

**JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR PEACH COUNTY AND CITIES OF
BYRON AND FORT VALLEY**

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT – PEACH COUNTY

**Prepared by
The Comprehensive Planning Committee
With Assistance from
The Middle Georgia Regional
Development Center**

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Introduction

Peach County, established in 1924, was the last county formed in Georgia. Created from parts of Houston and Macon Counties, it is named after the area's most famous crop.

Peach County is located in the southwestern portion of the Middle Georgia Region along Interstate 75, 90 miles from Atlanta and 16 miles from Macon. It is a primarily rural community that has a 151.1-square-mile land mass and only .4 square miles of water. The cities of Byron and Fort Valley (the county seat) are the two municipalities within the county. In addition, Peach County partly encompasses the Cities of Warner Robins and Perry. These two municipalities, which are predominantly a part of Houston County, will be briefly mentioned but are discussed in greater detail in the Houston County Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to Peach County, the Middle Georgia Region includes the counties of Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson. Each of these counties may be used as points of reference throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

In accordance with the Local Planning Requirements set forth by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have developed a joint comprehensive plan. The plan consists of three elements: Community Assessment, Community Participation, and Community Agenda.

The Community Assessment will contain:

- Potential issues and opportunities relevant to the community,
- An analysis of existing development patterns, which includes a map of recommended character areas to consider for future development,
- An analysis of development patterns as they pertain to the Quality Community Objectives created by DCA to assist local governments in evaluating their progress towards sustainable and livable communities, and
- An analysis of data to verify consistency with the three objectives listed above.

The Community Participation Plan will contain a local government strategy to ensure adequate public and stakeholder involvement in preparing the community agenda.

The Community Agenda will include:

- A map that reveals the community vision for the future physical development of Peach County,
- A list of issues and opportunities that Peach County has identified as requiring a need for further action, and
- A program to implement the future vision for Peach County by addressing the identified issues and opportunities.

Community Assessment

Peach County is fortunate to be at a crossroads in planning for its future. The county's population continues to grow, particularly in and around the City of Byron and in the unincorporated areas along Hwy. 41. Much of this growth is fueled by neighboring Houston County and nearby Robins Air Force Base, the largest industrial complex in the State of Georgia as well as the single largest employer in the Middle Georgia region. Peach County is virtually a blank canvas in which important decisions can be made concerning its future. It is an opportunity that many other counties wish they could revisit.

A successful planning strategy begins with preparation, research, and a comprehensive community assessment. This involves identifying and analyzing current community assets, resources, and opportunities. A comprehensive inventory of current conditions allows community planners to accurately evaluate the community's strengths and weaknesses, and in turn, plan effectively.

The Community Assessment portion of this plan consists of a wide-ranging, objective analysis of Peach County and its two municipalities - the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley. The assessment contains four distinct sections that will evaluate current conditions. The sections are as follows: Identification of Potential Issues and Opportunities; Analysis of Existing Development Patterns, which include Areas Requiring Special Attention and Recommended Character Areas; Supporting Analysis of Data and Information; and Quality Community Objectives.

Identification of Issues and Opportunities

The Community Assessment will explore issues and opportunities in the following nine elements of comprehensive planning:

Demographics,
Land Use,
Economic Development,
Housing,
Historic and Cultural Resources,
Natural Resources,
Transportation,
Community Facilities and Services, and
Intergovernmental Coordination.

Demographic: Issues

- The entire Peach County community, similar to that of the region, state, and nation is experiencing a higher number of senior citizens than in previous years. This increase, due primarily to the Baby Boom population reaching the age of 60, is anticipated to continue for several decades. Services must be made available to meet the needs of this segment of the population.
- The total population within Peach County is increasing. This results in an increased demand for infrastructure and services to be provided within the community. Local officials must plan now for the growth that is anticipated to occur within the next twenty years, rather than wait to react when the demand outpaces the supply.
- Projections indicate that substantially more households will be present within the community in twenty years. Consequently, significant developments will be occurring within the community over this time period to ensure that the housing demands are met. Almost 3,000 housing units are projected to be added to the housing stock within Peach County by the year 2025, which is likely to result in sprawl.
- The average household size is anticipated to remain relatively constant in Peach County over the next twenty years.
- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the age 14-17 population within Peach County will be between one-half and one-third of what it is today by the year 2025. This will have significant implications on the school system and its programs.

Demographic: Opportunities

- The population within Peach County is projected to consistently grow. As a result, the labor pool within the community will consequently increase. With adequate skills and training, Peach County may increase its marketability from an economic development standpoint.
- Projections indicate an increased population in high growth areas. If done in conjunction with effective land use planning, this growth could be beneficial to the community. Without effective land use planning, the historical integrity and sense of place within the community could be negated.
- With an increased number of senior citizens in the country, the community is seeking to recruit retirees which may result in a stimulation of the local economy through the provision of additional services to meet the demands of this population.

Land Use: Issues

- A number of suburban-style residential developments are being developed in and around the City of Byron that reinforces Byron's transformation from a small rural community to a suburban enclave. Byron is developing into a bedroom community for those working in southern Bibb County and Houston County.
- Future investment in the Byron downtown area will have to compete against resources needed to improve infrastructure necessary to accommodate the new residential and commercial growth.
- Strip commercial development along Highway 49 creates an unattractive entrance into the City of Byron. Similarly, strip commercial development along the City of Fort Valley's major thoroughfares has created a generally unattractive appearance and impacts nearby residential areas.
- Because of the age and condition of housing structures and related infrastructure, resources within the City of Fort Valley will have to be directed to neighborhood redevelopment efforts. Additionally, the City of Fort Valley has experienced very little new residential development.
- Fort Valley has a definable downtown area but there are problems that prevent it from reaching its full potential, such as vacant buildings, vehicular/pedestrian traffic conflicts, limited financial resources, and the mix of uses.

Land Use: Opportunities

- The City of Byron has a definable downtown area where the Byron Better Hometown Program and business owners have made substantial investments in time and money to make it appealing to both residents to shop, and entrepreneurs to invest into new businesses.
- Industrial land is readily available to new development in the North Peach Industrial Park and off Highway 49.
- Renovation of the Austin Theatre in the City of Fort Valley could attract traffic to the downtown area, and with it, new business investment.
- Neighborhood redevelopment strategies in the City of Fort Valley should include plans to improve the surrounding commercial development, by encouraging mixed use development, controlling signage, curb cuts, utility installations, and establishing building design and appearance standards.
- South Peach Industrial Park, though located just outside the City of Fort Valley, creates opportunities to link this employment center with redevelopment efforts in the southern end of the City.

- Opportunities exist to establish attractive entranceways into the County at the new interchanges at the Russell Parkway Extension and Highway 96 and the interstate corridor north to White Road.

Economic Development: Issues

- The community has a relatively low number of persons who have completed high school, or its equivalent. A Significant number of jobs that could be attracted to the community require a high school diploma at a minimum, if not higher education. A focus should be to ensure that the population within the community possesses the skills and training to enable the community to have a competitive advantage on economic development projects.
- Many groups are working toward economic development activities within the community. With proper coordination, these individuals and groups might encourage additional economic development ventures within the community. Failure to coordinate and collaborate will likely result in stagnant or declining economic development opportunities.
- Many sales tax dollars are captured by other communities as Peach County residents shop in neighboring counties for a variety of purchases.
- The community lacks businesses that cater to Fort Valley State University students. With several thousand students on campus during the academic year, the opportunity for complementary businesses to cater to a student's lifestyle have the potential to be successful within the community.
- Infrastructure is still limited in some areas that are projected to experience tremendous growth. Community planning is essential to determining when this infrastructure will be available to meet the needs of the anticipated growth.
- Over half of Peach County's residents commute to other counties to work.

Economic Development: Opportunities

- A new spec building has been constructed in South Peach Park. It is currently being marketed to prospects.
- Peach County is located along the I-75 corridor, the path of the Fall Line Freeway, and several state highways. Significant economic development activities are likely to occur in areas near these highways.
- A Retail and Commercial Recruitment Committee is in effect and will work to attract such businesses to the community.

- Agricultural businesses have been a foundation for the Peach County economy.
- Growth at Robins Air Force Base is likely to impact Peach County through residential, commercial, and retail growth.

Housing: Issues

- There has been a rapid infusion of single-family dwellings in the county, particularly in the City of Byron and the surrounding unincorporated areas. This indicates a potential lack of diverse housing choices as well as a lack of affordable housing alternatives such as apartments and/or town homes.
- There is a significantly higher percentage of manufactured homes in the county when compared to state and regional averages. Such a large percentage of mobile or manufactured homes could indicate a burden on the tax base as well as the possibility of having an increased number of substandard housing in the future due to the fact that manufactured homes tend to deteriorate and depreciate faster than stick-built homes.
- There is a much higher percentage of aged, substandard, and/or dilapidated housing in the City of Fort Valley than found elsewhere in the county. Primary areas of concern include Branham and Green Streets, Miller Street north of Vineville Avenue, Spruce Street corridor, and Fort Valley State University corridor.
- Peach County is faced with a potential future shortage of affordable single-family homes as the county continues to grow in population and commuting patterns continue to reflect residents traveling to neighboring counties for employment. If wages remain constant, future affordability is diminished. Additionally, the City of Fort Valley has seen a substantial increase in cost-burdened and severely cost-burdened households over the past 20 years.
- There is a lack of quality housing in the City of Fort Valley needed to support the student population of Fort Valley State University. This problem is compounded by the fact that the seven current student residence facilities on the Fort Valley State University Campus are outdated and are in poor physical condition.

Housing: Opportunities

- Results of the 2004 Fort Valley Housing Assessment provides the community the opportunity to develop a long-term housing strategy geared towards specific, high-need target areas. Additionally, the assessment positions the community to address housing needs through various assistance programs, such as the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Programs and the Community Housing Investment Program (CHIP). There has also been a recent groundbreaking for

construction of a new 300,000-square-foot student housing complex on the Fort Valley State University campus.

- The City of Fort Valley has the opportunity to redevelop poverty census tracts to provide additional affordable housing for its citizens. These census tracts can become part of an Enterprise/Opportunity Zone that will be eligible for grant money that can fund revitalization efforts.
- Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have the opportunity to begin planning for the provision of housing for special needs populations. These special populations mostly encompass the elderly, college students, and those in the workforce who are struggling with affordable housing. As these populations increase and their housing needs are not met, they will seek residence in other communities.
- Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have the opportunity to research regional examples of successful redevelopment projects related to housing in a downtown area, student housing, and elderly housing. These regional examples could prove very helpful in gaining ideas about what type of projects could work in their community.

Historic and Cultural Resources: Issues

- The Cities of Byron and Fort Valley are lacking entertainment and leisure activities as well as fine arts and cultural venues in the downtowns. Both cities should try to cultivate a diverse mixture of businesses, retail, and entertainment facilities in the downtown areas.
- The Byron Community Center provides important community services, but a lack of funding is diminishing its operational capacity. As a much needed community facility, a more permanent and reliable means of support and assistance should be sought in addition to the private donations the center currently receives.
- The Toomerville neighborhood of Byron is in need of revitalization. Existing social, economic, and physical conditions of the area should be evaluated in order to determine the best course of action. This could provide a good opportunity to promote the African American cultural heritage in Byron.
- There has not been a comprehensive historic resource survey of the unincorporated areas of Peach County. It is likely that there are a number of historic resources that could be used to benefit the community and will be lost due to neglect or teardowns for new development.

Historic and Cultural Resources: Opportunities

- A concentrated effort to rehabilitate and utilize the buildings in Byron's historic district, accompanied by the formation of a Historic Preservation Commission, and establishment of a historic district ordinance are necessary steps to ensure the protection of Byron's heritage resources. Once accomplished, the Historic Preservation Commission and the Byron Better Hometown should work together to utilize its downtown and historic preservation efforts as a tool for local economic development.
- Peach County is part of the Middle Georgia Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (HPAC) and should utilize the new HPAC website as a promotional tool of its county and cities. The county should also continue using the HPC as a forum to support and foster regional historic preservation activities.
- The Fort Valley Main Street Program should continue its efforts to promote Fort Valley's cultural and historic resources. It might consider partnering with the Fort Valley HPC and the Peach County Historical Society to increase its effort and attention to the historic downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and make certain that Fort Valley is utilizing its many heritage resources to their best advantage.
- Fort Valley has three original turn-of-the-century train structures that have been preserved. It is important for the city to continue to protect and promote its railroad heritage.
- The HA Hunt School, which currently houses the Hunt Educational and Cultural Center, should be considered for nomination to the Georgia State Register and National Register of Historic Places. The school should also be protected at the local level by a historic preservation ordinance.
- Continue to capitalize on the Peach Blossom Trail, Andersonville Trail, Antiques Trail and Masee Lane Gardens, as a way to draw people into the county and its cities. While Peach County may only be one or two stops listed on the Peach & Antiques trails, it is important to promote a unique experience different from the other places along the trail. Marketing and promotional efforts should be tied to the trails but also extend beyond them to showcase the individuality of Byron, Fort Valley, and Peach County. Byron should also continue to promote its walking and driving tours.

Natural Resources: Issues

- Mossy Creek and Bay Creek were recently added to the 2006 Environmental Protection Agency's 303(d) list of impaired streams for such contaminants as Biota and Fecal Coliform. Additionally, Juniper Creek has experienced on-going

issues with industrial contaminants. Corrective measures must be initiated and future mitigation efforts employed.

- Existing wetlands throughout Peach County must be protected and preserved. These wetlands protect water quality and provide habitat for various forms of plant and animal life. Peach County is also experiencing a rapid decline in agricultural land and open green space due to encroaching development.
- There is a need for improved storm water management efforts as the population and related development continues to increase throughout the county. Also, both federal and state regulatory guidance pertaining to storm water issues can be expected to become more stringent in future years.
- Development in flood-prone areas should be limited. Any development within a flood plain is prone to the effects of flooding. In most cases this is in the form of structure or property loss. Any development that is considered for the flood plain should be in the form of parks or other recreation areas to minimize the potential for loss when a flood event does occur.
- The remaining cleanup efforts at the Woolfolk Superfund Site should continue to be closely monitored. The affected areas along Pine and Preston Streets are expected to be completed in fall of 2008. When all cleanup efforts are complete, the once contaminated site will be replaced with public facilities, recreational areas, housing, and businesses.

Natural Resources: Opportunities

- Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have the opportunity to further protect and enhance their natural resources through continued active involvement with the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition. The Clean Air Coalition is committed to improving the region's air quality by increasing the use of alternative fuels and other clean air strategies.
- Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have the opportunity of improving and enhancing the community's water quality through future development of Big Indian Creek Reservoir. Discussions have also begun regarding the development of another reservoir within the community to further address future water needs.
- Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have the opportunity to protect and preserve agricultural areas as open space through appropriate planning and zoning initiatives. An additional option is to encourage individuals who sell off farming acreage to establish conservation easements to protect these lands from encroaching development.

Transportation: Issues

- There is no existing major north-south road between Interstate 75 and U.S. 341; consideration should be given to construct a road that acts as a major collector or minor arterial connecting SR 96 to SR 42 with eventual connection to U.S. 341.
- Possible upgrade of local road network in east-central Peach County area to accommodate projected traffic demand in the area. Lack of traffic modeling in area makes it difficult to forecast future traffic volumes, thus determining precisely what improvements are needed.
- Truck traffic in downtown Fort Valley is creating congestion, conflicts with pedestrian traffic, and possible harm to older historic buildings in the area.
- Sidewalks in Peach County are restricted to the downtown areas of Byron and Fort Valley.
- Project increase in rail traffic along with the convergence of automobile traffic from US 341, SR 96, and SR 49 will likely cause more traffic delays and congestion in downtown Fort Valley, and significantly impact opportunities to redevelop this area.
- To access the North Peach Industrial Park, trucks are forced to negotiate a difficult turning radius at the intersection of SR 49 and Dunbar Road.
- Access to the Perry-Houston County Airport from Byron, Fort Valley, and Peach County is very difficult. Improving this access will be crucial if these communities are to derive the benefits from this facility and the neighboring industrial area.

Transportation: Opportunities

- The Warner Robins Area Transportation (WRATS) Long-Range Transportation Plan recommends short-range, mid-range, and long-range highway improvements, and if implemented, would significantly improve the level of service and connectivity by the end of the planning period. Several of these projects are listed in the WRATS Transportation Improvement Program.
- Two projects on the Fall Line Freeway in Peach County, scheduled for completion in summer 2006, will greatly improve traffic flow and congestion in and around Fort Valley. The State Transportation Improvement Program includes a project to extend the SR 49 Bypass to Highway 96.

- Both the City of Byron and the City of Fort Valley are committed to building and maintaining an excellent sidewalk network that improves foot mobility in the downtown areas and provides pedestrian connections to other points of interest.
- Walkways between the main and agricultural campuses at Fort Valley State University need to be paved. There is no pedestrian network on the campus. Designated crosswalks are needed on Carver Drive and State University Drive to access additional campus facilities.
- A separate facilities plan was developed for the City of Byron in the Regional Plan that includes new sidewalks, streetscape improvements, and a shared-use trail along White Road.

Community Facilities and Services: Issues

- Each jurisdiction must evaluate the capacity of its water and wastewater system and determine if expansion, rehabilitation, or enhancement is desired to meet future demand. Without such improvements, steps should be taken to limit the amount of growth within the community to ensure water and wastewater availability.
- The Peach Regional Medical Center has considered relocation of its facilities, currently in Fort Valley, to a location in the eastern portion of the county. This proposal has been met with mixed reactions and requires extensive communication to convey information and alleviate concerns.
- Interest has been expressed for a better entrance into South Peach Park that avoids Oaklawn Cemetery. Such action will require community leaders to develop a new primary entrance into the facility if it is the local government's desire to make such a change.
- City of Byron is under a consent order from EPD for its wastewater treatment system. Additionally, the City of Byron is working cooperatively with the City of Warner Robins for treatment of some wastewater.
- Peach County desires to upgrade North Peach Park to accommodate new recreational programs. Currently, Peach County owns a pecan grove adjacent to the existing North Peach Park and intends to develop this area into a recreational park in the future.

Community Facilities and Services: Opportunities

- The Austin Theater is in the process of being refurbished and rehabilitated to provide social activity space within the community. It is anticipated that the renovation will be completed during the fall of 2006.

- Everett Square Park is in the process of being developed within the community. This three-acre site is anticipated to have walking trails, a pavilion, and an amphitheater when fully developed.
- New Powersville fire station will be constructed and will house an EMS bay.
- The Peach County Board of Education is seeking to construct two new elementary schools to meet the demands of the community. SPLOST revenues have been approved to be used for such activities.

Intergovernmental Coordination: Issues

- The community must update its Service Delivery Strategy to remain in compliance with the Georgia Planning Act. Failure to update the Strategy will result in the community's inability to obtain state funding for a variety of projects.
- Provision of service in all portions of the county will greatly impact development in the future. Proper planning for this growth requires local leaders to develop the most efficient mechanism for providing services in areas that will experience growth.
- Zoning regulations from community to community differ. While this is not uncommon, some members of the community desire more unified zoning requirements to prevent developers from playing local governments off of each other for personal gain.

Intergovernmental Coordination: Opportunities

- The community can utilize its membership in the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority to further economic development initiatives within the community.
- Urban Redevelopment Plan has the potential to greatly enhance the southern and southwestern portions of the City of Fort Valley and revitalize these areas of the community. Local leaders are currently collaborating to complete the development of this plan.

QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

Development Patterns

Traditional Neighborhoods

Traditional Neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of a more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.

- The zoning regulations do not separate commercial, residential, and retail uses in every district. There is a need for a mixed-use development ordinance that would promote walking between various zones. The new Byron City Complex could serve as a focal point within zones. This would enable connectivity between various locations within the community.
- Peach County does not have an ordinance in place to allow for neo-traditional development “by right,” that eliminates a long variance process for developers. Development patterns in Peach County lack organization.
- Prior to recent rapid development, Peach County had an abundance of trees. Committee members indicated that the only area in the county that requires the planting of shade bearing trees is along Russell Parkway Extension. Some residents are concerned that as new areas are developed in Peach County, a tree ordinance will be necessary to preserve and replenish the shade bearing trees.
- Peach County and the City of Byron do not have an organized tree-planting campaign. Nevertheless, Fort Valley is currently working on becoming a “Tree City” and an arboretum has been established in South Peach Park. Adding a tree on Arbor Day will be an annual event. The city of Byron has a desire to become a “Tree City” as well. Warner Robins however, already has a “Tree City” designation.
- The *Peach County Clean and Beautiful Program* is designed to keep public areas clean and safe. Organized cleaning is held a minimum of once a year. Though the County has established fines for littering, citations against this ordinance are rarely issued. Enforcement of this ordinance is encouraged.
- There are some areas of Fort Valley with a strong sidewalk network. In some sections of the city, they need improvement while other areas lack them totally. Conversely, sidewalk connections are absent in Byron, particularly in the Toomerville Community, and therefore residents walk in the streets as opposed to



on sidewalks. There is consensus that Warner Robins has well maintained sidewalks in certain areas.

- In some areas of Byron and Fort Valley, errands can be made on foot if desired although sidewalks need improving. In Warner Robins, motorized transportation is necessary to run errands due to the fact that sidewalks do not provide for connectivity between residential and commercial areas.
- With present conditions, Peach County children have few options other than a motorized vehicle for transportation to school. The presence of crosswalks, sidewalks, and biking trails could promote safe walking and biking to school.
- Schools within Peach County are located in or near neighborhoods, but are not part of a traditional neighborhood school concept.

Infill Development

Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.

- Byron and Fort Valley have an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development, however the City of Warner Robins does not. There is a desire in Byron for a stronger urban design.
- The City of Fort Valley is actively working to redevelop the Woolfolk Superfund Site. Cleanup is scheduled to be totally completed in 2008. The building of the Thomas Public Library and the Troutman House refurbishing are current evidence of the site's reuse. Brownfields in Byron and Powersville still sit vacant. Warner Robins has no brownfield sites.
- There are no nodal development plans in Peach County.
- Peach County does allow small lot development for some uses

Sense of Place

Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as a community focal point. Where this is not possible, activity centers should serve as such points. Community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, and pedestrian oriented where people tend to gather for the purpose of shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

- Peach County has a distinct sense of place. Abundant peach and pecan trees make up the county's unique character.

- The Historic District of downtown Byron and the historic structures of Fort Valley have been delineated as important landmarks, preserving the area's history.
- The historical landmarks present in Byron and Fort Valley are important to Peach County. Active historical societies and established Main Street Programs in both municipalities, as well as other interested preservation groups, have taken steps to ensure continued protection of these areas.
- Ordinances are in place to preserve and regulate design standards of certain portions of the county, particularly the historical areas.
- Byron would like to see a more stringent sign ordinance for the commercial and historic districts.
- There is a need for conservation easements to preserve the agricultural lands that were once prominent throughout the county. Unfortunately, it is difficult to encourage farmers to continue farming when land sales bring in a much greater return.

Transportation Alternatives

Alternatives to the automobile should be made available to each community. They include mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities.

- Peach County Transit primarily serves seniors and lower income residents, but also serves the general traveling public. The service also contracts with Middle Georgia Technical College to make trips back and forth each day.
- New development is required to connect with existing development through a street network along with walkways and bikeways.
- Byron lacks a continuous sidewalk network but plans are in place for improved pedestrian facilities in the downtown area connecting to schools and parks off of White Road.
- Sidewalks have been built in the newer subdivisions throughout Peach County. They are required in the commercial districts, in dense residential areas, and subdivisions one-half mile of a school and other areas likely to attract pedestrian traffic.
- The Warner Robins Area Transportation Study specifies established bicycle routes through the Warner Robins Urbanized Area that encompasses Warner Robins, Byron, and the eastern portion of Peach County. Byron is planning to become a major bicycle hub in the future. Encouraging bike riding could open up a market for bike trade stores in Peach County.

- Peach County allows for the sharing of parking areas wherever possible.

Regional Identity

Each region should promote and preserve a regional “identity” or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

- The downtown areas of Byron and Fort Valley are characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage. There is a need to create a distinct urban design for the Byron downtown area.
- Peach County is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that promote local agricultural products such as peaches and pecans. Lane Packing and others are great economic resources, as well as tourism assets to the community. In fact, it may be advantageous to encourage agricultural related businesses along the Highway 96 Corridor to support Lane Packing as a focal point.
- The Battle of Byron, the Peach Festival, and Nightmare on Main Street are just examples of how Peach County celebrates local culture, commerce, entertainment, and education of the region. The fact that Peach County is the source of abundant peach and pecan trees as well as other farming staples is another notable asset. It is also home to Fort Valley State University, a land grant institution and a frontrunner in teacher education and agriculture.
- Warner Robins participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s Regional Tourism Partnership.
- Peach County promotes tourism based on unique characteristics such as Lane Packing, Masee Lane Gardens, and the historical downtowns of Byron and Fort Valley.



Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation

The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.

- There are designated historic districts in both Byron and Fort Valley.
- Fort Valley has an active historic preservation commission.

- The City of Byron desires ordinances that require new construction to compliment historic development. Fort Valley has a historic development ordinance.

Open Space Preservation

New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development to be used for public parks or greenway/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.

- In recognizing the importance of greenspace preservation, developers have set aside some portions of their projects for open space.
- With the exception of Warner Robins, Peach County does not have a local land conservation program, or work with state or national programs.
- Peach County and the City of Byron is actively preserving greenspace either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development. Examples of this include Timber Ridge Subdivision, New Haven Subdivision, and the Boyscout Camp, which has over 100 acres set aside for land conservation.
- Though Peach County does not have a conservation subdivision ordinance, the Timber Ridge and New Haven subdivisions are preserving 25 acres and 20% of open space, respectively. Peach County desires developers that take advantage of cluster development and hope to have a conservation ordinance developed in the future. Warner Robins however, has plans to enact an ordinance as these types of developments continue to occur in the area.



Environmental Protection

Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life in the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

- There is a desire for Peach County to compile a natural resource inventory to protect and preserve natural features. Some areas of Warner Robins have already been inventoried.
- Peach County has indicated a desire to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- Some natural resources in Warner Robins have been defined.

- Peach County has passed the Part V Environmental Ordinances and they are enforced.
- Peach County and the City of Byron is using storm water Best Management Practices (BMPs) for all new development.

Social and Economic Development

Growth Preparedness

Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, and ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.

- Peach County is aware of the growth and providing a balance with improved infrastructure is a necessity.
- Development regulations and/or zoning regulations should be reviewed to ensure that the ordinances will help the community achieve its desired goals.
- A capital improvement program is in place that supports future and current growth.
- Although the eastern portion of Peach County near Byron has been designated as a high growth area, growth is also desired in Fort Valley. Strategies must be developed to achieve that end, particularly focusing on the FVSU student population as an economic commodity and redeveloping some integral areas of the city.
- New development guidelines are clear
- There is no formalized educated process to allow all interested parties to learn about the development process in the Peach County community.
- Planning and Zoning, City Council and County Commission meetings are held to inform the public of land use and zoning decisions. Media outlets cover each of the meetings.
- Community meetings were held countywide to inform the public of the Peach County comprehensive planning process. In addition, a website was established to provide comprehensive plan updates.



Appropriate Businesses

The business and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long term sustainability linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources in the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher skill job opportunities.

- Organizations involved in Economic Development within Peach County have considered the community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses. Strategies for industrial and business recruitment have been formulated based on the evaluation. In particular, there are plans to overcome the problems within the community regarding water and sewage capacity.
- Economic Development organizations within Peach County have considered the type of businesses in the community and have a plan to recruit compatible businesses and industry.
- Peach County recruits businesses that provide or create sustainable products
- Peach County is mostly made up of a service and manufacturing workforce. The loss of jobs at the Blue Bird Body Company, Dan River, and others have had an adverse impact on the economy.

Employment Options

A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.

- Presently Peach County does not have an entrepreneur support program.
- There is a desire to establish a Middle Georgia Technical College Satellite campus in the county, where training could be established through Georgia's Quick Start Program. The program will enable students to receive on-the-job training while still in school.
- Though there are professional and managerial positions in Peach County, they are insufficient in number to provide employment to all of Peach County's residents.

Housing Choices

A range of housing sizes, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances) to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and provide a range of housing choices to meet market needs.

- Peach County has limited allowance for garage apartments and mother-in-law suites.
- Peach County needs affordable housing for all income levels.

- The cities of Byron and Fort Valley follow the original town pattern, continuing the existing street design and with smaller setbacks.
- Fort Valley has a desire to establish loft apartments in the downtown area.
- There is vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing, particularly in Fort Valley, due to the presence of the University.
- Multi-family housing is permitted in Peach County.
- There are housing authorities in Byron and Fort Valley that support the building of lower income housing.
- There are housing programs in Peach County that focus on persons with special needs.

Educational Opportunities

Educational training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

- There is a desire for Peach County residents to have access to workforce training programs that provide job skills, particularly in high tech fields, hopefully resulting in the attraction of such businesses to the area.
- Fort Valley State University, located in Fort Valley, is a prominent land grant institution in Peach County. The University is also planning to reopen a campus in Warner Robins. Middle Georgia Technical College is located in Warner Robins. There is a desire for a satellite campus of MGTC in Peach County, making it more accessible to prospective students in the community. Nearby Macon is home to Mercer University, Wesleyan College, and Macon State College where Peach County students also attend.
- Peach County needs to provide professional jobs to keep college graduates in the community. As it is a bedroom community, the task could prove quite difficult.

Governmental Relations

Local Self Determination

Communities should be allowed to develop and work toward achieving their own vision in the future. Where the state seeks to achieve a particular objective, state financial and technical assistance should be used as an incentive to encourage local government conformity on the objectives.

- Peach County participates in numerous programs with the Middle Georgia Regional Development Center such as formulating overall planning strategies and redeveloping specific underserved areas.
- Peach County has membership with the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition, which encourages the use of alternative fuels and other strategies to provide cleaner air to the region. The City of Byron has passed a resolution encouraging the use of alternative fuels.
- Sheriff offices, schools, and emergency services share efforts but there is a need for better coordination of information provided by these services, particularly in terms of E-911 addressing.

Regional Cooperation

Regional Cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly when it is critical to the success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.

- Although there is a joint city and county comprehensive plan, there is often a lack of communication between the governments.
- The City of Fort Valley and Peach County are working with Fort Valley State University in redeveloping the University Corridor to make it an attractive gateway onto the campus. Warner Robins, Byron, and unincorporated areas of Peach County work together on the WRATS plan. Though it may be difficult, the municipalities within Peach County recognize the need to work together to rectify concerns to countywide problems.
- Jurisdictions are working avidly to complete the Peach County Comprehensive Plan.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The Analysis of Existing Development Patterns consists of three major sections: (1) evaluation of the existing land use patterns within the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley and unincorporated Peach County; (2) a discussion of the areas requiring special attention; and (3) the identification of recommended character areas. (see Appendix for related Maps)

Existing Land Use

This section of the report includes an inventory and analysis of existing land use patterns within Peach County. It begins with a review of the methodology used to obtain the existing land use.

Methodology for Deriving Existing Land Use

The Middle Georgia RDC Information Technology (IT) Department staff coordinated with the Peach County Tax Assessors Office to obtain several of their files to establish most of the parcel-based existing land use information. The first file was the Georgia Department of Revenue's Tax Digest program called WinGap. The WinGap file classifies each parcel of property based on certain property codes. Below are the property codes from WinGap that were used by the RDC staff to establish the individual land use categories for this report:

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>WinGap Equivalent</u>
Residential (except multi-family and manufactured home parks)	Residential; Residential Transitional
Commercial (includes multi-family residential and manufactured home parks)	Commercial
Industrial	Industrial
Public/Institutional (includes parks/recreation/conservation uses)	Exempt Property

Trans/Comm/Utility
Agriculture/Forestry

Utility
Agricultural; Conservation Use

Because WinGap incorporates manufactured home parks and multi-family dwellings having four or more units into its commercial property code, there was no means to separate these uses from this property code, thus, manufactured home parks and multi-family dwellings have been placed under the commercial land use category. Discussion of these uses, however, will take place in the residential section below. In addition, Parks/Recreation/Conservation uses were placed under Public/Institutional.

Existing Land Use Definitions

For this study the following existing land use categories were used:

Residential: The predominant land use in this category is single-family or manufactured homes.

Commercial: This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities, organized into general categories of intensities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building. Multi-family dwellings and manufactured home parks are coded as commercial as explained above.

Industrial: This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.

Public/Institutional: This category includes certain state, federal, or local government uses and institutional uses. Government uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc. Includes park/recreation/conservation uses such as, playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forest, golf courses, recreation centers, or similar uses.

Transportation/Communication/Utilities: This category includes such uses as major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, or other similar uses.

Agriculture/Forestry: This category is for land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or commercial timber, or pulpwood harvesting.

City of Byron

Residential

Most of the residential development within the City of Byron is single-family detached dwellings located in a classic traditional neighborhood or more recent suburban-style subdivisions at densities ranging from two-six units per acre. Manufactured homes and duplexes are present in the City but are scattered throughout residential areas. There are several manufactured home parks as well, and they are concentrated in the northern section of the City. With the exception of several subdivisions off Walker Road, residential uses in the City of Byron are located north of Highway 49.

Several major residential developments have recently been permitted in the City of Byron. This reinforces the trend, which has taken place over the last several years, that the City of Byron and the nearby unincorporated area will become increasingly a bedroom community for those working in southern Bibb County and Houston County.

Commercial

The types of commercial development in the City of Byron can be classified as follows: (1) central business district; (2) strip highway commercial development; (3) neighborhood commercial centers; and (4) regional commercial centers.

