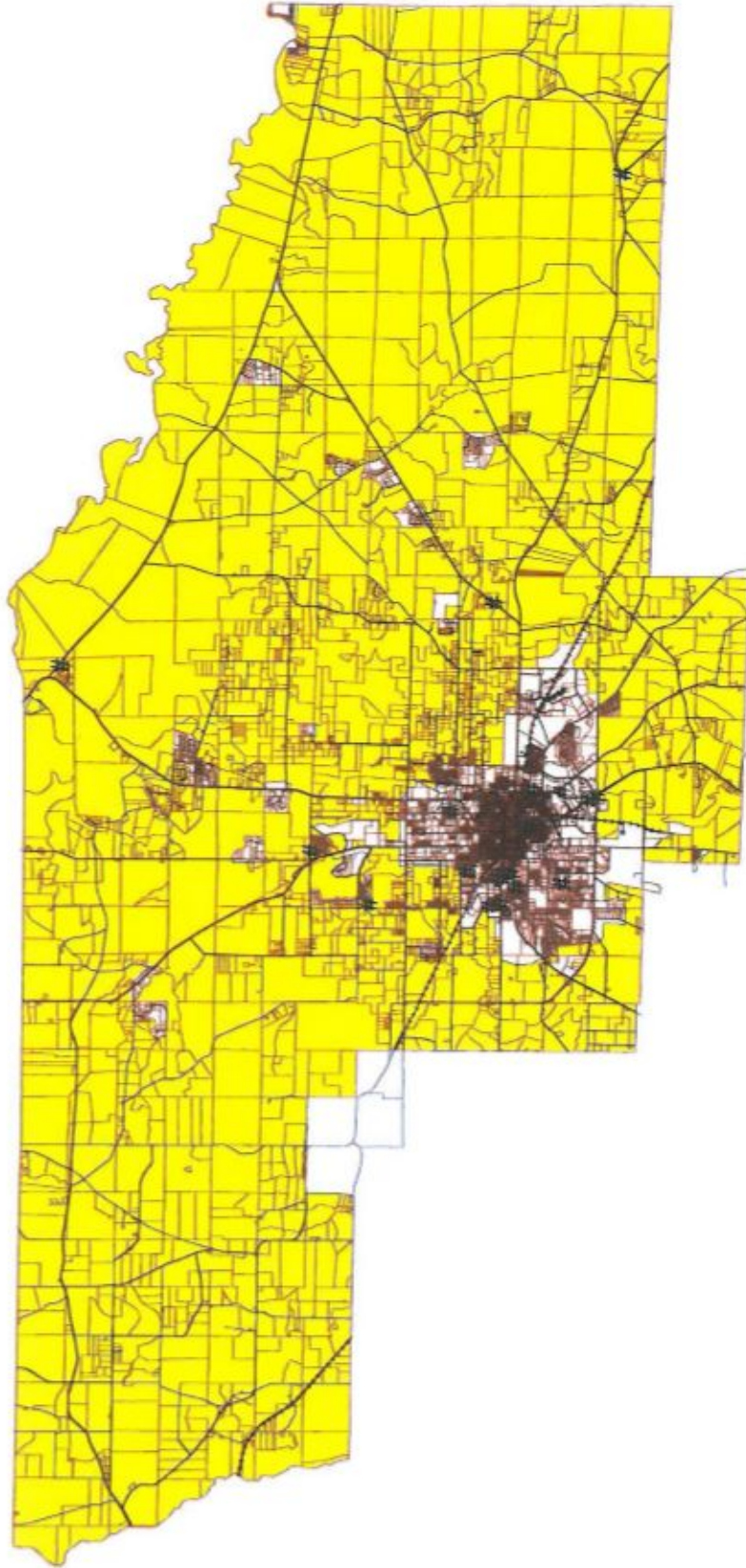








General Farming shown in Yellow





Economic Development Element Appendix 2: Labor Force Demographics (Baseline 2015)

