

Banks County Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive Plan Update for
Unincorporated Banks County, Georgia

Part II
Community Agenda

2008 - 2018
October 2008



Prepared By:

 **MACTEC**

Prepared For:

Banks County



Banks County
Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

COMMUNITY AGENDA



Prepared for:
Banks County
Homer, Georgia

By:



MACTEC, Inc. – Planning & Design Group
Atlanta, Georgia

July 22, 2008

Table of Contents

TRANSMITTAL RESOLUTION III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... III

1. INTRODUCTION 1-1

 Purpose 1-1

 Scope 1-2

 Why we plan 1-2

 Context of Growth and Change 1-3

 Community Participation 1-4

 How to use this plan 1-6

 Maintaining the plan 1-7

2. COMMUNITY VISION 2-1

 Vision Statement 2-1

 Character Area Map 2-2

 Future Development Map 2-36

 Quality Community Objectives 2-38

3. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES 3-1

 Population 3-1

 Economic Development 3-2

 Housing 3-5

 Natural and Cultural Resources 3-6

 Community Facilities and Services 3-9

 Transportation 3-11

 Land Use 3-12

 Intergovernmental Coordination 3-15

4. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM 4-1

 Report of Accomplishments 4-2

 2009-2013 Short Term Work Program 4-3

 Long Term Projects 4-5

 Policies 4-6

5. DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS 5-1

 Traditional Neighborhood Development 5-1

 Greyfield Redevelopment 5-2

 Conservation Subdivisions 5-3

 Purchase of Development Rights 5-3

 Transfer of Development Rights 5-4

 Mixed Use 5-4

 Roads and Sidewalks /Streetscape- 5-5

 Tax Increment Financing and Tax Allocation Districts 5-6

 Community Improvement Districts 5-7

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY III



BANKS COUNTY

Resolution 2008-15

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT THE BANKS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018 COMMUNITY AGENDA TO THE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the Banks County Board of Commissioners have completed the Community Agenda document and the update to the Short Term Work Program as part of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update; and

WHEREAS, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005 and established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the required public hearing was held and public notice of the public hearing advertised accordingly the at the Banks County Board of Commissioners meeting on July 22, 2008.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Banks County Board of Commissioners does hereby transmit the Community Agenda portion of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review.

Adopted by the Banks County Board of Commissioners on July 22, 2008.




Attest



Gene Hart
Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Joe Barefoot
Board of Commissioners



Rickey Cain
Board of Commissioners

Acknowledgements

BANKS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS		
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Introduction

Introduction to the Community Agenda for unincorporated Banks County

Located in the Georgia Mountains Region, Banks County covers 233.7 square miles of predominantly rural landscape. Banks County includes portions of six municipalities: Alto, Baldwin, Gillsville, Homer, Lula and Maysville. Homer is the only city located completely in Banks County. The other five cities straddle the County border. Understanding the importance of planning for long-range growth and development, Banks County citizens, elected officials, professional staff, business leaders, property owners and major employers worked together to prepare the *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 – Part II Community Agenda (Community Agenda)*.

Purpose

The *Community Agenda* represents the community’s vision, goals, policies, key issues and opportunities that the community chooses to address, and an action plan highlighting the necessary tools for implementing the comprehensive plan. In addition, it outlines a Character Area Map and a Future Development Map for unincorporated areas of Banks County.

The *Community Agenda* serves the purpose of meeting the intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ (DCA) “Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning,” as established on May 1, 2005. Preparation in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining status as a Qualified Local Government for Banks County. State law requires Banks County and its municipalities to update their respective comprehensive plans by October 31, 2008. For planning purposes, DCA classifies Banks County as a “Basic” planning level jurisdiction. The *Community Agenda* encompasses unincorporated Banks County.

The *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 Community Agenda* updates the *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 1992-2015* that was



*Historic former Banks County Courthouse
located in Homer*

adopted in 1992. This 2008 update will serve as the official Comprehensive Plan for unincorporated Banks County. Unlike the 1992 plan, however, separate plan updates are being prepared for each municipality.

Scope

Part I of the *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018* included the Community Participation Program, *Community Assessment and Analysis of Supporting Data* that were prepared prior to the implementation of the *Community Participation Program*. These provided a preliminary look at the issues and opportunities, areas of special concern and an analysis of the existing development patterns that included recommended “character areas.” The *Community Agenda*, which is Part II of the *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018*, represents these ideas and additional ideas that have been discussed through the public participation process.

The *Community Agenda* does not restate the data included in Part I. Instead, it provides a fine-tuned list of issues and opportunities, maps depicting character areas and future development, and an implementation program. For the Character Area Map, the *Community Agenda* presents strategies for implementation of each character area. For the implementation program, the *Community Agenda* includes the Short Term Work Program (STWP), an assessment of the most-recently-adopted STWP and policy statements intended to guide the County.

Why we plan

Comprehensive planning is an important management tool for promoting a strong, healthy, community. The Plan provides a vision, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the future of the community. It protects private property rights while also encouraging and supporting economic development. The Plan can be used to promote orderly and rational development so that the County remains physically attractive and economically viable while preserving important natural or historic resources. The Plan provides the tool to become more certain about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met. It provides a tool for the community to achieve the development patterns it desires, such as: traditional neighborhoods, infill development, creating a sense of place, providing transportation alternatives, creating mixed uses, protecting natural resources and accommodating economic growth. Planning also helps the County invest the public’s money wisely in infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer, schools, parks and green space, and other facilities to maintain and improve the quality of life for the residents of Banks County.



McCoy Bridge Road crossing over the Hudson River east of Homer

Context of Growth and Change

Banks County’s population grew to a U.S. Census Bureau-estimated 16,556 in 2007, up from 14,422 in 2000, which represented a 14.8% increase from 2000 to 2007 for the County. Much of the County’s growth has occurred in the Banks Crossing area where U.S. 441 intersects I-85. New developments proposed for Homer and Maysville are also in the planning stages, however they have not yet impacted community growth. Growth has also occurred southeast of the U.S. 23/SR 365 corridor along the western Banks County boundary in unincorporated areas Baldwin, Alto and Lula.

Population projections prepared for the comprehensive plan update for Banks County show a continuation of recent trends and result in a 2030 population that ranges from a low of 23,002 to a high of 30,532, representing an average annual growth rate that ranges from 1.4% to 2.7% (see figure in right margin). The County faces the challenge of accommodating approximately a population increase of 6,446 to 13,976 residents, while also maintaining the integrity of its agricultural and rural heritage.

As residential growth occurs, the housing stock will inevitably continue to change. The Banks County inventory of housing units increased 102.3% between 1980 and 2006. While the real number of single-family detached housing units increased from 1980 to 2000, their proportion decreased as mobile homes/trailers increased their share. Future development will need to further diversify the housing choices available to County residents in order to provide for ever-changing housing preferences.

Along with the growth in population, the County has also experienced steady labor force growth. The Labor force grew by an average annual rate of growth of 3.5% between 1990 and 2006, compared to 2.5% growth for the County’s population. A challenge for the County however, is providing jobs within the County for this labor force. In 2000, a majority (70.4%) of the growing labor force left Banks County each day for work. Meanwhile, 56.4% of the jobs in Banks County were held by non-County residents. This mismatch highlights the need for the County to provide more housing near its job centers.

The Banks Crossing and Martin Bridge interchanges with I-85 provide Banks County with the most opportunity for new commercial and industrial development. A large portion of the Banks Crossing area has already been developed, but significant undeveloped land remains that could provide for a variety of uses, including workforce housing opportunities that can be made available to serve the growing workforce as light industry and retail continues to grow in the I-85, U.S. 441, SR 63 and SR 59 areas. The Martin Bridge area shown in the Character Area Map and Future Development Map should be reserved for

Context of Growth & Change in Banks County

- Growing labor force
- Changing supply of housing
- Mismatched labor force
- Banks Crossing & Martin Bridge growth potential
- Sewer service area expansion
- Growing population

Historical Population

Year	Population
1980.....	8,702
1990.....	10,308
2000.....	14,422
2007.....	16,556

- Net population gain 1980-2007: 7,854
- Average Annual Growth Rate 1980-2007: 2.4%

Population Projections

Year	Low	Medium	High
2010	17,282	17,753	18,283
2015	18,712	19,749	20,889
2020	20,142	21,745	23,495
2025	21,572	23,740	27,014
2030	23,002	25,736	30,532

- Range of net projected population gain 2007-2030: 6,446 to 13,976
- Range of projected average annual growth rate 2007-2030: 1.4% to 2.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, DCA, MACTEC
¹ DCA (1.0 multiplier) based on the average increment of change -1980-2000
² Exponential Growth Rate based on percent 2.4% annual change 1980-2007
³ DCA projections (1.35 multiplier) based on average increment of change 1990-2000



industrial growth. Housing to serve the workforce can occur in areas near Martin Bridge that will have access to sewer.

The County currently provides limited sewer service, which has restricted the opportunities for new development of all kinds. Plans are underway to determine the infrastructure needed for serving Martin Bridge and other nearby areas along near the I-85 corridor with sewer. This County investment will likely provide incentive for new development to take place. As planned sewer services expand, the opportunity exists to use the expansion as a way to direct growth to appropriate locations recommended in the land use plan and to manage the timing of new growth.

Community Participation

Creating a functional Comprehensive Plan begins with defining a common vision for the future development of the Community. A Community Vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future – the starting point for creating a plan and actions to implement the plan. A successful visioning process requires meaningful participation from a wide range of community stakeholders. More than 75 Banks County residents, property owners, business owners and other stakeholders contributed to the production of the *Community Agenda*. Due to the participation involved in developing the plan, the *Community Agenda* should generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of Banks County and thereby encourage citizens to remain engaged in the development process and ensure that the county and each municipality implement the plan.

Visioning Process

The Visioning Process, or citizen participation process, for the *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018* included multiple layers of participation from the residents and stakeholders of Banks County. A Kick-Off Meeting, Visioning Workshop, Framework Workshop, an Open House, and Public Hearings at the Banks County Board of Commissioners provided opportunities for input. Public Hearings were held at the Banks County Courthouse. The Banks County Senior Center in Homer hosted the remaining meetings and workshops listed above. In addition, the Steering Committee added considerable input into the planning process.

Countywide Kickoff

The Countywide Kick-Off meeting took place in March 2008. Questionnaires were distributed to the 30 attendees at the meeting and in subsequent issues of the local newspaper. Responses received by the consultant team helped supplement



Participants prioritize the issues and opportunities during an exercise at the Visioning Workshop

and expand the list of preliminary issues and opportunities presented in the Community Assessment.

Visioning Workshop

A Visioning Workshop was held in Homer on March 31, 2008. Thirty participants attended this meeting that focused on county-wide planning policies. Participants provided their input on the future of Banks County during the workshops via community preference surveys, facilitated discussions, completing questionnaires, and one-on-one conversations with the planning team. Participants also responded to the preliminary issues and opportunities and the proposed character areas at these meetings in addition to addressing the questions, “Where are we? Where are we going? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?”

Framework Workshop

The Framework Workshop was held in Homer on April 15, 2008. A community framework was presented at this workshop attended by 25 community stakeholders. Participants had the opportunity to begin defining the role that each community would play in the future of Banks County. These ideas would later be fine-tuned by the Steering Committee. In addition, participants had the opportunity to view the summarized stakeholder feedback gathered by the planning team during the Visioning Workshop. The consultant team assembled the information gathered during the Community Visioning and Framework Workshops and presented drafts to the Steering Committee for review and fine tuning prior to the Open House.



Participants discuss growth issues at the Visioning Workshop

Open House

The public was then presented the “preliminary draft” *Community Agenda* document and maps at the Open House on June 19, 2008. A “final draft” *Community Agenda* document was prepared after the Open House that was then presented to the Banks County Board of Commissioners at a regularly-schedule meeting on July 22, 2008. It was at this meeting that the BOC adopted the transmittal resolution that allowed for the transmission of the *Community Agenda* to GMRDC and DCA for review.

Public Relations

Throughout the planning process, public documents were posted on the Banks County government website. Public meetings were announced and detailed accounts reported in the Homer *Banks County News* newspaper, which also provided those who did not attend meetings with an opportunity to understand the process.

Steering Committee

In addition to meetings designed to solicit input from the general public, the planning team also organized a Steering Committee to provide important input and feedback into the planning process. The Steering Committee included representatives of County departments related to development and a mix of appointed officials, key property owners, neighborhood leaders, chamber and other economic development professionals, community service providers, areas residents, and others with some stake in the future development of the County.

The Steering Committee assisted in defining the preliminary issues and opportunities, defining character areas for the *Community Assessment*, and preparing the implementation program during the *Community Agenda*. In addition, the Steering Committee reviewed drafts of the major plan components at various points during the process of developing the *Community Agenda*, providing at each step of the way critical feedback and insight gained from dealing with the important issues facing the county on a daily basis. The Steering Committee members played a vital role in development of the Implementation and Policies chapters of the *Community Agenda*. Involvement of the Steering Committee members in this phase was crucial since many of the members will in be responsible for coordinating the execution of many of the actions/projects identified in the Short-Term Work Program or administering polices defined in the Agenda. The committee of 25 members held a total of six meetings during the planning process.



Participants mark up the Recommended Character Area map at the Visioning Workshop.

How to use this plan

In order to implement the County’s vision for growth and development as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan, the following elements were created during the planning process for use in guiding and implementing land use and development policy:

Character Area Map

The Character Area Map reflects the community vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with an extensive public countywide visioning process, is expressed in unique “character areas” that cover the entire County. The Character Area Map, which is intended to supplement the Future Development Map by organizing common themes of development throughout the county, promoting desired development patterns, guiding design and physical development, providing a framework for regulatory and policy changes and helping to guide future rezonings.

Future Development Map

The Future Development Map builds on the Character Area Map by applying the acceptable land uses for a given character area at a parcel level, resulting in every property in the County having a specific future land use. The Future Development Map is intended to guide future rezonings; proposed zone change requests are reviewed for consistency with the land uses and densities recommended in the Future Development Map.

While the Character Area Map and Future Development Maps recommend land uses and development patterns for a 20 year planning horizon, it is important that they be reviewed on an annual basis to determine if amendments are needed based on changing market and demographic trends.

Short Term Work Program

A five-year short term work program (STWP) is the primary implementation tool for achieving the community vision. It includes action items for implementation by the governing body that are based on recommended strategies identified for each character area and for each planning element in the Issues and Opportunities section (housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, land use, transportation, community facilities and services and intergovernmental coordination).

Policies

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the comprehensive plan, including achieving the Vision for Future Development and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. Policy statements are identified for each planning element.



One of the many rural, country roads that define the character in much of Banks County1

Maintaining the plan

The Board of Commissioners is responsible for maintaining the *Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018* to accurately reflect current community conditions and the community's vision and priorities for the future. Maintenance of the plan includes major and minor plan amendments, updates of the plan, or required periodic updates of the Community Agenda.