Central Business District

In the Byron central business district, there is a mixture of government, retail, and services blended together into one cohesive and well-defined unit. The City of Byron has been designated as a Better Hometown Community by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The local Better Hometown Committee, along with the City of Byron and business owners, are making major investments in the central business area both in terms of time and money to make it appealing for both residents to shop and entrepreneurs to invest into new businesses. Future investment in the downtown area should continue throughout the planning period in order to maintain its appeal and attract new businesses. This may be difficult knowing that community resources will have to be appropriated to improve the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the new residential and commercial growth.

Strip Highway Commercial

Strip highway commercial is the predominant commercial use in the City of Byron, spread from White Road to Interstate 75. This type of commercial activity is characterized by its variety and intensity of uses; both retail and service, numerous curb cuts, and general unattractiveness due to the amount of signage and utility poles and a lack of design controls. Another concern about strip commercial developments is the tendency for businesses to move out of older strip areas and move into new developments. This, at least at the present time, is not a major concern in the Byron area.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Several neighborhood commercial centers have developed within the Highway 49 strip commercial area. Future neighborhood commercial centers should be encouraged to be part of nodal development at the major highway intersections where there is a mixture of residential, office, retail, and institutional development. By enacting regulations that will allow this type of development to take place, it will likely minimize the reoccurrence of strip commercial development and establish an attractive living, shopping, and working environment; and reduce the potential for traffic congestion.

Regional Commercial Centers

Regional commercial centers can take on several different forms; retail malls, specialty centers, and large shopping centers anchored by big-box retail establishments. The Peach Outlet Mall located on Highway 49 east of I-75 is an example of a regional specialty center. It has taken advantage of its location along I-75 and uses the outlet store concept to attract large numbers of shoppers from throughout the region.

Industrial

Industrial uses situated in the City of Byron are considered for the most part light-industrial in nature and are located along Highway 49 south of White Road and the North Peach Industrial Park, a 135-acre site located off I-75.

Public/Institutional

Land classified as Public/Institutional in the City of Byron includes local and state government buildings, public schools, churches, fire station, parks, etc. Most of the public/institutional uses are concentrated along White Road, Main Street, and Boy Scout Road.

Agricultural/Forestry

Though most of the land within the City of Byron is occupied by urban uses, there are still several areas in the City that are either in agricultural use or have been set aside for conservation purposes. One large area is located between the railroad tracks and Highway 49, while the other large area is in the extreme western portion of the City between Main Street and Highway 42.

City of Fort Valley

Residential

Unlike the City of Byron with its many new low-density residential neighborhoods, the City of Fort Valley is characterized by older mixed-use neighborhoods where the lots are considerably smaller and the densities considerably higher. Because of the age and

condition of many of the structures in these neighborhoods as well as the aging infrastructure, resources will have to be directed to redevelopment. The City of Fort Valley has experienced very little recent residential development.

Commercial

There are two types of commercial development located in the City of Fort Valley: (1) central business district and (2) strip highway commercial.

Central Business District

The City of Fort Valley has a well-defined central business district located off Highway 49. This district includes the city and county offices and many small businesses working together under the Mainstreet Program to invest in making this area an appealing area to work and shop. Despite these efforts, there are a number of problems that beset the downtown area that prevent it from reaching its potential, such as vacant buildings, vehicular/pedestrian traffic conflicts, limited financial resources, and finding the right mix of uses to create a reason for residents to come to the downtown. It is hoped that the newly renovated Austin Theatre, with its cultural events, meetings and banquets that it will attract, will bring traffic into the downtown area.

Strip Highway Commercial

Fort Valley like most communities has commercial development spread along its major thoroughfares. Along Highways 49, 341 and 96, retail and service activities of varied uses and intensity dot the landscape along with numerous curb cuts, utility poles, and signage creating a general unattractive appearance. Many of these commercial uses impact on the nearby residential neighborhoods. Redevelopment strategies for these strip commercial areas should correspond closely with the overall neighborhood redevelopment plans. It is suggested that changes to commercial development regulations take place to encourage more mixed-use development and control of signs, curb cuts, utility installations, and building design and appearance.

Industrial

The main industrial use in the City of Fort Valley is the Blue Bird Body Company located on both the north and south sides of Highway 49 close to the Five Points area. Though not directly within City limits of Fort Valley is the South Peach Industrial Park, a 190-acre tract that has recently completed its third phase of development with a new speculative building. Several other smaller industrial uses are located south of the railroad tracks.

Public/Institutional

Public/Institutional uses that have been identified in the City of Fort Valley include: Fort Valley State University and football stadium, Peach County High School and several

other public schools, City Hall and Peach County Courthouse, Neighborhood Service Center, Thomas Public Library, fire stations, public works department complex, other federal and state office buildings, park and recreation facilities, Peach County Hospital, and numerous churches and cemeteries. Land owned by the Peach County Development Authority at the South Peach Industrial Park is also shown under this land use category. The majority of the public/institutional uses are concentrated off State University Drive, Highway 49, and SR 49 Bypass and in close proximity to the downtown area.

Agriculture/Forestry

Land in the City of Fort Valley classified in agricultural or conservation use can be found in the extreme eastern portion of the City, in the western section of the City north and south of Highway 96, and in the southern section of the City between Fort Valley State University and the railroad tracks. Unless population trends are reversed or there is some institutional or public need, this land will most likely remain in this land use category.

Unincorporated Peach County

Residential

Once occupied by agricultural and forestry uses, the area north of Lakeview Road/Highway 247 Connector/Bible Camp Road and the area north of Byron is being transformed into a suburban residential area, with numerous low-density, single-family subdivisions sprawled throughout the landscape. The remainder of the residential uses in unincorporated Peach County can be described as rural residential; a mixture of single-family detached and manufactured homes located in generally one-acre lot subdivisions or on large estate lots.

Commercial

Retail, service, or office uses in the unincorporated area are situated primarily near the Byron and Fort Valley city limits, with the remainder being convenience commercial uses designed to serve the rural population, and commercial development at interchanges at Highway 49 and the Highway 247 Connector.

Opportunities exist for the new interchanges at the Russell Parkway Extension and Highway 96 and the interstate corridor north to White Road to establish attractive entranceways that will leave a positive and lasting impression on visitors to the community. Development plans should be developed for these areas that address building design and appearance, signage, ingress/egress, etc.

Industrial

Other than the South Peach Industrial Park located just south of Fort Valley on Highway 341 South, land shown as industrial use includes a tract east of the Perry-Houston County Airport and a tract south of Juniper Creek Road.

Public/Institutional

The largest public/institutional uses in unincorporated areas of Peach County are the U.S. Agriculture Fruit and Nut Research Center off Dunbar Road, the portion of the Perry-Houston County Airport in Peach County, a Boy Scout Camp off Boy Scout Road, and Massee Gardens in the extreme southern end of the County off Highway 49. The remainder of the public/institutional uses consists primarily of churches and cemeteries.

Agriculture/Forestry

Most of unincorporated Peach County is classified as agriculture/forestry or in conservation use. It is likely that if current land use and population trends continue, most of the agriculture/forestry land north of Lakeview Road/Highway 247 Connector/Bible Camp Road and north of Byron will be occupied by suburban residential development; the land between Interstate 75 and U.S 41 from Russell Parkway Extension to Mossy Creek will also be suburban residential in nature with more intensive uses near Highway 96 interchange; and the land north of the Russell Parkway Extension east of I-75 will in most probability be developed as industrial or heavy commercial uses. Other potential growth corridors for residential and commercial development are: (1) Highway 96 from Fort Valley to Interstate 75. The area around Lane Packing Company is already transitioning to residential and commercial, and it is expected that during the planning period, more intensive uses will spread west towards Fort Valley; and (2) the SR 49 Bypass. When work is completed on that section of the Fall Line Freeway, it will become a prime location for new higher density residential, commercial, light industrial, and institutional uses.

Character Areas

Character Areas are sub-areas of the community that would require detailed implementation of policies, investments, incentives, or regulations as it relates to influencing future development patterns, preservation, or overall improvement. The following section lists and maps out character areas identified in Peach County that will warrant further exploration in the future.

Character Area	Description/ Location	Development Strategy
Agricultural/Open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Indian Creek • Boy Scout Camp • Mossy Creek • Mule Creek • Flint River • Areas southwest and southeast of Fort Valley • Areas east of Byron 	Lands in open or cultivated state or sparsely settled, including woodlands, farm lands, conservation, and greenspace. These areas should be preserved to protect the identity of the community.
Declining Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toomerville area • Southern Fort Valley • Vineville neighborhood in northern Fort Valley 	An area that has most of its original housing stock in place, but housing conditions are worsening due to low homeownership rates or lack of property maintenance. These areas may be losing their neighborhood identity and are in need of enhancement.
Downtown Byron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Byron 	A focal point of the community with a sense of identity, commonly associated with general retail, services, commercial, local government operations, and public/open space for pedestrian use.
Downtown Fort Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Fort Valley 	A focal point of the community with a sense of identity, commonly associated with general retail, services, commercial, local government operations, and public/open space for pedestrian use.
Historic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fort Valley Historic District • Byron Historic District 	Historic district or area containing features, landmarks, and civic or cultural uses of historic interest. Characterizations may vary based on size, location, and history of the community. The integrity of the community should be preserved to ensure that such resources are not lost within the community.

Character Area	Description/ Location	Development Strategy
Industrial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Peach Industrial Park • South Peach Industrial Park 	Land use in higher intensity manufacturing, assembly, processing activities where noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics are not contained on site.
Major Highway Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-75 • U.S. Highway 341 • S.R. 41, 42, 49, 96, and 247-C 	Developed or undeveloped land on both sides of designated high-volume transportation facilities. Characteristics include orientation of buildings to the highway; high transit, including stops and shelters; on-site parking; and large set-backs for buildings.
Rural Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North central portion of the county 	Rural, undeveloped land likely to face development pressures for lower density.
Stable Traditional Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peripheral sections of Fort Valley • Peripheral sections of Byron 	Areas of established neighborhoods where little change has occurred and is anticipated.
Developing Suburban Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northeast portion of county • Northwest of Byron • Southwest of Byron 	Areas anticipated to transform from rural to suburban with regards to residential, commercial, and retail development, especially near major corridors.
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area occupied by and adjacent to Fort Valley State University. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas in and around a sizable educational institution within the community. Areas of interest and concern include the physical campus of the educational institution and surrounding properties which can complement the functions of the institution and the needs of its faculty, staff & students.

Areas Requiring Special Attention

This section identifies areas of Peach County that require special attention and are categorized as follows:

Significant natural or cultural resources, specifically areas likely to be intruded upon

- Locations likely to be subjected to rapid development or change of land use
- Areas where the pace of development may outpace availability of community facilities and services, including transportation
- Redevelopment in terms of physical appearance
- Abandoned structures or sites, including those that are environmentally contaminated
- Significant infill opportunities
- Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or substantial unemployment

Special Attention Area	Description/ Location	Additional Comments
<i>Significant natural or cultural areas likely to be intruded upon</i>		
Peach and Pecan Trees	Throughout Peach County	Farming acres are being encroached upon by development.
Big Indian Creek	Peach County	Proposed Reservoir to be used as scenic area and tourist attraction.
<i>Locations likely to be subjected to rapid development or change of land use</i>		
Highway 49 Highway 41 Russell Parkway Extension	Peach County	Identified as a high growth area. Opportunities are present to establish design control ordinances.
Lane Packing	Highway 96 in Peach County	Provides a tourist attraction as well as agribusiness opportunity to stimulate economic growth. Peach Orchards are currently being sold to make room for residential development. Opportunity to encourage cluster development to preserve greenspace.
Strip Commercial Development	Highway 41 and Russell Parkway in Peach County	Attract shoppers to Peach County, improving the tax base. Opportunity to establish design controls.
<i>Areas where the pace of development may outpace availability of community facilities and services</i>		
Industrial Parks	North Peach and South Peach Industrial Parks	Additional water, sewer and roads are needed to support facilities.

Special Attention Area	Description/ Location	Additional Comments
<i>Redevelopment in terms of physical appearance</i>		
Everett Square	Downtown Fort Valley	Preservation of nearby historic homes and redevelopment of Everett Square Park.
Byron Historic District	Byron	Rehabilitate historic structures and improve streetscape in downtown Byron.
Jailhouse Park	Byron	More land will be acquired to expand park.
Fort Valley Mainstreet	Fort Valley	Fort Valley has significant historical structures, including three original train buildings.
Loft Apartments	Fort Valley Triangle West Church Street	Provide opportunities for downtown living by reusing older structures.
Commercial Districts	Highway 49 and I-75 Intersection in Byron Fort Valley Five Points Area	Opportunity to establish tree ordinance to improve streetscape, and enact design controls.
Byron Community Center	Byron	A source of historical pride in the Toomerville Community in Byron and is used to provide recreational services to the city.
Austin Theater	Downtown Fort Valley	Currently being rehabilitated into a meeting hall and eventually a performing arts theater.
<i>Abandoned Structures or Sites, including those that are environmentally contaminated</i>		
Woolfolk Superfund Site	Fort Valley	Cleanup is scheduled to continue until 2008. Plans for site include commercial and office space.
Powersville Site Peach Metals Industrial Site	Powersville Byron	No plans for redevelopment have been made.

Special Attention Area	Description/ Location	Development Strategy
<i>Significant Infill Opportunities Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or substantial unemployment</i>		
Fort Valley State University Corridor	Fort Valley	Opportunity to redevelop area to create an attractive gateway into the University.
Spruce Street	Fort Valley	Opportunity to redevelop area.
Gano Community	Across from Fort Valley State University	Small homes need rehabilitation.
Toomerville Community	Byron	Historical African American community where homes need rehabilitating.

Demographics

Regional Population

In Middle Georgia, there is a disparity between urban and rural communities. For example, Bibb and Houston Counties contain a fast-paced, urbanized feel within a more densely populated area. Peach County, along with much of the region, is more rural and more sparsely populated. Although considered rural in terms of population, Peach follows Baldwin County as the fourth most densely populated county within the Middle Georgia region (Table 1-Appendix).

The current estimated total population of Peach County is 24,682 residents according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Peach County's total population has grown steadily since 1980, with growth rates averaging 11.8%. Within the past five years, data indicates that the rate has somewhat slowed, with the average growth rate dropping to 4.2% (Table 2-Appendix). However, estimate and local data indicate that growth rates will increase rather dramatically, growing at a rate of approximately 18.2% between present and the year 2025.

While the outlying unincorporated areas of Middle Georgia have experienced population growth, some cities have actually lost population in spite of a strong positive net migration. Following this trend, growth is currently concentrated along the eastern portion of the county near Byron and in the southeastern portion near Warner Robins and Houston County. This can be attributed to the presence of Robins Air Force Base, the close proximity to the more urban areas of Bibb and Houston Counties, and the annexation of properties located on the fringe of Byron's city limits. The fact that residents are choosing to live further from urban centers and commute to their places of employment may also account for the increase in population. Corresponding to this trend, in the past six months there have been a total of 100 new housing permits obtained in unincorporated Peach County with an additional 150 expected in the months of September-November. This, along with other future developments, will surely contribute to a population swell within the community in coming years.

The City of Byron has experienced a moderate growth increase of 10.6% since the 2000 census but is expected to experience a drastic increase by the year 2025 of over 53% (Table 2-Appendix). To accommodate the expected influx of population, Jackson Crossing is expected to begin development within the next year. The 530-acre development is estimated to have over 500 residential homes, 50 acres of commercial and office space, 107 acres of green space, 12 acres dedicated to schools, and 78 acres of street right-of-way. The extraordinary population growth is interconnected with the outward sprawl trend seen in most Middle Georgia areas, especially residential development in Houston and Bibb Counties. In addition, Byron is conveniently situated between two of Middle Georgia's largest cities and is situated along I-75 and a modern four-lane highway, Highway 49.

In contrast, the City of Fort Valley experienced a population decline from 8,198 in 1990 to 8,005 in 2000. The decrease in population may be a result of citizens leaving for the more rural unincorporated areas of the county, which could include reasons such as lower property taxes, availability of undeveloped land, relaxed zoning regulations, and a desire for a more rural lifestyle (Table 2-Appendix). Recognizing the city's population decrease throughout the last decade, Fort Valley has begun focusing efforts on revitalizing the downtown area in hopes of creating a new community spirit that will keep its citizens within city limits. In the past four years, the City has raised more than \$400,000 and invested it into downtown development. Furthermore, the City has undertaken efforts to market itself as a retirement destination for persons over the age of 55 years.

Population Change

The most significant component of population increase during the last 15 years in Peach County has been due to natural increase. Well over half of the total population change was caused by natural increase, while just over one-third of the total population level change was due to net migration. The high natural increase could be the result of younger people staying in the area to raise their families because of affordable housing and increased highway access to surrounding cities.

Throughout the Middle Georgia region, approximately half of the total population is due to net migration and half the result of natural increase. The State of Georgia total population change differs from that of Peach County. Over two-thirds of Georgia's total population increase has been due to net migration, while just over one-third of the growth has been due to natural increase.

Household Data

Possessing the largest number of households in Middle Georgia, Bibb and Houston Counties each have between 40,000 and 60,000 households according to US Census Bureau estimates. With an estimated 9,000 households in 2005, Peach County has the fifth largest number within the Middle Georgia Region (Table 3-Appendix). Although, the number of Peach County households is relatively small in comparison to other jurisdictions within the region, it is expected to increase by over 31%, or 2,830 households, over the next 20 years. According to statistics from the 2000 Census, over the next 20 years the City of Byron will be the forerunner of Peach County's residential growth with a 44.6% increase in the number of households, while the City of Fort Valley will experience a modest increase of 4.4%.

Size of Households

While the number of households has increased around the country, the size of the household has decreased. This can be attributed to the changing economic and social conditions of the past 30 years. Such changes include a general reduction of birth rates as well as dramatic increases in female-headed, single-parent families and the number of non-elderly single households. According to the 2004 Georgia County Guide, 16% of the

total households are female-headed, single-parent families, slightly higher than the State average of 12.2% for the year 2000.

Peach County's household size is slightly higher than the Middle Georgia region with 2.63 persons per household; the region averages 2.4. The County's average is projected to continue to decrease over the next five years to 2.61, but then remain fairly constant until 2020 (Table 4-Appendix). With smaller household sizes, the number of households demanded within the community increases, signifying a need for additional housing. Smaller single-family homes, more affordable housing, and multifamily homes may be necessary to satisfy these future demands indicated in these trends.

Age Distribution

Historically in Peach County, the largest percentage of the population has been in the 5 to 13-year-old and 35-to-44-year-old age ranges (Table 5-Appendix). With the significant number of working-age residents, jobs are needed to sustain the area workforce. Although between 15 and 30 miles from larger urban centers, Peach County is becoming a popular locale for those who have made the decision to commute to their places of employment. Over time, other age categories have steadily continued to increase, leaving a fairly even distribution of the population in all categories except the 14-to-17-year-old category; which has decreased over time. Surprisingly, the increased number of workforce aged individuals within the community and the number of high school aged children is projected to decrease.

The high school age population in Peach County is expected to reach a 20-year low in the year 2025 despite the 31% increase in the number of households in Peach County. These projected population trends have significant budgetary and policy implications in the local education system. With an enrollment decrease, the state revenues dedicated to education are likely to decrease within the community, placing more of the burden for sustaining the current level of educational funding on the shoulders of the local taxpayers. The younger segment of the population, 5-to-13-year-olds, is estimated to comprise the highest percentage of the population in Peach County through the year 2025 (Table 5-Appendix).

The age distribution for the Middle Georgia region remained steady from 1980 to 2000. The most significant change was the 65 and older age group representing over 10% of the population in 1990 to 2000. Age distribution for the State of Georgia shows an aging population from 1980 to 2000. According to the Census Bureau, the increase is driven by the number of people born during the "Baby Boom" after War World II (1946-1964). For example, the highest percentage of the population in 1980 could be grouped into the 44 and younger categories. In 1990, the larger percentage moved up to the 45 and older age groups. Finally, in 2000 the largest percentage of the population in Georgia was the 55 to 64 age group. The United States has experienced a relatively consistent age distribution from 1980 to 2000 with the 65 and older category constantly having the highest population.

Race and Ethnicity

In conjunction with Peach County's population increase, all races or ethnicities identified in Table 6 (see Appendix) have increased in number since 1980, according to the Georgia County Guide. However, only White and Hispanic populations grew in regards to the percentage of the population within Peach County, where Blacks or African Americans currently represent a smaller percentage of the population presently than in previous years. Although the data indicates a decline since 1980, Peach County is among four other Middle Georgia Counties (Baldwin, Bibb, Twiggs, and Wilkinson), with a large percentage of black residents (Table 6-Appendix).

The most notable shift in ethnic composition in Peach County is the increase in residents of Hispanic ethnicity, with a 216.9% increase since 1990. The increase in Hispanic population can be the result of the County's high number of seasonal, manual employment. Hispanic populations tend to live in areas where there is a variety of seasonal, high paying, or service-related jobs. Keeping track of the increase of Hispanic residents can aid the community in terms of determining what services are necessary to provide such as the translation of documents into Spanish or establishing English as Second Language (ESL) programs. In fact, ESL has already been established through the literacy program at the Hunt School in Fort Valley. Having a significant Hispanic population can also create job opportunities for a bilingual workforce.

Income Levels

Household Income Distribution

Historically in the City of Byron, the majority of the population had an average annual household income of \$29,999 or less. From 1990 to 2000, the percentage of households that had an average annual income of \$50,000 to \$99,999 increased from 25% of the City's population to almost 40%. From 1980 to 2000, a high percentage of the City of Fort Valley's annual household income distribution was \$9,999 or less. In 2000, it decreased to 27.7% but remains the highest percentage of households in the City. Within Peach County the City of Fort Valley has the highest percentage of population below the poverty level (Table 7-Appendix).

The average annual household income in Peach County had been similar to that of the City of Fort Valley from 1980 to 1990. In 2000, Peach County had a large increase of household incomes in the \$50,000 to \$99,999 range, especially incomes \$75,000 to \$99,999. Household income distribution in the State of Georgia was similar to the City of Fort Valley until the year 2000. The highest percentages of households were in the income range of \$9,999 or less per year. In 2000, the State of Georgia had the most distributed percentage of households among the income levels. The State of Georgia had the highest percentage of households with an average income of \$60,000 or greater, with over 12% of households in the \$100,000 or greater income level (Table 8-Appendix).

This data indicates that the buying power within the Fort Valley area is significantly less than that of the City of Byron and Peach County. Consequently, extrapolations of this data can be made and show that funds from property taxes and sales taxes generated within the City of Fort Valley will likely impair the revenue generating capacity of the City of Fort Valley, and will have to be assisted by Peach County. Services available through the local government require funding, and the lower income population is the target audience for many government social programs.

Per Capita Income

According to the Census Bureau, over the past 25 years, the City of Fort Valley's per capita income has been lower than Peach County, the City of Byron, the Middle Georgia Region, the State of Georgia, and the United States. This trend is projected to continue for the next 20 years. The City of Byron has historically had a higher per capita income than Peach County. The per capita income in Peach County is very close to that of the Middle Georgia Region, but slightly less. In the next 20 years, a similar trend is projected to continue. Both Peach County and the City of Fort Valley have per capita incomes that are substantially less than the State of Georgia and the United States; estimates show that this is likely to continue through 2025 (Table 9-Appendix).

Average Median Household Income

Peach County, the City of Byron, and the City of Fort Valley average median household incomes have all increased since 1990. The City of Fort Valley has had the smallest increase and the lowest household income of \$27,487. In the City of Byron the average household income has increased over 38% in the past 15 years to significantly surpass that of Peach County and the City of Fort Valley. The City of Byron has seen increases in its average household income, and the rate of growth has been slower than the State of Georgia. The result has been that the City of Byron's average median household income is currently higher than the State of Georgia by 21% (Table 10-Appendix).

Economic Development

Economic development is a term generally applied to the expansion of a community's property and sales tax base or the expansion of the number of jobs through office, retail, and industrial development—this can be summed up as business recruitment, retention and expansion. Expanding the Peach County economy requires an inventory of existing conditions; once those conditions have been inventoried the community can implement sustainable economic development activities. That inventory of existing conditions within the community consists of its economic base, labor force, economic resources, and economic trends.

Economic Base

One indicator of the economic base for the Peach County community is employment by industry. Within this section Peach County employment by industry is compared to the State and to the nation.

Employment by Industry

According to the *Georgia Employment & Wages 2004 Averages*, produced by Georgia Department of Labor, the service-producing industry was the largest employment industry within Peach County. Average monthly employment in this industry in 2004 was 3,277 (or 42% of total average monthly employment). Within the service-producing industry, the largest employment sector in that same year was retail trade (employing 1,327). Average monthly employment by the goods-producing industry in 2004 was 2,369; of this, 1,665 jobs were in the manufacturing sector, and 1,303 were in the transportation equipment sector. Just over 30% of average monthly employment in Peach County was in the goods-producing industry. Approximately 72% (5,650) of 2004 average monthly employment in Peach County was in the private sector; almost 28% (2,168) of average monthly employment was in the public sector. The manufacturing, retail trade, and government enterprises sectors represented 12.5%, 10.4% and 27.8% of Peach County earnings in 2002, according to the *2004 Georgia County Guide*.

The five largest employers in Peach County in 2004, according to the Peach County *Georgia Area Labor Profile*, were Advance Stores Company, Blue Bird Body Company, Fort Valley State University, Peach Regional Medical Center, and Southern Orchard Supply Inc. This list compiled by the Georgia Department of Labor excludes the public school system and governmental agencies.

Between 2003 and 2004, employment in Peach County declined 4.3% (or 353 jobs); from 8,171 workers in 2003 to 7,818 workers in 2004. Consequently, unemployment rates within the community increased. These declines can be, at least partially, attributed to the closure of the Dan River facility and decreased employment levels at the Blue Bird Body Company.

The Blue Bird Body Company has been a mainstay within the Peach County community for jobs and its contributions to the local tax base. This employer of persons from throughout the middle Georgia region, provides well-paying jobs within the manufacturing sector. With employment levels that have neared 2,000 in recent years, the impact of this particular economic engine is significant. The Fort Valley facility has long been the corporate headquarters of the Blue Bird Body Company.

In a larger sense, the economic base within Peach County is similar to many communities across the region, state, and nation. A continued increase in service industry jobs has been seen and is projected between periods from 1980 to 2025. Furthermore, the number of manufacturing jobs has decreased due, in part, to automation and overseas competition. Unlike many other portions of the state and country, agricultural jobs remain strong due to the peach, pecan, and strawberry facilities operating within Peach County.

Comparison to the State

Conversely, employment in the State of Georgia increased 1.4% between 2003 and 2004. At the State level, the numbers for employment by industry are large, so the most effective way to compare Peach County employment by industry to State employment by industry is to look at how the leading sectors and industries in Peach County compare to those same sectors and industries at the State level. For example, where 42% of average monthly employment in Peach County was in the service producing industry, approximately 65% of average monthly employment at the State level was in that industry. Approximately 83% of employment within the State was in the private sector in 2004; 17% was in the public sector. The distinctions between earnings by place of work are less noticeable at the State level. In 2002 the leading earnings sectors were manufacturing (approximately 16%), finance, insurance, and real estate (9.8%) and healthcare and social assistance (7.6%).

Comparison to the Nation

The national unemployment rate in June 2005, according to the United States Department of Labor (DOL), was 5.0%. Nationally the leading employment industries in November 2005 were (percent of total employment in parentheses) office and administrative support (17.5%), sales and related services (10.6%), food preparation and serving-related services (8.2%), production (7.9%) and transportation and materials moving (7.4%), according to DOL.

Labor Force

The Peach County labor force can best be understood by reviewing employment status, occupations, personal income, wages, and commuting patterns. This section looks at each of these components and offers comparisons with the State and Nation where appropriate.

Employment Status

In 2004 the unemployment rate in Peach County was 6.3%, according to the *Georgia Area Labor Profile* (GALP) for Peach County that is produced by the Georgia Department of Labor. That same source indicates that the unemployment rate for the Peach County area (comprised of Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Macon, Peach, and Taylor Counties) was 5.7% during the same period. Unemployment rates for the State of Georgia and the United States in 2004 were 4.6% and 5.5%, respectively.

The higher unemployment rate within Peach County, at this juncture, was partially attributable to the fact that a number of individuals were laid off from manufacturing positions at the Blue Bird Body Company and Dan River.

The Peach County labor force in 2004 was made up of 11,057 potential workers, according to the Peach County GALP. Of that number, 10,357 workers were employed. Unemployment in Peach County is higher than both the State and National averages; the rate was the third highest in the Peach County area in 2004—only Taylor County (7.8% unemployment) and Macon County (6.4%) were higher. Peach County neighbors Houston County, which had an unemployment rate of 3.8% in 2004. An available pool of workers in Peach County can help employers there take advantage of the regional growth being fueled by Bibb and Houston Counties.

Occupations

Leading goods-producing occupations in Peach County in 2004 were in the manufacturing and transportation equipment sectors, according to the *Georgia Employment & Wages 2004 Averages* (GEW) produced by the Georgia Department of Labor. These two sectors employed 2,968 workers that year. The leading service-producing occupation was in the retail trade sector with 1,327 workers in 2004, according to GEW. After retail trade, the leading employment sector within Peach County was local government, which employed 1,260 in 2004. Goods-producing occupations employed 2,369 in 2004; but service-producing occupations led in employment with 3,277 workers.

Personal Income

Per capita income in Peach County in 2003, according to GALP, was \$22,732 (about 78% of the State per capita income or about 72 percent of the National per capita income). In that same year per capita income in the State of Georgia was \$28,890 (about 92% of the National per capita income) and in the United States it was \$31,487, according to the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Table 11 in the Appendix reflects personal income composition for 2005 in Peach County and the State of Georgia.

Wages

Table 12 in the Appendix is a table of data presenting and comparing the range of wages in the Peach County area and in the State by percentile for 2005. Wages for all industries lagged the State wages by an average of six percentage points in the Peach County area in 2005.

Earnings by Sector

In addition to Table 12 that shows the wage analysis for the Peach County area and the State of Georgia, Table 13 (see Appendix) presents and compares the average weekly wages in 2004 in Peach County and the State of Georgia. As shown in the table, average weekly wages in the Peach County agriculture, forestry, and fishing and manufacturing sectors were above the average weekly wages for those same sectors at the State level. However, 2004 average weekly wages for other sectors in Peach County were noticeably below the corresponding sectors at the State level. The service-producing industry in Peach County in 2004 paid 57% of the State wage but comprised almost 42% of employment in Peach County; the goods producing industry in Peach County paid 93% of the State wage but made up just over 30% of employment.

Commuting Patterns

According to the *2000 County-to-County Worker Flow Files* produced by the United States Census Bureau, almost 43% of employed residents of Peach County worked in Peach County; by contrast, just over 48% of persons working in Peach County were residents of Peach County. The second largest source of Peach County workers was neighboring Houston County, supplying just over 18% in 2000. That same year over 24% of Peach County residents commuted to Bibb County; 20% worked in Houston County. Houston, Bibb, Crawford, Macon, Taylor, Dodge, and Dooly Counties each had residents working in Peach County in 2000.

Commuting patterns help provide a snapshot of whether a community is a “bedroom” community for a neighboring area, whether the community is a destination for workers, or is some mix of the previous two options. For example, 17% of employed residents in neighboring Crawford County work in Crawford County while 45% commute to Bibb County, consequently giving the appearance that Crawford County is a “bedroom” community for Bibb County.

The fact that a sizable number of individuals live in Peach County and commute to other locations for employment indicates that work available for the community does not adequately meet the demands of the resident population. Two potential scenarios, which can be evaluated to determine the underlying reason for this phenomenon, include the idea that skill sets possessed by Peach County residents are unable to be utilized by employers currently within the community or that wages paid within Peach County for certain positions are less than for areas in surrounding, or a combination of each.

First, the number of available jobs within the community is less than the employable labor force in the same area. Most recent Georgia Department of Labor statistics indicate that there are almost 1,200 fewer jobs in Peach County than employed Peach County residents (regardless of where their job is located). Additionally, as quantified above, wages paid within Peach County are less than wages paid in other portions of the state. It can be inferred that these two factors collectively prevent those living in Peach County from working in other communities.

Although these statistics paint Peach County's employment options in a negative light, the fact does remain that some individuals might prefer the more rural lifestyle when compared to the neighboring urban centers of Macon and Warner Robins. The quality of life that these individuals are pursuing results in their choosing to live in Peach County and work in other locations.

Economic Resources

Educational Attainment

A careful evaluation of educational statistics is important when considering preparation of community residents for the professional and technical skills required in the workforce. In 2000, 73.4% of Peach County residents over the age of 25 possessed a high school diploma, which is less than the state average of 78.6%. Within the City of Byron, the percentage of high school graduates is the highest within the county at 81.8%, but only 17% of the population possesses a bachelor's degree. Fort Valley has a lower level of high school graduates at 61.6%, and only 13.5% of the residents possess a bachelor's degree. Although the community has Fort Valley State University (FVSU) present in Fort Valley, these statistics indicate that a number of individuals attend FVSU, but do not remain in Fort Valley after completion of their educational careers. Educational attainment is an important factor to consider when addressing the perception from local residents of a lack of high technical skilled labor in the community (Table 14-Appendix).

There are currently five public schools in Peach County: two elementary schools; two middle schools; and one high school, which is located in Fort Valley. There are currently plans for two new elementary schools, although the residents of Byron strongly feel a closer high school would be beneficial to their community. However, the number of students within the areas that could potentially be served by a new high school do not substantiate the cost associated with the construction and staffing of a new high school. Current plans for the two new elementary schools are estimated to cost the Peach County Board of Education approximately \$4.2 million to complete.