<b>Labor Force and Wage Information</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Ben Hill County Labor Force	6,039
Nine County Labor Draw Area	71,547
Unemployment Sept 2015	8.6%
<b>Community Data</b>	
Ben Hill County Population	17,780
Ben Hill County 2014 Graduation Rate	83.5%
Median Annual Household Income	\$28,547
<b>Average Weekly</b>	
Manufacturing Wage for Ben Hill County	\$729.00
Wood Product Average Weekly Wage	\$798.00
Fabricated Metal Product Average Weekly Wage	\$811.00

(Source: Georgia Department of Labor)

**Economic Development Element Appendix 3: Site Inventory and Infrastructure Baseline 2015**



## Colony City Industrial Park

## Available Parcels



### Massee Tract

- 148 ac portion of Colony City Industrial Park (divisible)
- Utilities in place (12" water line, 10" sewer line, electric, natural gas)
- 5000' Hwy 107 frontage



### Ross Tract

- 163 ac interior portion of Colony City Industrial Park (divisible)
- Utilities in place (12" water line, 10" sewer line, electric, natural gas)
- 5000' Hwy 107 frontage



### Oriole Tract

- 23 ac fronting County Rd. 117 (1,650 ft long x 500' deep)
- Utilities in place (12" water line, 10" sewer line, electric, natural gas)
- Very convenient to By-Pass and Hwy 129



### Prescott Tract

- 48 ac adjacent to Polar Beverages with interior access
- Utilities in place (12" water line, 10" sewer line, electric, natural gas)
- 



## Dephi Tract - 160 acres +/-



144 Benjamin Hill Dr.



**Building Specifications**

- 49,500 SF manufacturing facility
- 6,000 SF shop
- 4,000 SF office
- 10.5 acres with security fencing
- 16' eave height
- Located on Fitzgerald By-pass just off Hwy 129





## 139 Benjamin Hill Dr.



### Building Specifications

- 83,100 SF manufacturing/distribution
- 16.6 acres
- 18 to 23' ceiling height
- 8 dock high doors
- Compressed air, fire protection
- Simple access to Hwy 129 and Fitzgerald By-pass



## 130 Colony Drive



### Building Specifications

- 40,000 SF + manufacturing (multiple bldgs)
- 47.81 acres
- 20' ceiling height
- Rail spur
- Weigh station
- Security fenced with updated security system
- Simple access to Hwy 129 and Fitzgerald By-pass





## 218 Seaboard Rd.



### Building Specifications

- 40,300 SF light manufacturing
- 7.95 acres
- 16' ceiling height
- 2 dock high doors; drive in door
- Rail siding
- Heavy power
- Located in Colony City Industrial Park



## 116 Stuart Way



### Building Specifications

- 16,500 SF light manufacturing (to be fully renovated in 2015)
- 4.75 acres
- 1 dock high door
- Simple access to Hwy 129 and Fitzgerald By-pass



Economic Development Element Appendix 4: Industrial Jobs by Employer Baseline  
2015

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

Arising Industries Johnnie Batten  
200 Ed Ward RD.  
409-0872  
Cargo Trailers  
Employers: 70  
[www.arisingindustries.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.enviro-log.net)

Fitzgerald Utilities  
Jeff Lewis  
P.O. Box 667  
426-5400  
Utilities  
Employees: 85  
[www.fitzutilities.com](http://www.fitzutilities.com)

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

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

Look Trailers  
Johnny Streat  
122 Glenn Bass RD.  
423-0056 FAX: 423-0039  
Cargo Trailers  
Employees: 106  
[www.looktrailers.com](http://www.looktrailers.com)

Mana Nutrition  
Loris Jarvis  
189 Seaboard RD.  
423-8700  
Nutrition/Food  
Employees: 30  
[www.mananutrition.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.watcocompanies.com)

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

**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	



# 2020 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-credits>



Economic Development Element **Appendix 9**: 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><b>Tier 1</b></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	