Plan Amendments

DCA defines major amendments as those changes to an adopted comprehensive plan that alter the basic tenets of the overall plan or a significant portion of the plan or if they have the potential to affect another local government. DCA defines minor amendments as those that the comprehensive plan that are

purely local in nature and do not qualify as major amendments. Major amendments to the plan must be submitted to the GMRDC for review within six months from the date that the Board of Commissioners experiences or decides to pursue a change that would qualify as a major amendment. Minor amendments do not require GMRDC review.

Updates to the Short Term Work Program

At a minimum, the Board of Commissioners must prepare and submit annual updates or five-year updates to the STWP portion of the *Community Agenda*. These updates must be submitted to GMRDC for review in order to maintain Quality Local Government status.

Updates to the Comprehensive Plan

At a minimum, a plan update must be completed every ten years, in accordance with the Local Comprehensive Plan Recertification Schedule maintained by DCA. However, after five years, the Board of Commissioners may determine that the comprehensive plan needs to be updated, based upon the degree of change in the community. If only minor changes have taken place, then revisions to the plan may be sufficient, in the form of plan amendments. If significant changes have occurred in community conditions (i.e., if the data upon which the plan is based has become significantly outdated, or the community's vision has changed), an update of the comprehensive plan or a major plan amendment may be needed.



SR 164 looking west near Dink McCoy Road

Community Vision

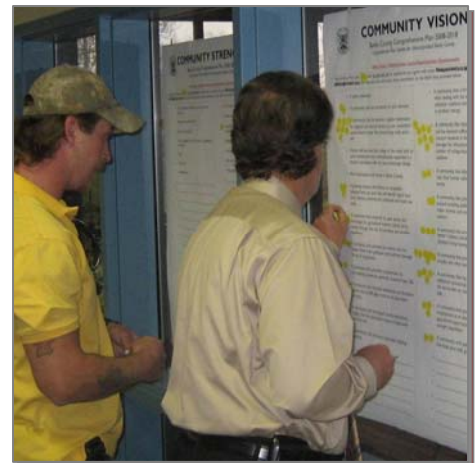
Involving the community throughout the development of the comprehensive plan plays a key role in the success of the plan

The Community Vision section paints a picture of what the Banks County desires to become and provides complete descriptions of the development patterns envisioned. This section begins with the vision statements for the unincorporated Banks County. The Community Vision then presents the Character Area Map subsection that includes the Character Area Map (with the character area descriptions) and the Future Development Map (specific areas along with the future development category descriptions). Finally, the Community Vision outlines its relationship to the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) as set forth by DCA in Appendix A.

Vision Statement

Banks County is a proud and vibrant community that works to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency while offering an exceptional quality of life in a quiet, clean, beautiful, safe environment. We embrace our history while coming together as a community to balance the promotion of targeted growth with the protection of our rural, agricultural character and natural resources. We do so in order to build a successful future for our children that includes:

- Protecting natural open space, agricultural heritage and rural integrity, balanced with clear designation of areas of new neighborhood development to meet the various housing needs of the our citizens while providing for commercial and industrial development that offers employment opportunities for our residents
- Promoting attractions, regional and national events, historic and cultural sites to encourage the growing tourism industry that includes
- A sustainable community that works to protect our rivers, streams and other important natural resources with incentives and sensible regulations



Visioning workshop attendees shown above participating in a Community Vision statement prioritization exercise

- Encouraging residents to live and work within the County by fostering a dynamic local economy that attracts and maintains a diverse workforce for the developing industrial/hi-tech employment while maintaining traditional agricultural opportunities.
- Neighborhoods located near employment centers that promote a sense of community by including public spaces, walkable streets and connectivity to adjacent uses, while incorporating a variety of housing choices to meet the needs of varied income levels and economic situations and provide for the changes that occur at each stage of life,
- A transportation network that provides a variety of ways to move around including public transportation options for major arteries and connectivity to other employment centers.
- Excellent recreation facilities and activities for citizens of all ages with a focus on our youth/teenagers and senior citizens
- Excellent provision of public safety and social services for the wellbeing of all citizens.
- Value and support for an outstanding public education system that continually strives to surpass state and national standards.
- Respect for appropriate growth guided by sound planning practices that properly manages all aspects of that growth (i.e. increased traffic, infrastructure needs, environmental impact, etc.)

Character Area Map

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Character Area Map that reflects the County's vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with an extensive public countywide visioning process, is expressed in unique "character areas" that cover the entire County. Together the character areas form a single map, which is intended to supplement the Future Development Map by organizing common themes of development throughout the county, promoting desired development patterns, guiding design and physical development, providing a framework for regulatory and policy changes and helping to guide future rezoning requests. The following pages present the map and associated Character Area narratives for unincorporated Banks County.

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the



Historic church in the Nail's Creek crossroads community

future. The character areas for Unincorporated Banks County defined and shown in the Character Area Map, define areas that:

- Presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved;
- Have potential to evolve into unique areas; or
- Require special attention because of unique development issues

The Character Area Map for unincorporated Banks County identifies the following character areas:

- Preserve
- Water Supply Watershed Protection Buffer
- Rural Agricultural
- Rural Residential
- Rural Crossroads
- Rural Corridor
- Community Activity Node
- Emerging Suburban
- Bushville Emerging Suburban
- Bypass Emerging Suburban
- Banks Crossing
- Martin Bridge
- Banks Crossing Corridor
- Homer Bypass Corridor
- North 441 Rural Corridor
- Baldwin Corridor
- Growth Corridor
- Landfill
- Incorporated Cities



Bulldozer shown above working to prepare land for new development near I-85

Character Area Defining Narrative

The character areas listed above are described in the following pages. Each description includes the following information, which presents an overall vision for future growth and development for a character area:

- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

Development Pattern

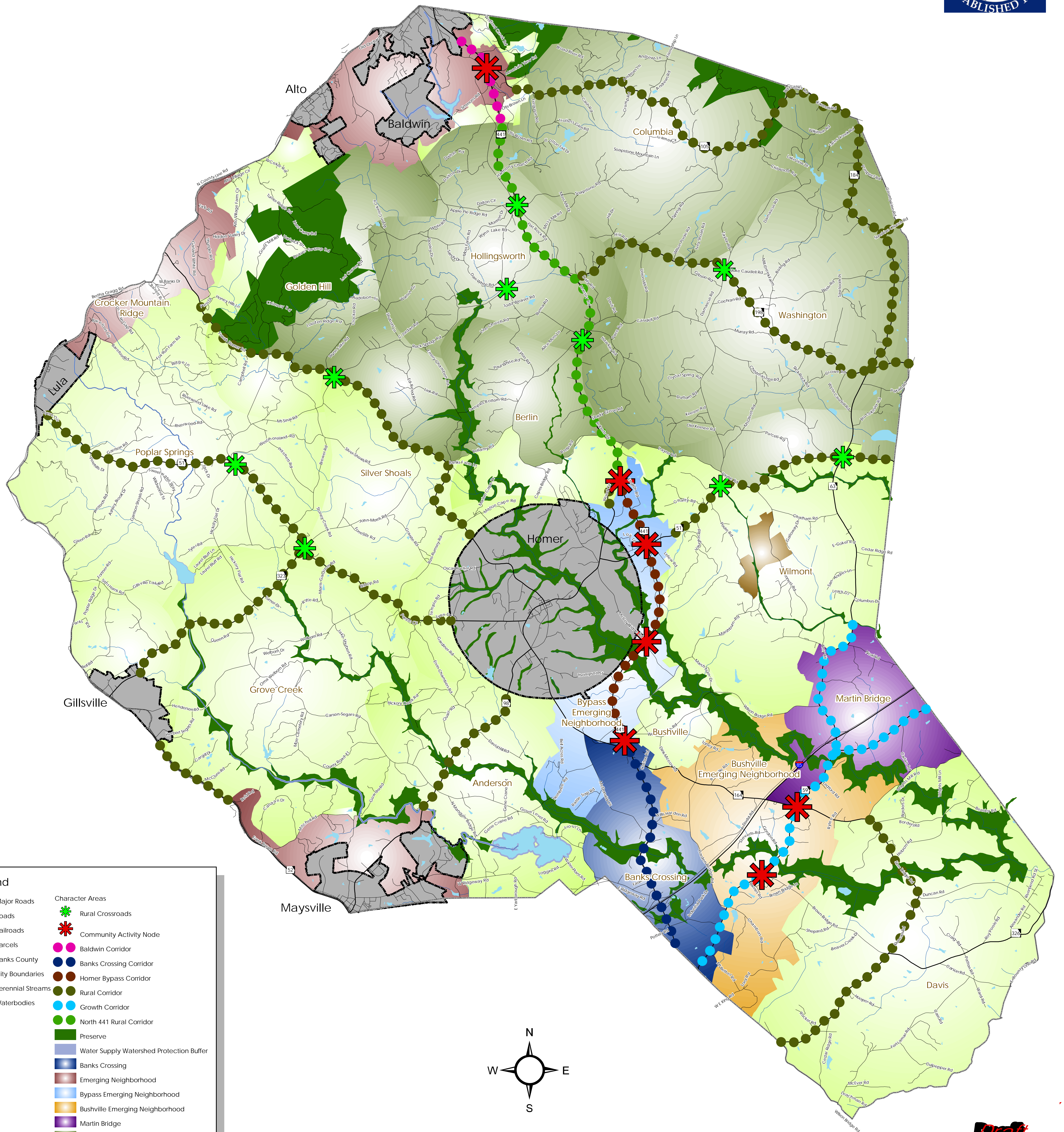
The development pattern describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design

Banks County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008-2018

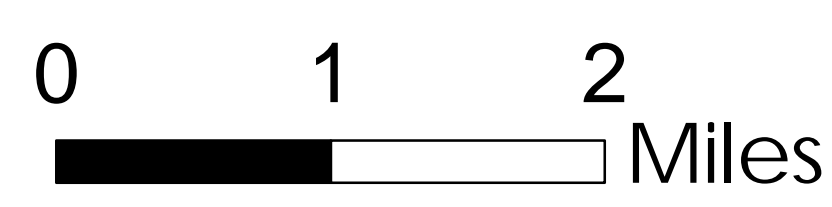
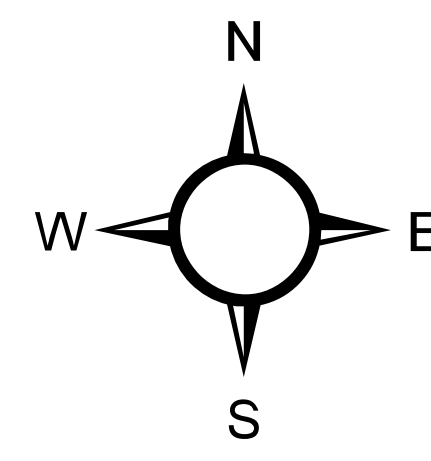


Prepared By:
Checked By:



Legend

— Major Roads	Character Areas
— Roads	★ Rural Crossroads
— Railroads	★ Community Activity Node
▭ Parcels	● Baldwin Corridor
▭ Banks County	● Banks Crossing Corridor
▭ City Boundaries	● Homer Bypass Corridor
— Perennial Streams	● Rural Corridor
■ Waterbodies	● Growth Corridor
	● North 441 Rural Corridor
	■ Preserve
	■ Water Supply Watershed Protection Buffer
	■ Banks Crossing
	■ Emerging Neighborhood
	■ Bypass Emerging Neighborhood
	■ Bushville Emerging Neighborhood
	■ Martin Bridge
	■ Rural Agricultural
	■ Rural Residential
	■ Landfill
	■ Incorporated Cities



Draft

Source: Banks County
 This map is intended for planning purposes only. Preserve Areas include floodplains. Floodplain data was acquired by FEMA Q3 Data and Banks County. Floodplains may not be entirely representative of all floodplains within the county. Thus, preserve areas are subject to change with additional floodplain studies.

Map Document: (G:\Banks County\mxd\character_areas.mxd)
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Prepared by:
MACTEC

Character Area Map

- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park areas
- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development



Rural character in Banks County

Primary Land Use

The primary land use section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section provides the basis for the future land use map, which identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Implementation Strategies

Finally, the implementation strategies section identifies the measures the County can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal.

Preserve

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas such as undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, conservation areas, and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development of any kind. Banks County examples of this character area include Wilson Shoals Wildlife Management Area and floodplain areas adjacent to the Hudson and Grove rivers.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for low-impact recreation (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education



Preserve includes the floodplain area of the Hudson River corridor



Example of potential for greenway along waterway as shown here from the Three Rivers Greenway in West Columbia, SC

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture (low impact only – see Banks County Watershed Protection Ordinance)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements
- ☞ Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- ☞ Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the County review process.
- ☞ Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality
- ☞ Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- ☞ Discourage expansion of the R&B Landfill
- ☞ Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors and defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system. The plan would pay particular attention to the Hudson River and Grove River floodplains.
- ☞ Coordinate with the State of Georgia and FEMA to update countywide floodplain maps, a process that includes determining countywide elevations'



Dalton Road in north Banks County

Water Supply Watershed Protection Buffer

A water supply watershed consists of land area upstream of a governmentally-owned public drinking water intake. The buffers included in this character area were created and are maintained to ensure water quality in the watershed system is not compromised by land activities such as grading, septic systems, and accidental release of contaminants. The intent is to minimize the transport of pollutants and sediment to the water supply, to maintain the yield of water supply watersheds

This character area includes buffer areas adjacent to Mountain Creek near Baldwin and Grove Creek in the southwestern part of the County, as defined by the Banks County Zoning Ordinance. For seven miles upstream of the Grove Creek and Mountain Creek reservoirs the creeks are protected through maintenance of a 100-foot vegetative buffer and a prohibition on impervious surfaces and septic drain fields within 150 feet of the streams. Beyond the seven-mile limit the buffers reduce to 50 and 75 feet, respectively.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain undisturbed buffers
- Protect water quality

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Agriculture (low impact only – see Banks County Watershed Protection Ordinance)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate with the City of Baldwin to adopt and enforce a watershed protection ordinance in order to protect the water quality of the Mountain Creek Reservoir.*
- ☞ *Continue to enforce existing Environmental Conservation District regulations for water supply watershed, wetlands and groundwater recharge*

Rural Agricultural

The Rural Agricultural character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural and large-lot residential uses. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural; housing tends to be scattered across the landscape on very large lots and is typically not in proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or sewer infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's rural tradition and active farms and maintain its rural, open spaces.

Residential uses are expected to take the form of larger lots or “conservation subdivisions.” A conservation subdivision allows homes to be clustered on smaller lots, without increasing the density allowed under a property's existing zoning, in order to maximize open space and viewsheds. The concept is an alternate response to development pressures for lower density residential neighborhoods in rural areas.

The Rural Agricultural character area comprises much of the northern/northeastern portions of the County, including the following communities: Berlin, Columbia, Hollingsworth, Silver Shoals, and Washington.