Initial discussions are underway between the community and Middle Georgia Technical College to construct a new satellite campus to provide job and skills training for individuals within Peach County and surrounding counties. Middle Georgia Technical College has indicated to the community that a number of individuals have begun taking classes in the Warner Robins campus, only to drop out due to the commute from Peach

County and beyond. Conventional wisdom indicates that a facility closer in proximity to the students would enable more individuals to successfully complete their training. There is also a desire among planning committee members for workforce training to be established through the Georgia Quick Start Program that would include robotics and lean technology (Table 15-Appendix).

Economic Development Agencies

Peach County is in the service region of the Middle Georgia Regional Development Center (MGRDC). The Middle Georgia RDC is a regional planning and development agency serving the communities of Middle Georgia since 1965. The MGRDC provides technical assistance to the 11 counties and 22 cities that encompass its service region. The Middle Georgia RDC is comprised of professional departments specializing in planning, economic development, public administration, information technology, and aging services.

Peach County is also serviced by an Economic Development Program representative from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). This representative serves three service regions across the state with the purpose of overseeing economic development-related projects throughout his/her service area. Additionally, DCA has a regional representative who acts as a liaison between the community and DCA staff in Atlanta. This person is tasked to ensure that communities across Middle Georgia are informed of all available economic development resources.

Georgia Tech Regional Economic Development Institute in Macon offers an array of services to businesses seeking to locate or expand within Middle Georgia. The common objective of these offerings is to grow Georgia's economy by providing technology-driven solutions to the state's businesses and communities. Georgia Tech EDI seeks to attract new companies to Georgia, assist existing enterprises expand, provide technical expertise for enhanced competitiveness, and help communities plan for growth.

In addition to these regional and state agencies, there are several recognized economic development agencies specific to Peach County. These include the Development Authority of Peach County, the Byron Development Authority, the Middle Georgia Regional Development Authority (Houston, Peach, and Pulaski Counties) and the Downtown Development Authorities for the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley.

Economic Development Programs and Tool

There are several economic development programs or tools made available to businesses and residents of Peach County. These include Freeport exemptions and the availability of business development funds.

Freeport exemptions were entered into by Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, and Twiggs Counties, as well as the Cities of Eatonton, Forsyth, Macon, and Milledgeville. These governments have all elected to create Freeport

exemptions on ad valorem taxes on inventories within their communities. These exemptions include the following types of commercial and industrial inventory:

- Class 1 - Raw materials and goods in process of manufacture – 100 percent exemption;
- Class 2 - Finished goods produced in Georgia within the last 12 months - 100 percent exemption; and
- Class 3 - Finished goods stored in Georgia within the last 12 months and destined for shipment out-of-state - 100 percent exemption.

Additionally, business development funds are available to local governments through the Georgia Small Business Lender (GSBL). In 1978, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration designated the Middle Georgia Regional Development Center as an economic development district (EDD). The charge of an EDD is to increase per capita income, lower unemployment, and promote economic stability. As part of this overall economic development effort, in 1982 the MGRDC created the Development Corporation of Middle Georgia (DCMG) to provide access to capital for small businesses, increase the tax base, and create jobs. In 2004, the DCMG changed its name to Georgia Small Business Lender (GSBL) in order to reflect its ability to make loans throughout the State of Georgia.

The GSBL, along with participating private sector lenders, help new and expanding businesses with the acquisition of fixed assets. The five loan programs operated by the GSBL offer smaller down payment requirements, lower interest rates, flexible loan structuring, and longer terms than are generally available through commercial lenders. The benefit to communities is through the creation of jobs, an increased tax base and improved access to goods and services.

In 1983, the GSBL became a Certified Development Company of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). This certification allows the GSBL to make loans through the SBA's 504 Program. Along with offering SBA loans, the GSBL currently operates three additional loan programs. The GSBL operates a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and manages an Economic Development Administration Revolving Loan Fund for the MGRDC. In addition, GSBL operates a pilot micro-loan program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Utilizing the GSBL as the administrative agent has numerous advantages including rapid start-up, economies of scale, experience in lending and asset liquidation, established financial controls, marketing capacity, and access to resources in a wide variety of disciplines.

Business Outreach Services (BOS) is located in the City of Macon and operated by the University of Georgia (UGA) with a grant from the Small Business Administration. The UGA BOS program helps businesses improve their competitive advantage by providing sound advice and technical information relating to all phases of small business

management. Services that are provided free of charge include business plan development, market research, record keeping and accounting, cash flow analysis, financing alternatives, and international trade. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC), under the umbrella of BOS, offers affordable training seminars and workshops to improve business skills and knowledge of topics including: marketing strategies, accounting principles, tax procedures, computer technology, business law, time management, and procedures on how to start and manage a business. The Macon BOS office offered their services to 345 businesses within the Middle Georgia Region in 2002 with many of these being minority or women-owned businesses.

The Industrial Extension Service Regional Office is located in the City of Warner Robins and operated by Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI). This service provides companies with on-site, confidential management and technical assistance. They have a professional staff of engineers trained in a variety of fields. Some of the services available include plant layout and material handling advice, computer application assistance, technical problem-solving, productivity audits, energy audits, environmental health/safety assessments, on-site training, continuing education offerings, satellite downlink access, and business and technical database searches. This assistance is supported by the University System of Georgia, and most often the staff can provide three to five days of help at no charge.

Education and Training

There are several educational and training opportunities in Peach County. These include public schooling at the primary and secondary levels as well Fort Valley State University, a public university located in the City of Fort Valley. According to the Peach County Board of Education, Peach County is home to Byron Elementary School, Hunt Elementary School, Byron Middle School, Fort Valley Middle School and Peach County High School. Neighboring Houston County is home to Middle Georgia Technical College (MGTC). MGTC offers a wide variety of job training programs, professional certifications, and technical degree programs. Peach County is also served by Georgia's Quick Start Program. This program is nationally recognized for providing customized, high-quality training services at no cost to new or expanding businesses.

The Quick Start Program's flexibility allows for each business and/or industry to work on a schedule that is most conducive to the needs of the company. Training sessions are sometimes provided at company facilities, while at other times they are provided at participating technical schools, or other agreed upon locations. Additionally, the schedules are flexible in that courses are offered during the day, at night, or on weekends to meet the needs of the company. According to the Quick Start website, programs are available in fields such as metals, electronics, paper, plastics, textiles, apparel, food processing, printing, chemicals, warehousing and distribution, and business services.

There are several job training programs available to Peach County employees and employers. The Middle Georgia Workforce Investment System offers job training with contracted educational facilities throughout the region (and outside the region) through

the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The training is available to all residents of the Middle Georgia Region. Including its Welfare to Work Program, the Consortium served 1,260 people in 2003. The Consortium contracts with the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, Allied Trucking in McDonough, Macon State College, Putnam Hospital's School of Practical Nursing, and Middle Georgia Technical College, among others, to provide training to qualified persons.

Economic Trends

Economic trends within Peach County can be described through sector trends, major employers, important new developments and unique economic situations.

Trucking, Warehousing, and Distribution Industries

The 2005 *Economic Diversification Strategy* outlined a plan to encourage the trucking, warehousing, and distribution industries in the Middle Georgia Region because of its interstate connections and proximity to major seaports. Peach County, one of four counties in the region studied, is attractive to businesses because it consists of large undeveloped tracks suitable for industrial and commercial land uses, as well as numerous vacant warehouse spaces. The continuous development of these industries could bring much needed jobs into the area. Skilled labor training provided by the technical schools in the Middle Georgia Region for managers, computer technicians, forklift operators, material handlers, and equipment maintenance specialists would greatly benefit local students.

Tourism

Peach County is poised to capitalize on potential tourism dollars spent in the area due to the presence of attractions in the community such as Lane Packing, Pearson Farms, and Masee Lane Gardens, all of which offer daily tours. Opportunities for tourism also occur in the historical areas located in Byron and Fort Valley. Many of Byron's historical structures have been printed in a "Walking and Driving Tour Brochure" complete with photographs, and accompanied by a brief history of the property. The historic district in Fort Valley is advertised by a similar publication.



Agribusiness

When the peach industry overtook cotton in the late 19th century as the primary source of agricultural revenue, it became the primary cash crop for Peach County. The Elberta Peach, named for the wife of Marshallville peach grower, Samuel Rumph, remained the primary peach in



Georgia until 1960. During peach season at that time, as many as 50 packing sheds were operated in Peach County. Today, peach growers ship 1,500 to 2,000 truck loads of peaches each year from the community. Two modern facilities now grow and distribute peaches in large quantities: Lane Packing and Pearson Farms.

The Lane Packing Company is a farm that was begun in 1904 and has been a family-owned operation for four generations. Located outside the city of Fort Valley, the 4,000-acre farm grows a variety of peaches and pecans. The roadside market operated by Lane Packing features seasonal produce, The Peachtree Café, Just Peachy Gift Shop, and a mail order service. Presently, portions of the farm are being sold to make way for residential development.

Pearson Farms is located five miles outside of Fort Valley and has been owned by the Pearson family for over 100 years. The farm contains 1,500 acres of peaches and 2,000 acres of pecans. In addition to owning a packing shed, Pearson Farms is a gift/mail order company that ships agricultural goods all over the world.

Sector Trends

According to the Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) the Middle Georgia Work Investment Area (MGWIA), comprised of Baldwin, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties, expects to see significant growth in the sectors reflected in Table 15 (see Appendix). This table provides a regional perspective for job growth comparisons. Industries expecting the largest job growth at the regional level include (annual growth rates in parentheses): food manufacturing (7.3%), hospitals (6.4%) and support activities for transportation (5.9%).

For a more localized perspective regarding job growth in Peach County, Woods & Poole Economics, in its *2005 State Profile*, projects that the manufacturing, retail trade, services and state and local government sectors will employ the largest number of workers in the County. These projections have been condensed in Table 16 (see Appendix) showing employment projections between 2005 and 2025.

Georgia DOL has also projected declining industries in the MGWIA. Table 17 (see appendix) indicates declining industries and provides a regional perspective. Industries expected to experience the most significant declines include (annual growth rates in parentheses): nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing (-5.7%), construction of buildings (-5.1%) and state government—excluding education and hospitals—(-4.8 %).

Declining sectors and industries are just as important to economic development as those that are growing and projected to grow. For a more localized perspective regarding job growth in Peach County, Woods & Poole Economics, in its *2005 State Profile*, projects that mining, transportation, communications and public utilities, federal civilian government and federal military government will employ the smallest number of workers in the County. These projections have been condensed in Table 18 (see Appendix) showing employment projections between 2005 and 2025.

Major Employers

The five largest employers in Peach County in 2004, according to the Peach County *Georgia Area Labor Profile*, were Advance Stores Company, Blue Bird Body Company, Fort Valley State University, Peach Regional Medical Center, and Southern Orchard Supply Inc. Between 2003 and 2004 employment in Peach County declined 4.3% (or 353 jobs); from 8,171 workers in 2003 to 7,818 workers in 2004.

Important New Developments

Peach County constructed a speculative building costing approximately \$2.2 million within the South Peach Industrial Park during the past 12 months. During this same time period, Peach County experienced the opening of numerous retail establishments. These facilities, many dining establishments, likely provided over 100 jobs within the community. Additionally, two new fitness facilities and a new car dealership opened to provide jobs within the community, while generating additional private investment.

Job losses within Peach County during Fiscal Year 2006 were somewhat limited. Local leaders identified four closures that eliminated jobs within the community. One grocery store and three additional retail establishments ceased operations, which likely resulted in approximately 75 displaced workers.

Peach County is experiencing a shift in private investment from the traditional downtown areas of Fort Valley and Byron to locations on and around interstate interchanges along I-75. Such investment and development have resulted in lack of significant developments within the downtown areas over time. Additionally, the City of Fort Valley has a Superfund site located in the central business district of downtown that is in the process of remediation.

The Peach County Hospital has maintained a constant presence within the community for a number of years. This facility, in recent months, has made plans to relocate to property in eastern Peach County. However, in August 2006, the facility withdrew its request for permission for such a facility from the State of Georgia. At this juncture, it is unclear whether the hospital will continue to pursue the more eastern location, remain in its present location with facility modifications, or continue operations out of the existing facility.

Unique Economic Situations

Opportunities within Peach County are enhanced by the fact that three interstate interchanges are relatively undeveloped at this time and present great potential for economic development activities. Also, the community has constructed a new speculative building in the South Peach Industrial Park, which is being marketed to potential industries. Furthermore, workforce training activities to mitigate a lack of individuals with high levels of educational attainment are being pursued between Peach County, the City of Fort Valley, and Middle Georgia Technical College.

Superfund sites within Peach County are in need of remediation in order to convert the contaminated site into a location capable of supporting new business or industrial development. Specifically, the community has obtained \$3.6 million in FY 2005 for the remediation process of the Woolfolk facility with the expectation that an additional \$4 million may be available for FY 2006. Additionally, a \$50,000 redevelopment planning grant was obtained to assist with expenses associated with the project cost.

At present, there is limited availability of land in the South Peach Industrial Park. Similarly, there are no large continuous tracts available within the North Peach Industrial Park. In order to remedy this need, the community has identified this need should be addressed in a timeline of approximately three to five years from the present. The first phase of this will be to develop a conceptual and master plan for the activities. Subsequently, funding must become available, land must be acquired, and infrastructure must be ensured available to the location.

The North Peach Industrial Park is in need of traffic improvements to the interchanges of Interstate 75 and is also in need of a new entrance into the industrial park via White Road, an overpass with no interstate access. The industrial park is in a prime location; however, industrial transporters would have problems accessing the site as it is today. Current road layouts include deficiencies in turning radii. Distances between maneuvers are inadequate to queue up a length of vehicles. The City of Byron desires improved interstate access including a Frontage Road from the S.R. 247-C to S.R 49, as well as a four-point interchange along White Road. This project has not been identified by the Georgia Department of Transportation for completion in the short-term, but is a priority within the City of Byron nevertheless.

Housing

Accurately assessing the housing inventory in a community can help that community determine whether the existing housing stock is capable of adequately providing for the current and future community housing needs. Housing in Peach County is best portrayed through a review of housing types and mix, condition and occupancy, cost of housing, cost-burdened households, special housing needs, jobs-housing balance, and housing issues unique to the Fort Valley State University student population.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a housing unit as a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters, or if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Housing stock must be adequate in terms of both affordability and safety. Housing must also support a growing population. Based on these factors, strategies and programs should be identified to maintain adequate housing stock throughout the community.

Housing Types & Mix

This review of housing types and mix in Peach County is constituted through analysis of the housing stock composition, recent trends in types of housing, and a summary evaluation of housing in the county.

Composition of Housing Stock

Housing types in Peach County range from modern to turn of the 19th century, particularly in the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley. In 2000, according to the July 2003 *Georgia State of the State's Housing: Service Delivery Region 6* (GSSH) produced by the Housing and Demographics Research Center at the University of Georgia, Peach County had 9,093 housing units. Of these, almost 66 % were single-family units, 8 % had 2 to 4 units, almost 7 % had 5 or more units, and slightly fewer than 20 % were mobile homes. In Peach County, according to GSSH, approximately 52 % of housing units were built more than 20 years ago, and almost 48 % were built within the last 20 years. This statistic is indicative of a rapidly growing community.

Recent Trends in Types of Housing

Between 2002 and 2003, according to the *2004 Georgia County Guide*, there was a more than 41 % increase in the number of single-family housing units authorized for construction. In 2003 alone, 174 new, privately-owned housing units were constructed. This increase in new home construction has been the trend since 2001, when there were 135 new, privately-owned residential structures built; in 2002 that number was 123. Compare these numbers with housing construction in 1999 when only 112 homes were built. The focus since 2001 on purely single-family residences indicates a trend in Peach

County to accommodate a growing demographic that does not want to live in multi-family or apartment housing.

Evaluation of Housing

In Peach County in 2001, according to GSSH, there were 5.37 manufactured home placements per 1,000 people. As a percentage of housing units in Peach County, the manufactured home or trailer housing sector is larger than that of the State as well as most of Region 6, which is comprised of Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs and Wilkinson Counties. The average number of manufactured home placements per 1,000 people for Region 6 in 2001 was 1.93; for the State that number was 1.15. The large presence of manufactured homes and the recent trend toward solely authorizing single-family units indicate that the community seeks to diminish the presence of manufactured homes by increasing the availability of single-family units.

A comparison of the GSSH findings with 2000 U.S. Census data, reported for Peach County and its two municipalities, confirms this surge in single-family dwellings. Because of the presence of Fort Valley State University (FVSU), there are a greater number of multi-family dwellings (25.6%) in the City of Fort Valley; however, in Byron, multi-family units only consist of 8.9% compared to the 77.5% of single-family homes. This may indicate a need for more apartment rental properties in Byron for residents who desire housing alternatives.

Condition and Occupancy

The following discussion on the condition and occupancy of housing in Peach County centers on the age and condition of housing, owner- and renter-occupied housing units, and vacancy rates.

Age and Condition of Housing

Since housing units deteriorate with age, age is sometimes used as a sign of the condition or quality of a community's housing stock. In particular, housing units greater than 20 years old are often in need of repairs or refurbishment. As indicated previously, GSSH reports that almost 52 % of housing units were built more than 20 years ago and approximately 48 % were built within the last 20 years. This almost even split suggests recent growth, but also reflects a significant percentage of aged housing stock. Combined with the recent boom in new home construction experienced by the county since 2001, Peach County appears poised to maintain a housing stock characterized as advantageous in both age and condition through the 2010 U.S. Census.

U.S. Census data, as reflected in Table 19 (see Appendix), indicates that the unincorporated areas of Peach County and the City of Byron have a far greater percentage of the newer housing stock. Additional analysis found later in this section

will show that the City of Fort Valley faces unique challenges concerning the age and condition of their housing stock.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 55 housing units (or 0.7%) that lacked complete plumbing facilities in Peach County in 2000, 49 housing units (or 0.6%) were lacking complete kitchen facilities, and 415 housing units (4.9%) were without telephone service. As a whole, these numbers exceed state averages (lack of complete plumbing: 0.6%, lack of complete kitchen facilities: 0.5%, and no telephone service: 3.2%) as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. This is consistent with the identification of a moderately large, aged housing stock, found predominantly in the Fort Valley area and the Toomerville neighborhood of Byron.

Owner-Occupied Housing Units

There were 3,969 specified owner-occupied housing units in 1999, according to the 2003 *Georgia State of the State's Housing: Service Delivery Region 6* (GSSH). Of these units, more than 57% of the owners spend less than 20% of their income on housing, almost 21% spend between 20 and 29%, and slightly fewer than 22% spend 30% or more on housing.

Renter-Occupied Housing Units

In Peach County there were 2,626 specified renter-occupied housing units in 1999, according to GSSH. Of those housing units specified as renter-occupied, slightly less than 50% spend 30% or more on housing, almost 17% spent between 30% and 49%, slightly fewer than 21% spent 50% or more on housing, and less than 13% were not computed.

Vacancy Rates (Owners and Renters)

GSSH indicates that in Peach County there were 657 vacant housing units in 2000. Of those units, more than 43% were for rent or sale, almost 9% were rented, sold or not occupied, 11% were for seasonal use (including migrant workers), and slightly less than 37% of vacant housing units were classified as other.

Owner-occupied and renter-occupied data is important when evaluating the cost of housing in the community as well as in determining the impact housing costs have on the residents of the community. This is evident in the analysis that follows.

Cost of Housing

Median Property Value

In 2000, the median home value in Peach County was \$78,300 and \$34,100 for manufactured homes. The median housing value for homes in Byron was \$91,600, and in Fort Valley, \$58,000. More importantly, the median monthly mortgage payment in

Peach County in 2000 was \$858. This compares favorably with the state median of \$1,039. Additionally, Peach County's median monthly rent in 2000 was \$412, again comparing favorably with the state median of \$613. The vast majority of the homes in unincorporated Peach County and the two municipalities were worth under \$100,000. As shown in Table 20 of the Appendix, ownership percentages declined as the worth of the homes increased, further substantiating Peach County's characterization as a "bedroom community."

As the county continues to grow, and those employed in neighboring counties continue to make Peach County their home, particularly in Byron and the Northeastern portion of the county, the availability of affordable single-family homes for residents will need to be addressed by community leaders. This is particularly true if wages paid in Peach County remain constant.

Median Rent

For specified renter-occupied units in Peach County in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average spent on rent was \$412. There were 258 specified renter-occupied units (9.8% of such units) that spent nothing on rent, and no more than \$1,499 was spent on rent for any single housing unit in Peach County. Table 21 (see Appendix) reflects specified renter-occupied units, gross rent, and the percentage of renters pertaining to each monetary bracket. This information is helpful to community leaders in calculating the cost of rental housing in Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley.

Cost-Burdened Households

Cost-burdened households are defined as those that are paying 30% or more of net income on total housing costs. Severely cost-burdened are defined as those households paying 50% or more of net income on total housing costs. It should be noted that severely cost-burdened households are calculated only for renter-occupied housing units. The preceding table presents 1999 data from the U.S. Census Bureau regarding the percentage of income spent in Peach County on housing. In Peach County in 1999, 78.3% of owner-occupied housing units spent 29% or less on costs associated with housing, according to GSSH; 49.9% of renter-occupied housing units spent less than 30% on housing costs that year. As a result, 11.7% of owner- and 50.1% of renter-occupied housing units were cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened in Peach County in 1999; the percentage of severely cost-burdened renters in Peach County in 2000 was larger than elsewhere in Region 6. There is a strong correlation between spending 30% or more of income on housing costs and a corresponding decrease in quality of life; more income spent on housing costs means that less income is available for savings, clothing, food, and other household expenses.

Over 2,300 (almost 58%) of specified owner-occupied units spent less than 20% of income on housing in 1999, according to GSSH; approximately 42% spent 20% or more. On the other hand, 1,287 (less than 50%) specified renter-occupied units spent less than

30% of income on housing; that means slightly more than 50% of those spent 30% or more of income on housing. This information indicates that renters spend a larger percentage of income on housing than do homeowners; it also indicates that renters in Peach County tend to be more cost-burdened than owners. This is consistent with the other counties in Region 6, which tended to have more severely cost-burdened renter households than the State. Table 22 in the Appendix illustrates owner and renter costs as a percentages of household income.

Needs of Cost-Burdened Households

Peach County neighbors the Macon Metropolitan Statistical Area (Macon MSA). The City of Macon is the county seat of Bibb County, and 24.3% of Peach County residents commute to Bibb County for employment. It follows, then, that Macon MSA data pertains to Peach County when considering the status of cost-burdened households. A housing wage is defined as the needed annual income to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent (FMR) provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is the dollar amount below which 40% of the standard-quality rental housing units are rented. Outside of the Macon MSA, but within Region 6, the annual income needed to meet the set housing wage in 2001 was \$17,253 (or \$8.29 per hour); this hourly housing wage was 161.1% of the federal minimum wage, an increase of 2.7% between 2000 and 2001, according to the *Georgia State of the State's Housing: Service Delivery Region 6* (GSSH). For the Macon MSA, according to GSSH, the hourly housing wage in 2001 was \$10.21 (193.8% of the federal minimum wage). According to GSSH, a federal minimum wage-paying position (\$5.15 per hour) requires a person to work 79.3 hours per week to afford the FMR in the Macon MSA. GSSH indicates that, for a worker to maintain adequate housing in Peach County in 2001, that worker needed to make \$10.21 per hour.

Relationship of Cost to Socio-Economic Characteristics

Socio-economic characteristics include housing, educational attainment, employment, income, mobility, and social characteristics. Many of these characteristics have been addressed elsewhere in this plan. This is a brief discussion relating housing costs to these characteristics but focusing on employment, housing and income. In 2004 the unemployment rate in Peach County was 6.3%, according to the *Georgia Area Labor Profile* for Peach County that is produced by the Georgia Department of Labor; this rate was second to only one of Peach County's neighbors—Taylor County. GSSH determined that seven of the eleven counties in Region 6 are considered to be persistent poverty counties; Peach County is one of them. Simultaneously, Peach County is considered by GSSH to be an existing and emerging growth center. According to GSSH, Peach County, with median earnings of \$19,773 in 1999, was one of two counties in Region 6 where median earnings were less than \$20,000 annually. For the State of Georgia, median earnings for all workers aged 16 years or older were \$24,111. Housing costs relate directly to socio-economic characteristics and household income is a measure for determining the percentage a household spends on its housing costs. Table 23 (see Appendix) presents the percent of Peach County households by income in 1999.

Understanding the amount of public assistance received by Peach County residents may help assess the relationship of housing costs to socio-economic characteristics. Table 24 (see Appendix) indicates the average amount of households, individual recipients, and families having received public assistance in Peach County in FY 2003.

A sizable portion of cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened renters and owners and household income (with many residents receiving public assistance) that is below State and regional levels present a housing challenge to the Peach County quality of life.

Special Housing Needs

This section on special housing needs reviews the demographics of the Peach County/Cities of Byron and Fort Valley population pertaining to each section and discusses programs available to individuals who may need them. Specifically, this section discusses programs available to the elderly and homeless populations, migrant farm workers, victims of domestic violence, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, and persons recovering from substance abuse.

Elderly

According to GSSH, between 1990 and 2000 the 85 years old and older population in Peach County increased 35%. This increase lags both Region 6 and the State, which saw increases of 42.4% and 53.5%, respectively, during that same period.

Measuring the potential impact of the elderly population may be useful in community planning. GSSH provides that the dependency ratio is defined as the number of children younger than 18 years plus the number of elderly persons 65 years old or older per 100 persons ages 18 to 64 years. People are living longer and more elderly are working past the age of 65 so a dependency ratio defined using the number of persons 85 years old or older may be more appropriate. This ratio is defined in terms of the age of the population; there is no relationship between it and the receipt of government aid. A high dependency ratio indicates that there may be greater demand for housing and related services for families with young children and/or older adults; it also may mean there are more people at a non-working age relative to persons of working age. Table 25 in the Appendix reflects the dependency ratios for those aged 65 years and older and those aged 85 years and older for Peach County, Region 6, and the State.

Nursing home facilities for Peach County include the Church Home for the Aged and the Fort Valley Healthcare Center, both of which are located in Fort Valley. There are five personal care homes, four in Fort Valley and soon to be in Byron, for those of senior age who do not require 24-hour care, but require the basic needs of shelter, food, and support services. Because the population of senior citizens is projected to increase throughout the planning period, further assessment of facilities to service this particular citizenry may be necessary to determine future need. Also, for those in their later years, but are still very much active, the building of senior communities may need to be taken into consideration

as well. Two assisted living homes in Peach County are specific facilities for those who suffer from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or Lou Gehrig's disease. The Peach County Association for the Mentally Retarded provides services for mentally disabled citizens.

Homeless

The Peach County office of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), a division of the Georgia Department of Human Resources, administers the Aid to Families with Dependent Children and the food stamp programs in Peach County. Food stamps are available for homeless persons. The office also provides information and refers people needing other types of social assistance to appropriate providers. In addition, the office provides an energy assistance program for low-income households; those families with children can apply for funding assistance if that child is threatened with homelessness; and families threatened with homelessness due to financial mismanagement can receive assistance through this office. The office can become a protective payee and assume management of the family's finances to ensure that their resources are used effectively to maintain their housing status.

In addition to the Peach County office of DFCS, the Middle Georgia Community Action Agency assists households at or below the poverty level with payment of rent, mortgage, and utility bills. There are also a number of churches in the community that assist low-income families threatened with homelessness.

Victims of Domestic Violence

Neighboring Houston County has several resources that could be used by victims of domestic violence. These resources include the District Attorney Victim Assistance Program, the Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia, HODAC Victim Resource Center, and a Salvation Army Safe House. There are no known resources within Peach County for victims of domestic violence.

Migrant Farm Workers

Currently, there are no known special housing services provided to migrant workers in Peach County.

Persons with Disabilities

There were 4,803 persons aged five and older with a disability in Peach County in 2004, according to the *2004 Georgia County Guide*. Table 26 (see Appendix) illustrates the age ranges and percentage of the population within those ranges that are classified as disabled. A significant percentage of disabled persons within a particular age bracket potentially indicates an increased need for those persons. For example, a large percentage of disabled persons that are aged 75 years and older may require additional care facilities specifically tailored to their needs. According to the *2005 Peach*

County/Cities of Byron and Fort Valley Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan, there are currently five assisted living facilities in Peach County. The Phoenix Center provides services through its City of Fort Valley outpatient office for those with developmental disabilities.

Persons with HIV/AIDS

Between 1981 and 2003 in Peach County there were 86 cases of AIDS reported to the Georgia Department of Human Resources' Division of Public Health, according to the *2004 Georgia County Guide*. There were 8 cases reported in 2003; the rate per 100,000 persons that year was 32.9. By comparison, the same rate in 2003 for the State of Georgia was 15.4. While there is Peach Regional Medical Center, Houston Medical Center in neighboring Houston County, and the Medical Center of Central Georgia in neighboring Bibb County that taken together provide comprehensive medical care, there are no known HIV/AIDS specific treatment programs in Peach County.

Persons Recovering from Substance Abuse

Phoenix Center Behavioral Health Services provides mental health, substance abuse and developmental disability services to adults, youth, and families in the Middle Georgia area. The Phoenix Center is a public corporation created by the Georgia General Assembly to address the needs of persons with a psychiatric, substance abuse, or developmental disability. The Phoenix Center serves Houston, Peach, and Crawford Counties and have outpatient offices located in the Cities of Warner Robins, Fort Valley, and Roberta.

Jobs-Housing Balance

Sufficient Supply of Affordable Housing

One tool for determining affordable housing is to compare median housing costs for owners and renters at the local, state, and national levels. The average home in Peach County is valued at approximately 70% of the State average and about 65% of the national average. Median rent in Peach County is 67% of the State average and 68% of the national average. Simultaneously, the average wage for the Peach County area in FY 2005 was 94% of the state average wage. This indicates that housing costs in Peach County are significantly lower than the State. Table 27 of the Appendix shows median housing costs for owners and renters in Peach County, the State of Georgia, and the United States in 2000 and per capita income in those areas for 1999.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, there were 10,650 employed residents in Peach County in 2000; 4,137, or 39%, working in their county of residence and 61% working outside their county of residence. Median property values in Peach County in 2000 were less than both the region and the state; median monthly rent of renter units in Peach County in 2000 was also below both region and state levels. This data would seem to indicate that there is a sufficient supply of affordable housing in Peach County to

support the existing workforce. The greater concern would seem to be the high percentage of residents seeking employment outside their county of residence.

The affordability of the Peach County housing stock appears sufficient to meet current demand; this may change as builders grow the housing stock in Peach County to accommodate persons moving into Peach County but commuting to neighboring areas, such as Bibb and Houston Counties, for employment.

Commuting Patterns

As indicated in the 2004 Middle Georgia Joint Regional Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and as discussed previously in this assessment, Peach County is identified as a bedroom community with a lack of employment opportunities resulting in well over half of the workforce traveling outside of the county for employment.

Barriers to Affordability

Housing costs may increase as growth from neighboring Houston County extends into the eastern portions of Peach County; however, if wages remain constant, the one potential result may be a barrier to affordability based on housing costs versus wages earned.

Fort Valley Housing Assessment

In 2004, the City of Fort Valley completed a housing study to assess substandard and dilapidated housing conditions that remain present in specific areas of the city. The study found that 16.4% of 3,000 structures were in poor condition. The assessment further determined that areas with concentrated numbers of substandard housing occurred along Branham and Green Streets, down Miller Street north of Vineville Avenue, and along the Fort Valley State University Corridor.

To address substandard and dilapidated housing conditions in the city, Fort Valley has made plans to demolish irreparable structures and create infill housing that is architecturally compatible to the neighborhood, particularly in the University District and along the Miller Street corridor. In addition, the City of Fort Valley has expressed a desire for an Enterprise/Opportunity Zone overlay district consisting of the aforementioned areas. This will not only work to eradicate these blighted areas, it will ensure steps towards economic revitalization of the city. An overlay district along the Fort Valley State University Corridor will also give an aesthetically pleasing entrance to the campus.

Fort Valley State University (FVSU) Housing Conditions

A recent housing study completed for the University indicated that there is a lack of available student quality housing in the City of Fort Valley. Additionally, the seven

student residence facilities located on the Fort Valley State University Campus are in poor physical condition and outdated.

Currently, FVSU can house an estimated 968 students; however, the projected total for the number of beds actually needed is 1,800, almost double what currently exist. The study suggested replacing the resident halls, and as a result, the FVSU Master Plan proposed the demolition of 71% of its existing on-campus housing.

Students do have the option of off-campus housing; however, the neighborhoods that surround FVSU contain single and multi-family housing units. Some of the homes that are rented to students are located along Pear Street and Carver Drive, which forms the western perimeter of the campus, and along the State University Drive corridor. Unfortunately, many of these homes do not offer any better conditions than on-campus housing.

Within walking distance of the University are gasoline service stations and convenience stores containing laundry facilities, as well as the Greyhound Bus Station on State University Drive. The one restaurant located in close proximity to the school is on Carver Drive. For any other services, travel into the Fort Valley Downtown area is necessary.

The FVSU campus itself is attractive; however, one must first traverse the university corridor where the significant number of substandard housing gives an overall blighted appearance. The lack of, and the poor quality of housing can be a deterrent to students who wish to attend the university.



On July 11, 2006, groundbreaking occurred for a 300,000 square foot student housing complex on the Fort Valley State University Campus that will accommodate in excess of 900 students. The project, being developed by H.J. Russell and Company, will include six red brick buildings that are compatible with FVSU architecture. Five buildings will contain student housing and one amenities facility will include offices, indoor recreational space, and a convenience store. The project leaves room for future expansion that would accommodate up to an additional 200 students. The facility is scheduled to open in August 2007, at which time five existing residential structures will be retired. The new housing complex will be instrumental in the recruitment of students to the University.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Peach County Historical Areas

Byron History

The City of Byron was named after Lord Byron, the favorite poet of founder, Dr. Charles H. Richardson. Byron was incorporated in 1874. The new township was from the portion of Houston County that would be later combined with Macon County to form Peach County in 1924, making it the 161st county in Georgia.