## 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 was 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 the role and value of character areas, 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 current state of the specific area and should not be construed to necessarily represent the desired state, although for some descriptions this may be the case.) The stated ***Development Strategy*** should serve as a guide for all development and redevelopment taking place in the Character Area. Adherence to these development strategies will ensure consistent and complimentary development, which promotes a greater sense of place and overall improved quality of life. The listing of ***Permitted Zonings*** provides guidance 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, there are certain uses which 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 which could take place 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 are 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**

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 important part of Ben Hill County industry by maintaining very low density residential development primarily accessory to farm operations and right-to-farm principles. 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**

- 1) Economic Prosperity
- 2) Resource Management
- 3) 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 the development rights of their property to a qualified conservation organization or government agency, in exchange for tax savings. Sale of development rights is an arrangement whereby private landowners sell the development rights of their property to a qualified conservation organization or government agency. In both cases above, giving up the development rights permanently protects property from development and thereby ensures that it remains as 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 to 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 quality of the natural environment by requiring excess water and pesticides, or by creating unnecessary conflicts with sewers, sidewalks, and vehicle access. It is important 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, stream flow and geometry, and water quality.

**Preserve Agriculture Land Use**

Help contain sprawl development by preserving agricultural lands in your community. This may be accomplished through any combination of the following: 1) Establish an agriculture zoning district with very large 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) Employ a waiver program that requires, at the time any land use permit, building permit, or occupancy permit is applied for on non-agricultural land abutting or within 1,000 feet of agricultural land, that the applicant would sign a waiver indicating that he understands that agricultural land exists near the subject property and an agricultural 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.

## **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 their lots and buildings, location on major roadways, and heavy traffic volumes created by the regional draw of the businesses.

### **Development Strategy**

The focus should be on reinforcing stability by encouraging more home ownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing. 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**

- 1) Economic Prosperity
- 2) Resource Management
- 3) Efficient Land Use
- 4) 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 the development rights of their property to a qualified conservation organization or government agency, in exchange for tax savings. Sale of development rights is an arrangement whereby private landowners sell the development rights of their property to a qualified conservation organization or government agency. In both cases above, giving up the development rights permanently protects property from development and thereby ensures that it remains as 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, use of 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/or containment of Brownfields is often very expensive.

### **Downtown Commercial Core Character Area**



#### **Description**

This is the area within the City of Fitzgerald where 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 therefore 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 control 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**

CC - Community Commercial  
G-B - General Business  
P - Professional  
MR - Multi-Family Residential

### **Quality Community Objectives**

- 1) Economic Prosperity
- 2) Efficient Land Use
- 3) 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 business growth within the community.

**Flexible Parking Standards:** Revise land development regulations to remove rigid parking requirements to reduce the number of 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/or containment of Brownfields is often very expensive.

### **Historic Residential Character Area**



### **Description**

Located within the historic city 16-by-16-block square, this area is composed of predominantly older residential structures dating back to the 1930s and beyond. The houses, buildings, and properties of these areas are often of historic and of architectural significance, and are located on small lots laid out 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 historic character of the area through setback and buffering requirements for new development.

### **Predominant Land Uses**

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

### **Permitted Zoning Districts**

R-1, R-1A, R-6, R-9, R-22 - Residential

MR – Multiple Residential

CC – Community Commercial

### **Quality Community Objectives**

- 1) Sense of Place
- 2) 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 in favor of the construction of 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 program 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 for the regulation of 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 specimen or “heritage” tree protections, which protect individual trees considered important because of unique characteristics.

## **Industrial Character Area**



### **Description**

This area consists of predominantly industrial uses, with some public/institutional and agricultural mixed in. Of special note is the location of the historic Evergreen Cemetery at Evergreen and Ben Hill Drive within this character area. Overall, the area serves as the City's primary industrial lands. 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 area 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**

## 1) 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 the appropriateness of buildings, properties, and land uses to create an architecturally and physically cohesive area of specified character.