Rural Agricultural character shown above is defined here by a horse barn and pastureland along SR 51 east of Homer



Wide-open spaces define the Rural Agricultural character shown above

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes (minimum lot size of five acres) or conservation subdivisions with a net density of one unit per five acres and develop with significant amounts of protected open space and natural conservation areas
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic resources
- Preserve rural character, viewsheds, hillsides, other natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways
- Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into these areas
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Discourage excessive clearing and grading in order to protect trees, topography and water quality



Poultry farms dot the landscape throughout the Rural Agricultural character area

Primary Land Uses

- Agricultural
- Single family residential (minimum lot size of five acres or conservation subdivisions with a net density of one unit per five acres)
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance*
- ☞ *Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design*
- ☞ *Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas that identify appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk.*

- ☞ *Adopt Utilities Department policy that discourages extension of public sewer infrastructure into these Rural Residential and Rural Agricultural character areas*
- ☞ *Continue to follow BMPs for any land disturbance activities, including tree harvesting and utility construction*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Rural Conservation District to provide for the long-term protection of large areas of property not suitable for development, including farmland, major recreation areas or historic sites, and environmentally sensitive natural resource systems*
- ☞ *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks (for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)*
- ☞ *Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)*

Rural Residential

The Rural Residential character area, like the Rural Agricultural character area, includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural and low-intensity residential uses in order to retain open space and farmland. The difference between the two character areas is that Rural Residential is intended to accommodate more residential development than what is desired for the Rural Agricultural character area.

Residential uses are expected to take the form of larger lots or “conservation subdivisions.” A conservation subdivision allows homes to be clustered on smaller lots, without increasing the density allowed under a property’s existing zoning, in order to maximize open space and viewsheds. The concept is an alternate response to development pressures for lower density residential neighborhoods in rural areas.

Rural Residential character area covers the western/southwestern area of the County, where suburban-scale residential development has occurred, as well as portions of East and South Banks County. The following communities are included in this character area: Anderson, north Bushville, Davis, Golden Hill, Grove Creek, Poplar Springs and Wilmot.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes (minimum lot size of two acres) or conservation subdivisions with a net density of one unit per two acres and develop with significant amounts of protected open space and natural conservation areas



Rural Residential character defined by large acreage residential and agricultural land

- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, and natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into these areas
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible

Primary Land Uses

- Agricultural
- Single family residential (minimum lot size of two acres or conservation subdivisions with a net density of one unit per two acres)
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)



Example of Rural Residential character in Banks County

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Rural Conservation District to provide for the long-term protection of large areas of property not suitable for development, including farmland, major recreation areas or historic sites, and environmentally sensitive natural resource systems*
- ☞ *Discourage expansion of the R&B Landfill*
- ☞ *Adopt Utilities Department policy that discourages extension of public sewer infrastructure into these Rural Residential and Rural Agricultural character areas*
- ☞ *Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas that identify appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk.*
- ☞ *Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design*

Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design

- ☞ *Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)*
- ☞ *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks (for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)*

Rural Corridor

The Rural Corridor character area includes sparsely developed or undeveloped public or private land on both sides of a rural arterial with significant natural, scenic or pastoral views that would be disrupted by leap frog, conventional suburban residential and commercial development along or near the corridor. Public roadway features, such as signs, roadside erosion control, drainage and materials storage also have a major impact on the scenic quality and character of these corridors.

The Rural Corridor character area works in conjunction with Rural Agricultural, Rural Residential and Rural Crossroads character areas, but differs in that pressure for development tends to be greater along corridors. As a result, it is important for the County to regulate land uses so that they will complement rather than detract from a scenic experience and to preserve rural character. The Rural Corridor character area covers roughly 300 feet of property on each side of these thoroughfares, and examples include rural segments of some state highways, including the historic “Old Federal Highway” east of Homer.

Small nodes of commercial development with small, enclosed retail trade and service are appropriate at important intersections (as designated with the Rural Crossroads future development map character area). These nodes maintain the rural character with appropriate building designs.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Limit extension of public utilities in these areas
- Enact guidelines for new development that enhance the scenic value of the corridor and addresses landscaping and architectural design to protect rural scenery, historic resources and prevent unattractive sprawl development/visual clutter along the roadway
- Preserve tree lines and groves adjacent to the corridor



Wide open spaces and pastures define the Rural Corridor area along Martin Bridge Road/SR 63 north near Cedar Ridge Road

- Consider the use of drainage swales for paved roads in lieu of curb and gutter
- Encourage compatible architectural styles that maintain the regional rural character and do not include franchise or corporate architecture
- Limit on-site commercial signage and prohibit billboards
- Limit parking in front of commercial properties
- Connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes
- Provide pedestrian linkages to adjacent and nearby residential or commercial districts
- Provide bicycle accommodations
- Consolidate driveways and use directional signage to clustered developments, where they are permitted
- Institute driveway controls and access management standards to facilitate traffic flow
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Prohibit linear, commercial strip center development and concentrate commercial development at Rural Crossroads nodes

Primary Land Uses

- Passive or small active parks
- Agriculture
- Large lot residential

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- ☞ *Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors and defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system. The plan would pay particular attention to the Hudson River and Grove River floodplains.*
- ☞ *Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)*

North 441 Rural Corridor

The North 441 Rural Corridor character area is a largely undeveloped portion of U.S. 441 between Homer and Baldwin and works in conjunction with the Rural Crossroads, Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas. This character area is intended to maintain traffic flow along U.S. 441 by locating commercial development in Rural Crossroad areas where the corridor intersects with Apple Pie Road and Caudell. Much of the North 441 Rural Corridor is intended to remain rural in character with agricultural uses and large-lot residential development. Controls on signage and building/site design features for permitted commercial uses can help ensure new development is compatible with the rural nature of the area, and concentration of commercial uses at intersections versus linear development along the corridor can maintain viewsheds.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain rural character and views along the corridor
- Cluster commercial uses that serve local needs at major nodes along the corridor
- Prohibit linear, “strip center” development along the corridor
- Preserve traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor, and by use of shared driveways and interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards
- Maintain or increase landscaping along the corridor with new development, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage commercial development that requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage) as well as interior sidewalk connections
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards



Site designs that place parking to the rear or side of buildings help preserve rural character, while also providing retail and other services for surrounding communities

Primary Land Uses

- Neighborhood commercial/retail
- Rural Residential (large lot)

- Agricultural, including supporting retail (excluding larger-scale uses such as farming equipment sales)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*

Rural Crossroads

The Rural Crossroads character areas represents rural-scale activity centers made up of a mix of uses that includes residential, commercial and civic uses at or within a one-to two-block radius of an intersection of major roadways. These areas provide service to rural and agricultural communities in the area as well as travelers with limited goods and services. Rural Crossroads also provide gathering points for rural communities and can contain small businesses and civic uses such as clubs, houses of worship, fire stations and other government services. While the commercial uses typically come and go in these areas, the community institutions typically remain.

Rural Crossroads areas are not intended to encourage development of conventional highway commercial strip development or multi-use convenience stores and gas stations. Instead, these areas encourage country stores (that may include two to three gas pumps), small-scale restaurants, houses of worship and community facilities such as elementary schools, fire stations, post offices and feed stores.



Banks County Fire Department station

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve rural character
- Preserve and create areas that are compatible with existing surrounding rural community in terms of customers served, scale, site design, and existing land uses
- Provide small-scale daily convenience commercial needs in compact nodes
- Cluster buildings at the area's center
- Encourage shared parking among the various uses
- Maintain open space surrounding the center
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character rather than “franchise” or “corporate” architecture
- Limit clearing and grading

- Reduce access points along the highway
- Connect to greenways/trail system, wherever possible
- Accommodate residential growth that respects the rural character and open spaces (large-lot development or conservation subdivisions)

Primary Land Uses

- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Civic/Institutional (at a rural scale)
- Passive or small active parks
- Neighborhood commercial/retail

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Evaluate the feasibility of adopting a Rural Crossroads Zoning District that among other standards includes minimum standards for commercial building, signage and site design
- ☞ Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access

Community Activity Node

The Community Activity Node character area represents locations at major intersections along U.S. 441 and the “Growth Corridor” of SR 59 that are primarily surrounded by the Emerging Neighborhood character areas. Not yet highly developed, these areas include some commercial uses and/or community facilities that serve local residents and have the potential to meet additional goods and service needs to reduce vehicular trips to more established commercial areas. Though intended to provide a broader range in commercial uses than the Rural Crossroads character area, the Community Activity Node is not intended to accommodate regional “big box” stores and shopping centers; however, these nodes are suitable locations for small markets, which are currently unavailable inside the County limits.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Concentrate commercial development at major roadway intersections (nodal development) to serve surrounding residential areas
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding areas, including the placement of higher intensity residential uses as a transition between the character area and surrounding areas



On-street parking, landscaping and street furniture are important components of mixed-use centers encouraged in the Community Activity Node character area



Intense residential development is encouraged in this character area to provide housing choice in the County

- Provide safe, convenient pedestrian or multi-use trail connections to residential areas
- Prohibit automobile-oriented strip center development
- Provide a mix of uses that serve surrounding residential areas
- Develop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses
- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage and align driveways wherever possible
- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access between adjacent uses
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Provide sidewalks between businesses
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Encourage attractive and high-quality building and site design, including lighting materials, building height and signage
- Limit impervious service
- Encourage a mixture of housing types concentrated mixed-use development nodes that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services

Primary Land Uses

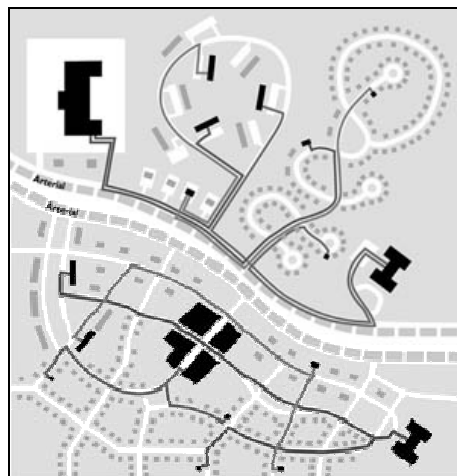
- Neighborhood-scale commercial (retail and office)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks
- Residential (when part of a mixed use master plan)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Evaluate the feasibility of adopting a Community Activity Node zoning district that require development of small-area master plans with approval that address site design, building materials and placement, building design, lighting, signage and access.
- ☞ Expand sewer service to include all Community Activity Nodes currently underserved
- ☞ Adopt a collector street plan that provides a long-range plan for developer-driven construction of a connected street system
- ☞ Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and



Development should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees



The Emerging Neighborhood character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.

materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor

- ☞ *Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance*
- ☞ *Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas*
- ☞ *Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system*

Emerging Neighborhood

The Emerging Neighborhood character area addresses areas around the cities of Baldwin, Maysville and Lula, Alto and Baldwin that have experienced some residential development and are poised for additional growth. There are additional Emerging Neighborhood character areas east of Homer and in central/south Bushville, which are described separately in this chapter.

Generally, the Emerging Neighborhood character area seeks to protect hillsides and natural resources while accommodating neighborhoods that should provide a range in housing sizes and types as the area builds out over the next 20 years, with sidewalk connections for residents and vehicular connectivity between neighborhoods and to the existing street network.

For the most part, non-residential uses (local goods and services) should be accommodated in downtown areas or at appropriate intersections designated as Community Activity Node on the Future Development Map. It is also appropriate, however, for small, neighborhood-scale, traditional neighborhood commercial and mixed use to occur in town centers created as part of an overall community master planned development. Wastewater collection and treatment services will be essential for ensuring long-range sustainability in this character area.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Encourage master-planned, traditional neighborhood development communities that blend walkable neighborhoods with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision
- Limit hillside development and protect natural and scenic resources
- Accommodate a variety of housing choices
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees

- Require multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions and street networks where possible
- Require multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way including sidewalks and street trees
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space with active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible
- Connect to existing neighborhoods, where possible, to provide alternate routes

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Mixed Use (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Multi-family (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Commercial (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Passive and active recreation
- Public/Institutional

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a collector street plan that provides a long-range plan for developer-driven construction of a connected street system*
- ☞ *Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance*
- ☞ *Develop zoning districts or overlay that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing*
- ☞ *Development of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Plan that includes study of the feasibility providing neighborhood and community park facilities in areas where growth is expected*
- ☞ *Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Neighborhood character areas underserved*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County*



Attached housing provides housing choice and is encouraged in Bushville Emerging Neighborhood



Example of attached housing that would be appropriate when included within a master planned community in the Emerging Neighborhood area (image of golf course development in Homer)

- ☞ *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- ☞ *Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments located outside of rural areas*

Bushville Emerging Neighborhood

The Bushville Emerging Neighborhood character area generally covers undeveloped portions of central/south Bushville located on either side of I-85 that, together with the Bypass Emerging Neighborhood and the Emerging Neighborhood character areas, is intended to accommodate the vast majority of the County's projected residential growth. This character area describes an area where pressure for suburban residential subdivision development is high due to the proximity of existing (Banks Crossing) and potential (Martin Bridge) employment and activity centers.

This character area should accommodate a range in housing sizes and types, including multi-family, as the area builds out over the next 20 years. These residences can contribute to the available stock of workforce housing, given the land uses and anticipated growth in the surrounding areas (see Banks Crossing and Martin Bridge character area descriptions).

The character area seeks to avoid the development of conventional suburban neighborhoods with few or no sidewalks, larger lot sizes only, high to moderate degree of building separation, and predominantly residential uses with scattered civic buildings and varied disconnected street patterns. Any commercial uses or mixed uses intended to serve area residents should be located at appropriate intersections proposed along SR 59 (see Community Activity Node character area description), as well as the Banks Crossing character area. It is also appropriate, however, for small, neighborhood-scale, traditional neighborhood commercial and mixed use to occur in town centers created as part of an overall community master planned development. Wastewater collection and treatment services will be essential for ensuring long-range sustainability in this character area.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate a variety of housing choices
- Encourage master-planned, TND communities that blends walkable neighborhoods with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked



Single family development located in the developing Oaks at Banks Crossing subdivisions Bushville Emerging Neighborhood character area

in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision

- Promote street design that slows traffic and increases pedestrian safety, such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Require multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions
- Require multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way including sidewalks and street trees
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space with active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible
- Connect to existing neighborhoods, where possible, to provide alternate routes

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Mixed Use (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Multi-family (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Commercial (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Passive and active recreation
- Public/Institutional

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a collector street plan that provides a long-range plan for developer-driven construction of a connected street system*
- ☞ *Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance*
- ☞ *Develop zoning districts or overlay that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing*
- ☞ *Development of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Plan that includes study of the feasibility providing neighborhood and community park facilities in areas where growth is expected*



Pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees and homes with front porches are encouraged in Bushville Emerging Neighborhood



Existing single-family residential within the Bushville Emerging Suburban character area

- ☞ *Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Neighborhood character areas currently underserved*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- ☞ *Prepare Subarea Master Plan for the Bushville Emerging Neighborhood area that includes: (1) Identification of mixed use and commercial nodes (2) Connector/Collector street plan (3) Sidewalk requirements and cross sections (4) Greenspace master plan (5) Updated traffic study requirements and (6) Bike/Pedestrian/Greenways Master Plan*
- ☞ *Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments located outside of rural areas*

Banks Crossing

The Banks Crossing character area is the retail center of Banks County. Located on both sides of U.S. 441 near the U.S. 441/I-85 interchange, the area includes a portion of the Tanger Outlet Center and other commercial uses that benefit from close proximity to I-85. It also includes adjacent industrial and residential uses. Served by sewer, Banks Crossing has the potential to experience additional growth and development.. Existing development along the largely built-out portion of U.S. 441 in the area is automobile-oriented strip commercial development characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk by parking lots with few shade trees. The Banks Crossing Corridor and Growth Corridor character areas describe the specific issues and implantation measures related to the U.S. 441 and SR 59 corridors that in conjunction with the Banks Crossing character area defining narrative.