Railroad lines were established in Byron in 1843. In the early 1850s, it was a flagstop station (trains stopped only when signaled) on the Southwestern Railroad, known as the “One and One-Half Station.” It was later renamed Jackson Station, after Nimrod Jackson who maintained the wood rack used for wood-burning engines. The rail lines were essential to Byron’s economy. In the 19th Century, cotton was shipped to market by rail until it was replaced by the peach industry, which took over as the cash crop later in the era.



Homes and businesses were built along the railroad tracks to form a community that is now the present-day Byron Historic District. Development patterns for Byron follow no set configuration until Howard and Pecan Streets. The majority of historic structures date from 1880s through approximately 1920s. The Richardson-Collins House, circa 1860 and the Jackson House, circa 1870 are believed to be the oldest structures in Byron and are still standing today. Folk Victorian represents the dominant historical architectural styles. There are also some examples of one story Queen Anne Cottages and structures that depict neo-classical revival style, particularly the Aultman House, the Warren McCrary Home, and the Peavy-Vinson-Clark Home.



Toomerville is Byron’s Historic Black neighborhood with homes dating from the early 1900s. However, only two original structures in that community have retained any semblance of historic integrity. Although Toomerville has been a target area for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, substandard housing still remains in the area, resulting in the demolition of several properties.

Fort Valley History

Fort Valley, originally the site of two Indian trails, was founded in the 1820s by James A. Everett as an Indian Trading Post. The town was chartered in 1856, approximately 30

years after it was founded. How Fort Valley received its name is debatable, as there are no records of a military fort having ever been in the area. One theory is that the settlement was originally, “Fox Valley,” due to the abundance of foxes during that era. Nevertheless, the name was misread by the United States Post Master in Washington D.C. as “Fort Valley.” Another story claims that Fort Valley was named for Everett’s friend and Revolutionary War Hero, Arthur Fort. The origin of “Fort Valley” is still questioned in present times.

The original charter designated the town limits as one mile in each direction from the train depot. Outside of the one-mile radius, cotton plantations flourished, replaced later by peaches, pecans, and asparagus as cash crops.

The first homes in Fort Valley were built from logs and then evolved to a more colonial style. Homes depicted throughout the city, and still portrayed in present times, are that of Queen Anne and Georgian Cottages, Victorian architecture, Craftsman, and Colonial, Greek and Neo-classical Revival styles, in addition to other historical styles.

James Everett used his wealth and influence to attract the railroad to Fort Valley in the 1840s, though he died before the arrival of the first train. The railroad was instrumental in the development of the town, and with its growth, it became necessary to build a Freight Depot in 1871 and a passenger terminal in 1900.



The city is fortunate to have retained all three turn-of-the-19th-century railroad buildings. The old passenger rail depot was partially renovated and sold. The freight terminal and switching station both remain unchanged from when it was originally constructed.

The large number of freight and visitors to Fort Valley culminated in the construction of two hotels, the Winona and the Bassett Hotel. The Winona was demolished in the 1900s, and the Bassett Hotel was recently destroyed by fire in 2006.

Nationally Significant Resources

The following sites in Peach County have been listed on the National Register for Historic Places:

- Byron Historic District (1995) – In Byron along the Central Georgia Railroad Tracks from Jackson Street to Vinson Street, including Heritage Boulevard, Main, Church, and Academy Streets.
- Everett Square Historic District (1994) – In Fort Valley bounded by Knoxville, Vineville, Anderson, and Macon Streets.
- Fort Valley State University Historic District (2000) – Fort Valley.

- James A. Everett House (1992) – Peach County.
- Peach County Courthouse (1980) – Fort Valley.
- Strother’s Farm/Massee Lane Gardens (1980) Peach County.

Regionally Significant Resources

Peach County plays an important role in the historic identity of the Middle Georgia Region. A significant historic resource, partially located in Peach County, is Massee Lane Gardens. Not only is Massee Lane Gardens a local and regional cultural asset but they are also home to a national organization, the American Camellia Society. While the gardens are a significant resource tying Peach County to the region’s cultural heritage, the county is also tied to the region in the form of the Georgia Peach Blossom Trail and Antiques Trail. These heritage trails are well-traveled by Georgia residents and tourists alike and contribute greatly to revealing the important historic, cultural, social, and economic aspects of the region as well as that of each community and county the trails wind through. Peach County, Byron, and Fort Valley should utilize these trails as a mechanism to draw people in and then encourage them to stay and visit longer to experience the shopping, dining, and leisure amenities offered by the cities and county.

Locally Significant Resources and Preservation Efforts

The history of a place and the conservation of its heritage resources are intrinsically linked to maintaining a high quality of life and are an indispensable element of a community’s economic development efforts. It is the buildings, sites, and structures of a place that help to define a community’s unique identity. There are a number of organizations working to promote and utilize the historic fabric of Peach County including the Byron Better Home Town, the Byron Historical Society, the Fort Valley Main Street/Downtown Development Authority, and the Peach County Historical Society. These organizations are the driving force behind many rehabilitation projects, heritage tourism, and downtown marketing efforts.

The first step in utilizing historic resources at the local level is identifying and evaluating them. While Historic Resource Surveys have been completed in Byron and Fort Valley, there has yet to be a county-wide survey conducted of the unincorporated areas of Peach County. For economic development, land use and conservation purposes, and for the protection of its historic fabric, Peach County should consider completing a Historic Resource Survey of its unincorporated areas.

Byron

Byron is growing, especially in the areas just beyond the city boundaries. The city does boast a National Register historic district designated in 1995; however, it lacks the protection offered by a local ordinance. Byron has been a Better Home Town since 2000,

and the organization works to promote Byron but can only accomplish so much on its own. The city should undertake an effort to update any existing historic resource surveys for the entire city, including all residential areas. Once accomplished, Byron should consider adopting a local historic district along with a historic preservation ordinance and corresponding historic preservation commission. A regulatory mechanism such as a local ordinance provides a measure of protection to Byron's historic and cultural resources. This is necessary if the community wishes to expand upon and promote itself as a tourism destination and a place where people want to live, work, and play.

In addition, special attention should be paid to the historic Toomerville neighborhood. Including this neighborhood in a local historic district may or may not be the most appropriate action. Evaluation of existing conditions, both economic and physical, should be done to determine the most suitable approach to preserving this important cultural area. A possible immediate solution and revitalization aid may be a partnership between the Byron Better Home Town and the city to establish a paint-up/fix-up program. A more long-term resolution would be designating the Toomerville area as a conservation district. Conservation districts are used in both historic and non-historic neighborhoods because they focus on keeping the size, scale, and simple unifying features of a neighborhood intact. Conservation areas/districts are primarily used as a guide to ensure proper infill development occurs rather than focusing on the sometimes stringent and expensive maintenance required by historic design guidelines. Conservation districts also help foster a stronger sense of enthusiasm and community pride.

Fort Valley

The City of Fort Valley has taken an active role in the preservation of its historic and cultural resources. The Fort Valley Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) formed and identified the Everett Square Historic District as a locally significant district in 1993. Shortly thereafter, in 1994, the Everett Square district was nominated to and designated as a National Register Historic District. Accompanying the establishment of the Fort Valley HPC, a historic preservation ordinance was put in place to provide protection to the Everett Square district. Following the adoption of the ordinance and establishment of the HPC, Fort Valley became a participant in Georgia's Certified Local Government (CLG) program. Being a CLG makes the city eligible for federal historic preservation grant funds and technical assistance and allows for a greater degree of coordination and recognition among local, state, and federal preservation activities.

Another preservation advantage Fort Valley has is that it is a designated Georgia Main Street community, which the city pairs with its Downtown Development Authority (DDA). As a Main Street community it has access to more resources, both state and national, that can be tapped to support preservation activities and initiatives.

The City of Fort Valley has a solid preservation foundation but has not accomplished all of which it is capable. Guided by the HPC and Fort Valley Main Street/DDA the city should make a concentrated effort to utilize its CLG status and Main Street resources to continue the revitalization and economic development efforts needed to create and

sustain a vibrant, downtown destination that meets the needs of both residents and tourists alike.

Rehabilitation Projects

The Byron Depot

The Byron Historical Society, established in 1989, has worked to research and restore notable historical structures throughout the city. In the 1990s, the Byron Depot (circa 1870) became the Society's first restoration project, and won an "Outstanding Restoration/Rehabilitation Project" award from The Georgia Trust in 1991. Located in the centermost point of town, the depot served a growing population with the arrival of the railroads in the 1840s. It was also used to ship more peaches daily in the 1920s and 1930s than anywhere in the world. Today, the depot houses the Byron Museum, and the freight room serves as a meeting area.

Other renovation projects in Byron include the Old Jail (c. 1875), which is currently used as the Byron Historical Society Headquarters, and the Old Drug Store, which serves as the Visitors Welcome Center.

The Austin Theater



local voters.

The Austin Theater in Fort Valley was originally built in 1915 as a retail store. The building was sold the following year, and the second story was converted into Slappy's Opera House. Eventually, it became Peach County's first courthouse in 1925 and then was converted into a movie theater in 1934. When the Austin Theater closed in 1995, the facility remained vacant until rehabilitation efforts began after a 2004 sales tax referendum was approved by

Rehabilitation of the Austin Theatre is scheduled to be completed by October 2006. When finished, the building will serve a multi-purpose function for banquets and meetings. The ground floor will contain the theater, which will include removable seating at a later date. The Austin Theater is important to the history of Fort Valley and will be a valuable addition to the heritage tourism and economic development efforts of the city.

The Troutman House

The Troutman House (c.1870) is one of the largest 19th Century homes still standing in Fort Valley. It is home to the Peach County Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority, and the Welcome Center. Originally this Vernacular-Greek Revival Architectural Style Home sat 3,000 yards south of its present location. The son of original owner Col. John Fielding Troutman, Sr. moved the home to what is now Oakland Heights Parkway in view of the train yard. The Troutman House, having fallen

into a state of disrepair, was restored through Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) Grants and private donations.

Cultural Areas

H.A. Hunt School

The H. A. Hunt High School in Fort Valley was a school that specifically educated African Americans at a time when formalized education for black students was virtually non-existent in Peach County, as well as other areas. The school was named for the second principal of Fort Valley High and Industrial School. Although the school was established in 1941, the Spruce Street building that housed the school was constructed in 1954. The Hunt School educated black students until desegregation occurred in 1970.



Nine years later, the Peach County Board of Education voted to demolish the Hunt gymnasium which had fallen into a state of disrepair. Rather than to succumb to destruction of a piece of history, Henry Bryant and Evelyn McCrary, along with other interested parties, purchased the gymnasium for \$20,000. It was subsequently incorporated in 1981 as the Hunt Educational and Cultural Center. The mission of the center is to help meet the cultural, educational, social, and economic needs of the community.

The Hunt School is an important heritage and cultural resource and should be formally recognized as such. Historic designation of the property should be sought at the local, state, and national levels. While National Register designation is merely honorary, it helps when pursuing funding and other support. Local designation and inclusion in a historic district or as a stand alone local landmark provide increased protective measures and funding opportunities, especially since Fort Valley is a CLG. While the building itself provides a tangible link to the past for graduates of the previous Hunt High School, the programs currently offered are establishing a link between the Hunt School with the present generation. This facility is a valuable community asset for sustaining and advancing Fort Valley's quality of life and with community support will be able to continue its services well into the future.

Byron Community Center

In 1917, Julius Rosenwald initiated a school building program that benefited African American students at a time when educational options for black citizens were limited. The Julius Rosenwald foundation contributed 4.3 million dollars towards 5,358 schools, shops, and teachers' quarters throughout the south and southwestern United States. The funding that went towards erecting



these buildings was matched by the African American community using money obtained by donations and fund raisers, not to mention sweat equity. When financing was discontinued upon Rosenwald's death, the matching funds raised by the communities far exceeded the contributions given by the foundation. Although many of the Rosenwald Schools are no longer in existence, archives documenting these historical learning institutions can be found in the Fisk University Library in Nashville, TN.



The Byron Community Center sits in the exact spot as the former two-classroom Rosenwald School located in the Historic Toomerville Community. The unique aspect of the building is that it was erected in 1967 using the authentic materials of the demolished school. Though the center can no longer be classified as a Rosenwald School due to its extensive alteration, the site still has a history that can be remembered by many of its former students.

Today, the community center, a clear remnant of the 1960s, consists of two multi-purpose rooms, a kitchen, bathrooms, and an office area. There are plans underway for an addition to the rear of the facility that would contain a larger kitchen.

The programs initiated by the center include after-school tutoring from kindergarten to 12th grade. If funds are available, other outreach activities consist of the senior citizens program and summer program for disadvantaged children. The community center is also used for wedding receptions, funeral repasts, and other gathering purposes. The Byron Community Center remains in operation, funded by private donations that diminish with each passing year. Through possible grant funding, it is the hope of the community that the center will remain open. The Community Center is a valuable resource for Byron, and grant funding assistance and community support should be actively pursued to enable this facility to remain in operation.

Natural Resources

Environmental Planning Criteria

Water Supply Water Shed Areas

There are no water supply water shed areas in Peach County.

Groundwater Recharge Areas

Peach County is located in the Coastal Plains Province, which contains extensive aquifers and recharge areas. Soils within this geological zone that consists of Cretaceous and younger sediments are very permeable and are present near the surface, allowing them to be recharged by precipitation.

As Peach County develops, the protection of groundwater recharge areas needs to be considered. Groundwater recharge occurs where surface soils are porous, enabling surface waters to seep into the ground, therefore replenishing underlying aquifers. Aquifers are a geological formation that is able to store and dispense significant quantities of water.

Land use activities can affect groundwater recharge areas. Development activities that increase the amount of impervious surfaces (buildings or paved areas) within a recharge area can divert rainfall away from underlying aquifers. Over time, the aquifer will have decreased ability to produce groundwater. The construction of inadequate septic systems and leaky underground storage tanks or agricultural sprays, such as pesticides, can contaminate groundwater as they are washed into the aquifer by precipitation.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has listed protection criteria that must be adhered to in order to avoid contamination of groundwater recharge areas. While several rules apply to permits issued by DNR, it is the responsibility of local governments to enforce minimum lot size requirements for homes with septic tanks, as well as for development within the recharge areas, as specified in the *Environmental Protection Criteria*.

The DNR has developed three categories to measure the areas of vulnerability as it relates to groundwater contamination within the state. The analysis of high, medium, or low susceptibility is based on soil and geological characteristics, including type, slope, depth to groundwater, and type of bedrock. Approximately 80% of Peach County is highly susceptible to groundwater contamination, specifically along major streams and river beds. The remaining portion of the county falls within the “medium susceptibility” category.

Local Part V Ordinances for Peach County have been adopted for Groundwater Recharge Areas. Permitted uses allow for the following:

- New above ground storage tanks with a minimum volume of 660 gallons, shall have a secondary containment unit for 110% of the volume of tanks or 110% of the volume of the largest tank in a cluster of tanks.
- New agricultural waste impoundment sites shall be lined if they are within:
 - A high pollution susceptible area,
 - A medium pollution susceptible area and exceeds 15-acre-feet, or
 - A low pollution susceptible area and exceeds 50-acre-feet.
- New homes and new manufactured home parks served by a septic tank/drainage system shall follow specific gallons per acre per day (gpac) as outlined in the Ordinance.
- Construction requiring septic tanks must be approved by the Health Department after meeting the requirements outlined by the Georgia Department of Human Resources for Onsite Sewerage Management.
- Permanent storm water infiltration basins shall not be constructed in high pollution susceptibility areas.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where the water covers the soil or is present either at or near the surface all year. Characteristics differ in terms of soils, topography, climate, hydrology, water chemistry, and other factors. Swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas are classified as wetlands.



Wetlands have a delicate eco-system, serving fish, wildlife, and vegetation. Wetlands Protection District Ordinances established for Peach County encourage the protection of these areas from encroachment that would reduce its functioning ability to produce good water quality, floodplain and erosion control, groundwater recharge, aesthetic natural areas, and wildlife habitat. A map of delineated wetland areas in Peach County can be found in the Appendix.

Construction is prohibited in the wetlands protection district, as is the receiving of toxic and solid wastes. Activities are restricted to recreational, such as fishing and bird watching; educational, as in natural trails; and to be used for pasture land with certain protections in place.

Protected Rivers

Land that parallels the waterways is known as a river corridor. They serve as recreational areas, a habitat for wildlife, and are sources of clean drinking water. In addition, they allow for animal migration, river and sedimentation control, and floodwater absorption.

A small portion of the Flint River Corridor traverses Peach County. The River Corridor Protection District, outlined in the Part V Ordinance, is defined as being within 100 feet horizontally on the eastern side of the river as measured from the water banks. The top of the bank and the edge of the river is also a part of the Protection District although it is not included as part of the 100-foot buffer as outlined in the minimum protection standards. The minimum standards of the Part V Ordinance allow for construction within the corridor under specific guidelines in terms of minimum lot size, the number of allowable structures on the lot, and areas in which septic tanks may be positioned. The regulations also include maintaining a protective natural buffer, as well as meeting sedimentation control requirements.

Protected Mountains

There are no mountain ranges in Peach County.

Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Impaired Waterways

A watershed is an area in which precipitation drains into a body of water. Peach County is located in the Ocmulgee Watershed Basin. Currently, the County is undergoing a watershed assessment led by the University of Georgia Watershed Group. Data from these waterways were obtained using chemical, physical, and biological properties to determine the current health of the watershed. This assessment is necessary for the County to receive National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Permits to regulate sources that discharge pollutants into the water.

A bio-assessment of streams was completed in 2003 in Fort Valley at eight sites that feed into the Upper Ocmulgee Watershed Basin. Properties assessed that included habitat, benthic macroinvertebrate, and fish communities were tested using standard water quality parameters: biochemical, oxygen demand, chemical oxygen, dissolved oxygen, total suspended solids, fecal coliform, and nutrients.

The bio-assessment indicated that waters at the eight testing sites were considered to be marginal. Erosion was a key factor in this consideration, which is common in agricultural and industrial areas and areas undergoing heavy construction.

In addition, Peach County has two waterways recently recorded on the 2006 Impaired Waters List as required by Section 303 (d) of the Clean Water Act. These are contaminated waterways that either partially support or do not support their designated

uses. As indicated in Table 28 of the Appendix, manmade causes are a contributing factor to their impairment .

Flood Plains

Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) have a 1% annual chance of flooding. Areas of Peach County that are within the flood zone are delineated on a Map found in the Appendix.

Geology, Minerals, and Soils

The geological region of Peach County is the Upper Coastal Plain Province extending south towards Florida and east towards the islands along the coast. The Fall Line makes up the northern boundary. Erosion or burial of sedimentary rocks occurred to make up



the distinct characteristics of the area attributing to successive levels of submergence associated with rising and falling sea levels during the Cretaceous, Paleogene, and Neogene Era, 135 million to 11,000 years ago. The younger layers of sediment are located towards the coastal areas; however, at the Fall Line they are underlain by igneous and metamorphic rocks. The coastal plain also contains limestone due to the exposure of marine

organisms.

Peach County is within an unusual physiological area within the Fall Line Hills called the Fort Valley Plateau District. It is characterized by the flat top interfluvial valleys with valley walls that are 50-150 feet deep. This area is discernible from the Fall Line Hills in that the interfluvial valleys are the dominant feature. There are fewer streams and less local relief. Furthermore, the Fort Valley Plateau is less dissected because of the Eocene, Paleocene, and possibly Cretaceous Age sediments. Elevations range from 500 feet in the north to 250 feet in the southeast. The east-west boundaries of the Fort Valley Plateau are the Ocmulgee and the Flint Rivers, respectively. Hogcraw and Big Indian Creeks form the southern boundary of the district. At the northern boundary, elevations reach 500 feet then abruptly lowering to the flat top interfluvial valleys.

Soil characteristics can determine the ability for potential development. Some soils require special design considerations that will adequately support infrastructure construction. Operation of sewerage disposal systems, especially septic tanks, will also be impacted by soil types.

Listed below are soil types found in Peach County as identified by the National Cooperative Soil Survey:

Faceville Soils (fine sandy loam and clay loam) – Very deep, well drained, and moderately permeable with medium runoff. They generally occur on level to rolling uplands. Elevation for this soil ranges from 200 to 400 feet and the dominant slope ranges

from 0% to 15%. The solum thickness is 65 inches or more and with the exception of surface horizons that have been limed, has a strongly acidic reaction. These soils are mostly used for cultivating cotton, corn, peanuts, soybeans, wheat, hay, vegetables, small grains, and tobacco. Some areas have been converted to pasture lands or have been reforested with pines, oaks, hickory, and dogwood.

Grady Clay Loam – Poorly drained, slowly permeable soils that are mostly located in upland depressions but are also found along drains. Grady soils forming clayey marine sediments and have slow runoff. The slope ranges from 0% to 2%. Solum thickness ranges from 60 to more than 80 inches with a strongly to extremely acidic reaction. The water table is near the surface six to eight months during the year. These soils are good for woodlands of oaks, cypress, gum trees, and grasses. It is also used for pasture land.



Greenville Soils (Clay Loam, Fine Sandy Loam) – Very deep, well drained, moderately permeable soils, found in the uplands and are formed in clayey marine sediments. Slopes are dominantly less than 8% but range from 8% to 18%. Solum thickness exceeds 60 inches. Except for the surface areas that have been limed, reaction is strongly to moderately acidic. Greenville soils are used for the production of cotton, corn, small grain, soybeans, truck crops, orchards, and as pastureland. Wooded areas contain pines, oaks, and hickories.

Henderson Cherty Sandy Loam – Very deep, well drained, slowly permeable soils that formed in material weathered from impure limestone. Slope ranges from 2% to 20%. The solum thickness is 65% to 95%. Except where the surface area has been limed, reaction for this soil is strongly acidic, consisting of forests containing mixed hardwoods and pines.

Lucy Sand – Very deep, well drained, moderately permeable soils where runoff ranges from slow to rapid, depending on slope and vegetation. This soil formed in sandy, loamy, fluvial sediments. Lucy soils are usually located on ridge tops and side slopes, ranging from 0% to 45%. The solum thickness is greater than 60 inches with reaction from very strongly acidic to strongly acidic in the subsoil. Nearly level to sloping areas are used for growing peanuts, corn, cotton, and soybeans. Sloping areas are best suited for hay and pasture lands. The steeper areas contain woodlands.

Lakeland Fine Sand – Very deep, excessively drained, rapid to very rapid permeable soils with slow runoff. They formed in thick beds of eolian or marine sands. Slopes dominantly range from 0% to 12% but can be as high as 85% in dissected areas. The thickness of the sand exceeds 80 inches and it has a strong acidic to moderately acidic (except where limed) reaction. Located on the broad uplands, this soil is used for cultivating peanuts, watermelon, peaches, corn, and tobacco. Natural vegetation consists of oaks and pines.

Lynchbury Loamy Sand – Poorly drained, moderately permeable, where runoff is negligible. The elevation ranges from 40 to 450 feet slope and slope is 0% to 2%. Thickness of the surface and surface layer is 3 to 19 inches. Except where limed, reaction is acidic to strongly acidic. This soil is used for growing corn, soybeans, cotton, tobacco, truck crops, small grains, or improved pasture. Wooded areas contain pines, oaks, gum trees, gallberry, and threeawn.

Norfolk Loamy Fine Sand – Well drained, moderately permeable, where runoff ranges from negligible to medium. This soil can be found in uplands and marine terraces. The elevation ranges from 30 to 45 feet and the slope is 0% to 10%. The thickness of sandy surface and subsurface layers range from 3 to 19 inches. Reaction is acidic to strongly acidic, except where limed. This soil is used for growing corn, cotton, peanuts, tobacco, and soybeans. Wooded areas consist of pines and hardwoods.

Orangeburg Sandy Loam – Very deep, well drained, moderately permeable soils formed in loamy and clayey sediments with medium runoff. Located on nearly level to strongly sloping uplands of 0% to 25%, the elevation ranges from 170 to 500 feet. Solum thickness is typically 72 to 96 inches. Ironstone nodules range from 0% to 10%. This soil contains very strong to moderately acidic reaction and is best used for the cultivation of cotton, corn, tobacco, and peanuts. Areas are also used as pasture lands and contain forests consisting of pines, oaks, hickories, and dogwood.

Red Bay Fine Sandy Loam – Very deep, well drained, moderately permeable, with medium runoff. It is formed in thick beds of unconsolidated, loamy, marine sediments on ridge tops and side slopes, which range from 0% to 15%. Solum thickness exceeds 60 inches with a reaction ranging from strongly to moderately acidic. This soil is used for growing cotton, corn, small grains, truck crops, fruit, tobacco, and annual legumes. It is also used as pasture land and contains wooded areas consisting of pines, poplars, oaks, sweet gums, and hickories.

Chastain Soils – Very deep, poorly drained, very shallow, with negligible to ponded runoff and slow permeability. Elevation is 10 to 90 with a slope ranging from 0% to 2%. Bedrock is greater than 80 inches. Reaction is extremely acidic to moderately acidic and is restricted to depths below 40 inches unless limited. These soils are forested areas and used as pastureland.

Leaf Soils – Poorly drained, very slowly permeable, nearly leveled soils, formed in clayey deposits on low terraces, along streams, on broad areas, and coastal flatwoods. Runoff is slow to very slow. Slope ranges from 0% to 2%. Solum thickness exceeds 60 inches with strong to extremely strong acidic reaction. Some areas of the terrace are occasionally or frequently flooded. Most leaf soils consist of forest land with mixed bottom land hardwoods or pines. Principle vegetation is oaks, gums, and pines. Some areas are used for growing corn and small grains.

Vaocluse Soils – Found in marine terraces and uplands, these soils are very deep, well drained, with high to very high surface runoff. Elevations range from 100 to 450 feet and

slope is 2% to 25%. The thickness of the sandy surface and subsurface layers are 4 to 19 inches with a bedrock depth greater than 80 inches. Reactions range from acidic to strongly acidic. This soil is used for cultivation of corn, cotton, small grains, and soybeans. It is also used for pastureland. Wooded areas contain various pines.

Hoffman Soils – Moderately deep, rapid runoff, well drained soils found on hills and mountains. Formed mainly from granite rocks, elevations are 3,800 to 5,100 feet. Reaction is neutral or slightly alkaline. Hoffman soils are used for rangeland, wildlife, and homesites. Vegetation consists of a variety of grasses, pines, and oaks.

Boswell Soils – Deep, moderate to well-drained, with moderate to very rapid runoff that are nearly level to steep soils. Regolith contains thick deposits of acidic clay. Permeability for this soil is very slow but with high shrink-swell potential. Slopes range from 1% to 17%. Solum is more than 60 inches thick with reaction that is very strongly acidic to strongly acidic, except on the surface areas that have been limed. This soil mostly consists of woodlands containing hardwoods and pines.

Oktibbeha Soils – Very deep, moderately well drained, very slow permeable soils, formed in the clayey sediments overlying chalk or calcareous clay. This soil contains medium to rapid runoff. No freestanding water has been observed but saturation can occur within depths ranging from 1.5 to 3.5 feet of the surface during short periods of winter and spring. Slope range is from 1% to 30%. Depth to chalk bedrock is more than 60 inches. Soils are principally found in woodlands, which contain pines, oaks, sweet gum, and hickory.

Slopes

Elevations in Peach County range from 300-550 feet above sea level, with the lower areas comprised mainly of swamp land. Byron, in particular, has two distinct elevations. In the northwestern portion, the increase follows a tributary drainage towards Juniper Creek. The changes in the southern section of the city follow Sandy Run Creek.

Steep slopes can be found in south and southwest Peach County. These grades are generally associated with flood hazards and are, therefore, not suited for development. Other sloping areas are mainly gentle with a 0-6% grade and moderate slopes that consist of 6-14% grade. These areas may be suitable for structural and non-structural type development with proper stormwater retention and erosion mitigation.

Plant and Animal Species

Where soils are well-drained, the dominant plant species are long-leaf pine, loblolly pine, and several species of oak. On poorly drained soils, the dominant species are long-leaf pine, slash pine, gallberry, and wire-grass. Other plant species in the Middle Georgia region that encompasses Peach County include short leaf pine, sweet gum, yellow poplar, dogwood, farkleberry, American holly, greenbrier, southern bay berry little blue stem, Elliott bluestem, threeawn, grassleaf gold aster, native lespedezas, and low panicums.

Deer, bear, fox, bobcat, skunks, opossum, squirrel, armadillo, raccoon, quail, turkey, and many types of song birds make up the popular wildlife. Also, a wide variety of insects and reptiles can be found throughout Peach County.

Table 29 (see Appendix) lists plants and animals that are either threatened or endangered as recorded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Contaminated Sites

Woolfolk Superfund Site

Woolfolk Chemical Works is an 18 acre site located in Fort Valley. In 1910, the company began operations as a lime-sulfur plant. Eventually, the plant began manufacturing pesticides in liquid and granular form for agricultural, lawn, and gardening purposes. Today, SurePack, Inc. uses the property to prepare and package pesticides. Land around the plant is predominately residential with approximately 600 homes within two miles from the site. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) responding to citizen complaints that the company was dumping waste products into a drainage corridor investigated the site in the early 1980s. Metals and pesticides were detected onsite, in groundwater, and in an open ditch south of the property. Three of the five wells, the sole drinking source for the City of Fort Valley, were within 1000 feet of the facility. Arsenic and lead levels found in two wells were below Federal Drinking Water Standards.

The subsequent Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study performed by the EPA identified 48 contaminants of potential concern, the greatest of which, was the presence of arsenic. In addition, the contamination had spread from the facility to the surrounding residential properties.

In 1994, Canadyne-Georgia Corporation (CGC) which owned the site, worked with EPA in a long-term clean-up. Contamination was removed from 26 residential properties and 22,900 tons of soil and debris. CGC purchased 17 residential properties and converted them into commercial use. Removal action was also ordered on ½-mile stretch of the drainage corridor where arsenic and pesticides were disposed.

Successful cleanup efforts allowed for complete reuse of the site. The Troutman House, cleaned and remodeled, currently houses the Welcome Center, the Fort Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority. The Thomas Public Library was built with over \$2 million dollars in donations from CGC and SurePack, Inc.

Cleanup of the remaining affected areas along Pine and Preston Streets are expected to be completed in fall of 2008. The total cost of this final phase will be approximately \$20 million. In the end, the once contaminated site will be replaced with public facilities, recreational areas, housing, and businesses.

Powersville Superfund Site

The Powersville Landfill Superfund site, located in the Powersville section of Peach County, provided sand and fill material from the early 1940s to 1969. In 1969, it became a sanitary landfill site that received municipal and industrial wastes. The site stopped accepting wastes in 1979 at the request of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). In 1983, the wells were sampled by EPD for contamination. Pesticides were detected in the local water well, initiating further investigation resulting in the Powersville Landfill being placed on the national priority list.

Subsequent investigations revealed the presence of benzene hexachloride, vinyl chloride, lead, and chromium in the groundwater. Also, concentrations of benzene hexachloride, dieldrin, chlordane, and toxaphene were discovered in the soil samples.

In 1988 Peach County agreed to implement a clean-up plan over a 30-year period. The remedial action formulated in 1991 addressed the landfill and monitoring wells as well as the waterline, deed restrictions, and an operation and maintenance plan.

The final construction report was issued in 1993, and the five-year review was completed in 1998. Continuous monitoring of the landfill is a part of the Operation and Maintenance Plan.

Peach Metal Industries

Peach Metal Industries (PMI) is a former electroplating facility located at the intersection of Boy Scout Road and Juniper Creek Road, one mile northwest of downtown Byron. The property contains 9.5 acres of land, six buildings in poor condition, and two tower structures. A locked gate on Boy Scout Road restricts access to the property.

Prior to PMI, the site was used as a barracks and tracking station for a Nike missile installation until 1967. PMI used the site from 1971 until 1987 when the company filed for bankruptcy. It was then used by Concrete Sales and Services, Inc. from 1987 to 1991.

Under an Administrative Order issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1991, Briggs and Stratton, the company from which PMI received materials, assumed responsibility for the site. Improper management of electroplating wastewater had led to soil contamination and eventually groundwater contamination. EPA ordered a removal action of several phases between 1991 and 1995 that cleared abandoned waste and stored processed material and contaminated soil. In addition, in 1991 the Georgia Environmental Protection Division ordered McCord Irrevocable Trust, from whom PMI leased the property, and Concrete Sales and Services, Inc. to analyze groundwater onsite. Sampling from 25 monitoring wells determined heavy metals and chlorinated



solvents that exceeded safe drinking water standards.

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census indicated that 507 residents live within a one-mile radius of the property. Over the past decade, new homes have been built along Juniper Creek Road across from the site. Private wells are also located within one mile.

In 2002, Georgia EPD responded to concerns of children accessing the property and the health risks it might impose. Subsequently, surface impoundments were backfilled with clean dirt and the gate was locked to prevent unauthorized entry. An increased number of illnesses present in the community was another concern, but studies seem to indicate a source other than the contamination.

Presently, the property sits abandoned with a perimeter fence and a lock at the entrance. No plans for reuse have been pursued.

Significant Natural Resources

Prime Agricultural Land

In 2002, there were 38,880 acres of farmland in Peach County, a 27% decrease from the 1997 figure of 53,327. With rapid development occurring in Peach County, there is no doubt that these numbers will continue to fall. Farmers see little advantage to continue their way of life as land prices continue to rise and with crops not producing as much return as the outright sale of their land. A way to preserve these agricultural areas as open space is to encourage those selling off farming acreage to establish conservation easements to protect these lands from encroaching development.