**Flexible parking standards:** Revising land development regulations to remove rigid parking requirements that 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 to ensure the protection of the quality of life 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 to 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 quality of the natural environment by requiring excess water and pesticides, or by creating unnecessary conflicts with sewers, sidewalks, and vehicle access. It is important 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 for the regulation of 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 to make it easier to obtain necessary approvals, particularly for innovative quality growth types of development. Revisions may include removing or combining unnecessary approval steps or publishing a step-by-step guide to the review process.

**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 help them 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 strip commercial 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.



## **Public/Institutional Character Area**



### **Description**

This area consists of certain 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 uses 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 development of essential facilities in locations where they can be conveniently accessed. Encourage 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**

Objective 6: Regional Cooperation

Objective 9: Educational Opportunities

Objective 10: Community Health

*For descriptions of objectives, see Section 4.*

## **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 to ensure the protection of the quality of life 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

## **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**

The focus for these areas is to reinforce the stability of the neighborhoods by encouraging higher rates of home ownership and maintenance or upgrading of existing structures.

### **Predominant Land Use**

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

### **Permitted Zoning Districts:**

R-1, R-1A, R-6, R-9, R-22 - Residential  
R-R – Rural Residential  
MR – Multiple Residential  
C-C - Community Commercial

### **Quality Community Objectives**

- 1) Efficient Land Use
- 2) Local Preparedness
- 3) Sense of Place
- 4) 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 in favor of the construction of 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 program 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 for the regulation of 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 specimen or “heritage” tree protections, which protect individual trees considered important because of unique characteristics.

## **Rural Residential Character Area**



### **Description**

These are areas of rural land that are likely to face development pressure for large-lot, low-density residential subdivision. Such developments typically consist of large residential lot subdivisions and open space. The majority of the Rural Residential areas can be found on the outer periphery of the City of Fitzgerald, 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 in order to maintain the low-density rural character of the area, with an emphasis on 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**

- 1) Sense of Place
- 2) Efficient Land Use
- 3) 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.

**Agricultural Buffers:** To minimize future potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and to 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 preservation of open space more extensively will want to discuss such issues as how to involve land trusts and provide for conservation easements.

**Conservation Easements:** An arrangement where private landowners donate the development rights of their property 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 mostly historic communities that 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 historic 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 the continued existence of these historic communities with good communication, coordination, and active protection and guidance. Encourage the development of small, local businesses that will meet the needs of the communities 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**

- 1) Efficient Land Use
- 2) Local Preparedness
- 3) Sense of Place
- 4) 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 in order to assure that they will be maintained or demolished.

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

## **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, with an emphasis on connectivity and walkability. In addition, care should be taken to control growth and ensure that any development will occur concurrent with the provision of necessary infrastructure and to ensure equitable distribution of project-created infrastructure cost 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 of subdivisions in order to provide additional green space, as well as passive and active recreation areas that will 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**

Objective 2: Resource Management

Objective 3: Efficient Land Use

Objective 4: Local Preparedness

Objective 7: Housing Options

Objective 8: Transportation Options

*For descriptions of objectives, see Section 4.*

### **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.

## **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 the form of crops, or passive in the form of forest management or pasture lands. The G-F district should be utilized as a land use designation where a more intensive use of the land is unlikely to occur in the near future. The requirements of the district are designed to encourage the maintenance of a rural character until more intensive development is feasible.

**R-R Rural Residential:** The purpose of this district shall be to allow for 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. 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. 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. 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:** The purpose of this district is to provide residential areas with a minimum lot size of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said areas being protected from 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.

**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 conventional 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 which are 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:** The purpose of this district 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 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.

**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 are commonly needed by the Ben Hill County citizens.

**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 in order 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 which might be detrimental to surrounding neighborhoods, or to 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 regulations of the WLI District.

## 10. Transportation Element



### III. Maps

# **Appendix**

**Sign-In Sheets**  
**Public Hearing Notices**  
**Transmittal Letters**  
**Adoption Resolutions**