New development is intended to preserve but enhance the area’s role as the commercial hub for the County. Development patterns that reflect more urban traits, such as buildings placed closer to the sidewalk, the use of pocket parks and other shared public spaces, and a mix of uses is desired for this area, including for sites suitable for redevelopment. Developments that offer a variety of quality housing choices are also appropriate for this existing employment and activity center. “Big box” retail should be limited to this area and should be designed to fit into mixed-use planned development that shares parking with surrounding uses and is linked with sidewalks.



Existing commercial development in Banks Crossing's Tanger Outlet

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Encourage attractive and high-quality building and site design, including lighting materials, building height and signage
- Reflect a unique identity for the area
- Accommodate both residents and tourists
- Include a relatively high-density mix of commercial and retail centers, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Encourage redevelopment that reflects a mix of pedestrian-friendly uses and ample landscaped common areas
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types (town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums) that can serve a broad range of incomes, including workforce and affordable housing
- Provide strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Provide wide curb lanes or bike lanes to permit bicycling
- Connect to nearby networks of greenspace or multi-use trails, where available
- Establish a connected street network for new development that links to existing streets
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding rural and low-density areas
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Discourage strip development
- Reflect a campus or unified development where a horizontal mix of uses is desired
- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Clearly define road edges by locating buildings at roadside with parking to the side or rear
- Prohibit billboards and limit business sign height/size to minimize “visual clutter”
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character



New commercial development located in Banks Crossing

- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Higher density residential uses (when part of an approved master plan)
- Light industry (adjacent to existing industrial uses)
- Educational institutions

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a gateway and signage master plan for the Banks Crossing area coordinated with the banner signage and street lights along U.S. 441*
- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*
- ☞ *Expand sewer service to include Banks Crossing areas currently underserved*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- ☞ *Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use development*



Quality commercial development in the Town Center area of Cobb County, Georgia



Existing commercial development along U.S. 441 Banks Crossing Corridor

Banks Crossing Corridor

The Banks Crossing Corridor character area is a largely built-out portion of U.S. 441. This character area works in conjunction with the Banks Crossing character area, but differs due to its focus specifically on the U.S. 441 corridor. The development pattern reflects automobile-oriented strip commercial development and stand-alone “interchange commercial” characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk by parking lots with few shade trees. .

As the spine of the Banks Crossing character area, the corridor acts as both an activity generator as well as gateway to the County. As such, the character area seeks to strengthen the overall unique identity of Banks Crossing while providing an attractive appearance for residents and visitors entering the area.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Provide sidewalks and a more pedestrian-friendly environment by incorporating landscaped buffers between the roadway and sidewalks and placing buildings closer to the street
- Limit signs and billboards
- Cluster high-density development at nodes along the corridor, such as major intersections
- Provide sidewalk connections between frontage properties and adjacent residential uses
- Increase landscaping along the corridor, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, parking to the rear of a building, and requires quality materials and design related to the building, the site, and signage
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards



Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors should strive to create the connected, mixed-use corridor shown on the bottom and avoid recreating the existing condition shown on the top in the above graphic.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space when part of a master plan or outlined by subarea master plan)
- Multi-family residential (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a gateway and signage master plan for the Banks Crossing area coordinated with the banner signage and street lights along U.S. 441*
- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and*

materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor

- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

Martin Bridge

The Martin Bridge character area represents the Martin Bridge Road/I-85 interchange and surrounding areas. Currently rural and sparsely developed, the Martin Bridge area has the potential to develop as an employment center due to its access to I-85 and planned water and sewer infrastructure expansion. The County envisions the Martin Bridge area providing jobs and economic opportunities for a mix of light industrial, wholesale trade, distribution, assembly, processing, office, limited commercial and other supporting uses. In addition, the area has the potential for attracting high-tech uses that can contribute to the area becoming an employment center.

Industries in Martin Bridge will not generate excessive noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics common with heavier industrial uses. The combined areas of Martin Bridge, Banks Crossing, and major corridors (85, 59, 164 and 441) are intended to form the commercial and industrial center of Banks County.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse employment opportunities for County residents that include low intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade and distribution activities balanced with campus-style office development
- Accommodate limited supporting commercial uses to serve employees
- Prohibit strip commercial development and typical interstate highway interchange commercial development such as a proliferation of fast food restaurants, hotels and convenience stores, unless such uses are limited and part of a coordinated, master plan that integrates these uses into the overall design of an employment center.



I-85/Martin Bridge Road interchange area provides opportunity for employment center development



Employment center development located in Hall County provides an example of quality office park/warehouse development that incorporates landscaping and high-quality building materials that are appropriate for Martin Bridge

- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding rural and low-density areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Provide access management measures to maintain traffic flow (e.g. shared driveways and interparcel access for similar uses on adjacent properties)
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site design
- Incorporate parking lot landscaping
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character
- Limit grading and clearing during site development
- Protect air and water quality and prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding population
- Provide adequate buffers and limit visibility of industrial operations/loading docks/parking from the public right of way
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter”



Intersection of SR 63 and SR 59 south of I-85 provides opportunity for employment center development

Primary Land Uses

- Light Industrial
- Distribution and Warehousing
- Campus-style office
- Limited supporting commercial uses

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate with Martin Bridge area property owners to develop a master plan for developing the interchange area.*
- ☞ *Establish formal process for coordination with economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks*
- ☞ *Expand sewer service to include Martin Bridge*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites*

- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*

Growth Corridor

The Growth Corridor Area character area generally parallels I-85 along SR 59 / SR 63 and works in conjunction with the Banks Crossing, Bushville Emerging Neighborhood, Community Activity Node and Martin Bridge character areas that it crosses. Due to anticipated growth in these areas, the corridor will likely experience additional traffic as well as pressure for development along the corridor. The intent of this character area is to preserve the ability of the corridor to carry increasing traffic that will serve Banks Crossing and Martin Bridge. This will require development to be focused at major intersections: SR 59 at Brown Bridge and at Sims Bridge (see Community Commercial Node character area description) rather than traditional “strip center” development fronting the corridor.

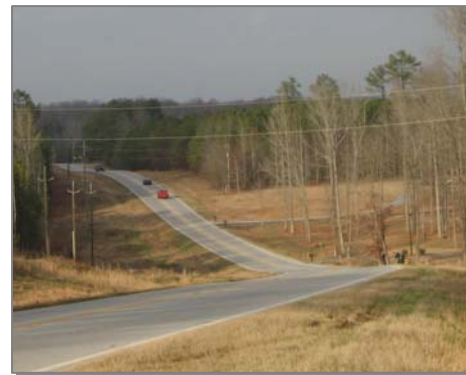
Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor and by use of shared driveways and interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor
- Prohibit linear, “strip center” development along the corridor
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural and low-density residential uses
- Provide sidewalk connections to adjacent residential areas
- Maintain or increase landscaping along the corridor with new development, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage commercial and mixed use development that permits minimal building setbacks, parking to the rear of a building, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage) as well as interior sidewalk connections



Business park development in the Town Center area of Cobb County, Georgia that incorporates lush landscaping in median of collector and local streets as well as within parking lot



SR 59 shown above is part of the Growth Corridor character area

- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Single-family residential
- Multi-family residential

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*



Example of attached housing that would be appropriate in a master planned development within the Bypass Emerging Neighborhood area (image above of golf course development in Homer)

Bypass Emerging Neighborhood

The Bypass Emerging Neighborhood character area generally covers undeveloped, open land located east of Homer along a segment of the U.S. 441 Bypass (see Homer Bypass Corridor Character Area) that is intended to accommodate a significant portion of the County's projected residential growth. This character area describes an area where pressure for suburban residential subdivision development and associated strip commercial development along arterial roadways is greatest.

The Bypass Emerging Neighborhood character area should provide a range in housing sizes and types as the area builds out over the next 20 years. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated at mixed use nodes located along U.S. 441 (See Community Activity Node character area description). It is also appropriate, however, for small, neighborhood-scale, traditional neighborhood commercial and mixed use to occur in

town centers created as part of an overall community master planned development. Wastewater collection and treatment services will be essential for ensuring long-range sustainability in this character area.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate a variety of housing choices
- Encourage master-planned, TND that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Require multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions
- Require multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way including sidewalks and street trees
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space with active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible
- Connect to existing neighborhoods, where possible, to provide alternate routes



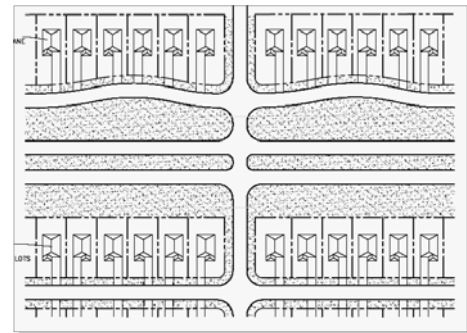
Pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods include wide sidewalks, street trees and on-street parking in this example of an Emerging Neighborhood area

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Mixed Use (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Multi-family (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Commercial (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Passive and active recreation
- Public/Institutional

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a collector street plan that provides a long-range plan for developer-driven construction of a connected street system*
- ☞ *Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance*
- ☞ *Develop zoning districts or overlay that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing*
- ☞ *Development of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Plan that includes study of the feasibility providing neighborhood and community park facilities in areas where growth is expected*
- ☞ *Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Neighborhood character areas*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- ☞ *Prepare Subarea Master Plan for the Bypass Emerging Neighborhood area that includes: (1) Identification of mixed use and commercial nodes (2) Connector/Collector street plan (3) Sidewalk requirements and cross sections (4) Greenspace master plan (5) Updated traffic study requirements and (6) Bike/Pedestrian/Greenways Master Plan*
- ☞ *Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments located outside of rural areas*



Access management is necessary along U.S. 441 Bypass to allow for development

Homer Bypass Corridor

The Homer Bypass Corridor character area is a largely undeveloped four-lane corridor east of Homer and works in conjunction with the Bypass Emerging Neighborhood and Commercial Activity Node character areas, but focuses specifically on the U.S. 441 corridor. Some development has occurred, but the area is predominantly rural in nature with large tracts of agricultural property.

The character area is intended to support commercial uses and mixed uses at major intersections, in particular 441 North and Old 441, 441 and McCoy Bridge, 441 and 51, and 441 South and Old 441 – all areas falling within Community Activity Node character area – to serve local residents, with higher intensity housing opportunities appropriate at locations between the nodes (see Bypass Emerging Neighborhood character area). This nodal development of commercial uses versus linear, “strip center” development that often predominates U.S. highways is

desired for this corridor in order to maintain U.S. 441's functionality as a bypass.

Controls on site design, including signage, building placement and size, and landscaping will help the area develop in a manner that is attractive, compatible with the surrounding rural character, and continues the theme of U.S. 441 being an important gateway to Banks County and its municipalities.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor and by use of shared driveways and interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor
- Prohibit linear, “strip center” development along the corridor
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural and low-density residential uses
- Provide sidewalk connections to adjacent residential areas
- Maintain or increase landscaping along the corridor with new development, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage commercial and mixed use development that permits minimal building setbacks, parking to the rear of a building, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage) as well as interior sidewalk connections
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards



U.S. 441 Corridor is currently relatively undeveloped and offers opportunities for a mix of residential uses and commercial nodal development

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space, when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)

- Multi-family residential
- Single-family residential

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

Baldwin Corridor

The Baldwin Corridor character area is the northernmost portion of U.S. 441 and works in conjunction with the Emerging Neighborhood and Community Activity Node character areas outside of the Baldwin city limits. Access management is an important goal for this character area in order to facilitate traffic flow, as is the placement of commercial and mixed use development to serve local needs at appropriate nodes. Commercial/mixed use development supported in the Community Activity Node at the intersection of U.S. 441 and SR 105. This portion of U.S. 441 also serves as a gateway to Baldwin. Design controls are therefore important to ensure signage, building and site design compliments the area.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor and by use of shared driveways and interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor
- Prohibit linear, “strip center” development along the corridor
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural and low-density residential uses

- Provide sidewalk connections to adjacent residential areas
- Maintain or increase landscaping along the corridor with new development, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage commercial and mixed use development that permits minimal building setbacks, parking to the rear of a building, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage) as well as interior sidewalk connections
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Multi-family residential (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- ☞ *Encourage creation of TAD, CID or BID as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) corridor planning and plan implementation improvement projects*

Landfill

R&B Landfill is located on 485 acres in unincorporated Banks County. The surrounding area is rural. The site is permitted by the State of Georgia to accept asbestos-friable, asbestos-non-friable, construction and demolition debris, drum management-solids, industrial and special waste, and municipal solid waste. Upon reaching capacity in approximately 17 years, the landfill site is anticipated to revert to a low-intensity use that is compatible with the rural nature of the area, such as a passive recreation site. Expansion of this area is discouraged in order to protect the area's natural resources and rural character.

Desired Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate existing landfill activities on property approved for such uses
- Prohibit expansion of landfill area

Primary Land Uses

- Landfill

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate Comprehensive Plan Update with Solid Waste Management Plan Update*

Incorporated Cities

This character area represents the incorporated cities of Alto, Baldwin, Gillsville, Homer Maysville and Lula. Descriptions of each, including desired development patterns and land uses, are addressed in separate plans prepared by each respective jurisdiction.



SR 51 in Homer, one of five incorporated cities in Banks County. Incorporated cities are each preparing comprehensive plans separate from the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

Map 1 Character Areas Map (see display maps)



Future Development Map

The Future Development Map builds on the Character Area Map by applying the acceptable land uses for a given character area at a parcel level, resulting in every property in the County having a specific future land use. The Future Development Map is intended to guide future rezoning requests; proposed zone change requests are reviewed for consistency with the land uses and densities recommended in the Future Development Map.

The future land use categories shown on the map are listed below:

Parks/Recreation/Conservation - Publicly or privately owned land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses or dedicated as open space. Examples include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, floodplains, river or stream buffers, golf courses, recreation centers or similar uses.

Agriculture/Forestry - Land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting.

Rural Residential - Agricultural uses, large lot residential uses that can support lifestyle or hobby farms, and conservation subdivisions.

Residential - Conventional residential subdivisions, conservation subdivisions with supportive recreational facilities and small-scale public/institutional uses, and master-planned traditional neighborhood development (TND) that can accommodate a mix of housing types as well as limited neighborhood-oriented commercial uses.