Major Recreational Areas

Currently, there are no major federal, state, or regional parks in Peach County. Local parks and recreational areas are further discussed in the Community Facilities portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

Scenic Views and Sites

There are no public scenic vistas in Peach County. Nevertheless, there has been interest expressed in seeking a Scenic Byway designation status for State Route 341 from the City of Perry, Houston County, through the City of Fort Valley, Peach County, and continuing to Roberta in Crawford County. There is also interest in extending the aforementioned proposed byway along State Route 96 from the City of Fort Valley through Peach County.

TRANSPORTATION

Local Transportation Planning Process

Formed in 1983, The Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) currently involves the Cities of Warner Robins, Perry, and Centerville and Houston County. It also includes Byron and Peach County (small portion of eastern Peach County is within the WRATS Study Area), Robins Air Force Base, and the Georgia Department of Transportation.

WRATS was established to: (1) Maintain a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process; (2) Update and revise the 20-year intermodal transportation plan; (3) Create a functional relationship between transportation planning and city-county development; (4) Maintain an updated transportation database; and (5) Produce all documents and studies that are necessary to maintain a Certified Transportation Planning Process. It consists of three committees: Technical, Citizens Advisory, and Policy.

The remainder of Peach County outside of the WRATS Study Area participates in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) planning process. Annually, the Statewide STIP is updated to reflect the current list of highway, road and bridge and transportation enhancement projects that are planned to be implemented during the upcoming three years.

Local Transportation System

Road and Bridge Network

The system of federal and state routes that serves Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley totals 179.10 miles and includes: I-75, US 41, and US 341 that run north-south and SR 42, SR 49, SR 247C, and SR 96 that run east-west. They are supported by a county and city road network that total 773.70 miles, of which 548.55 miles or 70.9% are paved. Though this system of federal, state, and local roads and highways provide good movement of traffic and goods through the county, there are several problems that do exist.

First, there is a no major north-south road between I-75 and US 341. Due to the potential growth along the SR 96, SR 42, and Mosley Road Corridors and the fact that SR 49 is part of the Fall Line Freeway, consideration should be given to construct a road that acts as a major collector or minor arterial connecting SR 96 to SR 42 with eventual connection to US 341.

Second, as growth continues in eastern Peach County, serious consideration needs to be given to study and possibly upgrade the local road network (Lakeview Road, Bible Camp Road, Mosley Road, and possibly others) to accommodate the projected traffic demand in this area. Without a good model to forecast future traffic volumes, it is difficult to determine what improvements may be needed. It is suggested that this area be eventually added to the WRATS Study Area so it could be studied during a future update of the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Third, SR 96 east of I-75 is planned to be widened to I-16. As mentioned in the Existing Land Use Analysis section, tremendous growth is expected along SR 96 between I-75 and Fort Valley during the planning period. As development continues in this corridor, traffic volumes on this section of SR 96 need to be carefully monitored and at such time, a project should be placed in the STIP for widening of this road.

Fourth, a major problem for the City of Fort Valley is increased amount of truck traffic coming through the downtown area creating congestion, conflicts with pedestrian traffic, and possible harm to the older historic buildings in the area.

Finally, the road network around Byron is currently experiencing both congestion and connectivity problems and by 2030, these problems will become even more problematic if improvements are not made. The recent flurry of large residential developments (Developments of Regional Impact) has given more emphasis on finding solutions to these transportation issues.

WRATS Long-Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program

Byron's transportation problems were documented in a recent update of the WRATS Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Long-Range Plan identified (1) existing base year (2002) road network level of service; (2) future (2030) road network level of service using a transportation model that takes into consideration projected population, housing, employment statistics and other factors and includes existing planned and programmed improvements that are in the WRATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and State Construction Work Program; (3) a list of short, mid-range, and long-range improvements; and (4) future road network level of service with the proposed improvements included.

The Year 2002 base year model revealed several "level of service" (LOS) problems involving the Byron area. First, SR 49 between I-75 and US 41 was operating at level E and F (C or below is acceptable). Second, the level of service on portions of White Road was at LOS D. Third, the desired line of traffic created from Byron to SR 247 to get to Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) was causing LOS problems on Houston Lake Road south of SR 49 and on Dunbar Road in Houston County.

The 2030 road network model that only included the programmed improvements showed LOS on the above roads becoming worse and other roads serving Byron were to experience LOS problems. SR 49 from I-75 to US 41 was projected to become LOS F.

Most of White Road would be at LOS D, with the intersection at SR 49 becoming LOS F. Dunbar Road from SR 49 to US 41 would have LOS ranging from D-F depending on the location. A large portion of Dunbar Road east of US 41 would experience LOS F.

In addition to the LOS issues in the Byron area, the 2030 model identified other LOS problems for several major thoroughfares in Peach County. SR 247C, Russell Parkway Extension, and SR 96 between US 41 and I-75 were projected to have LOS F. SR 96 west of I-75, Lakeview Road to John E. Sullivan Road, and John E. Sullivan/Walker Road would all be LOS D.

From this information, the project consultant, Post, Buckley and Schuh and Jernigan, with input from the WRATS staff and committees developed a list of proposed improvements broken out by short, mid-range and long-range designed to improve the LOS on these projected congested corridors. The transportation improvements recommended in the 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan are as follows:

Short-Range

- SR 96 from I-75 to Lake Joy Road (4 to 6 lanes)
- SR 49 from Byron to US 41(2 to 4 lanes)
- Median to SR 49 through Byron for safety

Mid-Range

- SR 247C from SR 49 to I-75 (2 to 4 lanes)
- US 41/SR 11 from SR 49 to Russell Parkway (2 to 4 lanes)

Long-Range

- US 41/SR 11 from Russell Parkway to Mossy Creek (2 to 4 lanes)
- Dunbar Road from SR 49 to US 41-includes bridge over I-75 and alignment along New Dunbar Road (New construction to 4 lanes)
- SR 42 from SR 49 to Mosley Road (2 to 4 lanes)
- White Road/Thompson Road from SR 49 to Houston Lake Road (2 to 4 lanes)
- Russell Parkway Extension from Housers Mill to Lakeview Road (New construction of a 2-lane road.

After the recommendation process was completed, the consultant ran the Year 2030 LOS model this time with all of the recommended improvements (Houston and Peach County). The results of the model indicated that the LOS would be LOS C or better on all of the impacted roads mentioned above with the exception of SR 96 west of I-75, which would still be LOS D.

The next step in the WRATS transportation planning process is the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is produced annually and covers three years with a second three-year Tier. The most recent TIP approved by the WRATS

Policy Committee covers FY 2007-09 with Tier 2 covering FY 10-12. The TIP lists the project name, the project description, the project phase and cost by year, and the source of funds. Below are the projects listed in the TIP that are within the Peach County portion of the WRATS Study Area.

SR 49 from Byron to US 41:

- **Right-of-Way-FY 08**
- **Construction-FY 10**

SR 96 from I-75 to SR 247

- **Right-of-Way-FY 08**
- **Construction-FY 10**

SR 341 from SR 96 to Houston County

- **Preliminary Engineering-FY 10**

State Transportation Improvement Program

During the development of the annual rural State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), representatives from the Georgia Department of Transportation District Office work with local officials from outside the metropolitan planning organizations (rural areas) to develop a list of highway and bridge projects that are designed to correct or improve traffic congestion or safety issues within that particular county. The most recent rural STIP, which is still in the draft stage, covers FY 07-09. The projects that have been listed in this document for Peach County are described below:

- Miscellaneous Improvements on SR 49 and SR 7 (US 341);
- Upgrade of traffic signals at various locations in the county;
- New construction of SR 49 Bypass from SR 49 Connector to SR 96 - Preliminary Engineering is scheduled for FY 08, with right-of-way acquisition and construction scheduled for after FY 09;
- Bridge replacement on Mosley Road at Mule Creek; and
- Transportation Enhancement Project-Fort Valley Freight Depot Rehabilitation.

Governor's Road Improvement Program

The Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) began in 1989 by resolution of the state legislature and the Governor to connect 95% of the state's cities (with a population of 2,500 or more) to the Interstate System. The GRIP system ensures that 98% of all of the areas within the state will be within 20 miles of a four-lane road. One of the road corridors included in the GRIP was the Fall Line Freeway to run from Columbus to Augusta.

Fall Line Freeway

Portions of the Fall Line Freeway pass through Peach County. It begins on SR 96 at the Flint River to the SR 49 Connector (Fort Valley Bypass). It follows the Bypass to SR 49 just outside the City of Fort Valley. It continues on SR 49 to I-75 where it then proceeds north to Macon.

Two construction projects are planned on the Fall Line Freeway in Peach County. The first is the widening of SR 96 from the Flint River to the SR 49 Connector, and the second is the adding of two additional lanes to the 4.9 mile SR 49 Connector. Both were scheduled for completion by summer 2006.

Signalized Intersections and Signage

As outlined by the draft FY 07-09 State Transportation Improvement Program, a number of signalized intersections on the State Highway System in Peach County will receive upgrades during this three-year period. The priorities for these intersections are developed by the Georgia DOT District Office in close coordination with local officials.

Determining the need for traffic and directional signage on the State Highway System in Peach County is the responsibility of the Georgia DOT District Office with input provided by city and county officials. The placement of traffic and directional signage on the city/county road network is based on local priorities and other factors. One of the needs identified at the local level is for additional signage directing traffic to and within the downtown areas of Byron and Fort Valley.

Paving the Way Home Initiative

In February 2006, Governor Purdue announced the list of 2006 local road projects that would be funded through his "Paving the Way Home" transportation initiative. The projects funded through the Local Assistance Road Program (LARP) are only a portion of the monies that would be part of this two-year initiative. The 2006 LARP projects that were announced totaled approximately \$60 million statewide. Sometime later, the 2007 LARP and State Aid projects will be announced to complete the Paving the Way Home program.

Georgia counties (to include Peach County) prioritize their transportation improvement needs annually and submit the list to Georgia DOT to determine how much funding they will receive under LARP and State Aid. The 2006 LARP for Peach County shown below were selected from the county's prioritized list.

Byron

- East Street-0.13 miles
- Walker Road-0.30 miles

Fort Valley

- Hardeman Avenue-0.61 miles

Unincorporated Peach County

- State University Drive-0.35 miles
- Willville Road-1.67 miles

Total City/County Mileage: 3.06 miles

Alternative Modes

This section identifies bicycle, pedestrian facilities, and public transportation or other services for population without automobiles. This section also identifies the areas of the county where mode choice is limited and to evaluate how effectively mobility needs of the community are met by these transportation modes.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Sidewalks in Peach County are restricted to the downtown area of Byron and Fort Valley. As part of the Better Home Town Program and National Mainstreet Program respectively, these two cities are recognizing downtown as an important focal point for social, business, and living activities, and are working towards its redevelopment. This includes building and maintaining an adequate sidewalk network that improves foot mobility within the downtown area as well as providing pedestrian connections to other points of interest, particularly in Byron. In addition, recognizing the increasing number of bicyclists, the city is looking to become a major bicycle facility hub in the future. Fort Valley is currently undergoing a sidewalk assessment to improve pedestrian access to the downtown area.

Fort Valley State University contains a sufficient sidewalk network. Though walkways connect the main and agricultural campuses, they need to be paved. The network is lacking within the agricultural campus. Designated crosswalks are needed on Carver Drive and State University Drive to access additional campus facilities. In addition, a link between the University and downtown could encourage students to patronize area businesses.

Lack of designated bicycle routes could be a reason for minimal bicycle usage on campus. Adding routes, crossing areas, and other bicycle related facilities could provide incentives for this mode of travel.

The Georgia Department of Transportation in the mid-1990s prepared a Statewide Bicycle Plan that identified three routes through the Middle Georgia region; two of which pass through Peach County. The Central Route Corridor #15 comes out of Bibb County using US 41 and continues on this route to Dooly County and eventually to the Georgia-

Florida line. The TransGeorgia Corridor #40 comes out of Crawford County on SR 96 and proceeds on this highway until it reaches Houston County then continues on until its terminus point on Bull Street in Savannah.

In 2004, the Georgia Department of Transportation contracted with each of the RDCs in the state to prepare a Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan. The Georgia Department of Transportation, though requiring certain elements in the Regional Plan, gave each RDC flexibility to focus on the subject areas that would generate the most interest and have the most impact on the particular region. With this in mind, along with research conducted by the RDC staff on available local and national bicycle/pedestrian plans and data, it was decided that one of the focus areas for the Middle Georgia Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan would be the establishment of a System of interregional bike and shared-use trails connecting major regional points of interest in the region. To derive this interregional system, the Plan utilized the state bike system as a base, then added “spurs” to these routes. Below are the recommended trails within Peach County:

- Taking Central Route Corridor #15 and adding a spur through western Bibb County that would eventually connect to Peach County and Byron using Boy Scout Road. From Byron (which will be a major bicycle route hub), several spur routes were recommended; one along Hwy. 42 west to Hwy. 80, one along Hwy. 49 to Fort Valley where it connects to Hwy. 96 and the TransGeorgia Corridor Route #40), one along Moseley Road to Hwy. 49, and finally along White Road to Hwy. 41 where the Central Route continues south to the City of Perry to connect with their proposed shared-use trail system.
- Maintaining the TransGeorgia Corridor #40 the exception of several scenic spurs east and west of the City of Fort Valley in Peach County.

As reflected in Table 30 of the Appendix (Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan Initiatives), the City of Byron has expressed interest in improving pedestrian accessibility in the downtown area and to the public schools and park off White Road, and to become a bicycle facility hub. Realizing Byron’s interest in future bicycle/pedestrian facilities, a separate facility plan was included for Byron in the Regional Plan. In addition, representatives from the City of Byron would also like to see over the long-term, the development of a shared-use facility from where the sidewalks end on White Road across the interstate bridge to a large residential subdivision currently under development. Table 31 (see Appendix) presents the five-year implementation strategy for the City of Byron as well as the City of Fort Valley.

Public Transportation

Rural 5311 Program

Peach County operates through a third-party contract with the Middle Georgia Community Action Agency, a rural 5311 public transportation system. In 2005, the system provided 14,222 one-way trips, of which 3,529 were public trips using three vans.

Most of these public trips were for shopping and doctor's appointments, and to meet other personal needs. The remainder of the public trips was for employment and educational purposes. The current net operating budget for the system is \$128,493. The Peach County share is \$64,247, while GDOT funds the remaining 50% of the costs. The 5311 anticipates purchasing in FY 2007 a new shuttle van w/lift to replace their 2003 conversion van. GDOT will fund 90% of the capital costs, while Peach County will finance the remaining 10%.

DHR Coordinated Transportation

The Georgia Department of Human Resources contracts with the Middle Georgia Regional Development Center to administer the DHR Coordinated Transportation Program in the 11-county region including Peach County. The RDC subcontracts with the Middle Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc. to provide transportation services for Peach County residents that are clients of the following human service agencies or programs: Peach County Senior Center; Peach County Department of Children and Family Services; Kay-Peach Community Service Center; Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation Program-Perry Hub, and the Houston Phoenix Center.

In Fiscal Year 2006, a total of 21,716 one-way trips were provided by the Middle Georgia CAA, Inc. utilizing seven vehicles, including the three Section 5311 vehicles. Almost half of the total trips were for clients of the Kay-Peach Community Services, while the Peach County Senior Center and Peach County DFCS split most of the rest of the trips. The DOL Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Houston Phoenix Center accounted for only 186 of the total trips. The total expenses of the DHR Coordinated Transportation Program in Peach County were \$214,559, or an average of \$9.88 per one-way trip. This is 8.3% of the total regional budget of \$2.572 million.

Mobility Needs Analysis

The Section 5311 rural transit program provides excellent demand-responsive service for any Peach County resident that chooses to utilize the service. The number of public trips on the system is currently 25% of the total trips, and with more aggressive marketing to increase awareness of such a system, the total number of public trips and the percentage of the total trips would certainly increase. The marketing campaign should certainly focus more in the Fort Valley area where incomes and automobile availability is less and the need for public transit would be greatest. In addition, the student population at Fort Valley State University could also benefit from the public transit system.

By coordinating the requested trips from the various human service agencies and by being able to utilize the vehicles from the Section 5311 program: (1) it creates cost savings than if the services were done by the individual HSP; (2) it provides safe and quality service to the clients of these human service agencies; and (3) it maximizes the use of the Section 5311 vehicles. The biggest issue facing the DHR Coordinated Transportation Program is that the costs to provide the service has increased over the last several years, while the funding for the program has remained constant or for some areas

has been cut, thus making it very difficult to maintain the level of service to the DHR clients and for the transportation operators (who are few in number) to stay financially solvent.

Another mobility issue that will need to be reviewed in the very near future is the means of using alternative modes of transportation to reduce the projected traffic congestion in Byron and east Peach County area. As described in the road network section above, there are a number of improvements planned during the planning period to maintain a reasonable Level of Service. There is certainly no guarantee that those improvements, particularly in the mid- and long-range, will be built, and if they are, it may take longer than projected. Expanding the Section 5311 program to include subscription work-related trips as well as other commuter strategies (carpooling, vanpooling, tele-commuting, etc.) should be investigated as possible alternatives.

Parking

The sufficiency of parking and the adequacy of parking facilities is not an issue in Peach County with the exception of downtown Byron. There are currently few spaces available along the Main Street store fronts and the Byron Museum, and parking for the Jailhouse Park is non-existent. Patrons of the stores and Museum utilize the empty church parking lot across the street, while users of the Park have to park in the narrow jailhouse alley. This lack of parking should not be a major concern in the future, if the City's desire to improve pedestrian accessibility in the downtown area is realized. With an adequate sidewalk system in place, patrons and visitors should be able to park in the existing facilities and spaces available, including the vacant church lot, and walk safely and conveniently in the downtown area, while enjoying the beauty and serenity of this small town treasure.

Railroad, Trucking, and Airports

Railroads

Peach County is served by three rail freight lines. The first is a Norfolk Southern Railway line that is a branch of a major NFS north-line coming out of Macon. It enters the extreme northeast portion of the County, passes through Byron and Fort Valley to Montezuma, Americus, and Albany where it connects with the Georgia and Florida Railway, a shortline railroad. Based on information from the Georgia DOT, the line between the main truck and Fort Valley carries between 10-24.99 million gross tons annually, while the line between Fort Valley and Albany carries between 3.00-9.99 million gross tons per year.

The second rail freight line comes off the branch line above and begins in Fort Valley where it then heads west to Junction City and Columbus. This line hauls between 10.80 and 11.20 million gross tons a year.

The third rail freight line is the Georgia Midlands Railroad, a shortline railroad that runs from Perry to Roberta with a stop in Fort Valley. This line carries less than 2.99 million gross tons annually.

There is no passenger rail service in Peach County at the present time. The nearest service is through the AmTrak station in Atlanta. If, however, the recommendations of a GDOT intercity rail study are implemented, passenger service in Peach County could become a reality in the future.

In 1995, the Georgia Department of Transportation prepared The Intercity Rail Passenger Plan. This Plan collected extensive information on current intercity travel within the state; made forecasts of future travel by all modes; examined the suitability of existing railroad corridors for rail passenger service; and estimated ridership, revenues, costs, and external benefits of intercity rail passenger service in a number of possible corridors. From these corridors, a first-priority network of lines was recommended, along with a second priority network.

The first priority network of lines was chosen to maximize both the financial operating surplus from the lines and the net benefits of service to the State. As present in the Plan for the year 2020, the combination of service from Atlanta to Macon, Albany, and Savannah and Jacksonville was recommended as the first-priority network. The service from Macon to Albany would use the active Norfolk Southern Railway line that passes through Byron and Fort Valley.

The Norfolk Southern Railway lines currently pass through Fort Valley 12 times a day (six times in each direction.) In two years, it is expected to increase to 18 times a day. This increase in rail traffic along with the convergence of automobile traffic from US 341, SR 96, and SR 49 will likely cause more traffic delays and congestion in the downtown area and significantly impact the opportunities to redevelop the downtown area. If passenger rail service is added to this mix in the future, the problem will only get worse.

Trucking

There are currently no trucking terminals or major warehousing facilities that congregate a large number of trucks in one location. There is considerable amount of truck traffic that ingress and egress from the North Peach Industrial Park in Byron and the South Peach Industrial Park just outside of Fort Valley. In addition, the Fall Line Freeway (SR 96 and SR 49) carries a significant amount of truck traffic coming from the Columbus area heading to I-75, as well as that coming from Augusta, Macon, and Atlanta to points west. The recent improvements to Highway 96 and the SR 49 Bypass will improve truck movements through this corridor and hopefully reduce truck traffic coming into downtown Fort Valley.

To access North Peach Industrial Park, truck traffic has to negotiate a difficult turning radius at the intersection of SR 49 and Dunbar Road near I-75. It is hoped that this problem can be corrected during the SR 49 widening project.

Airports

The Perry-Houston County Airport, a portion of which is located in southeastern Peach County, accommodates a variety of aviation-related activities that include recreational flying, agricultural spraying, corporate/business jets, police/law enforcement, and experimental aircraft. The 372-acre facility is owned and operated by the Perry-Houston County Airport Authority. The Perry-Houston County Airport currently has a 5,002 feet long by 100 feet wide runway with medium intensity runway lighting (MIRL), visual approach slope indicators (VASI), and a full parallel taxiway with medium intensity taxiway lights (MITL).

Current landside facilities and services include a full-service Flight Based Operation (FBO) with limited maintenance services, a fuel concession providing AvGas, and a 2,367 square foot terminal/administration building. The airport also has 56 auto parking spaces, 32 apron parking spaces, 59 hanger spaces, and rental cars available.

There are currently 51 based aircraft at the airport, which is up from 29 in 1990. The airport has approximately 18,000 annual aircraft takeoffs and landings divided between local and itinerant operations with projections to almost 20,000 by year 2021, or 9% of its available annual operating capacity.

The latest State Airport System Plan has classified the Perry-Houston County Airport as a Level II airport and should provide facilities and services to meet this level. Airport improvements recommended in the plan include:

- Replace VASI with PAPI,
- Add six additional apron parking spaces as needed, and
- Add 41 additional auto parking spaces as needed.

Total Cost in 2001 \$1,428,600

Access to the airport from Byron, Fort Valley, and most of Peach County is very difficult. If these communities are to derive any benefit from this airport and neighboring industrial area, then better accessibility to Airport Road (highway fronting the airport) from the Peach County side must be provided.

Transportation and Land Use Connection

Identified below are the areas that are projected to experience significant traffic congestion in Peach County, and the role future land use patterns are expected to play in this issue. These areas were first described early in this section.

East Central Peach County

The area between Lakeview Road/Bible Camp Road/Mosley Road and Byron is quickly transitioning from agriculture and rural residential use to suburban residential. There is a serious need to project future traffic volumes in this area to determine possible improvements to the local road network, including a new major collector/minor arterial road connecting SR 96 to SR 42 with a future connection to SR 341. Adding this area to the WRATS Study Area will enable this issue to be evaluated and modeled during a future update of the WRATS Long-Range Transportation Plan.

SR 96 Corridor from I-75 and Fort Valley

This corridor is expected during the planning period to see a transition from rural uses to more intensive residential and commercial uses. With this change of land use will bring with it more traffic volumes to SR 96 west of I-75. SR 96 is scheduled for widening east of I-75 to Twiggs County in the near future, but no improvements are planned at this time west of I-75. It is strongly recommended, that future volumes be carefully monitored by local and GDOT officials on this portion of SR 96 and improvements scheduled in the State Work Program when conditions warrant.

Truck Traffic in Downtown Fort Valley

Truck traffic coming through downtown Fort Valley has created serious traffic congestion, conflicts with pedestrian traffic, and possible harm to significant historical buildings. There have been recent improvements to the Fall Line Freeway around Fort Valley that should route some of this traffic away from the downtown area. The issue should be carefully monitored to determine if additional steps need to be taken to resolve this problem.

Byron Area

Dunbar Road, White Road, SR 49, SR 247C, and portions of SR 42 will all be impacted by the enormous growth that is currently underway and is projected to continue in and around the City of Byron. The City of Byron has become a bedroom community for those working in Houston County and southern Bibb County. The traffic desire line is to the east and north, and the only way to get to the points of destination in Houston and Bibb County is to travel on the roads that are presently two lanes and do not have the capacity to handle the projected traffic demand.

Improvements are in the long-range plan that would eventually bring the level of service to an acceptable point, but there is no way to predict when and if these improvements will be built. Local officials from Byron and Peach County will need to become actively involved in the WRATS planning process to see that these planned projects are moved forward in due haste. Until such time that the improvements to the road infrastructure are made, local planning and zoning officials will have to take closer scrutiny of proposed new major developments on their impacts on the surrounding road network.

Community Facilities and Services

Water Supply and Treatment

Approximately one-half of Peach County is serviced by a public water system. The City of Byron, the Fort Valley Utilities Commission, the City of Warner Robins, the City of Perry, and Houston County each have water provision areas currently served and designated within Peach County. These current service areas have been delineated in the revision to the Peach County Service Delivery Strategy. Future service areas are in the process of being devised by each of the affected local governments.

In order to provide water service throughout the community, each of the jurisdictions (City of Byron, Fort Valley Utilities Commission, City of Warner Robins, City of Perry, and Houston County) utilize wells to provide water to designated portions of the community. Those areas not serviced by the public water systems rely on private wells.

The City of Byron operates a public water system to serve areas within the city limits, as well as areas on the periphery of the city limits. At the present time, the City of Byron's water system is adequate to meet the needs of the community. If anticipated growth within the community occurs over the next 20 years, the system must be expanded to supply future customers (residential, commercial, and industrial) within the City's defined service area. In order to ensure the efficient use of the infrastructure to support development, the City of Byron must work to encourage development in areas where the water system currently serves or to areas where minimal expansion is necessary. Another option is for the City of Byron to ensure that developers bear the cost of expanding infrastructure capabilities which could be accomplished through a variety of mechanisms. The current and future service areas of the City of Byron's water system will enable growth along the interstate and highway corridors in Byron. Areas within the city limits and on the periphery where water service is already being provided will afford development to occur where infrastructure is already in place.

The Fort Valley Utilities Commission (FVUC) also operates a public water system to serve areas within the city limits, as well as areas outside the city limits. The FVUC also provides water service to areas extending east from the city near the S.R. 96 corridor. In order for the FVUC to meet anticipated future demands placed upon the system, expansions to the east of the City of Fort Valley will be necessary. It is inevitable that growth along the interstate corridors will be occurring where three interstate interchanges are relatively undeveloped. This area has been identified as one of the top areas for growth outside of metro Atlanta by a consulting firm. The current and future service areas of the FVUC's water system will enable growth to the east of the current city limits of Fort Valley. Efforts to encourage infill development within the City of Fort Valley through activities such as improving the State University Drive Corridor, redeveloping the Woolfolk superfund site, and encouraging a revitalized downtown area will enable development to occur in areas where existing infrastructure is in place and sufficient to meet the demands of the community.

The City of Perry provides water service to the Perry/Houston County Airport, which is located in Peach County, as well as areas surrounding the facility. At present time, the City of Perry's system serves a minimal number of customers due to the fact that this area is relatively undeveloped. Certain FAA-imposed limitations exist regarding development around airport facilities, which impacts the City of Perry's service area in Peach County. The City of Perry has indicated its plans for water service provision within Peach County do not include a great deal of expansion. Therefore, only development in close proximity to the Perry/Houston County Airport is likely to be influenced by the City of Perry's water system.

The City of Warner Robins operates a publicly-owned water system that serves areas in extreme eastern Peach County. The City of Warner Robins is participating in the Peach County planning process due to the fact that a portion of the city limits extends from Houston County into Peach. It should be noted that Warner Robins is also participating in the Houston County planning process. The City of Warner Robins currently has excess capacity in its water system. A significant amount of growth in the system has occurred within the past ten years due to rapid development and annexation by the governing body. The Warner Robins Mayor and Council have expressed the desire to provide water service to meet future demands imposed by businesses and industries seeking to locate in areas currently unserved by other public water systems. Development will be driven by availability of public water, among other public utilities, and Warner Robins has indicated its ability to provide service in strategic areas.

Houston County provides public water in areas adjacent to U.S. Highway 41, which forms the Peach – Houston County border. Houston County also provides water service in extreme southern Peach County to a subdivision development to which no other jurisdiction could provide water. Areas provided water service by Houston County are primarily residential areas at the present time, but are likely to experience commercial and retail development in the future to support the residential growth that has occurred and is anticipated to continue to occur.

Table 32 (see Appendix) is an inventory of the water treatment capacity of the public water system of the City of Byron and the Fort Valley Utilities Commission in Peach County. The remaining jurisdictions do not quantify treatment capacity and storage capacity only for areas in Peach County. Inclusion of this data would misrepresent the current capabilities within the community. Treatment and storage capacity are given in gallons per day. Average daily use figures are given as a percentage of total-treatment capacity per day.

Sewerage and Wastewater Treatment

The City of Byron operates a publicly-owned wastewater treatment system that has been in existence for over 40 years. Infrastructure is currently available throughout the community to enable residents and businesses to tap onto the wastewater system. At present time, the City of Byron is overcoming consent orders and experiences inflow into the system due to failed piping, especially during periods of heavy rain. The plant

treatment process is unable to handle the excess flow, which results in high levels of bacteria being released into surface waters. In order to remedy some of the capacity problems experienced by the City of Byron, an arrangement was developed with the City of Warner Robins for the latter to treat some of the wastewater collected within the City of Byron. The limitations of the Byron wastewater system will necessitate the City seeking additional treatment options to support and further future development within the community. Onsite septic systems may be feasible and practical in certain portions of the community, but all portions of the community are not suited for such systems.

The Fort Valley Utilities Commission also provides a publicly-owned wastewater collection and treatment system. This system serves areas within the City of Fort Valley, areas around the periphery of the city limits, and in areas extending eastward between S.R. 96 and S.R. 49. The Fort Valley wastewater collection and treatment system is currently operating over capacity, and the level of treatment is not sufficient. The Peach County Water and Sewer Authority was formed to essentially provide water and wastewater treatment and distribution for the City of Fort Valley and Peach County. The Authority is searching for suitable sites for land application and has already committed a substantial amount of money from past Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax referenda. If the wastewater capacity of the city and county cannot be expanded, current residents and businesses will be negatively impacted and economic growth will stagnate for lack of adequate infrastructure. System expansion will allow service to be provided to the interchange of I-75 and Highway 96, an important step in development. Without these improvements, the FVUC will be unable to serve the areas to support future development.

The City of Perry operates a publicly-owned wastewater collection and treatment system in the same areas that it provides water service. The system is currently adequate to meet the needs within Peach County, but the City is actively pursuing upgrades to its system to enable the community to meet the future demands that will be placed upon it by exponential growth in the Houston County portion of the municipality. This upgrade to the collection and treatment capacity are essential to meet the future demands that are inevitable as residential construction within the community will grow exponentially. Onsite septic systems would not cause significant adverse environmental impacts in the City of Perry due to the limited geographic area which is in the city limits.

The City of Warner Robins also operates a publicly-owned wastewater system. Infrastructure associated with the collection of wastewater for areas within Peach County is adequate to meet the needs of the community, now and many years into the future. The useful life of the system is great due to the fact that all Warner Robins wastewater collection infrastructure has been installed in Peach County within the past five years. Warner Robins is currently able to support development along the Interstate 75 corridor in some areas that have been identified by the elected officials. The City of Warner Robins has the ability to guide development to certain areas, if it so chooses, based upon where it currently has infrastructure available that can be utilized to support the developments. The use of onsite septic systems within the City of Warner Robins is discouraged through local regulations.

Emergency Services

Health Care

The 50-year-old, Peach Regional Medical Center is presently located in Fort Valley. The 25-bed facility serves more than 25,000 patients per year. Designated as a Critical Access Hospital for Rural Residents by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Peach Regional Medical Center services include emergency care, outpatient care, medical/surgical services, and extended care. The hospital has plans to work in cooperation with the Georgia Heart Center to provide a cardiac specialty in their rotation of services.

With the rise in population, there were plans to build a new \$24 million dollar hospital, moving the more modern facility to a new 20-acre site off the State Route 247 Connector, one mile from I-75. The relocation would place the facility closer to Byron. However, in August 2006, the Peach Regional Medical Center withdrew the application for State of Georgia's approval, which is required to build a new hospital. There were concerns expressed by the State about the Hospital Authority's ability to raise enough funding to construct a new hospital. There were also questions concerning the ability to continue to provide service to patients from southern Peach County, as well as Crawford and Taylor Counties, which do not have hospitals.

Although the desired relocation has caused some apprehension with Fort Valley, there are greater questions as to whether the facility could support itself if it were to remain in its present location. The Medical Center has plans to resubmit their application.

The desire for Peach County Regional to leave Fort Valley and move closer to Byron is indicative of the population growth that has occurred in that portion of the county, meaning other services could follow suit.

Fire Protection

The Peach County Fire Department encompasses six fire stations. Station one is on Lakeview Road in the Powersville area. This station is manned 24 hours per day. The Powersville station is slated to be replaced with a new station on another location in the same general facility. The new facility will have an EMS bay attached to the new fire station and is anticipated to be completed in 2007. Station Two is manned eight hours per day (one shift) and is located on the southern side of Fort Valley off of U.S. Highway 341. Station Three is located on Willow Lake Road and is manned 24 hours per day. Station Four is located off of U.S. Highway 41 near the Peach – Houston County line and is manned eight hours per day. Station Five is located near S.R. 96 (Miami Valley Road) and is also manned eight hours per day. Station Six is located on Old Macon Road and is not manned; it is staffed by volunteers. The Peach County Fire Department has a Fire Chief and an Assistant Fire Chief that oversees all fire operations. Each individual station has its own command structure, including volunteers, to ensure effective provision of service.

The City of Fort Valley has two fire stations protecting its jurisdiction. The first is located behind City Hall on Church Street in downtown Fort Valley. This station is manned 24 hours per day. The second station is located on Oakland Heights and is manned 24 hours per day.

The City of Byron provides fire services through a volunteer fire department. The Byron Volunteer Fire Station is located on Highway 49.

Services provided by fire departments within Peach County include fire suppression, arson investigation, hazardous material mitigation, search and rescue, and fire safety education.

Public Safety

The Peach County Sheriff's Office has a primary jurisdiction to provide basic law enforcement service to all areas in unincorporated Peach County. The Sheriff's Office is comprised of a criminal investigation division, uniform patrol division (which includes the K-9 unit), traffic enforcement division, highway interdiction division, the detention division, school resource officers, warrant officers, and court services. The Peach County Sheriff's Office headquarters are located off of U.S. Highway 341 in the same facility as the Peach County Jail.

The City of Fort Valley has a police department, overseen by a Police Chief, which provides basic law enforcement services to residents within the City of Fort Valley. This department discussed the possibility of merging with the Peach County Sheriff's Office and evaluated all alternatives to determine if this would provide a more effective, efficient mechanism to provide services. The City of Fort Valley and the Peach County Sheriff's Office determined that, upon review of all issues that could affect the service provision, the proposed action was not practical at that time.

The City of Byron also has a police department, overseen by a Police Chief, which provides basic law enforcement services to the community. The Byron Police Department is responsible for much activity along Interstate 75 within the jurisdiction.

The police stations in both municipalities and the sheriff's department are older facilities that have expressed a desire to replace the existing facilities.

Peach County Parks and Recreation

South Peach Park



South Peach Park is located in Fort Valley near the Oak Lawn Cemetery. The 60-acre facility includes four baseball fields, four tennis courts, a playground with an interactive water feature, senior citizens center, three bathrooms, two concession stands and storage area, a 6.8 mile walking track, and a

volleyball court. On Arbor Day in 2006, nine trees were donated to the arboretum located in the park. The donation of trees will become an annual event.

North Peach Park

North Peach Park is on White Road in Byron. Originally 18 acres, the park acquired an additional 30 acres of adjacent farmland, and park expansion is planned over the next five to ten years. With the improvements, the park will contain three baseball fields, soccer field, football field, two basketball courts, five tennis courts, and a playground. A barn from the acquired acreage was preserved to be used as a meeting room, concession area, bathroom, and office.



Everett Square Park

Everett Square Park in Fort Valley was named for founder, James A. Everett. Currently undergoing renovation, plans for the three-acre site include a 135-seat amphitheater, a fountain, and a bandstand or pavilion located near a time capsule that was buried six years before. During Phase I, walking paths, grassing, and underground sprinklers will be installed in the park area. The City of Fort Valley and Peach County Public Works Departments will be completing some in-kind site work to aid in furthering the project. During Phase II, a veteran's memorial will be constructed in the park, as well as completing additional components associated with Phase I. Private funding and donation amounting to \$85,000 has gone towards the completion of Phase I activities.

Jailhouse Park

Jailhouse Park is named for its proximity to the Byron Town Jail built approximately in 1875 and is currently the headquarters to the Byron Area Historical Society. The development of the park was headed by the historical society with grant assistance from the State of Georgia. Beautifully landscaped, the park contains a large gazebo, walking paths, and a number of benches. In addition, there is a monument for a time capsule buried in 2000 that will remain unopened until 2052.



Stormwater Management

Within Peach County and each of the municipalities, significant runoff problems are occurring within the community. All areas of Peach County are suffering as more impervious surfaces are being constructed within each of the cities and the unincorporated portions of the county. Rain water must be diverted in appropriate manners to ensure that flooding does not cripple the Peach County community. Currently, each of the local government entities are in the process of developing means to remedy the problem.

By expanding stormwater capacity, Peach County and its municipalities enhance its opportunity to locate new or expanding commercial, retail, and industrial prospects to the community. Additionally, this will provide available infrastructure to protect and

preserve the environment from impairments. In an attempt to alleviate stormwater drainage issues, Peach County has obtained an inmate crew to clean ditches throughout unincorporated portions of the county. Not only has this resulted in greater aesthetic value in the community, the stormwater drainage system has greatly improved. Furthermore, Peach County has adopted ordinances and required personnel to obtain State of Georgia approved certifications for Erosion and Sedimentation Control.

Recognizing the need for stormwater drainage improvements, local leaders called for funding to be allocated from the most recent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) to address these issues. Funding has been designated from the current SPLOST in the amounts of \$1,250,000 for Fort Valley and \$750,000 for Byron to complete stormwater management improvements. Engineering efforts are underway to determine the exact needs within the community.

Solid Waste

The City of Byron is committed to reducing waste and implementing recycling programs. Keep Peach County Clean and Beautiful (KPCCB), a department of the Peach County Board of Commissioners, operates two “drop-off” centers open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. These two centers are located in the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley. The City of Byron recycling center is located on Jailhouse Alley. Each of the recycling centers accept glass, newspapers, computer paper, magazines, aluminum cans, steel cans, plastic, paperboard, and cardboard. Waste oil is accepted at the City of Byron Public Works Department facility and by the KPCCB in the City of Fort Valley.

Providers of recycling services in the City of Byron include Peach County through KPCCB, a private recycler and a waste hauler who accepts appliances and scrap metal.

Current facilities located within the City of Byron are sufficient to meet the waste reduction needs of the community. Peach County’s KPCCB organization is responsible for a recycling facility located in the City of Byron. These recycling opportunities, identified above are the only waste reduction programs currently available within the City of Byron. At this time, the community has deemed their programs sufficient to meet the current needs of its residents. Should conditions change, deficiencies will be identified through an ongoing assessment of the programs and facilities.

Current collection programs are consistent with the population, density and topographic demands of the City of Byron. These demands may influence the adequacy of future collection programs, and the City, through the continual solid waste management planning process, will modify its collection programs as needed.

Providers of recycling services in the City of Fort Valley include Peach County and KPCCB. The City of Fort Valley is committed to reducing waste and implementing recycling programs. The Recycling Center located in Fort Valley provides local recycling services through its recycling efforts. This center recycles cardboard and paper locally.

Current waste reduction programs and facilities are sufficient to meet the needs of the City of Fort Valley; growth throughout the planning period may increase the need to expand or construct these programs and facilities. An ongoing assessment would benefit the jurisdiction to ensure that waste reduction programs and facilities are consistent with community needs.

Current collection programs are consistent with the population, density, and topographic demands of the City of Fort Valley. These demands may influence the adequacy of future collection programs, and the City, through the continual solid waste management planning process, will modify its collection programs as needed.

Peach County is committed to reducing waste and implementing recycling programs. Keep Peach County Clean and Beautiful (KPCCB), a department of the Peach County Board of Commissioners, operates two “drop-off” centers open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. These two centers are located in the Cities of Byron (on Jailhouse Alley) and Fort Valley (on Old Macon Road). Although there are no facilities located in unincorporated Peach County, the Peach County Board of Commissioners has determined that the present operation of two facilities, one in each municipality, is sufficient to meet the community’s needs. Each of the recycling centers accepts glass, newspapers, computer paper, magazines, aluminum cans, steel cans, plastic, paperboard, and cardboard. Waste oil is collected by the KPCCB in the City of Fort Valley.

There are several recycling opportunities within Peach County. These opportunities include: automotive parts stores in the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley accept batteries and used motor oil; larger supermarkets and shopping centers compact cardboard for re-sale; automotive recycling dealers accept “junk” cars and other metals for re-sale; several wrecker companies are available to remove and recycle metal items and old cars; the Kay Center at 213 Allen Road (off of Spruce Street) in the City of Fort Valley accepts paper products; and there are two aluminum recycling companies located in the Cities of Fort Valley and Byron that accept metal and aluminum from different vendors.

Current waste reduction programs and facilities have been deemed to be sufficient to meet the needs of Peach County; growth throughout the planning period may increase the need to expand or construct these programs and facilities. An ongoing assessment would benefit the jurisdiction to ensure that waste reduction programs and facilities are consistent with community needs.

Peach County recently solicited bids from known providers to continue the provision or residential curbside collection, white goods, brown goods, and possibly yard waste collection that was previously provided by the City of Fort Valley. A new private provider has been selected and is providing the service.

Schools

Public Schools

Peach County has one primary and two elementary schools. Hunt Primary School and Hunt Elementary School are both located in Fort Valley. The primary school has 517 students and teaches pre-kindergarten through 2nd grade. Enrollment for the elementary school is currently 494 and teaches grades three through five. Byron Elementary, with a present enrollment of 863 students teaches grades kindergarten through five. In 2002, the school was awarded the Governor's Exemplary Award for High Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores.

The two middle schools are the Byron Middle School and the Fort Valley Middle School. There are 486 and 533 students enrolled in these schools respectively. Plans are underway for two new elementary schools in Peach County containing 44 classrooms and accommodating 750 students. The grades taught for both schools are six through eight. Byron Middle School was named one of the thirteen "Best of the Best" Schools, by the Georgia Schools of Excellence Program for achievement in reading/language arts and math.

Peach County High School, located southwest of Fort Valley, is the only public high school teaching 9th through 12th grade. There are currently 1,109 students enrolled. The location of the high school encourages the enrollment of nearby private schools and increased home schooling.

Private Schools in the area include, the Byron Christian Academy in Byron, Westview Baptist in Warner Robins, Warner Robins Christian Academy in Warner Robins, and Windsor Academy in Macon.

H.A. Hunt School

The H.A. Hunt School in Fort Valley was originally a secondary school for African American students. Erected in 1954, the school was ironically completed the same year as the landmark case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The site is no longer a school, but serves a variety of functions, housing the magistrate court, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Literacy Program that includes English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and other services. Plans for renovation have already occurred, resulting in a new roof for the facility. Further renovation plans include Wing C of the complex, which is closed due to asbestos contamination. The auditorium will also be refurbished, keeping its original use. Seating capacity will be lost although, as it is necessary for the facilities to become American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. Also bathroom additions must be made as well, further affecting the number of auditorium seats.



Fort Valley State University

Fort Valley State University, established in 1895, is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located in Fort Valley. The 622-acre campus contains 96 buildings including the University Historic District that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

During the 2004 fall semester, enrollment was 2,558, which included students from more than 30 states and 10 foreign countries. The University offers one Associates Degree, eight Bachelor's Degrees, and two Master's Degree. External degree programs are provided in Macon, Robins Air Force Base, Middle Georgia College in Cochran and Dublin, Georgia, and in downtown Fort Valley. The City of Warner Robins also has plans to establish a FVSU satellite program to service fast growing Houston County. Also, 200 online courses will be offered, providing 45 new computers to students who do not have one at home. The "Weekend College" Program is also offered at the Advanced Technology Development Center in Warner Robins, a collaborative program with Macon State College. The program offers a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Computer Science, and graduate degrees in education. FVSU also provides classes in public schools, medical centers, and other facilities in cooperation with other institutions.



FVSU has a strong teacher education department. The university heads the Operation Head Start Program for over 250 students in Peach, Taylor, Macon, Crisp, and Dooly Counties. In addition, the school heads the pre-kindergarten program for over 100 students in Byron and Fort Valley, which is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Fort Valley State is also a frontrunner in agricultural instruction. The University Cooperative Extension Program receives over 100,000 visitors yearly. A number of agricultural programs throughout Georgia have benefited from the Center.

Cemeteries

The Goodwill Cemetery, Oaklawn Cemetery, and Willowlake Cemetery are located in Fort Valley. The Byron Cemetery is located across the street from the City Hall in Byron. Private family and church gravesites are located throughout Peach County.



Other Facilities

The Austin Theater

The Austin Theater in Fort Valley is currently undergoing rehabilitation and restoration activities. These activities are anticipated to be completed in October 2006 and will result in a total project cost of an estimated \$500,000. The renovated theater will serve as

a multi-purpose facility, used for banquets and meetings. The ground floor will contain the theater, which will include removable seating at a later date.

C.W. Pettigrew Farm and Community Life Center

The C.W. Pettigrew Farm and Community Life Center, a full service conference and performing arts center located on Fort Valley State University Campus, opened its doors in 1987. It is the legacy of Dr. Cleveland W. Pettigrew, the third president of Fort Valley State College who died in 1982. In addition to completing six new campus buildings under his leadership, Dr. Pettigrew was instrumental in attracting a racially-mixed student body by implementing state-of-the-art facilities that included the Pettigrew Center.

The C.W. Pettigrew Farm and Community Life Center has a fully equipped multi-media room that provides rear screen projection, computers, and satellite down-link capabilities. Each conference room contains a built-in computer projection system. The performing arts theater encompasses 600 seats with writing surfaces to be used for classes or seminars, high-tech sound system and computerized lighting. The center also contains a full food service facility.

Natural Gas

Fort Valley and unincorporated Peach County are serviced by its municipal gas service whereas Byron receives natural gas from the Jointly Owned Natural Gas Transmission Line (JONGTL) Services. A strength for Peach County is that it is located in a region where natural gas is available at relatively low cost. Four interstate pipelines that run through Georgia provide an incentive for industries and large businesses to locate to the state as they are able to select their gas services, meaning providers must compete for their business. Unfortunately, there is a threat of low natural gas supplies during the winter months. At this time, the gas flow to businesses and industry are interrupted to meet residential demand. Luckily, with the region's temperate climate, this is not always a concern.

JONGTL, which services Byron, has an adequate and reliable supply of natural gas at the present time. However, during the coldest days of the year, the system does suffer from low pressure in some of the service areas. In fact, it limits industrial and commercial usage on those days, which may counter affect the ability to attract businesses to the area. Furthermore, the growing Middle Georgia Region, particularly Houston County, has made a significant impact on natural gas demands and will, in turn, negatively affect customers of JONGTL, especially in the more rural areas. It will be necessary to expand this system in the future to accommodate the excess need.

Consistency with the Service Delivery Strategy

Negotiations are still underway to reconcile differences in the Peach County Service Delivery Strategy. Upon completion of the Comprehensive Planning process, it is anticipated that local leaders will have adopted a new Service Delivery Strategy.

Appendix – A

Tables

Table 1: Population Density for Peach County (Persons per square mile)

County	1980	1990	2000	% Change since 1980
Baldwin	134.67	153.06	173.32	29%
Bibb	601.44	601.15	615.95	2%
Crawford	23.41	27.78	38.60	65%
Jones	207.42	237.96	295.46	42%
Monroe	37.08	43.41	55.23	49%
Peach	125.49	140.73	156.78	25%
Pulaski	36.20	32.38	38.78	7%
Putnam	30.07	41.40	54.84	82%
Twiggs	25.97	27.28	29.40	13%
Wilkinson	23.16	22.98	22.90	-1%
Total	102.05	110.50	124.84	22%

Woods and Poole Economics, Inc

Table 2: Total Population

	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Peach County	18,961	21,265	23,689	24,682	25,713	26,811	27,971	29,164
Byron	1,661	2,276	2,887	3,194	3,500	3,807	4,113	4,420
Fort Valley	9,000	8,198	8,005	7,756	7,508	7,259	7,010	6,761

US Census Bureau

Table 3: Number of Households by County

County	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Baldwin	10,151	12,165	14,758	15,910	17,062	18,213	19,365	21,669
Bibb	52,580	56,307	59,667	61,667	63,211	64,982	66,754	70,298
Crawford	2,357	3,069	4,461	4,987	5,513	6,039	6,565	7,091
Houston	25,509	32,433	40,911	44,762	48,612	52,463	56,313	60,164
Jones	5,270	7,300	8,659	9,506	10,354	11,201	12,048	12,895
Monroe	4,667	5,838	7,719	8,482	9,245	10,008	10,771	11,534
Peach	6,180	7,142	8,436	9,000	9,564	10,128	10,692	11,820
Pulaski	3,067	3,098	3,407	3,492	3,577	3,662	3,747	3,832
Putnam	3,398	5,229	7,402	8,403	9,404	10,405	11,406	12,407
Twiggs	2,812	3,296	3,832	4,087	4,342	4,597	4,852	5,104
Wilkinson	3,350	3,619	3,827	3,946	4,066	4,185	4,304	4,423
Total	23,474	139,496	163,079	174,242	184,950	195,883	206,817	221,237

US Census Bureau

Table 4: Average Size Household for Peach County

Year	Peach County	Middle Georgia Region	State of Georgia	United States
1980	2.92	2.99	2.83	2.83
1985	NA	2.89	2.73	2.68
1990	2.79	2.74	2.66	2.63
1995	NA	2.69	2.65	2.62
2000	2.67	2.62	2.65	2.59
2005	2.63	2.58	2.61	2.56
2010	2.61	2.56	2.59	2.54
2015	2.6	2.56	2.59	2.54
2020	2.61	2.57	2.6	2.55
2025	2.63	2.6	2.63	2.58

Woods and Poole Economics, Inc.

Table 5: Age Projections in Peach County

Peach County: Population by Age											
Category	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
0 – 4 Years Old	1,549	1,527	1,504	1,518	1,531	1,527	1,522	1,518	1,513	1,509	1,504
5 – 13 Years Old	2,995	3,139	3,282	3,413	3,543	3,680	3,817	3,954	4,091	4,228	4,365
14 – 17 Years Old	1,537	1,258	979	1,034	1,089	977	865	753	641	529	417
18 – 20 Years Old	1,534	1,605	1,675	1,665	1,655	1,685	1,716	1,746	1,776	1,806	1,837
21 – 24 Years Old	1,469	1,501	1,533	1,703	1,873	1,974	2,075	2,176	2,277	2,378	2,479
25 – 34 Years Old	2,866	3,065	3,264	3,192	3,120	3,184	3,247	3,311	3,374	3,438	3,501
35 – 44 Years Old	2,157	2,523	2,889	3,134	3,379	3,685	3,990	4,296	4,601	4,907	5,212
45 – 54 Years Old	1,799	1,994	2,189	2,603	3,016	3,320	3,625	3,929	4,233	4,537	4,842
55 – 64 Years Old	1,555	1,658	1,760	1,946	2,131	2,275	2,419	2,563	2,707	2,851	2,995
65 and over	1,690	1,902	2,114	2,223	2,331	2,491	2,652	2,812	2,972	3,132	3,293

U.S. Census Bureau

Table 6: Race and Ethnicity Distribution in Peach County

	1980		1990		2000		2004	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
White	9,392	49.0	10,716	50.6	12,588	53.2%	13,604	55.2
Black	9,682	50.6	10,075	47.5	10,767	45.4	10,801	43.8
Hispanic	144	.75	378	1.78	998	4.22	1,198	4.9

2005-2006 Georgia County Guide

Table 7: Percentage Household Income Distribution 1990

	Peach County	City of Byron	City of Fort Valley	Middle Georgia Region	State of Georgia
TOTAL Households	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Income less than \$9999	23.80%	18.00%	37.70%	20.11	16.77%
Income \$10000 - \$14999	9.00%	5.80%	14.60%	10.18%	8.62%
Income \$15000 - \$19999	8.10%	8.50%	7.70%	9.21%	8.87%
Income \$20000 - \$29999	16.20%	10.10%	14.90%	16.94%	17.13%
Income \$30000 - \$34999	7.60%	9.00%	4.90%	7.89%	7.90%
Income \$35000 - \$39999	5.60%	7.00%	4.00%	6.84%	6.77%
Income \$40000 - \$49999	10.50%	13.90%	7.60%	10.56%	11.03%
Income \$50000 - \$59999	7.90%	13.00%	2.90%	7.06%	7.61%
Income \$60000 - \$74999	5.70%	9.20%	2.10%	5.88%	6.85%
Income \$75000 - \$99999	3.30%	3.40%	2.10%	3.28%	4.63%
Income \$100000 or more	2.30%	2.20%	1.40%	2.05%	3.81%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 8: Household Income Distribution 2000

	Peach County	City of Byron	City of Fort Valley	Middle Georgia Region	State of Georgia
TOTAL Households	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Income less than \$9999	15.80%	10.20%	27.70%	13.22	10.13%
Income \$10000 - \$14999	8.10%	4.50%	14.30%	7.11%	5.85%
Income \$15000 - \$19999	6.10%	4.30%	8.60%	6.84%	5.91%
Income \$20000 - \$29999	15.10%	14.00%	17.40%	13.84%	12.74%
Income \$30000 - \$34999	5.40%	4.30%	5.90%	6.42%	6.22%
Income \$35000 - \$39999	5.90%	6.00%	5.50%	6.19%	5.87%
Income \$40000 - \$49999	9.50%	10.80%	6.10%	11.11%	10.85%
Income \$50000 - \$59999	8.50%	11.70%	3.30%	9.07%	9.24%
Income \$60000 - \$74999	9.10%	12.80%	3.80%	10.07%	10.48%
Income \$75000 - \$99999	9.70%	12.30%	4.80%	8.83%	10.36%
Income \$100000 or more	6.70%	9.20%	2.60%	7.31%	12.34%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 9: Per Capita Income

Year	Peach County	City of Byron	City of Fort Valley	Middle Georgia Region	State of Georgia	United States
1980	\$5,282	\$5,558	\$4,888	\$13,307	\$15,353	\$18,444
1985	8,136	9,420	6,516	15,608	18,512	20,713
1990	10,989	13,282	8,144	17,220	20,715	22,871
1995	13,510	16,047	9,480	18,077	22,287	23,771
2000	16,031	18,811	10,815	20,031	25,433	26,988
2005	18,718	22,124	12,297	21,131	26,975	28,581
2010	21,406	25,438	13,779	22,253	28,549	30,227
2015	24,093	28,751	15,260	23,422	30,141	31,943
2020	26,780	32,064	16,742	24,665	31,767	33,758
2025	29,467	35,377	18,224	26,006	33,413	35,673

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 10: Median Household Income

Year	Peach County	City of Byron	City of Fort Valley	Middle Georgia Region	State of Georgia	United States
1990	\$31,859	\$36,902	\$22,074	\$30,654	\$33,259	\$22,871
2000	44,164	51,118	27,487	37,982	42,158	26,988

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 11: Sources of Personal Income

Personal Income Composition (2005)		
	Peach County % of Personal Income	State of Georgia % of Personal Income
Personal income	100.0%	100.0%
Wages and salaries	42.6%	58.5%
Other labor income	9.2%	12.1%
Proprietors income	6.5%	8.7%
Dividends, interest and payments	17.6%	16.1%
Transfer payments to persons	21.1%	13.5%
Social insurance contribution	6.5%	8.6%
Residence adjustment	9.5%	-0.2%

Source: Woods & Poole Economics 2005 State Profile

Table 12: Wage Analysis

Peach County/State of Georgia Wage Analysis (FY 2005)			
	Peach County Area (All Industries)	State of Georgia (All Industries)	Peach County Area Wage as % of State of Georgia Wages (All Industries)
Entry wage	\$15,140	\$16,420	92%
25th percentile wage	\$17,381	\$18,922	92%
Mean wage	\$33,164	\$35,357	94%
50th percentile wage	\$26,672	\$27,563	97%
75th percentile wage	\$41,518	\$42,782	97%

Source: 2005 Georgia Department of Labor Wage Survey

Table 13: Average Weekly Wages

	Peach County	State of Georgia	Peach County Wages as % of State of Georgia Wages
Goods Producing	\$716	\$768	93%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	\$449	\$432	104%
Construction	\$554	\$739	75%
Manufacturing	\$810	\$797	102%
Chemical manufacturing	\$550	\$1,060	52%
Nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing	\$608	\$776	78%
Transportation equipment	\$866	\$1,014	85%
Service Producing	\$413	\$727	57%
Wholesale trade	\$710	\$1,085	65%
Retail trade	\$426	\$464	92%
Transportation & warehousing	\$629	\$870	72%
Information	\$672	\$1,181	57%
Finance & insurance	\$720	\$1,174	61%
Real estate, rental & leasing	\$663	\$770	86%
Professional, scientific/technology services	\$416	\$1,136	37%
Administrative & waste services	\$426	\$529	81%
Health care & social services	\$383	\$723	53%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	\$187	\$525	36%
Accommodation & food services	\$187	\$270	69%
Other services (except govt)	\$332	\$498	67%
Unclassified	\$583	\$765	76%
Government	\$815	691	118%

Source: 2004 Georgia County Guide

Table 14: 2000 Educational Attainment in Peach County

	Less than 9 th Grade	9 th -12 th Grade (no diploma)	High School Graduate (including equivalency)	Some College	Associates Degree	Bachelor Degree	Graduate Degree
Peach County	9.2%	17.4%	33.2%	19.3%	4.1%	9.8%	7.0%
City of Byron	5.7%	12.4%	35.3%	24.5%	5.8%	10.1%	6.3%
City of Fort Valley	15.3%	23.5%	27.8%	18.1%	2.1%	7.9%	5.6%

Source: US Census Bureau

Table 15: Middle Georgia Workforce Investment Area Industries with Largest Job Growth

Industry Title	2002 Base Year Employment	2012 Projected Year Employment	Total Change in Employment	% Change in Employment	Projected Annual Growth Rate
Hospitals	5,110	9,510	4,400	86.0%	6.4%
Food Manufacturing	2,370	4,820	2,450	103.1%	7.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,220	4,330	1,110	34.5%	3.0%
Administrative and Support Services	2,550	3,400	850	33.6%	2.9%
Educational Services	10,940	11,700	760	6.9%	0.7%
General Merchandise Stores	2,360	3,000	640	26.9%	2.4%
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	1,120	1,710	590	53.3%	4.4%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	2,250	2,750	500	22.3%	2.0%
Food Services and Drinking Places	6,930	7,300	370	5.4%	0.5%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	2,080	2,340	260	12.5%	1.2%
Truck Transportation	1,030	1,270	240	23.4%	2.1%
Support Activities for Transportation	280	500	220	78.2%	5.9%
Social Assistance	1,770	1,980	210	11.7%	1.1%
Health and Personal Care Stores	640	830	190	29.7%	2.6%
Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	350	510	160	45.4%	3.8%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, LaborMarket Explorer

Table 16: Largest Employment Sectors in Peach County (in thousands of jobs)

Sector	2005	2015	2025
Manufacturing	2.45	2.55	2.65
Retail trade	1.74	2.11	2.48
Services	1.47	1.49	1.51
State & local government	2.09	2.25	2.40

Source: Woods & Poole Economics, 2005 State Profile

Table 17: Declining Employment Sectors in Middle Georgia Workforce Investment Area

Industry Title	2002 Base Year Employment	2012 Projected Yearly Employment	Total Change in Employment	% Change in Employment	Project Annual Growth Rate
Federal Government, except Postal Service	12,790	10,340	-2,450	-19.2%	-2.1%
State Government, except Education and Hospitals	4,400	2,680	-1,720	-39.1%	-4.8%
Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers	7,030	6,210	-820	-11.7%	-1.2%
Agriculture, Crop and Animal Production	2,480	1,790	-690	-27.5%	-3.2%
Wood Product Manufacturing	1,740	1,180	-560	-32.0%	-3.8%
Food and Beverage Stores	2,070	1,620	-450	-21.7%	-2.4%
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	850	470	-380	-44.5%	-5.7%
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	1,690	1,390	-300	-17.6%	-1.9%
Construction of Buildings	730	430	-300	-40.7%	-5.1%
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	1,510	1,220	-290	-19.6%	-2.2%
Specialty Trade Contractors	2,510	2,290	-220	-8.8%	-0.9%
Utilities	1,110	920	-190	-16.7%	-1.8%
Local Government, except Education and Hospitals	4,230	4,070	-160	-3.6%	-0.4%
Private Households	600	480	-120	-20.2%	-2.2%
Real Estate	370	270	-100	-27.5%	-3.2%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, LaborMarket Explorer

Table 18: Smallest Projected Employers in Peach County (in thousands)

Sector	2005	2015	2025
Mining	0.01	0.01	0.01
Transportation, communications & public utilities	0.20	0.24	0.28
Federal civilian govt	0.11	0.12	0.12
Federal military govt	0.07	0.07	0.08

Source: Woods & Poole Economics, 2005 State Profile

Table 19: Year Structures Built

	2000-1999	1998-1995	1994-1990	1989-1980	1979-1970	1969-1960	1959-1940	1939 or Earlier
Peach County	285 (3.1%)	1,079 (11.9%)	1,158 (12.7%)	1,833 (20.2%)	1,774 (19.5%)	1,244 (13.7%)	1,069 (11.8%)	651 (7.2%)
Byron	43 (3.7%)	142 (12.2%)	154 (13.3%)	354 (30.5%)	161 (13.9%)	120 (10.3%)	129 (11.1%)	59 (5.1%)
Fort Valley	58 (1.8%)	291 (9.0%)	234 (7.3%)	361 (11.2%)	687 (21.3%)	588 (18.3%)	647 (20.1%)	352 (10.9%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 20: Value of Owner Occupied Units (2000)

	Less than 50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 to \$299,999	\$300,000 to \$499,999	\$500,000 to \$999,999	\$1,000,000 or More
Peach County	775 (19.3%)	2,046 (50.9%)	855 (21.3%)	249 (6.2%)	65 (1.6%)	22 (.5%)	2 (0%)	2 (0%)
Byron	50 (7.5%)	361 (54.2%)	173 (26%)	50 (7.5%)	23 (3.5%)	7 (1.1%)	0 (0%)	2 (.3%)
Fort Valley	524 (40.5%)	671 (51.9%)	86 (6.7%)	12 (.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 21: Gross Rent for 2000

	Less than \$200	\$200 to \$299	\$300 to \$499	\$500 to \$749	\$750 to \$999	\$1,000 to \$1,499	\$1500 or More	No cash rent
Peach County	302 (11.5%)	397 (15.1%)	843 (32.1%)	622 (23.7%)	135 (5.1%)	69 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	258 (9.8%)
Byron	32 (10.7%)	23 (7.7%)	62 (20.7%)	120 (40%)	38 (12.7%)	6 (2%)	0 (0%)	19 (6.3%)
Fort Valley	233 (14.4%)	326 (20.2%)	524 (32.5%)	303 (18.8%)	77 (4.8%)	29 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	352 (10.9%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 22: Peach County Owner and Renter Costs as % of Income (1999)

% of Household Income Spent on Housing	Owner		Renter	
	#	%	#	%
Less than 15%	1,568	39.0%	562	21.4%
15-19%	715	17.8%	252	9.6%
20-24%	513	12.8%	305	11.6%
25-29%	313	7.8%	192	7.3%
30-34%	174	4.3%	188	7.2%
35% or more	686	17.1%	787	30.0%
Not computed	47	1.2%	340	12.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 23: Peach County % of Households by Income (1999)

Income Range	% of Households
Less than \$10,000	15.8%
\$10,000 to \$34,999	34.7%
\$35,000 to \$99,999	42.7%
\$100,000 or more	6.8%
Total number of households	8,414

Source: Georgia State of the State's Housing: Service Delivery Region 6 (July 2003)

Table 24: Peach County Public Assistance (FY 2003)

Food Stamps		
Monthly Avg # of Households		1,819
# of Recipients		3,683
% of Population		15.1%
% Change between 2002-2003		15.2%
Total Benefits Paid		\$4,030,992
Medicaid		
# of Recipients		5,836
% of Population		24%
% Change between 2002-2003		-9.6%
Average Cost		\$2,186
Total Expenditures		\$12,757,970
TANF3		
Monthly Avg # of Families		254
Avg # of Recipients as % of Population		24%
% Change between 2002-2003		0.4%
Total Annual Benefits		\$669,945

Source: 2004 Georgia County Guide

Table 25: Dependency Ratio

	Less than 18 and greater than 65 years old	Less than 18 and greater than 85 years old
Peach County	56.0	27.2
Region 6	60.0	27.8
State of Georgia	56.5	27.9

Source: Georgia State of the State's Housing: Service Delivery Region 6 (July 2003)

Table 26: Percent of Persons by Age with a Disability

Age	Percent
5-15 years	5.2%
16-20 years	13.0%
21-64 years	23.0%
65-74 years	43.0%
75 years and older	66.2%

Source: 2004 Georgia County Guide

Table 27: Housing Cost Comparison (2000)

	Owner (Median home value)	Renter (Monthly rent)	Per Capita Income (1999)
Peach County	\$78,300	\$412	\$16,031
State of Georgia	\$111,200	\$613	\$21,154
United States	\$119,600	\$602	\$21,587

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 28: 2006 List of Impaired Waters

Water Source	Location	Use/ Evaluation	Criterion Violated	Potential Causes	Actions to Alleviate
Bay Creek	Headwaters to Beaver Creek (Peach/Houston County)	Fishing/Not Supporting	Biota, Fecal Coliform, Dissolved Oxygen	Urban Runoff, Municipal Facility	Impairment will be addressed by implementing a locally developed plan that includes the remedial actions necessary for possible solution. EPD will address urban runoff through a water protection strategy. Fort Valley was in compliance with its dissolved oxygen and fecal coliform limits in 2004 and 2005.
Mossy Creek	Mule Creek to Lake Joy (Peach/Houston County)	Fishing/Partially Supporting	Biota	Unknown Sources	EPD will address unknown sources through a watershed protection strategy.