Commercial - Non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities. Includes vertical or horizontal mixed-use (retail, office, residential) when part of a master planned development.

Industrial - Land used for manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities.

Mixed Use Industrial – Light industrial uses, campus-style office development, and supporting non-interchange commercial uses that serve surrounding businesses.

Transportation/Communications/Utilities - Water and sewage treatment facilities, power generation plants, railroad facilities, public transit stations, radio towers, airports, or other similar uses.



Poultry farms east of Homer represent Agricultural/Forestry future development categories

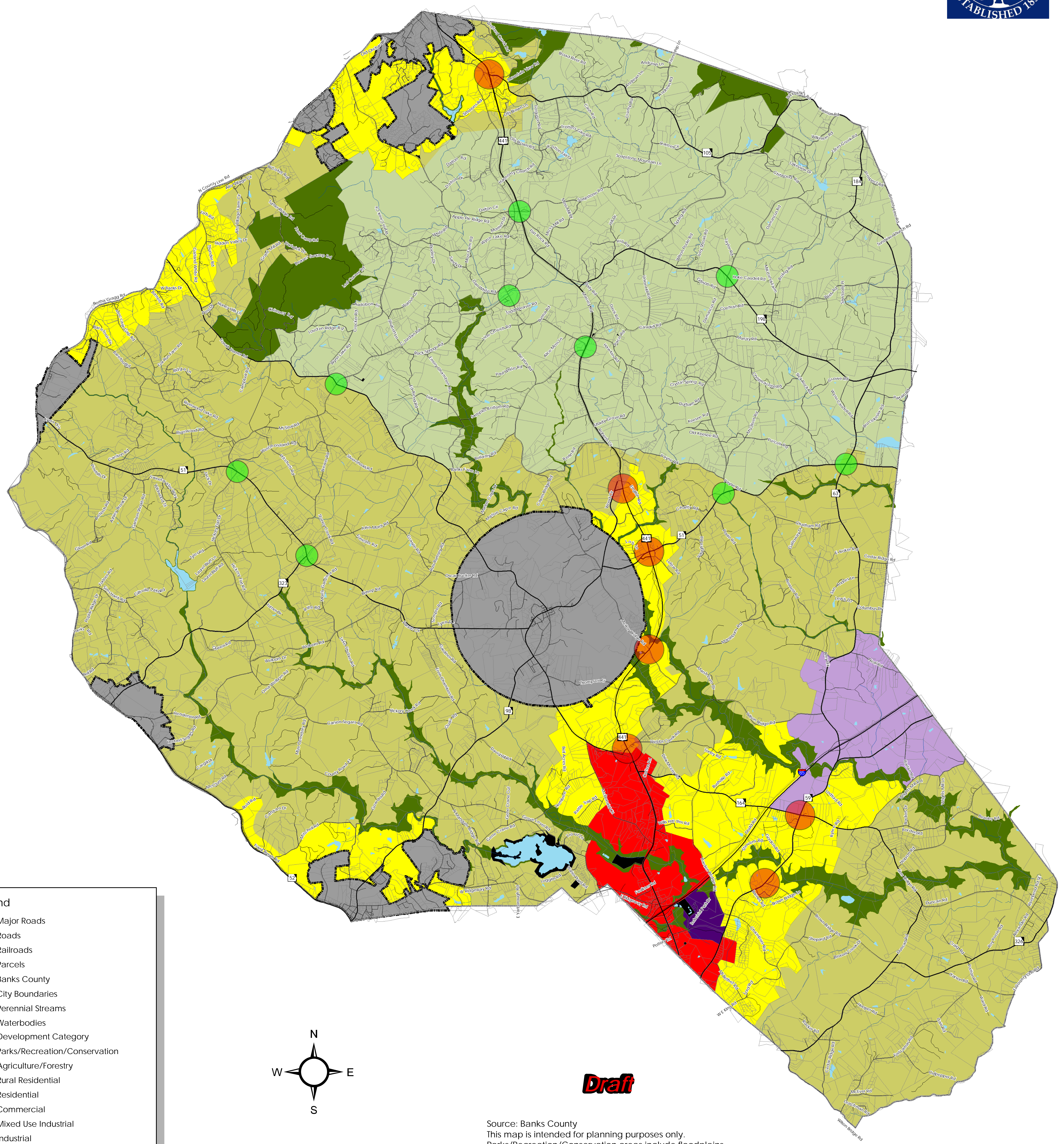


Suburban single-family residential development located south of I-85 near Banks Crossing in southwest Banks County

Map 2 Future Development Map (see display maps)

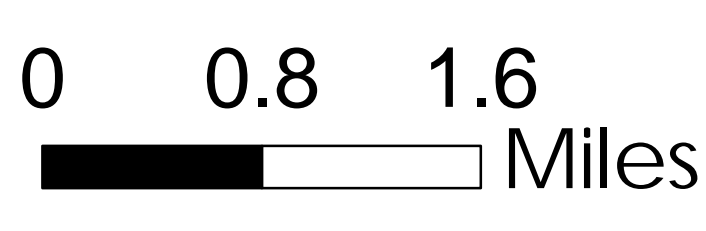
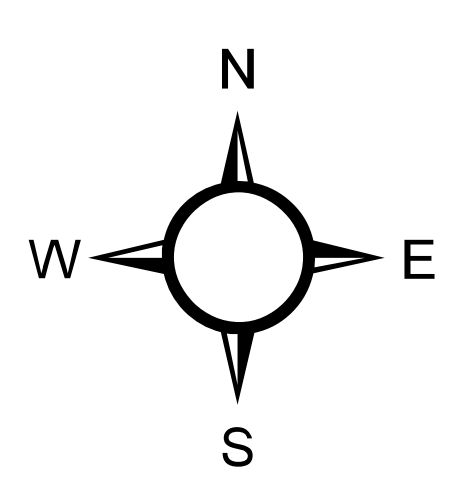


Banks County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008-2018



Legend

- Major Roads
- Roads
- Railroads
- ▭ Parcels
- ▭ Banks County
- ▭ City Boundaries
- Perennial Streams
- Waterbodies
- Future Development Category**
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Rural Residential
- Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed Use Industrial
- Industrial
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Rural Crossroads
- Community Activity Node



Draft

Source: Banks County
This map is intended for planning purposes only. Parks/Recreation/Conservation areas include floodplains. Floodplain data was acquired by FEMA Q3 Data and Banks County. Floodplains may not be entirely representative of all floodplains within the county. Thus, Parks/Recreation/Conservation areas are subject to change with additional floodplain studies.

Quality Community Objectives

In addition to the three levels of description above, the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) analysis for each Character Area can be found below. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. The QCOs were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

Regional Identity – Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

Growth Preparedness – Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

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

Educational Opportunities – Educational and 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.

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

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.

Open Space Preservation – New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.

Environmental Protection – Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special



Mt. Bethel Church near Banks Crossing is among the many community institutions

protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

Regional Cooperation – Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.

Transportation Alternatives – Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.

Regional Solutions – Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.

Housing Opportunities – Quality housing and a range of housing size, 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.

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

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.

Sense of Place – Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.



Table 2-1 Banks County Character Areas & Quality Community Objectives

Quality Community Objective	Character Areas																	
	Preserve	Rural Agricultural	Rural Residential	Rural Corridor	Rural Crossroads	Community Activity Node	Emerging Neighborhood	Bypass Emerging Neighborhood	Bushville Emerging Neighborhood	Banks Crossing	Martin Bridge	- Banks Crossing Corridor	Homer Bypass Corridor	North 441 Rural Corridor	Baldwin Corridor	Growth Corridor	Landfill	Incorporated Cities
Traditional Neighborhoods						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					✓
Infill Development									✓	✓								
Sense of Place	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transportation Alternatives	✓			✓														
Regional Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓										✓				✓
Heritage Preservation	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓			✓				✓
Open Space Preservation	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓									
Environmental Protection	✓	✓	✓											✓			✓	
Growth Preparedness		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Appropriate Businesses		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment Options						✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing Choices			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Educational Opportunities																		✓
Regional Cooperation	✓					✓	✓						✓		✓		✓	✓



Issues & Opportunities

The Updated compilation of Issues & Opportunities reflect public comments gained from the community participation activities

This section provides an updated list of issues and opportunities for unincorporated areas of Banks County that were identified in the *Community Assessment* portion of the Comprehensive Plan. This updated version reflects public comments gained from the community participation activities as well as other input gathered during the review of the *Community Assessment*. The following information is organized by the major topics defined in the DCA Local Planning Requirements:

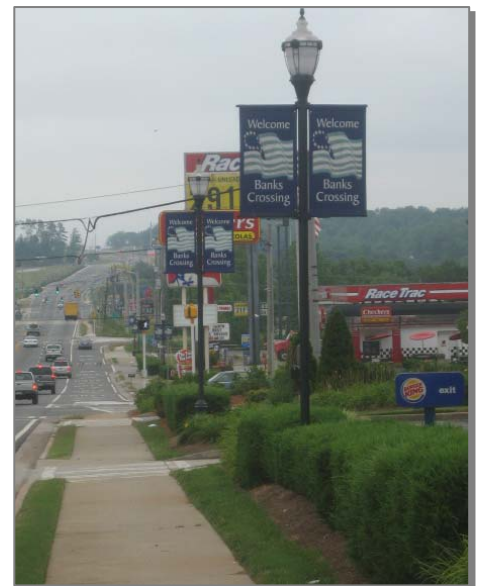
- Population
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Community Facilities and Services
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Intergovernmental Coordination

Population

Issues

Aging population – Banks County’s aging population requires special residential needs in terms of location and building design. The fastest growing age group in the County from 2000 to 2006 was the age 85 and older group. This group experienced an increased of 59.5%.

Poverty conditions for some – While decreases occurred in the number of children 17 and under between 2000 and 2004, 18.4% of the County’s 17 and under population continued to live in poverty in 2004. And though the total number of County



Signage along U.S. 441 in the Banks Crossing Area welcomes travelers and shoppers to the area

residents living poverty increased between 1995 and 2004, the proportion of County residents in poverty dropped. The increase in the number of total residents in poverty in Banks County occurred at a significantly slower rate than that of the state and nation.

Growing Hispanic community – The population of persons of Hispanic origin increased significantly from 1990 to 2006, but this growth rate was slower than that of each adjacent county. Banks County may see higher growth rates in this population in the future. Providing bilingual services and education present a service challenge for the community.

Opportunities

Income growth – County residents' income has increased as new growth has occurred. The proportion of Households in the County earning less than \$10,000 dropped by 14.5% while the number of households earning more than \$40,000 increased significantly. County median household income increased at a faster rate from 1989 to 2004 than state and national median household income. Per capita income in the County grew at a significantly faster rate than that of the state and nation.

Aging population – Banks County's aging population, coupled with a general, nationwide demographic trend of the retirement of the "baby boomer" generation, presents growth opportunities. As a community that can claim a comfortable climate, beautiful natural environment and quiet lifestyle, Banks can attract economically advantageous retirement community developments.

Economic Development

Issues

Identity of Banks Crossing area – The Banks Crossing area is too often referred to in media and individual business marketing materials as Commerce since it lies within the Commerce zip code area and is located adjacent to the Jackson County city. This reduces the impact of marketing efforts aimed at promoting the Banks Crossing brand.

Low levels educational Attainment – The County's rate of educational attainment lags significantly behind the levels of the state and surrounding counties. Only 65% of the County's residents 25 years and older have high school diplomas, compared to 78.6% statewide, 81% in Athens-Clarke County and 71.5% in Hall County. Low levels of educational attainment create a challenge in attracting economic development. The County's rate of those 25 and older with bachelor's degrees or higher of 8.6% also lags state of 24.3%. It also lags behind all surrounding counties.



This large-lot residential subdivision in the Martin Bridge area provides a prime example of the development pattern required for new suburban development in the absence of sewer infrastructure for most of the County's growth areas.

Lagging wages in County— Banks County’s wages lag behind the market area and state in almost every category. The number of jobs in the county is not increasing as fast as the population. Banks County average weekly wages are 68.2% of the average weekly wages for the state and 64.7% of the same for the nation.

Mismatched labor force— A majority (70.4%) of the growing labor force leaves Banks County each day for work. Meanwhile, 56.4% of the jobs in Banks County were held by non-County residents in 2000.

Tax base reliance on residential — Residential owners accept a large burden of the tax base due to the limited amount of commercial and industrial property located in the County.

Shopping limited to Banks Crossing area – Banks County’s retail center, Banks Crossing, is in the southwest corner of the County. The rest of the County benefits from taxes generated at Banks Crossing. However, as development occurs in north Banks County near Baldwin, Maysville, Lula, Alto and Homer, there will be an increased need for proximate retail and other support services.

Need for new industry – New industry is needed to provide higher paying jobs for County residents. Job growth has occurred as the annual average number of jobs in Banks County increased between 1990 and 2006 at a rate faster than that of the state. Manufacturing maintained the largest share of employment in Banks County at 26.7% in 2006 - down from 52.5% in 2000 and 50.2% in 1990.

Holding on to young residents – Job opportunities are limited for high school and college educated young residents in the County. New industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

Limited sewer slows economic development – Lack of sewer services has limited the development of new industry and residential neighborhoods in the County, especially at the Martins Bridge Road/Interstate 85 interchange.

Opportunities

Low unemployment – County unemployment rates trended lower than the rates for the state and nation, suggesting that Banks County residents are finding success in the job market.

Sales tax revenue – Revenue created by sales tax collected at Banks Crossing provides for services throughout Banks County.

Low Property Taxes - Banks County has kept property taxes low even as it experienced increased development pressure. Low taxes have made the County attractive to prospective residents and industry.

Small business friendly – Banks County has remained friendly to small businesses. “Self-employed” is represented as a much



Martin Bridge area properties have the potential to attract new employment center development to Banks County

larger proportion of the labor force occupations in the County when compared to the state and nation. The County recently obtained the “Entrepreneur Friendly Community” designation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development, a program that helps build entrepreneur and small business strategies into an area’s overall development efforts.

Banks Crossing and Martin Bridge – Available land is plentiful in the Martin Bridge and Banks Crossing interchange areas located along the I-85 corridor. Opportunities abound for a variety of uses, including a large scale employment center that could include mixed use, industrial and commercial. The County has plans to serve these areas with sewer with the new wastewater treatment plant to be located in the southeast corner of the County.

Corridors ripe for economic development – I-85 and U.S. 441 provide opportunities, given the appropriate infrastructure expansion and other improvements, for economic development including new industry, retail and housing. Opportunities along U.S. 441 should occur at strategic, master-planned development nodes, however, and not as a continuous strip of non-rural uses.

Regional equestrian center – Banks County should market itself as an ideal location for the future North Georgia regional equestrian center.

Regional events center – Banks County would benefit from a regional, enclosed events center for the purpose of hosting large-scale events such as conventions, concerts and exhibitions.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Market the County for selection as location for future North Georgia regional equestrian center.*
- ☞ *Adopt a gateway and signage master plan for the Banks Crossing area coordinated with the banner signage and street lights along U.S. 441*
- ☞ *Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas*
- ☞ *Study feasibility of County constructing a regional, enclosed events center for the purpose of hosting large-scale events such as conventions, concerts and exhibitions.*
- ☞ *Focus efforts on business/industrial recruitment and retention*
- ☞ *Identify and develop property for industrial park*



Big box retailers dominate the landscape along U.S. 441 in Banks Crossing near I-85

Housing

Issues

Growth and change in make up of housing stock – The Banks County inventory of housing units increased 102.3% between 1980 and 2006. While the real number of single-family detached housing units increased from 1980 to 2000, their proportion decreased as mobile homes/trailers increased their share

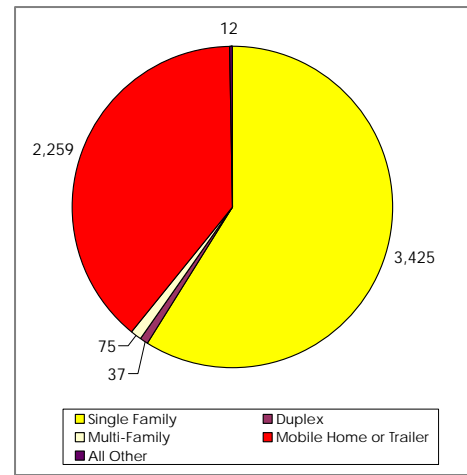
Aging in place – As larger segments of the population age, the need continues to grow to provide residential opportunities for Baby Boomers/empty nesters focused on “aging in place” possibilities with associated services and Universal Design. Few housing options are currently available for senior citizens in the County, though options are available just across the county line in Commerce.

Limited housing mix – The Banks County housing market currently provides few options beyond single-family homes on large lots, with limited options that would meet residents needs at all stages of life. However, the County has started addressing this imbalance by encouraging a wider variety of housing types. Large lot, single-family residential products dominate the Banks County housing market. Few multi-family products have come on line to meet the growing demand for housing to support the workforce, especially that of Banks Crossing. Most of the County’s multi-family units are located in the city of Baldwin.

Affordable workforce housing – County residents can more easily afford the housing available on the market, while the County’s lower wage workers, a majority of whom do not live in Banks County, have fewer affordable housing choices within the County. Mobile homes/trailers and manufactured housing are currently providing many with affordable housing in Banks County.

Opportunities

Banks Crossing and Martin Bridge interchange and Emerging Neighborhood area workforce housing – Workforce housing opportunities can be made available to serve growing workforce as light industry and retail continues to grow in the I-85, U.S. 441, SR 63, SR 59 areas. In addition, areas of Bushville and adjacent to the Homer Bypass are prime areas to accommodate new housing over the next 20 years. The Martin Bridge area is primarily reserved for industrial growth. Housing to serve the workforce can occur in areas near Martin Bridge that will have access to sewer.



Housing types in Banks County in the year 2000



A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Banks County

Increasing rate of home ownership – Home ownership increased in real numbers and in share of the total housing units from 1990 to 2000 and remained higher than the state.

Continue to provide opportunities for affordable housing – While new growth will likely include more housing products that cater to higher income brackets, the community believes strongly that the market should continue to provide housing around the \$150,000 range. The community also emphasized the importance of quality, affordable housing that will remain affordable over time, with low maintenance costs.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Increase code enforcement throughout the county (incorporated and unincorporated areas) to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")*
- ☞ *Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas concentrating new higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services*
- ☞ *Encourage the use of TND to prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments and also encourage a variety of housing types*



Large-lot residential development located near Banks Crossing, south of I-85 in southwest Banks County

Natural and Cultural Resources

Issues

Water quality – Stormwater runoff from developed and developing areas increases the pollution of the watershed and increases flooding as water moves more quickly. The EPD reported the Hudson and Middle Fork Broad rivers in Banks County as “not supporting” their designated uses in 2006. The report suggested that a watershed protection strategy addressing non-point source pollution was necessary to alleviate the conditions currently experienced in these two waterways.

Protecting water resources – Banks County’s Mountain Creek Reservoir is located within the City of Baldwin and impacted by runoff from development that takes place on adjacent property. The City has not adopted watershed protection ordinances that would protect the County’s largest water resource.

Maintaining character – Development of farmland has contributed to the disappearance of farm land and the rural landscape of the county. As demand increases for suburban development, more land will shift from agricultural uses to residential uses.

Protecting mountain and valley views – The views created by Banks County’s varied topography draw many new residents to



Hudson River shown near McCoy Bridge Road east of Homer

the County. Protecting viewsheds is important in order to maintain quality of life and preserve the historic rural character of the County.

Lacking regulations – Banks County lacks certain regulations for protection of steep slopes, protection of areas of prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, and protection of Federal and State Endangered and Threatened Species.

Floodplain data lacking – Banks County lacks adequate floodplain data for the entire County that is important information for sound decision-making concerning planning and new development.

Opportunities

Environmental planning regulations in place – Banks County has adopted the necessary regulations for Water Supply Watersheds, Groundwater Recharge Areas and Wetlands consistent with the EPD Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria. By completing supporting maps to adequately locate and identify these areas of environmental concern, the County can reduce impediments to implementation of these regulations.

Abundance of resources – The County has an abundance of hydrologic natural resources and the opportunity to make the best use of those resources with long range planning.

Appreciation of history – Banks County’s residents have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the County and understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs. It is important to capitalize on this appreciation, by providing avenues to channel this energy into historic preservation projects. Limited efforts have been promoted thus far.

Natural and cultural resources tourism– Banks County has the opportunity to market its natural and cultural resources assets along with its retail outlet centers to draw tourists to the area.

Multi-use trails – As new development occurs, a series of multi-use trails should be constructed to link new neighborhoods to older communities, schools, commercial centers and other attractions. Trails should act as both

Preserve character and environmentally sensitive areas – Conservation subdivisions, transfer of development rights and other creative zoning regulations and land development practices can be used to preserve and conserve agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas and open space character, while also allowing new construction.

Preserve history and culture – The County needs to protect historic resources by conducting an extensive review of historical, cultural and archeological resources followed by the development of regulations, guidelines and



Preservation of rural agricultural communities is crucial to the preservation of Banks County's character and history



Protecting historic and cultural resources, such as the Mt. Pleasant Church in the Mt. Pleasant Historic District east of Homer located on SR 51 should be protected for the use of future generations

educational/marketing programs specifically tailored to ensure that current residents and future generations will have the opportunity to appreciate the County's history and culture.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate with the State of Georgia and FEMA to update countywide floodplain maps, a process that includes determining countywide elevations.*
- ☞ *Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the County review process.*
- ☞ *Adopt a Historic Preservation Ordinance that will establish a Historic Preservation Commission to provide for the designation, protection, preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties and historic districts and to participate in federal or state programs to do the same.*
- ☞ *Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design*
- ☞ *Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors and defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system. The plan would pay particular attention to the Hudson River and Grove River floodplains.*
- ☞ *Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources*
- ☞ *Prepare a countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan*
- ☞ *Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements*
- ☞ *Continue to enforce existing Environmental Conservation Districts (water supply watershed, wetlands and groundwater recharge)*
- ☞ *Continue to follow BMPs for any land disturbance activities, including tree harvesting and utility construction*
- ☞ *Discourage expansion of the R&B Landfill*
- ☞ *Encourage the use of Conservation Subdivisions to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*
- ☞ *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality*
- ☞ *Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)*
- ☞ *Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design*



Greenway walking trails can link rural communities to community facilities and provide protection for river corridors

Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design

Community Facilities and Services

Issues

Limited sewer service area – Sewer is currently limited to the Baldwin area in north Banks County and in the Banks Crossing area at Interstate 85 and U.S. 441, though expansion to serve the Martins Bridge Road interchange and other areas south of I-85 area underway. Even with the expansion, large areas of the County will remain without sewer, limiting development potential to large-tract residential dependent upon septic systems.

Providing service to expansive rural areas – Banks County currently is challenged with providing emergency and infrastructure services to a large area of rural, dispersed development. Servicing these areas of sprawled development is costly and also requires more dependence on surrounding jurisdictions than desired.

Landfill – Expansion of the landfill would require a zoning change. Participants during the preparation of the *Community Agenda* have maintained steadfast opposition to the prospect of landfill expansion. Many perceive that further expansion will jeopardize the natural resources near the facility. Others perceive that expansion would limit the marketability of downstream property (e.g. Martin Bridge) for future development of employment centers and residential neighborhoods.

Celebrating local culture and arts – Banks County does not currently provide ample opportunities for showcasing folk art and local artisans.

Limited recycling opportunities – A recycling drop off is currently available at the landfill, however more convenient drop offs are necessary to encourage more widespread recycling efforts. New suburban communities will likely expect curbside recycling as these neighborhoods form and grow.

Activities for children – More activities are needed for the growing population of school-age children in Banks County.

Opportunities

Sewer expansion - Limited sewer creates the need for large residential lots. As planned sewer services expand, the opportunity exists to use the expansion as a way to direct growth to appropriate locations recommended in the land use plan and to manage the timing of new growth.

Solid waste plan update - Banks County is developing an update to the multi-jurisdictional Solid Waste Management Plan



Clustered community facilities in the Windmill Farms shown above

(SWMP) in conjunction with this update to the Comprehensive Plan. Efforts to provide more widespread opportunities for recycling should be incorporated into the County's vision for managing solid waste. Drop-off points should be expanded to include churches, schools, fire stations and other government facilities throughout the County.

Future water needs – Banks County is currently working with a consultant to determine short-term and long-term water needs.

Quality schools – The rapidly growing County school system provides the community with an educational asset that can be used to attract new residents.

Cluster community facilities – The County should focus the development of new community facilities throughout the County in clusters that could include schools, fire stations and parks in order to create a sense of place.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt Utilities Department policy that discourages extension of public sewer infrastructure into these Rural Residential and Rural Agricultural character areas*
- ☞ *Coordinate Comprehensive Plan Update with Solid Waste Management Plan Update*
- ☞ *Expand sewer service to include Banks Crossing, Martin Bridge, all Emerging Neighborhood character areas, and Community Activity Nodes currently underserved*
- ☞ *Complete and implement long range sewer expansion master plan which expands infrastructure to key areas*
- ☞ *Development of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Plan that includes study of the feasibility providing neighborhood and community park facilities in areas where growth is expected*
- ☞ *Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Residential and Rural Agricultural character areas*
- ☞ *Controlling new growth with coordination of land use, transportation, and facilities planning - providing infrastructure to encourage development where the future development map recommends it*
- ☞ *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks (for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)*



Multi-use trails, such as the one shown above, can link neighborhoods and provide linear park space

Transportation

Issues

Dirt roads – While dirt roads in some cases preserve rural character, the County’s system of roads currently relies too heavily on unpaved roads to serve its communities. It is important for the County to outline a specific road paving plan that targets projects for areas where new growth is encouraged, rather than areas where preservation of rural character is desired.

Wear and tear on County roads – The County road system endures wear and tear due to truck traffic generated by businesses fronting local roadways, including the larger-scale agricultural establishments.

Limited pedestrian and bicycle network – Few sidewalks and walking trails exist to provide safe and comfortable routes for people to walk.

Opportunities

Accessibility to I-85 and U.S. 441 – Banks County benefits from its location with two interchanges on I-85 and from U.S. 441 that provides four-lane access south to Athens and north to Habersham County.

Accessibility and overall low level of traffic congestion – In comparison to metro Atlanta communities to the south, Banks County’s relatively low level of traffic congestion is a benefit for local businesses and residents.

Norfolk-Southern railroad – The presence of Norfolk-Southern railroad in the County provides additional opportunity to move goods to and from the County and attract new industry.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a collector street plan that provides a long-range plan for developer-driven construction of a connected street system for areas not included in the Rural Agricultural Reserve or Rural Residential*
- ☞ *Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments located outside of rural areas*
- ☞ *Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards.*
- ☞ *Develop a road improvement plan*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*



One of Banks County’s many dirt roads that help define the rural, agricultural character in many communities



Martin Bridge Road at I-85

Land Use

Issues

Intensive farming uses – Intensive farming uses such as poultry farms are a valued economic resource for the County. However, many poultry farms have located on narrow, rural roads designed to handle rural traffic. The introduction of large truck traffic to these roads has created a less than ideal situation.

Strip commercial development – Strip commercial development areas will require special attention to prevent underutilization and blight as market and economic conditions change.

Sign clutter along U.S. 441 – The Banks Crossing area is defined by commercial signage designed in many cases to attract drivers passing through along I-85 resulting in clutter that detracts from the natural beauty of the area.

Scenic Corridors – New development along routes such as U.S. 441 could alter the character of the county dramatically if development occurs without an emphasis on protecting scenic views.

Preservation of agricultural property – As new development increases property values throughout the County, pressure to convert from agricultural uses to residential and commercial uses increases. Preservation of agricultural property is considered important for the long-term sustainability of the County.

Lack of guidance for zoning – Due to the age of the currently adopted Future Land Use Map and the amount of development that has occurred since its adoption in 1992, decisions on a case-by-case basis for converting agricultural land to residential or commercial have been occurring in what some consider spot zoning throughout the County.

Emerging bedroom community – Banks County has so far maintained its distinct culture and character as a rural county. However, rapid development in the next 20 years could alter this character to the point of converting the County into a bedroom community, leading to greater economic imbalance and associated challenges.

Opportunities

Traditional Neighborhood Development – The traditional neighborhood development approach can provide a wide range of housing types in newly developing areas with a connected pedestrian-friendly street system and ample open space. With proactive planning, Banks County can cluster community facilities including schools, fire stations, libraries and parks in order to create a sense of place.



Rural, agricultural character defines much of Banks County, as shown here along Hardin Bridge Road near SR 164



Proliferation of commercial signage along U.S. 441 in Banks Crossing

Mixed use development – Most development in the County is suburban residential development that separates residential from commercial. A mixed use approach in future development could provide the County with the opportunity to provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences in specific portions of the County.

Updated zoning ordinance – The County is in the process of making revisions to the zoning and development regulations that will make it possible to implement the specific vision outlined in the *Community Agenda*.

Large minimum lot sizes in farming areas – Lot size minimums in areas with intense farming can decrease the impact of the farming operations on adjacent residents. Five acres and two acres are the current minimums for these areas.

Encourage TDRs and PDRs – Transfer of development rights and purchase of development rights can be applied to preserve agricultural lands and other sensitive areas in need of protection from development.

Encourage conservation subdivisions – Conservation subdivisions can be used to retain the character of agriculture and protect the natural resources of the environmentally sensitive areas. Conservation subdivisions are residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of the site is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while houses are clustered on the remainder of the property. A Conservation Subdivision Ordinance authorizes the development of new conservation subdivisions on sites proposed by a developer, provided the development plans meet certain criteria specified in the ordinance.

Promote preservation of green space in new development – Development regulations can encourage developers of residential and mixed-use development to set aside appropriate amounts of green space for public recreation and storm water collection/filtering.