Georgia Environmental Protection Division

Table 29 Peach County Endangered Species List

Species	Federal Status*	State Status*	Habitat	Threats
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T	E	Inland waterways and estuarine areas in Georgia	Major factor in initial decline was lowered reproductive success following the use of DDT. Current threats include habitat destruction, disturbance at the nest, illegal shooting, electrocution, impact injuries, and lead poisoning.
Red-cockaded Woodpecker <i>Picoides borealis</i>	E	E	Nest in mature pine with low understory vegetation, forage in pine and pine hardwood stands	Reduction of older age pine stands and encroachment of hardwood midstory in older age pine stands due to fire suppression.
Indian Olive Plant <i>Nestronia umbellula</i>	No Federal Status	T	Dry open upland forest of mixed hardwood and pine	
Sweet Pitcher-Plant <i>Sarracenia rubra</i>	No Federal Status	E	Acid soils of open bogs, sand hill swamps, Atlantic white-cedar swamps, wet savannahs, low areas in pine flat woods, and along slough and ditches	

Source: United States Fish and Wildlife Service

*E = Endangered – A species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or part of its range

*T= Threatened – A species likely to become endangered in the future

Table 30: Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan Initiatives

Route Description	Facility Type	Implementation Table
Central Georgia Route Corridor		
Fulton Mill Road from Bethel Church Road to Peach County Line	Signs	Short-Term
	Bicycle Lane	Long-Term
Boy Scout Road From Peach County line to Byron City Limit	Signs	Short-Term
	Bicycle Lane	Long-Term
Boy Scout Road/Robinson Street/E. Heritage Street in Byron from City Limit to Main St.	Signs	Short-Term
	Shared Roadway	Short-Term
Jailhouse Alley/White Road from Main Street to Linda Dr.	Shared Roadway	Short-Term
	Sidewalks	Short-Term
White Road From Linda Drive to Red Oak Rd.	Signs	Short-Term
	Shared-use Trail	Long-Term
White Rd. from Red Oak Rd. to US 41 in Houston County	Signs	Short-Term
	Bicycle Lane	Long-Term
US 41 from White Rd to north Perry City Limits	Signs	Short-Term
	Bicycle Lane	Long-Term
US 41 from Perry City Limits to Georgia Agricultural Center	Shared-use Trail	Short-Term
Central Route Corridor – Spur#3		
Hwy 42 from Hwy 49 in Byron to US 80 in Roberta, Crawford County	Bicycle Lane and Signs	Long-Term
Central Route Corridor – Spur#4		
Moseley Rd in Byron from Main St to Hwy 49	Bicycle Lane and Signs	Long-Term
Hwy 49 from Mosley Rd. to Hwy 96 in Fort Valley	Bicycle Lane and Signs	Long-Term
Central Route Corridor – Spur#5		
Hwy 49 from White Rd. to Moseley Rd	Bicycle Lane and Signs	Long Term
TransGeorgia Corridor –Spur#1		
River Rd from Hwy 96 in Crawford County to Hwy 49 in Peach County	Signs	Short-Term
	Bicycle Lane	Long-Term
Hwy 49 from River Road to Hwy 96	Signs	Short-Term
	Bicycle Lane	Long-Term
<i>Short-Term: Anticipated to be implemented between 2005-2009</i>		
<i>Long-Term: Anticipated to be implemented after 2009</i>		

Table 31: Pedestrian Projects within Peach County

Description	Program Year					Likely Project Involvement	Estimated Cost	Possible Funding Sources
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009			
Construct Sidewalks along Main Street from Hwy 49 just past Moseley St; along Moseley Street from Main St. to the Downtown Square and around the City Square in Byron	X	X				City of Byron, Better Home Town Program, CVB	\$15,000	State/Federal Grants, Local
Construct streetscape improvements (lighting, benches, etc) in areas identified above	X	X				City of Byron, Better Home Town Program, CVB	\$20,000	State/Federal, Grants, Local
Construct sidewalks along New Dunbar Road; Linda Dr. to White Rd. to Hwy 49; and Church St. from Jailhouse Alley to Main Street in Byron			X	X	X	City of Byron, Better Home Town Program, CVB	\$52,000	State/Federal Grants, Local
Prepare pedestrian facility and infrastructure improvement plans for Fort Valley (along with Centerville, Forsyth, Gordon, Hawkinsville, Jeffersonville, and Roberta) based on results of the sidewalk assessments to improve access to the downtown area			X	X		RDC, Local Governments	\$35,000	GDOT, Local

Table 32: Peach County Water Treatment Capacity

City	Treatment Capacity	Average Daily Use/Treatment Capacity	Storage Capacity
Byron	600,000	83%	325,000
Fort Valley	4,000,000	50%	1,500,000

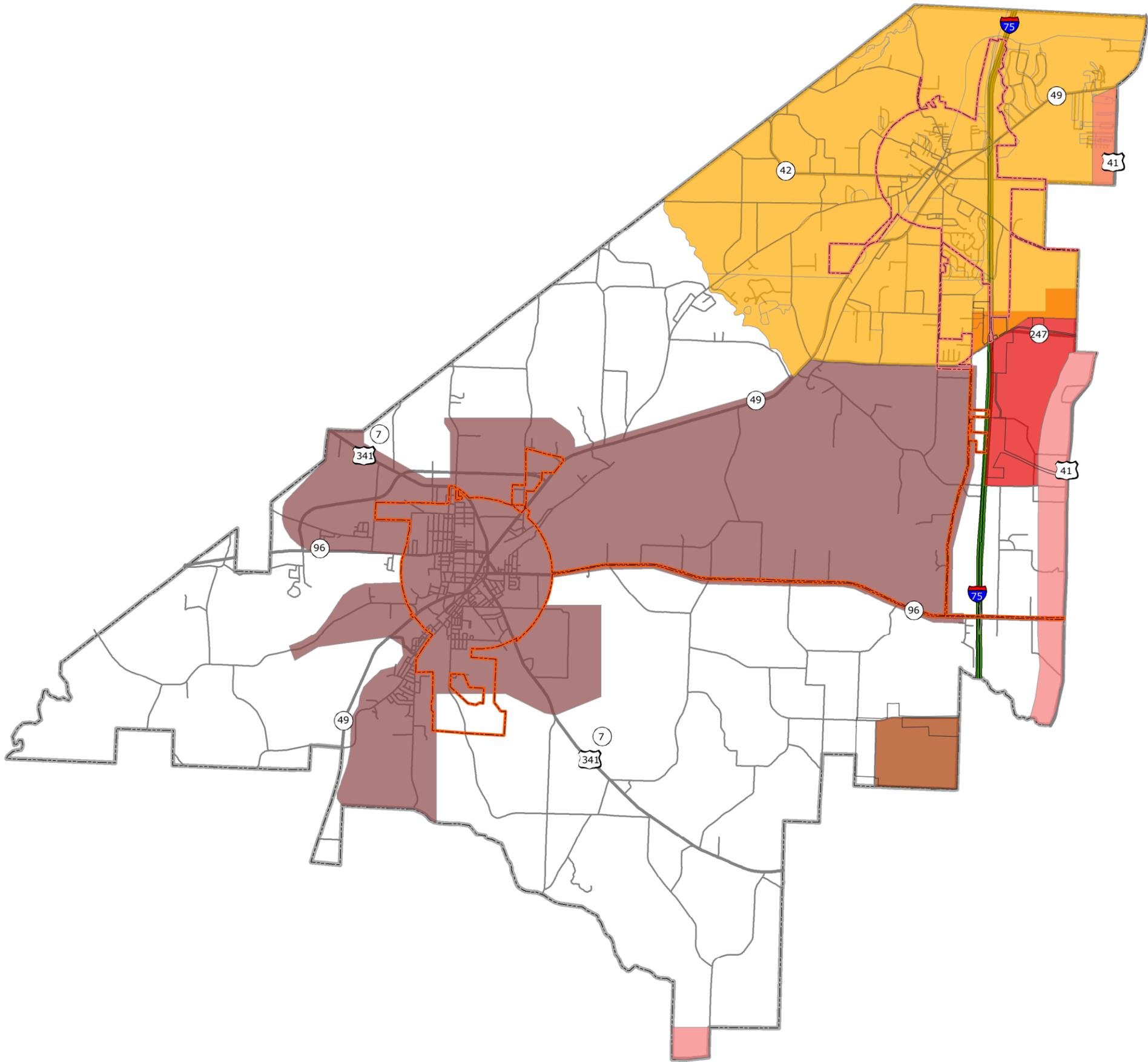
Source: 2004 Middle Georgia Regional Plan

Appendix – B

Maps

Peach County 2006-2026
Comprehensive Plan

**Water Supply & Treatment
Current Service Provision**



Legend

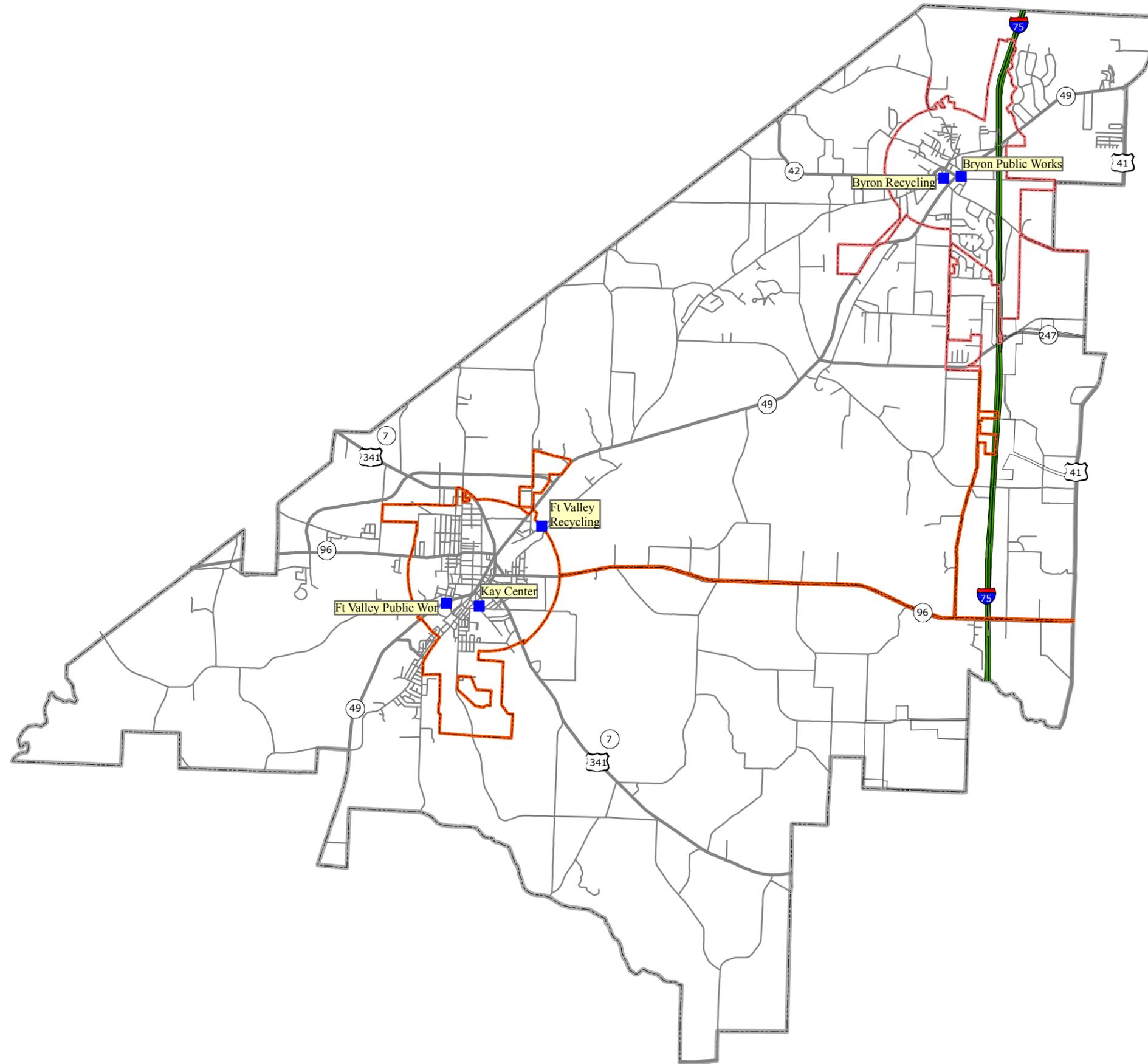
- Byron Service Area
- Fort Valley Service Area
- Houston Service Area
- Perry Service Area
- Warner Robins Service Area
- Byron
- Fort Valley
- Peach County Boundary
- Interstate
- City Street
- County Road
- State Highway



Solid Waste Management Facilities

Legend

-  Solid Waste Facilities
-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary
-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  State Highway



0 1 2 4 Miles

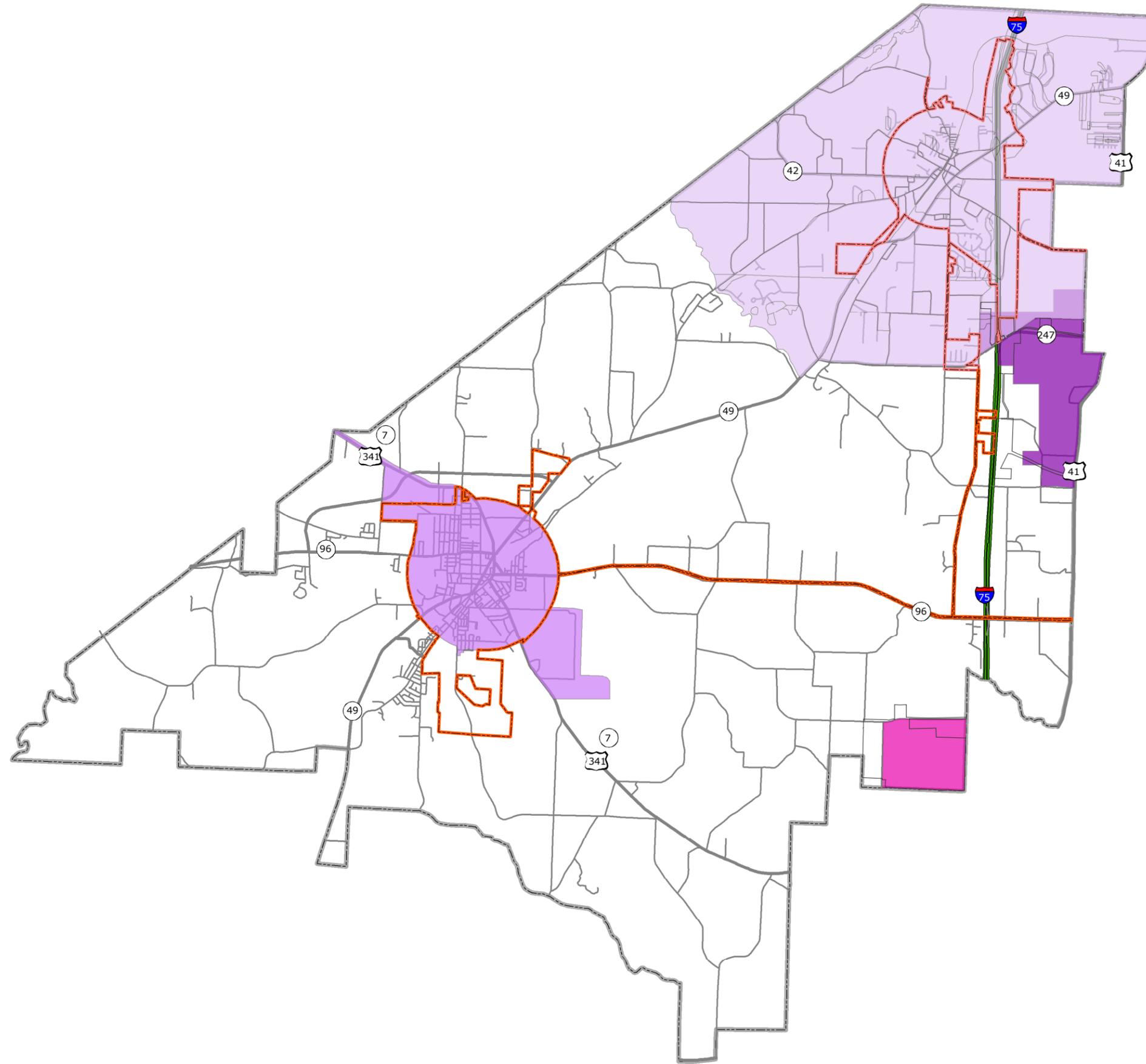


Peach County 2006-2026 Comprehensive Plan

Sewerage System & Wastewater Treatment Current Service Provision

Legend

- Byron Service Area
- Fort Valley Service Area
- Perry Service Area
- Warner Robins Service Area
- Byron
- Fort Valley
- Peach County Boundary
- Interstate
- City Street
- County Road
- State Highway



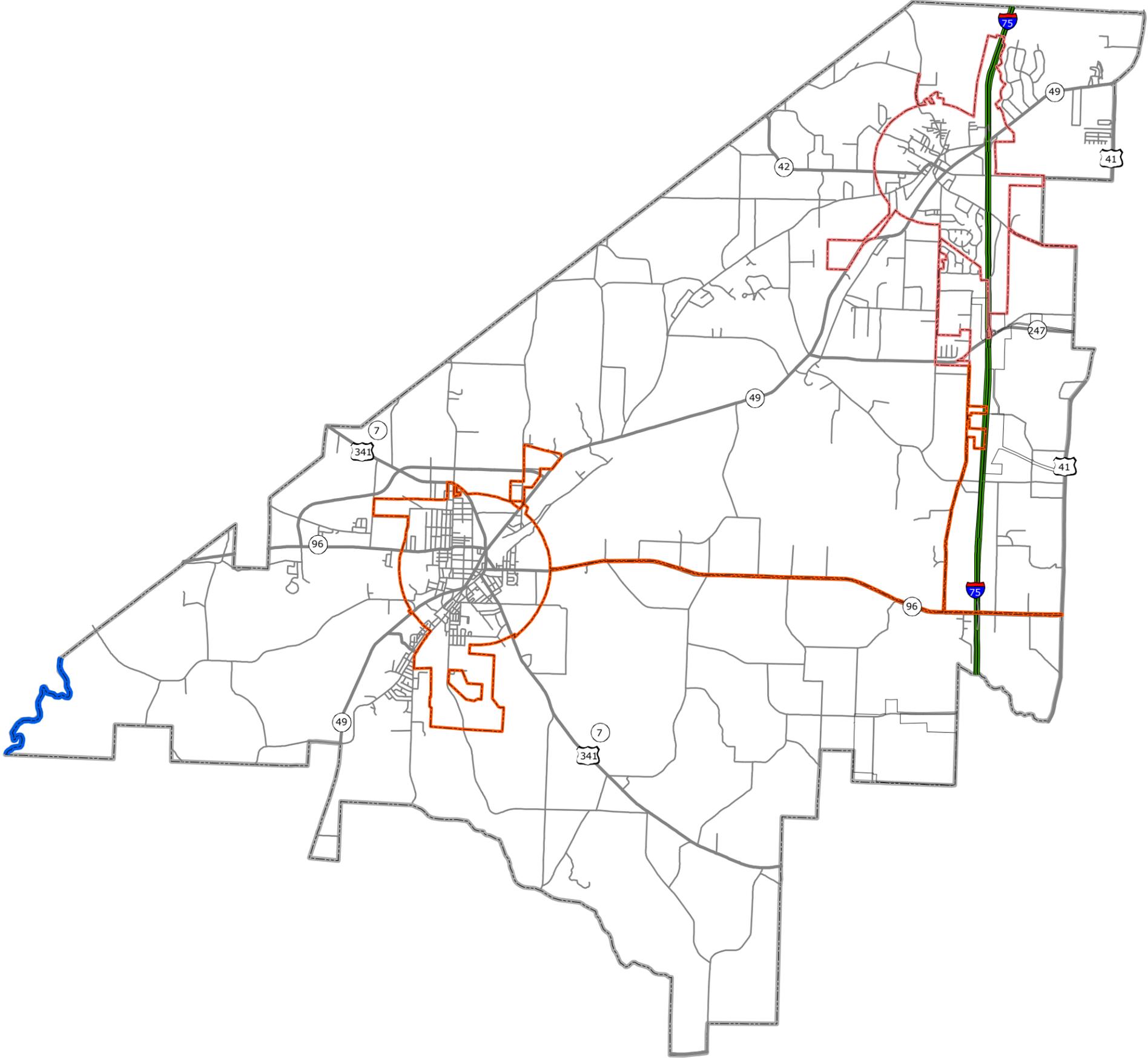
0 1 2 4 Miles



Protected River Corridors

Legend

-  River Corridor
-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary
-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  Public Road
-  Ramp
-  State Highway

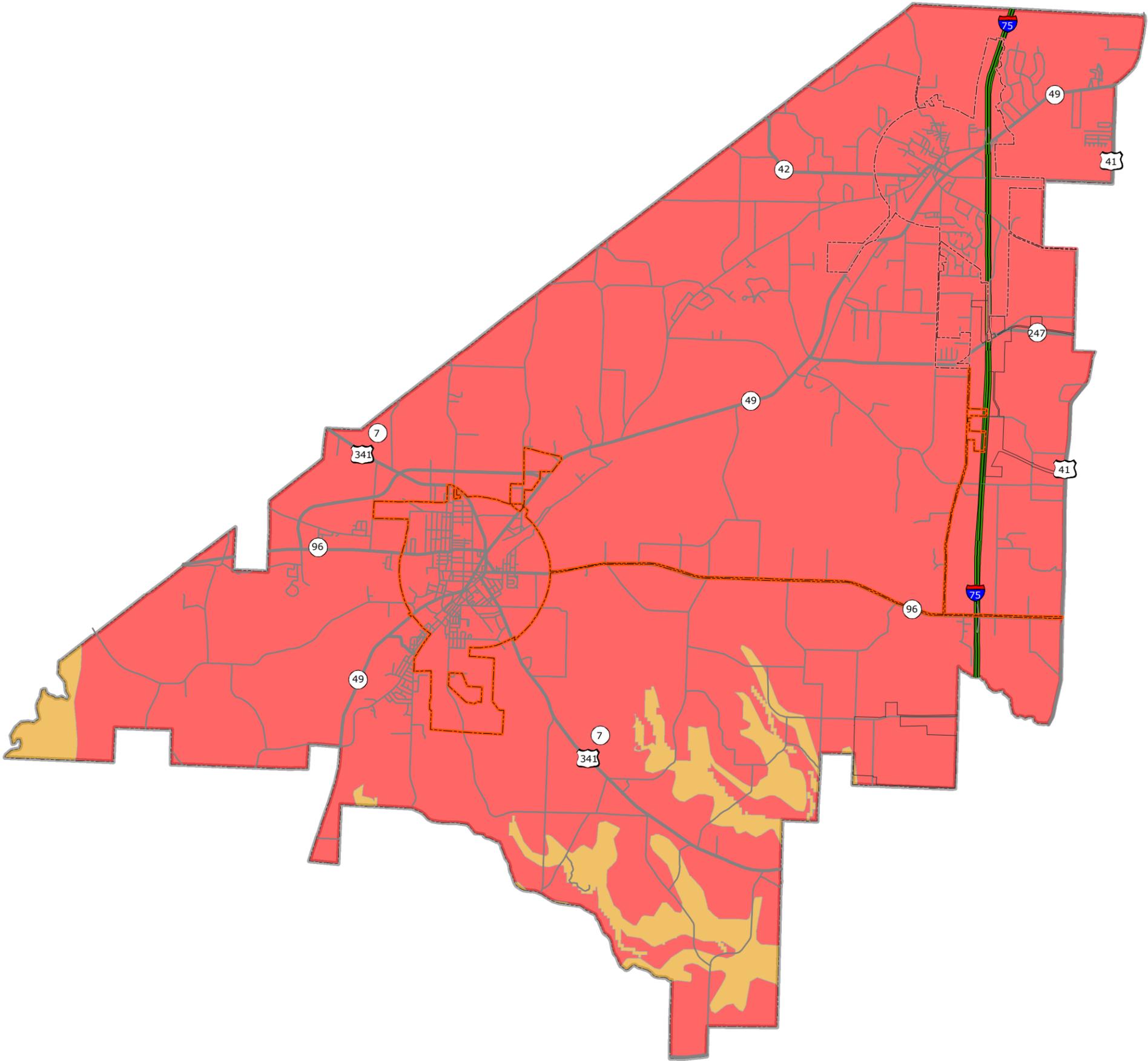


Pollution Susceptibility

Legend

- HIGH
- AVERAGE
- Byron
- Fort Valley
- Peach County Boundary

- Interstate
- City Street
- County Road
- Public Road
- Ramp
- State Highway



0 1 2 4 Miles



Planned Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Legend

5 Year Plan -Signage Only

Long Term Plan

Red Text Long Term Plan

Byron

Fort Valley

Peach County Boundary

Interstate

City Street

County Road

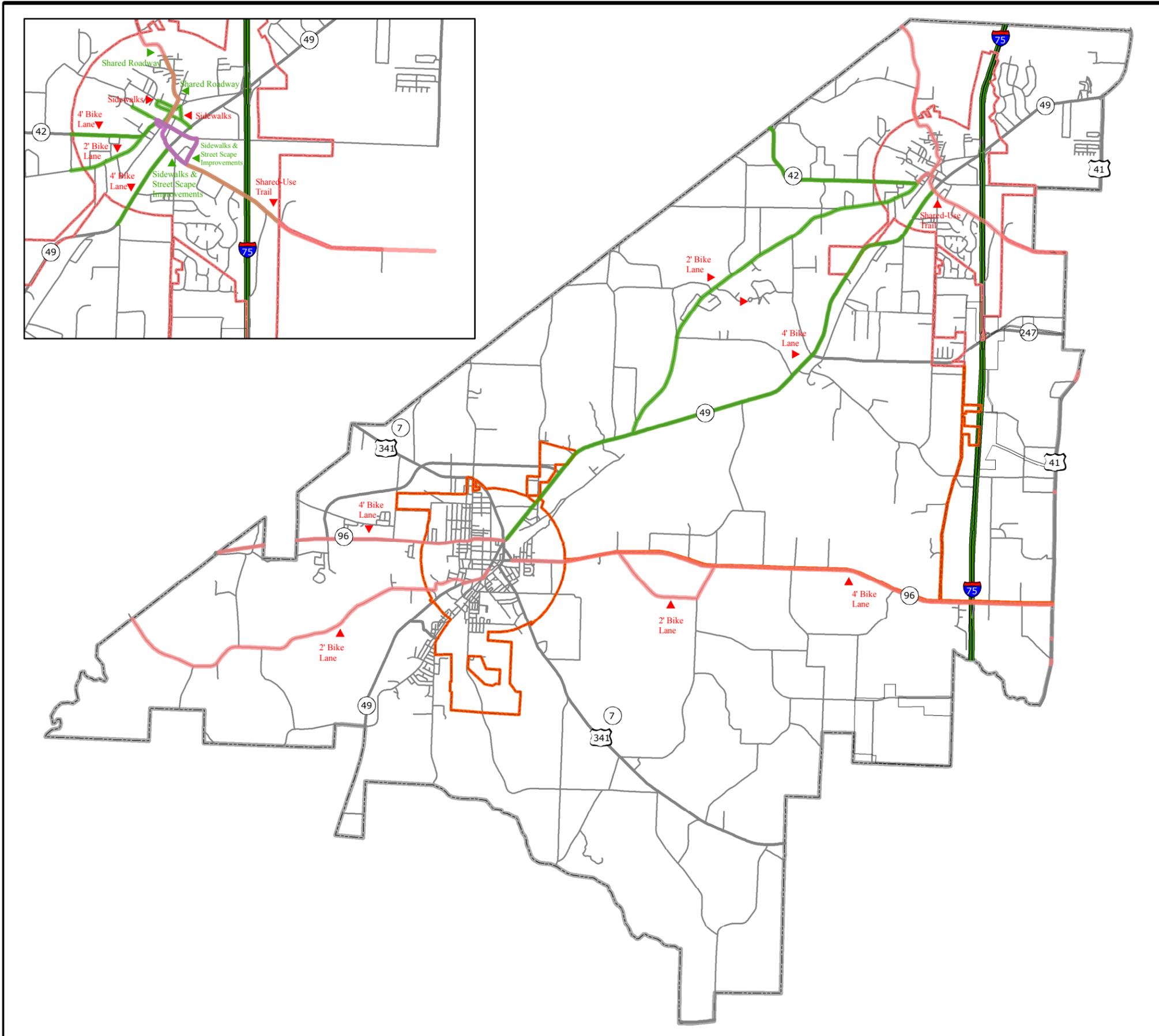
Public Road

Ramp

State Highway



0 1 2 4 Miles

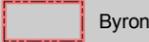


Parks and Recreation

Legend



parks



Byron



Fort Valley



Peach County Boundary



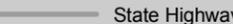
Interstate



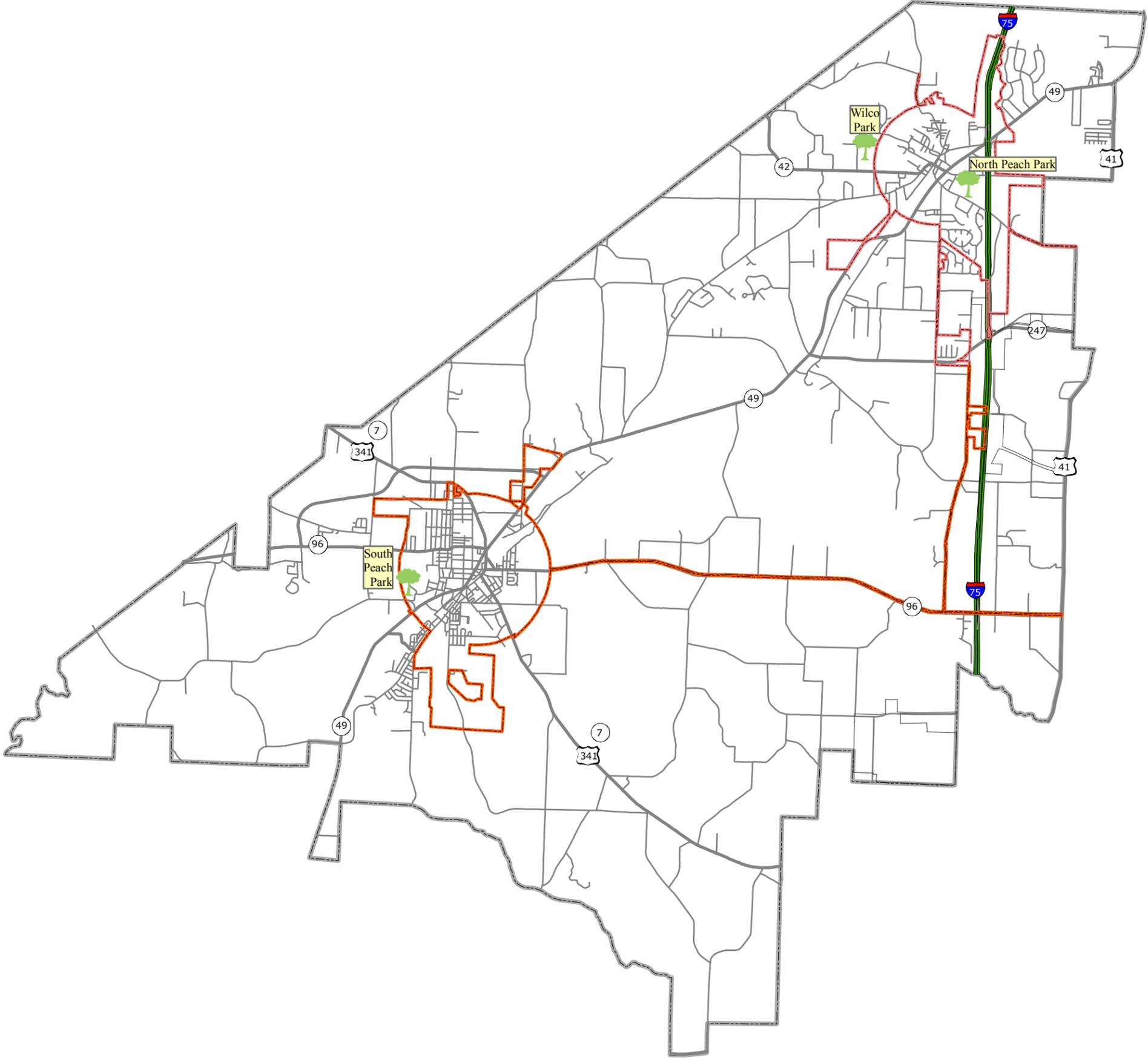
City Street



County Road



State Highway

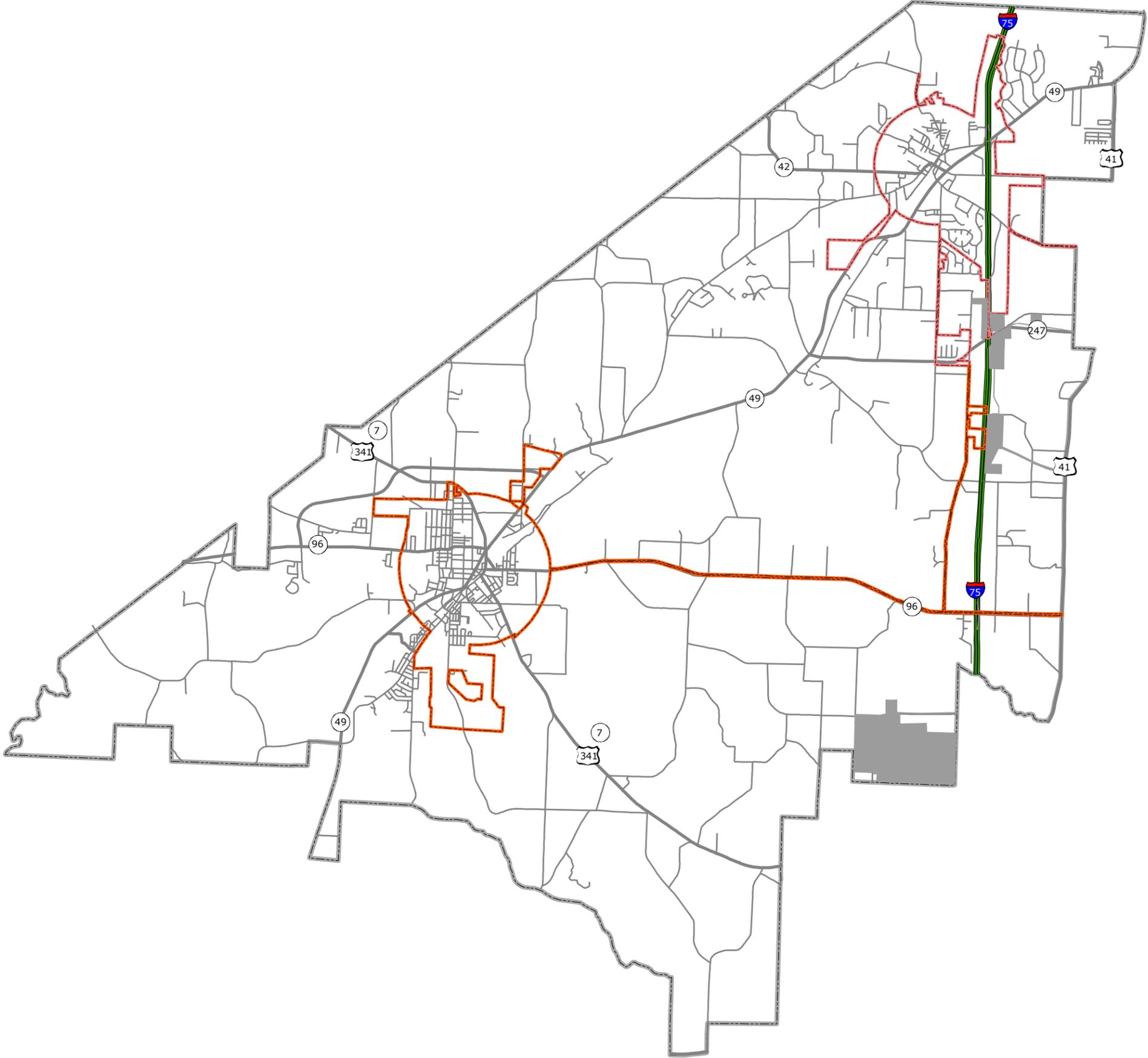


Major Road and Highway Network

Legend

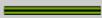
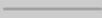
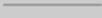
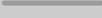
-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary

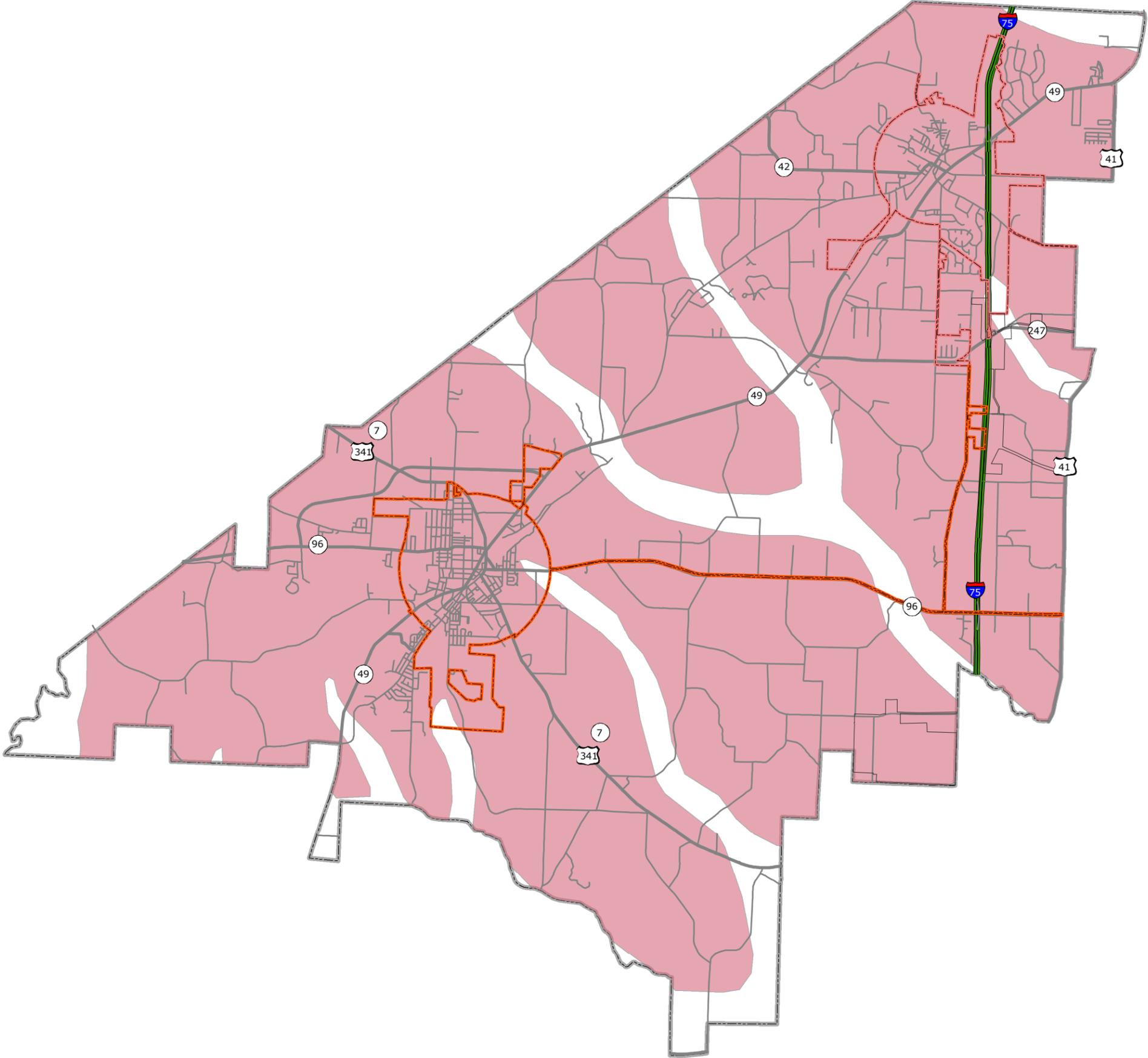
-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  State Highway



Groundwater Recharge Areas

Legend

-  CRETACEOUS-TERTIARY
-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary
-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  Public Road
-  Ramp
-  State Highway



0 1 2 4 Miles



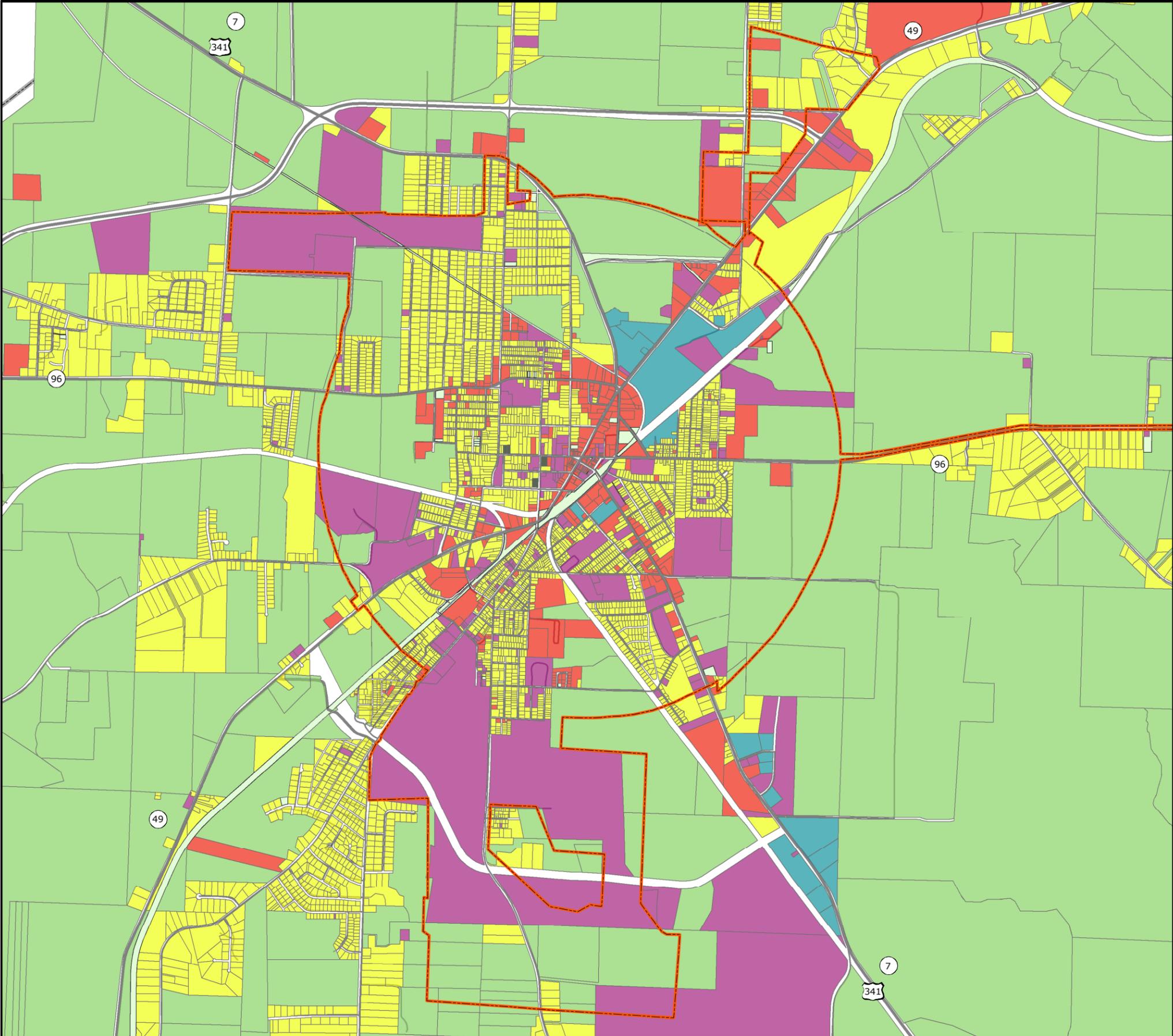
Existing Land Use Fort Valley

Legend

-  Agricultural
-  Commercial
-  Public/Institutional
-  Historic Areas
-  Industrial
-  Residential

-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary

-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  State Highway



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



Flood Plains

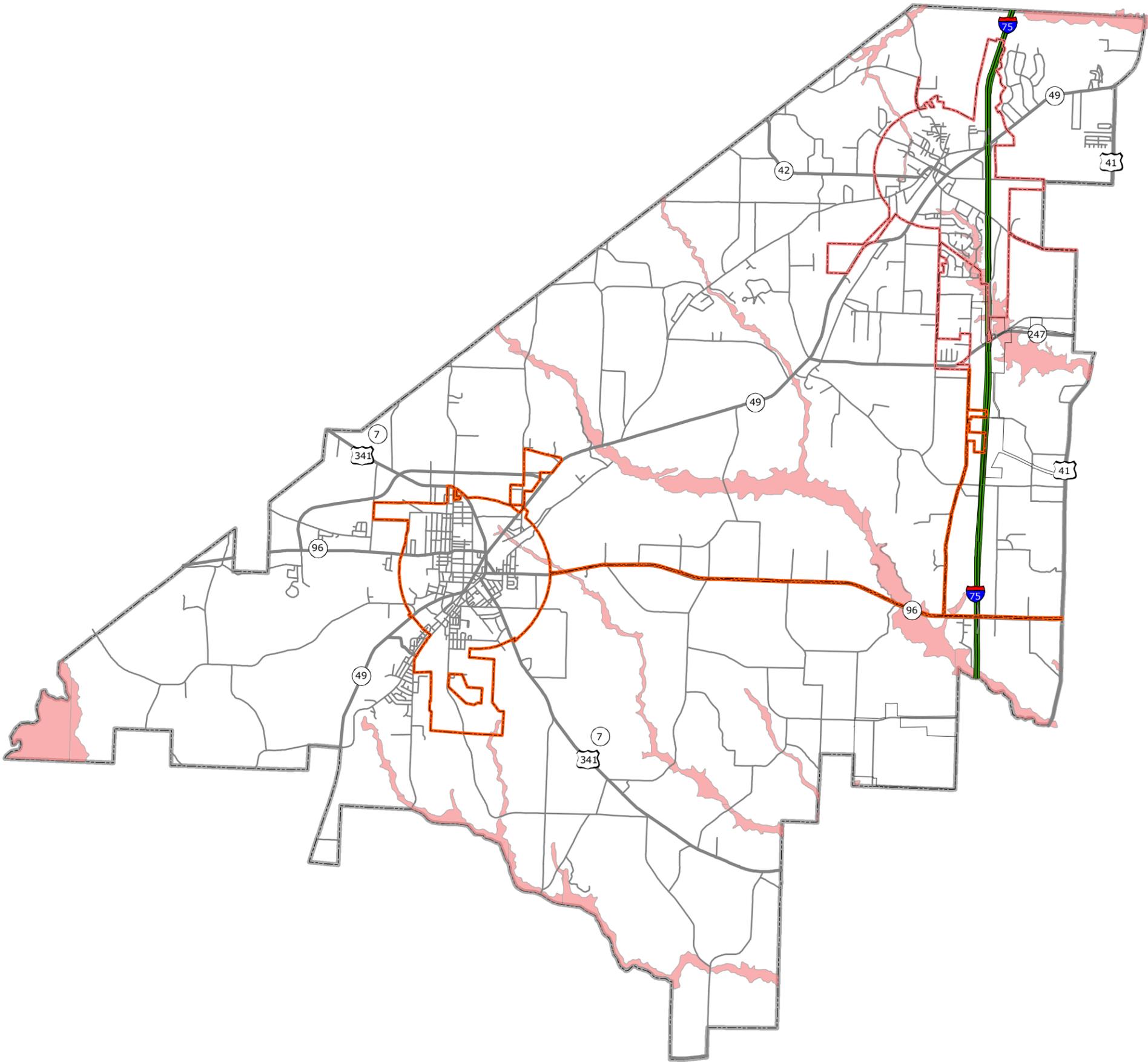
Legend

 IN An area designated as within a "Special Flood Hazard Area" (or SFHA) on a FIRM. This is an area inundated by 1% annual chance flooding for which BFEs or velocity may have been determined. No distinctions are made between the different flood hazard zones that may be included within the SFHA.

 X500 An area inundated by 0.2% annual chance flooding; an area inundated by 1% annual chance flooding with average depths of less than 1 foot or with drainage areas less than 1 square mile; or an area protected by levees from 1% annual chance flooding.

-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary

-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  Public Road
-  Ramp
-  State Highway



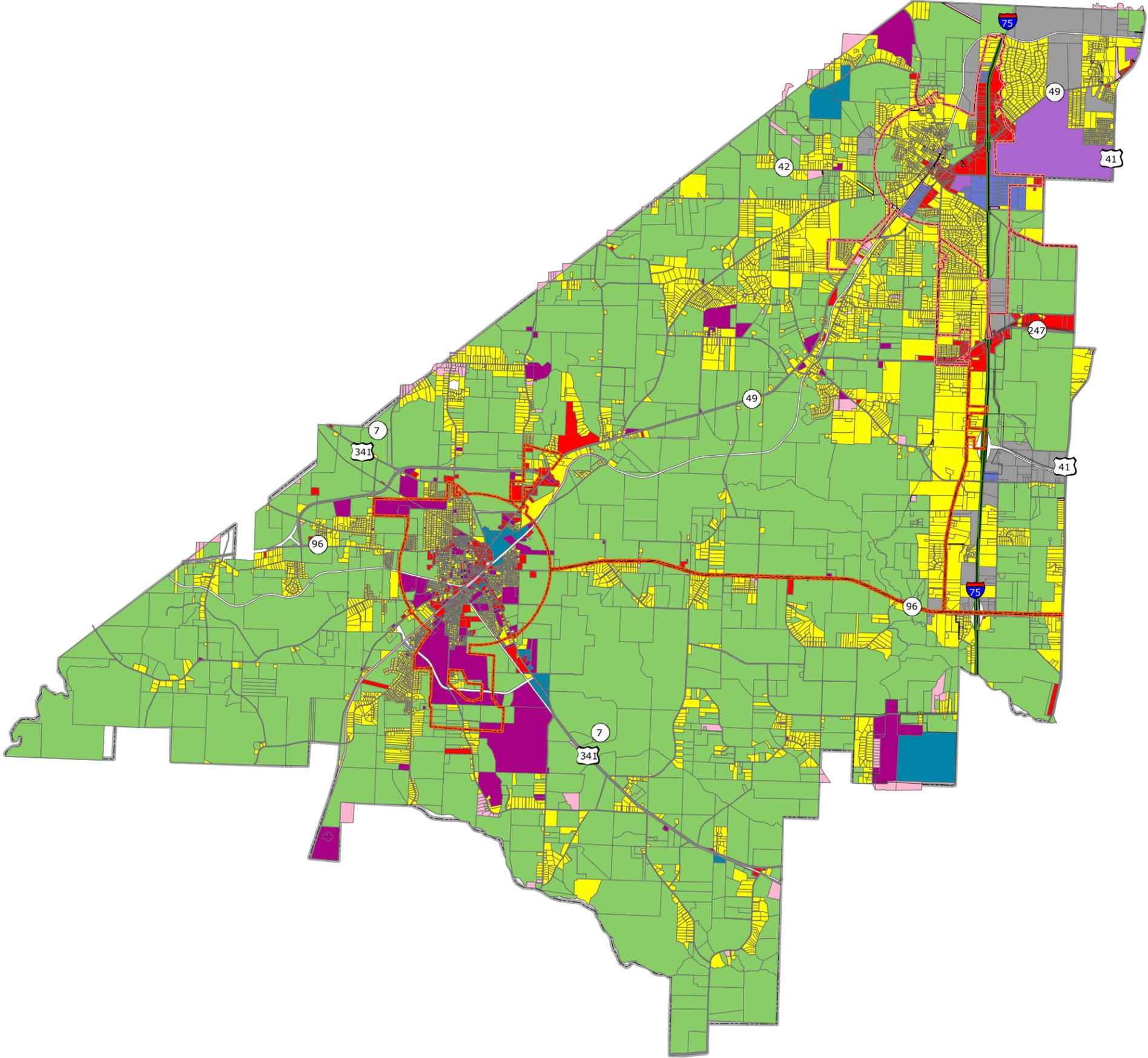
Existing Land Use

Legend

-  Agricultural
-  Commercial
-  Public/Institutional
-  Historic
-  Industrial
-  Residential

-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary

-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  State Highway

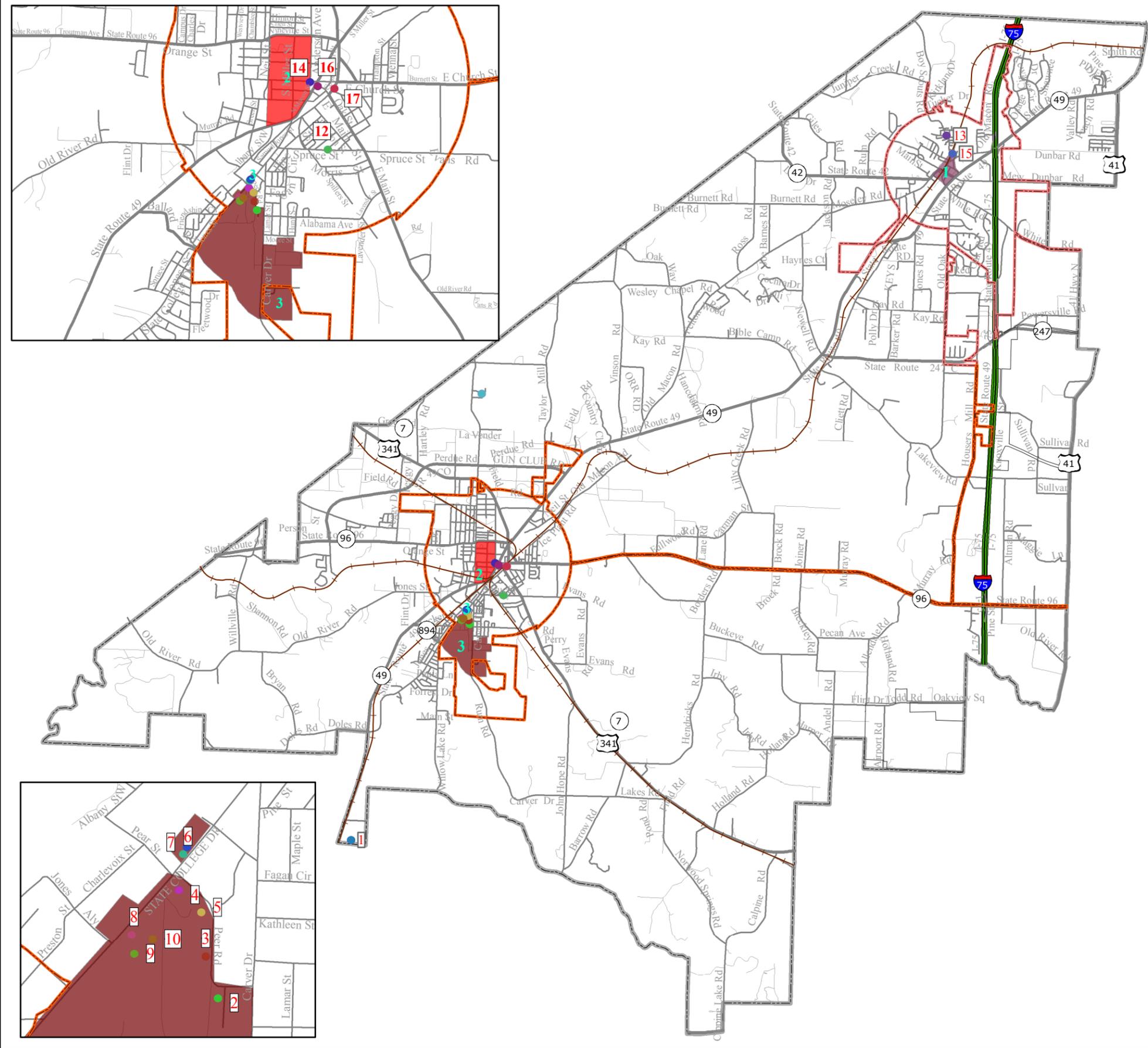


Peach County 2006-2026 Comprehensive Plan

Cultural and Historical Resources

Legend

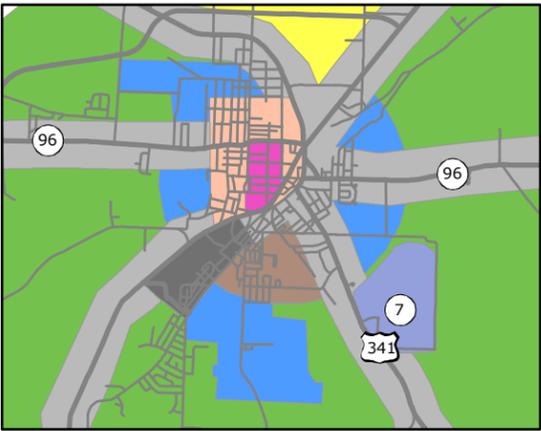
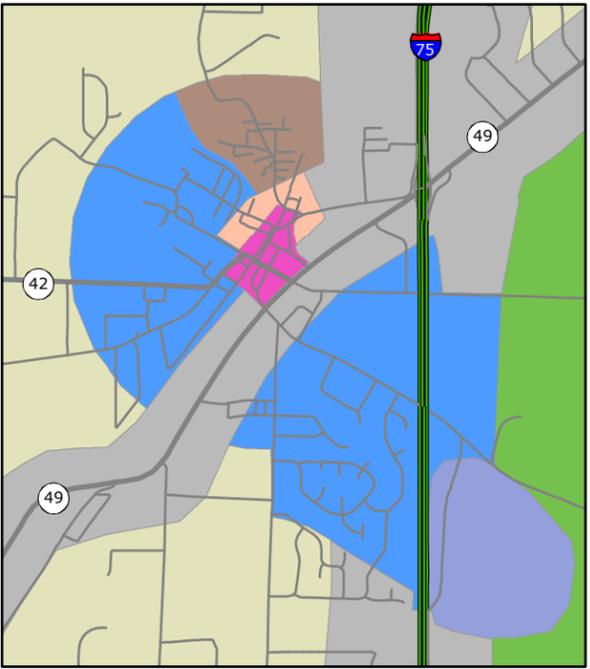
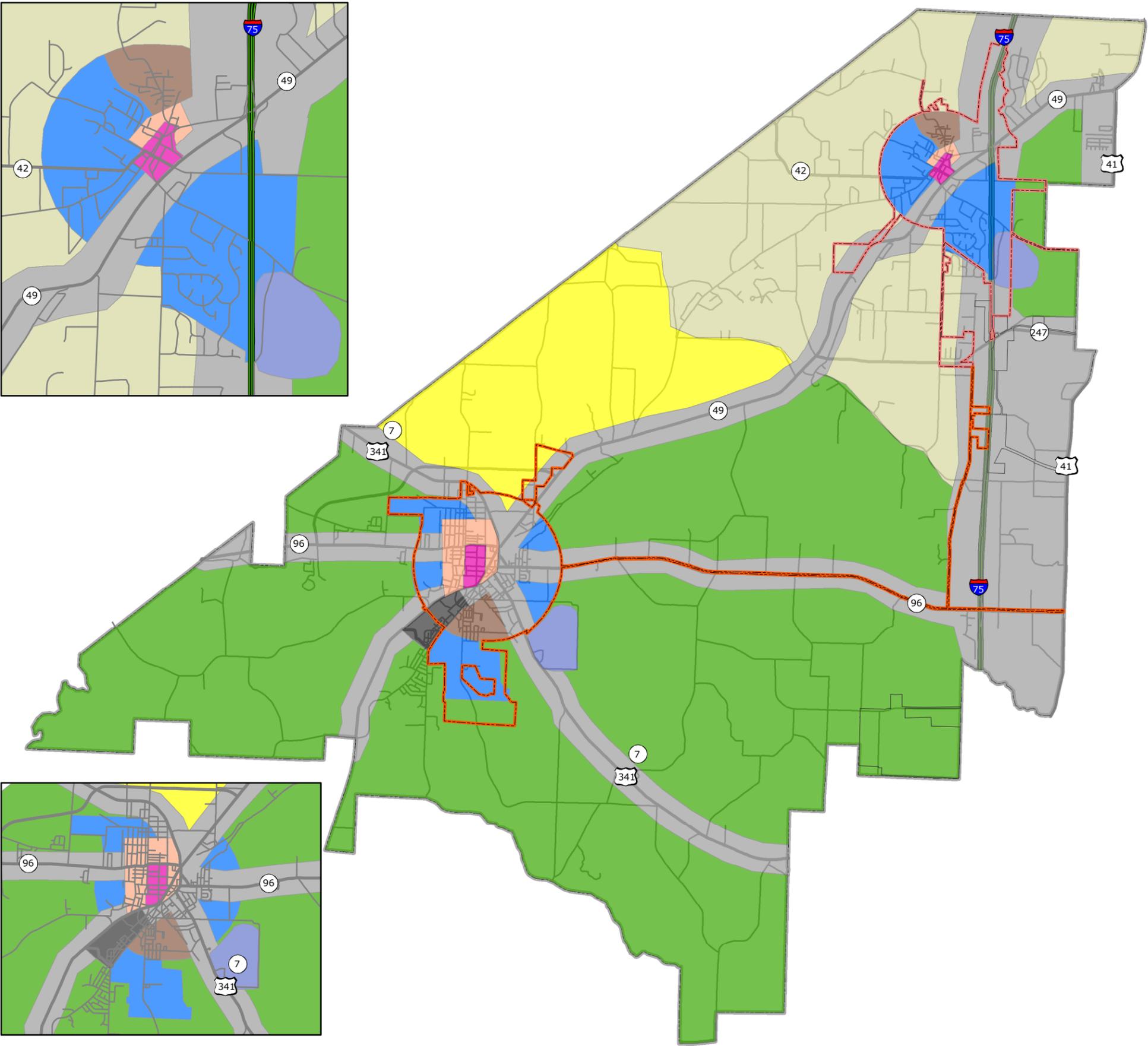
- 1 Strother's Farm/ Masee Lane Gardens
 - 2 FVSU: Ohio Building
 - 3 FVSU: Founders Hall
 - 4 FVSU: Anderson Alumni House
 - 5 FVSU: Carnegie Hall
 - 6 FVSU: Faculty House 706
 - 7 FVSU: Faculty House 904
 - 8 FVSU: Huntington Hall
 - 9 FVSU: Bishop Hall
 - 10 FVSU: Robert W. Patton Building
 - 11 James Everett House
 - 12 H. A. Hunt School -Not on National Register
 - 13 Byron Community Center
 - 14 Peach County Court House
 - 15 Byron Depot
 - 16 Austin Theatre -Not on National Register
 - 17 Troutman House -Not on National Register
-
- 1** Byron Historic District
 - 2** Everett Square Historic District
 - 3** Ft. Valley State University Historic District
-
- Interstate
 - City Street
 - County Road
 - State Highway
 - Byron
 - Fort Valley
 - Peach County



Proposed Character Areas

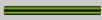
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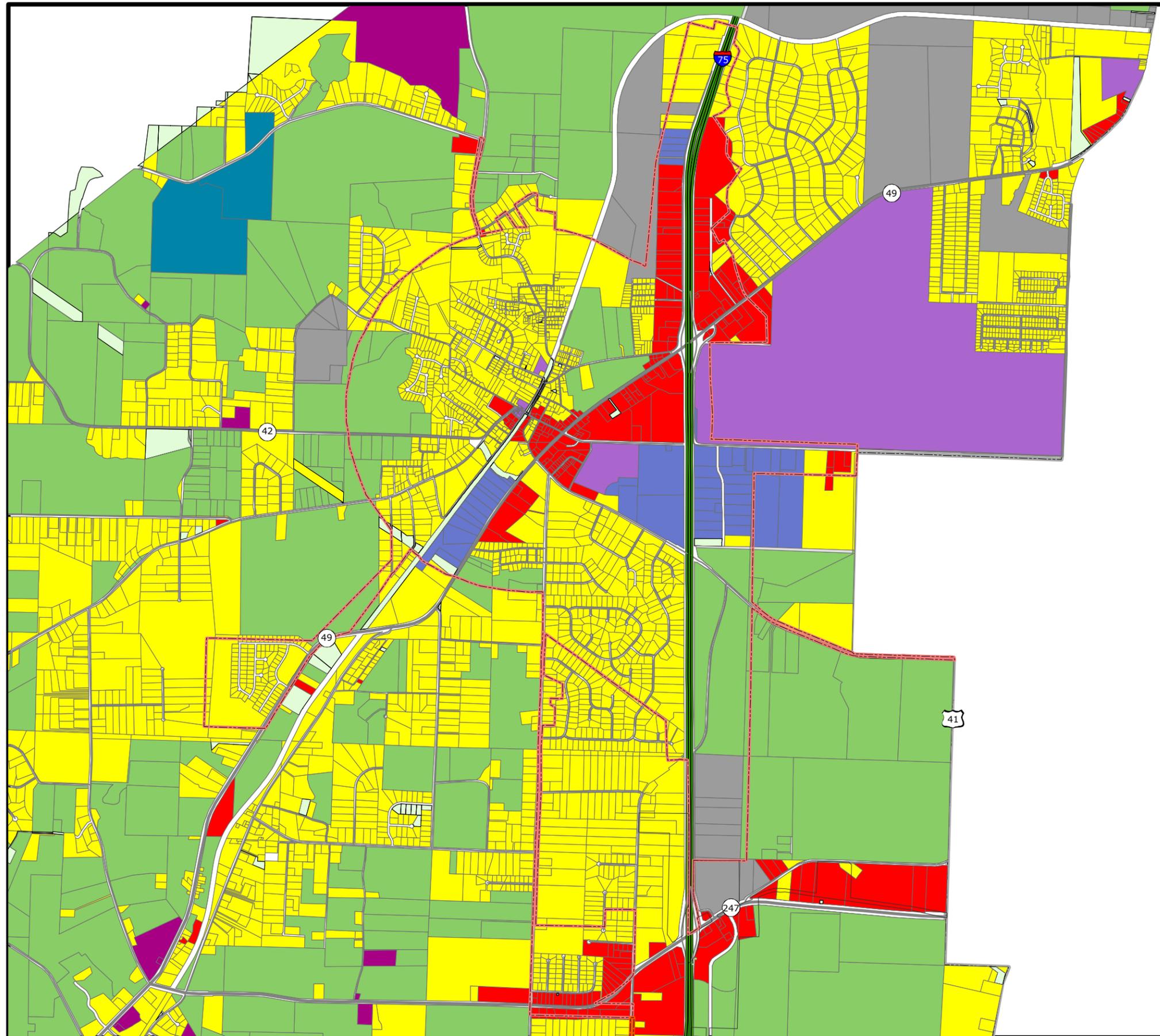
- Agricultural/Open Space
- Decreasing Neighborhood
- Downtown Byron
- Downtown Ft. Valley
- Historic Area
- Industrial
- Major Highway Corridor
- Rural Residential
- Stable Traditional Neighborhood
- Developing Suburban Area
- University
- Byron
- Fort Valley
- Peach County Boundary
- Interstate
- City Street
- County Road
- State Highway



Existing Land Use Byron

Legend

-  Agriculture
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Public/Institutional
-  Residential
-  Undeveloped
-  Byron
-  Fort Valley
-  Peach County Boundary
-  Interstate
-  City Street
-  County Road
-  State Highway



Peach County 2006-2026
Comprehensive Plan

Wetlands

Legend



Wetlands



Byron



Fort Valley



Peach County Boundary



Interstate



City Street



County Road



Public Road



Ramp



State Highway