Provide agricultural land preservation incentives – The County should provide incentives to encourage the preservation of farms in rural areas of the County that might otherwise receive market pressure to convert to suburban residential development.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance*
- ☞ *Evaluate the feasibility of adopting a Community Activity Node zoning district*
- ☞ *Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance*
- ☞ *Evaluate the feasibility of adopting a Rural Crossroads Zoning District that among other standards includes minimum standards for commercial building, signage and site design*



Example of three-story mixed use development appropriate for providing increased housing choice and retail/services in Banks County



Irvin's Grocery and Gas located at the intersection of SR 59 and SR 164

- ☞ Coordinate with Martin Bridge area property owners to develop a master plan for developing the interchange area.
- ☞ Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- ☞ Maintain up-to-date ordinances that adequately preserve the rights of local farmers and that provide for adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County
- ☞ Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- ☞ Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites
- ☞ Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- ☞ Prepare and adopt Rural Corridor Overlay District
- ☞ Prepare and adopt sign ordinance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- ☞ Prepare Subarea Master Plans for the Bushville Emerging Neighborhood and Bypass Emerging Neighborhood, area that includes: (1) Identification of mixed use and commercial nodes (2) Connector/Collector street plan (3) Sidewalk requirements and cross sections (4) Greenspace master plan (5) Updated traffic study requirements and (6) Bike/Pedestrian/Greenways Master Plan
- ☞ Require development of small-area master plans with approval of commercial and mixed use zoning districts in each Community Activity Node character area location. Master plans should address site design, building materials and placement, building design, lighting, signage and access.
- ☞ Study PDR and TDR programs that have been successfully implemented in counties similar to Banks and, if appropriate, implement a PDR and TDR program in Banks County
- ☞ Develop zoning districts or overlay that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing



Typical single-family home located on a large, rural lot in south Banks County



Coordination between the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners is critical to prepare for growth in the County. Pictured above is Banks County Middle School in the Windmill Farms area near U.S. 441 Bypass

- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Rural Conservation District to provide for the long-term protection of large areas of property not suitable for development, including farmland, major recreation areas or historic sites, and environmentally sensitive natural resource systems*

Intergovernmental Coordination

Issues

Coordination with schools – Coordination between the school system and the BOC is needed to ensure that new facilities keep up with growth. The County schools recorded record enrollments in 2007-2008, which makes the coordination all the more critical.

Coordination among cities on annexation records – More coordination is needed between Banks County and the municipalities to ensure that the County has access to the most accurate city limit boundaries as possible.

Coordination among emergency service providers – Coordination between the Banks County and municipal emergency service communication networks will be necessary in order to provide the County with an acceptable level of protection and emergency preparedness.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate with the City of Baldwin to adopt and enforce a watershed protection ordinance in order to protect the water quality of the Mountain Creek Reservoir.*
- ☞ *Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment*
- ☞ *Established meetings twice a year of mayors of the County's municipalities and the Board of Commissioners Chairman to discuss issues and develop opportunities to work together*
- ☞ *Maintain an adequate service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation*
- ☞ *Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services*

Implementation Program

Analysis of the existing land use, areas requiring special attention, recommended character areas and consistency with Quality Community Objectives

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by Banks County to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

- 2002-2007 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments
- 2009-2013 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

Report of Accomplishments

The Report of Accomplishments (ROA) provides a status of each work item identified in the County's 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program. For each activity the ROA identifies whether it was completed, postponed, or dropped, or if it is underway. Reasons are provided for a dropped or postponed activity, and a projected completion date is provided for items that are underway.

Element	Activity	Status				Notes
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped	
Community Facilities	4 new fire trucks			✓		Lack of funds available
Community Facilities	1 new ambulance		✓			
Community Facilities	Manpower increase for staffing new ambulance north end	✓				
Community Facilities	Manpower increase for staffing 2 existing fire stations		✓			FD has submitted grant to FEMA to provide for additional manpower
Community Facilities	Acquire property and construct new training facility		✓			FD currently searching for location
Community Facilities	Replace 1 existing ladder truck south end due to age and parts			✓		Lack of funds available
Community Facilities	Add 1 ladder truck to north end for future growth			✓		Lack of funds available
Community Facilities	Replace 2 existing ambulances due to high call volume, wear and tear	✓				
Community Facilities	Capital improvements fire station 410 east end	✓				
Community Facilities	Construct additional bay fire station 220 for equipment expansion					Additional bay not currently needed
Community Facilities	Purchase heavy rescue/HAZMAT truck			✓		Lack of funds available
Community Facilities	Construction of new DFACS building			✓		Awaiting approval from State prior to proceeding with construction
Community Facilities	Design and construct cardiovascular exercise trail	✓				
Community Facilities	3.1 miles grading, base and paving of exiting dirt roads	✓				
Community Facilities	Increase Banks Crossing wastewater as called for in water plan	✓				
Community Facilities	Expand water/sewer capacity construction 2 new tanks	✓				
Community Facilities	Design and construct new Banks County Sheriff's office and jail	✓				
Community Facilities	Staff and equip facilities for Sheriff to adequately service county growth	✓				
Community Facilities	Design and construct multipurpose gymnasium facility	✓				
Community Facilities	Obtain permit for water withdrawal from Middle For of Broad River			✓		Developing a long-term water plan; awaiting recommendations
Community Facilities	Construct bathroom at horse arena	✓				
Community Facilities	Extend water line on Hwy. 23 to Moccasin Gap Road	✓				
Land Use	Review, update and refine planning and zoning to meet county growth		✓			Preparation of Unified Development Code underway
Land Use	Provide for and protect County Farm land as future green space					Property includes recreation areas and provides space for future growth of county facilities/services (e.g. Courthouse Annex)
Economic Development	Review and plan for commercial and industrial growth to support and balance county tax base		✓			Actively promoting commercial and industrial growth
Economic Development	Prepare capital improvements plan for the county		✓			Long-term Water and Sewer Plan will serve as basis of the county's Capital Improvements Plan (plan development underway)

2009-2013 Short Term Work Program

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the County government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the Comprehensive Plan. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief Description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	Year					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013			
Economic Development	Market the County for selection as location for office and industrial development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Chamber, BCDA, BOC	NA	Grants, General Fund (GF)
Economic Development	Market the County for selection as location for future North Georgia regional equestrian center	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Chamber, BCDA, BOC	\$30,000/year	GF,
Economic Development	Identify and develop property for industrial park	✓	✓	✓			Chamber, BCDA, BOC	NA	NA
Natural & Cultural Resources	Coordinate with the State of Georgia and FEMA to update countywide floodplain maps, a process that includes determining countywide elevations.		✓	✓			P&Z	\$0	NA
Natural & Cultural Resources	Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the County review process.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	P&Z	\$0	NA
Community Facilities & Services	Adopt Utilities Department policy that discourages extension of public sewer infrastructure into these Rural Residential and Rural Agricultural character areas	✓					Utilities	\$0	NA
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate Comprehensive Plan Update with Solid Waste Management Plan Update	✓					P&Z	\$0	NA
Community Facilities & Services	Complete a Countywide Water Plan and implement recommendations of the plan	✓					Utilities	\$35,000	GF
Community Facilities & Services	Expand sewer service to include Banks Crossing, Martin Bridge currently underserved	✓	✓	✓			Utilities	TBD	GF, Fees, TBD
Land Use	Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Evaluate feasibility of adding a Community Activity Node zoning district	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Evaluate the feasibility of a Rural Crossroads Zoning District that among other standards includes minimum standards for commercial building, signage and site design	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Coordinate with Martin Bridge area property owners to develop a master plan for developing the interchange area.	✓	✓				P&Z, Chamber, BCDA	\$40,000	GF
Land Use	Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of corridors	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Maintain up-to-date ordinances that adequately preserve the rights of local farmers and that provide for adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	P&Z	\$0	NA
Land Use	Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County		✓	✓			P&Z	\$20,000	GF

Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	Year					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013			
Land Use	Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.		✓				P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites	✓	✓				P&Z	*	
Land Use	Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development	✓	✓				P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Prepare and adopt sign ordinance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas	✓	✓				P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop		✓	✓			P&Z	*	GF
Land Use	Prepare Subarea Master Plan for the Bushville Emerging Neighborhood character area			✓			P&Z	\$15,000	GF
Land Use	Prepare Subarea Master Plan for the Bypass Emerging Neighborhood character area		✓				P&Z	\$15,000	GF
Land Use	Require development of small-area master plans with approval of commercial and mixed use zoning districts in each Community Activity Node character area location. Master plans should address site design, building materials and placement, building design, lighting, signage and access.		✓	✓			P&Z	\$0	NA
Land Use	Study TDR programs that have been successfully implemented in counties similar to Banks and, if appropriate, implement a TDR program in Banks	✓	✓				P&Z	\$0	NA
Transportation	Adopt a collector street plan that provides a long-range plan for developer-driven construction of a connected street system for areas not included in the Rural Agricultural Reserve or Rural Residential character areas			✓	✓		P&Z	**	GF
Transportation	Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards that identify appropriate roadway width and configuration and that stipulate paved roads to use either drainage swales or curb, gutter and sidewalk.		✓	✓			P&Z	**	GF
Transportation	Develop a road improvement plan			✓	✓		P&Z	**	GF
Transportation	Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments	✓					P&Z	*	GF
Inter-governmental Coordination	Coordinate with the City of Baldwin to adopt and enforce a watershed protection ordinance in order to protect the water quality of the Mountain Creek Reservoir.	✓	✓				BOC, Utilities	\$0	NA
Inter-governmental Coordination	Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment	✓	✓				BOC, P&Z	\$0	NA
Inter-governmental Coordination	Established meeting twice each year of mayors of the County's municipalities and the Board of Commissioners Chairman to discuss issues and develop opportunities to work together	✓					BOC	\$5,000	GF
Inter-governmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC	\$0	NA

* Actions considered part of the development of the Unified Development Code; ** Actions considered part of the development of a Transportation Plan



Long Term Projects

Long-term Projects outlines specific long-term or ongoing implementation actions the County government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year time frame of the planning period (2014-2028). This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements or other programs or initiatives for plan implementation.

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy
Economic Development	Adopt a gateway and signage master plan for the Banks Crossing area coordinated with the banner signage and street lights along U.S. 441
Economic Development	Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas
Economic Development	Study feasibility of County constructing a regional, enclosed events center for the purpose of housing large-scale events such as conventions, concerts and exhibitions.
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt a Historic Preservation Ordinance that will establish a Historic Preservation Commission to provide for the designation, protection, preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties and historic districts and to participate in federal or state programs to do the same.
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
Natural & Cultural Resources	Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors and defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system. The plan would pay particular attention to the Hudson River and Grove River floodplains.
Natural & Cultural Resources	Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources
Natural & Cultural Resources	Prepare a countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan
Natural & Cultural Resources	Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements
Community Facilities & Services	Complete and implement long range sewer expansion master plan which expands infrastructure to key areas
Community Facilities & Services	Development of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Plan that includes study of the feasibility providing neighborhood and community park facilities in areas where growth is expected
Community Facilities & Services	Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Neighborhood character areas, Community Activity Nodes currently underserved
Land Use	Develop zoning districts or overlay that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing
Land Use	Study the PDR programs that have been successfully implemented in counties similar to Banks and implement an appropriate program for Banks
Land Use	Prepare and adopt a Rural Conservation District to provide for the long-term protection of large areas of property not suitable for development, including farmland, major recreation areas or historic sites, and environmentally sensitive natural resource systems
Transportation	Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services

Policies

Policies are intended to provide ongoing guidance and direction to County officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following recommended policies are organized by major topic as pertains to the comprehensive plan.

Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for the community's economy in terms of job skill requirements and linkages to existing businesses.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Consider access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Consider impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision-making on economic development projects.
- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.

Housing

- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate the diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Maintain an adequate supply of residential land, providing opportunities for various housing types, consistent with city policies for annexation, transpiration, land use and the environment
- Promote new infill housing development consistent with the style and type of housing in the surrounding neighborhood by developing underutilized or undeveloped lots within existing developed neighborhoods
- Encourage joint public and private participation through local, state and federal programs to help cover the financial gap between affordable housing and the actual cost of developing housing.

- Work in conjunction with the private developers and non-profit providers of affordable housing to ensure that an adequate supply of high quality affordable housing is available in Banks County
- Facilitate the development of low-interest loan programs to assist low-to-moderate income homeowners with housing maintenance.
- Encourage private developers who provide low-cost housing with both financial assistance when appropriate and assistance in planning, building or renovating low-cost housing
- Promote redevelopment projects that will add to the diversity in terms of housing types and price ranges of Banks County's housing supply
- Promote housing rehabilitation and adaptive re-use in appropriate areas of Banks County
- Periodically review zoning ordinance provisions and other regulatory tools to ensure that they do not restrict infill or redevelopment by creating barriers to the development of affordable housing. Such regulations include minimum floor areas, minimum lot sizes and standards, garage stall requirements, permit fees, etc.
- Eliminate land use conflicts through code enforcements and housing maintenance assistance and redevelopment to ensure the integrity and long-term viability of residential neighborhoods is protected
- Integrate and disperse affordable housing units throughout the city so that they are not concentrated in one area
- Support infrastructure improvements that contribute to a strong and healthy neighborhood identity
- Promote creative mixed-use development that integrates housing with public places, retail and service commercial
- Encourage site and architectural design that protects the existing characteristics of the natural environment and the community

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks (for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)
- Discourage extension of public utilities, especially sewer, that would encourage development of Preserve and Rural/Agricultural Reserve character areas
- Discourage septic tanks and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure
- Promote use of Preserve character areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations
- Promote the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- Protect farmland, open space, and environmentally-sensitive private lands by maintaining large lot sizes (e.g. at least five acres)
- Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners to help preserve viable farmland
- Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality
- Encourage landscaping with native vegetation that requires limited (or none at all) irrigation

- Encourage the use of Conservation Subdivisions to preserve rural character and sensitive natural resources
- Encourage tree protection and replacement with each new development
- Protection and conservation of the community’s resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Maximize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Develop infrastructure networks to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Direct development away from agricultural areas to conserve farmland to protect and preserve this important component of our community.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.

Community Facilities & Services

- Continue to promote SPLOST as successful local funding source and implement impact fees as supplemental funding source for some community facilities
- Continue to actively pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails
- Efficiently use existing infrastructure and public facilities to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (i.e., already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community’s residents and employers.
- Limit development within the community to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate the provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact nodal development at areas identified as suitable for such development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.

- Use planned infrastructure expansion regarding sewer expansion, to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.

Land Use

- Maintain up to date ordinances that adequately preserve the rights of local farmers and that provide for adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses.
- Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along the gateway corridors and other throughway roads in the County to lessen the effects of linear sprawl
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use development
- Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development
- Our decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.
- Create a “sense of place” along the gateways and corridors of the community
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating safe and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have the ability to walk and bicycle and have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services such as grocery stores.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-asides of greenspace are important to our community.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing encouraging commercial, industrial and higher density residential growth in areas that have show the potential more existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential in-fill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that are human-scale and less auto-oriented.

- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.
- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip development along major roadways.
- Remain open to land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.

Transportation

- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).
- Design new and reconstructed roadways appropriately by using context sensitive design considerations, to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize impacts on the environment and our historic resources.
- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Planning of our new and reconstructed roadways will include consideration of whether the roadways can accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions) in the non-rural/agricultural areas of Banks County.
- Support the creation of a community-wide greenway or multi-use path network for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- We will ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection, stormwater management).
- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.

Development Concepts

Taking a closer look at some of the tools recommended for implementation in Banks County

The Development Concepts chapter provides graphic design concepts and general strategy outlines for the strategies listed throughout the Community Agenda. The concepts shown on the following pages provide a wide range of solutions to the issues identified in Banks County.

Traditional Neighborhood Development

The term traditional neighborhood development (TND) describes the planning and urban design of pre- and early 20th-Century urban form built prior to the nation's reliance on the automobile. The early forms of these neighborhoods are primarily streetcar and commuter rail suburbs. On a smaller scale they resemble traditional American small towns of the early 20th Century. More recent forms are primarily large master planned communities.

In general, TNDs consist of the following characteristics:

- Compact defined urban neighborhoods composed of compatible mix of uses and housing types
- Network of connected streets with sidewalks and trees for convenient and safe movement throughout the neighborhoods for all modes of transportation
- Focus on pedestrian over the automobile, while retaining automobile convenience
- Integrate parks and public spaces into each neighborhood
- Placement of important civic buildings and key sites to create landmarks and a strong sense of place



TND form: (1) Lower-density residential, (2) urban residential, (3) Mixed-Use center, (4) Open Space and Civic Site, (5) Linear Park.



TND residential area of Seaside, Florida
Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

Instead of isolating uses from one another, traditional neighborhood development places emphasis on creating quality environments that are not left behind for the newest area next door. TNDs accommodate growth for a diverse array of lifestyles, incomes, and needs. They provide marketable and viable choices that will retain a sense of belonging and identity. The TND philosophy contends that an appropriate mix of uses, housing types, and strong design provide the backbone livable and sustainable neighborhoods.

Traditional neighborhood development concepts are key to Banks County's future as development moves east from the Atlanta area and southwest from the Greenville, S.C. area.

Greyfield Redevelopment

Today's American urban landscape is dotted with shopping malls which have become obsolete. These shopping centers, built primarily in the 1970's and 1980's, are dying due to various factors including differences in the market, changes in accessibility, and increased competition. A new tool for design experts is to turn these fading centers, named 'greyfields' for the typically empty parking lots surrounding them, into thriving downtown communities.

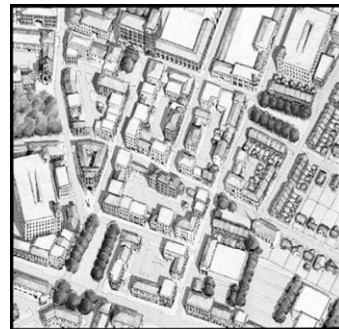
Greyfield revitalization efforts attempt to exchange afflicting influences with smart new growth that is both more environmentally friendly and establishes a strong sense of place. Revitalization of greyfield sites often consists of major redevelopment rather than conventional regional retail or simple face-lifts. Design initiatives are inspired by classic urban form and characterized by attractive, walkable streets and high density. Many greyfield sites are more suitable to be converted into housing, retail, office, services, and public space rather than standard retail. In these cases mixed-use development becomes an attractive option.

The mixed-use development plan concept replaces an isolated big box store with large parking lot with traditional, urban design that places buildings close to the street, separated only by a sidewalk and landscaped strip. Parking is located in the rear or to the side of the commercial buildings in order to create a friendly pedestrian environment along each street. The design connects the development to the adjacent community's street grid with pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.



Single Family Street in the Village of Tannin TND, Orange Beach, Alabama

Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company



Eastgate Town Center, before (top) and proposed after (bottom) in Chattanooga, Tennessee

Source: Dover Kohl & Partners

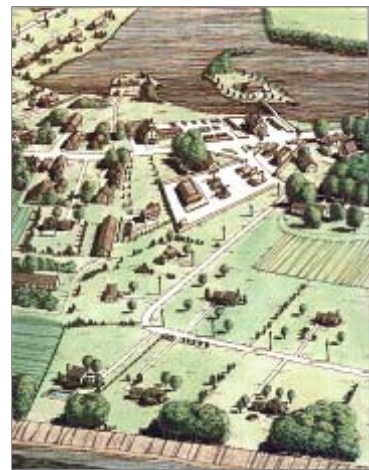
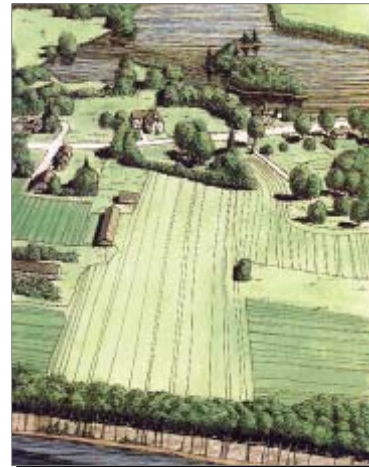
Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivisions (also called cluster subdivisions) are an alternative to conventional residential lot designs. Designers identify land resources (e.g. scenic views, steep slopes, riparian areas, etc.) worthy of conservation, then design development in a way that respects and preserves the resources identified. Conservation subdivisions make development in Greenfield, or undeveloped, areas much more sustainable since open space is protected. By clustering homes, future households are accommodated more efficiently on less developed land. A chief component of the conservation subdivision is that the developer can develop the same number of lots with conservation subdivisions as he can with conventional subdivisions. The difference is that conservation subdivisions allow the development to occur with much smaller lots that are clustered in order to preserve the areas for open space.

Conservation subdivisions can be residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of overall acreage is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while houses are clustered on the remainder of the property. They are similar in many respects to golf course communities, but instead of a manicured golf course, they feature natural forests, meadows, wetlands and community gardens or farmland. They contrast with conventional subdivisions in which nearly the entire parcel is subdivided into house lots and streets. Conventional subdivisions provide few green spaces for walking, little habitat for wildlife and few opportunities for residents to interact with their neighbors. Conservation subdivisions, on the other hand, provide all of these things.

Purchase of Development Rights

The purchase of development rights (PDR) involves the voluntary sale by a landowner of the right to develop a property to a government agency or private nonprofit land trust. The land owner receives a cash payment in return of signing a legally binding agreement, a deed of easement that restricts the use of the land, usually in perpetuity to farming and open space. The land remains private property with no right of public access. State and local governments have relied primarily on the sale of bonds to finance the purchase of development rights. The sale of development rights lowers the value of the farm for estate tax purposes, aiding in the transfer of the farm to the next generation. The price of the development rights is determined by an appraisal. Although future generations that farm a preserved farm will have development rights to sell, the farm will retain a value for farming, and the land can be sold to someone else to farm.



Alternatives for a rural area (top) with equal residential and commercial square footage developed with conventional large-lot rural zoning regulations (center) and with conservation subdivision regulations (bottom.)

Source - 1996 Center for Rural Massachusetts

PDR and the purchase of conservation easement are the same thing. By convention, however, PDR refers to the purchase of a conservation easement by a government agency, whereas the acquisition of conservation easements is done by private land trusts. The PDR also tends to refer to the preservation of active farm and forestlands. When development rights are purchased from several; contiguous farms, development can be more effectively directed away from the farming area, allowing farm owners to invest in their farms without complains from non-farm neighbors.

Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs are typically instituted to preserve open space or ecologically sensitive areas, such as wetlands, agricultural or forest uses or historic buildings or landmarks. In each case, the purpose is to protect the underlying resource while compensating the owner of the resources for its use. Detaching development rights from agricultural land means that such land cannot be developed or could only be developed at a very low intensity. When TDR is applied to historic buildings located in high-value areas, those buildings are preserved, because development pressure that would otherwise result in building's demolition and replacement is alleviated.

TDR features moving development potential from a property targeted for preservation to a property planned for development. The owner of the first property receives cash compensation from a developer or local government. The transfer of development rights (TDR) means that the development right can be moved to another site to develop that other property at a higher density than would normally be allowed. The first step is for a local government to establish a TDR market. This includes identifying a sending area, from which TDRs will be sent, and a receiving area, where developers use the TDRs to build at a higher density. For farmland preservation purposes, after the development rights are transferred, the sending area is then restricted to farming.

The two leading TDR programs for preserving farmland are in Montgomery County, Maryland and in the New Jersey Pinelands. Purchase of development rights has been far more popular than TDRs, however, partly because of the controversy in identifying sending and receiving area.

Mixed Use

Mixed use development combines numerous uses on one site in a strategic way, including office, retail, residential, hotel, services, and public transportation. Historically mixed use was a common form of development in America, and today is returning in



Mixed Use in Market Village development in Symrna, Georgia

response to land use segregation and the desire for an improved sense of community.

Developing with a mixed use approach can alleviate traffic and help reduce pollution, while providing residents a cherished place to call downtown. Accessibility becomes a major benefit, as various stores, restaurants, and homes are located in the same vicinity. Parking needs of the different uses vary throughout the day, and can be skillfully shared and placed in the backs of buildings or on-street as to not discourage pedestrian movement. Also, ‘pocket parks,’ parks which are tucked within the urban fabric of a downtown, balance with density to create an enjoyable, livable atmosphere.

Mixed land uses can create convenient places to live for people of various ages and income levels, enhancing the vitality of a community and its streets. Substantial fiscal and economic benefits can also be generated out of mixed use development, as the area becomes more attractive to residents and to businesses who acknowledge the benefits related to areas able to appeal to more people.

Roads and Sidewalks /Streetscape-

Streets inform the structure and comfort of urban communities. Their sizes and arrangements influence the form of growth in an area, affecting the amount of activity afforded to a region. Streets also shape how people relate to one another and their community, whether traveling in vehicle or pedestrian traffic. A hierarchy of roads becomes important to the centralization of an urban core and its surrounding vicinity, organizing patterns of density and focusing attention on one or many centers. Following are descriptions of three major road typologies which will become pertinent to Banks County planning.

Avenue

An avenue describes a straight, broad roadway bordered on both sides with either trees or large shrubs at regular intervals. The presence of an avenue often indicates an arrival to a landscape or architectural feature. Trees planted along avenues are typically of the same species or cultivar, creating a uniform appearance and emphasizing the full length of the street.

Boulevard

A boulevard indicates a wide, multi-lane thoroughfare, often planted with rows of trees. The boulevard can be perceived as three distinct routes: two sidewalks and the roadway itself, trees separating each of these components. Boulevards can affect the structure and comprehension of a city’s layout, linking important localities, and can also become popular destinations themselves. The boulevard can accommodate and even promote residential,

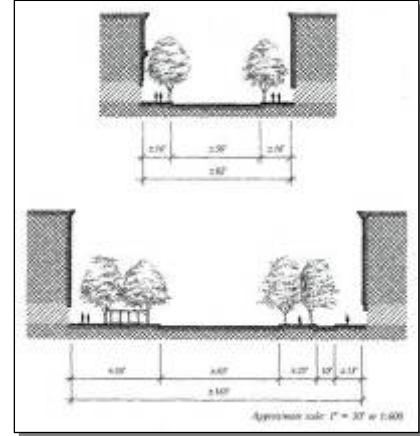


Mixed use building with ground floor dining and upper floor residential in the Highlands of West Village development in Cobb County, Georgia

business, and retail purposes, and, as in traditional use, often exists as a special place of promenade. In addition to the movement of vehicles and goods, the design purpose of a boulevard is about pedestrian traffic. Boulevards become a way for people to enjoy a city, and help to create identity.

Residential Street

Residential streets are designed to create a quiet, traffic-protected area. The feeling throughout is pedestrian friendly. Often the curb-to-curb width of the street is wide enough to allow some on-street parking. Residential streets can be emphasized by the planting of trees and shrubs.

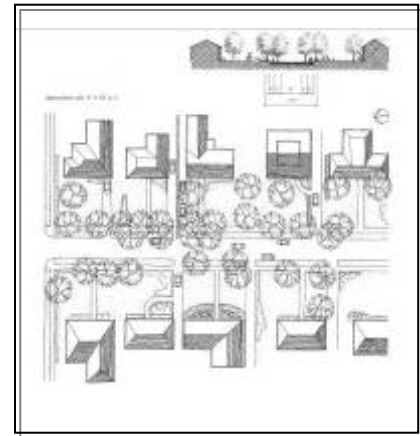
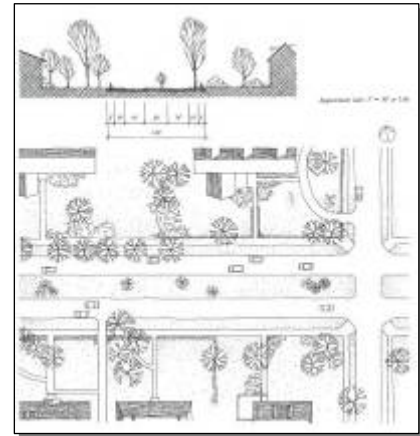


Tax Increment Financing and Tax Allocation Districts

A Tax Allocation District (TAD) is established for the purpose of publicly financing certain redevelopment activities in underdeveloped areas. Redevelopment costs are financed through the pledge of future incremental increase in property taxes generated by the resulting new development. Typically, upon creation, TADs have vacant commercial and residential properties, blighted conditions and numerous vacant buildings or are in need of significant environmental remediation.

The Georgia Redevelopment Powers Law was enacted in 1985 to give additional powers to local municipalities in order to facilitate the redevelopment of blighted or economically depressed areas. One of the powers that was granted to local governments in this law was to issue tax allocation bonds to finance infrastructure and other redevelopment costs within a tax allocation district. In order for an area to be designated a TAD, the government must verify that the area is need of redevelopment. These findings are reported in a Redevelopment Plan, which demonstrates why the area needs to be redeveloped and how the municipality plans to revitalize the area. The plan provides the redevelopment agency with the powers to improve dilapidated facilities and to use tax increment financing to achieve the goals of the redevelopment plan.

A tax increment is the difference between the amount of property tax revenue generated before TIF district designation and the amount of property tax revenue generated after the TAD designation. Establishment of a TAD does not reduce property tax revenues. Property taxes collected on properties included in the TAD at the time of its designation continue to be distributed to the school districts, county, community college and all other taxing districts in the same manner as if the TAD did not exist. Only property taxes generated by the incremental increase in the values of these properties after that time are available for use by



Examples of Avenue, Boulevard and Residential Street -

Source: Great Streets, Allan B. Jacobs

the TAD. The only change is that during the life of the TAD the property tax revenues are distributed differently with the incremental increase going into a special fund to finance some of the redevelopment expenditures within the TAD.

Tax Increment Financing is a widely used economic development tool that offers local governments a way to revitalize their communities by expanding their tax base, offsetting, in part, federal and state funds that are no longer available. TADs can act as the catalyst to attract further private investment into economically depressed areas. For instance, the City of East Point established a TAD to facilitate the development of Camp Creek Marketplace in a historically underserved market, thus providing hundreds of new jobs and access to retailers. TADs help local governments attract private development and new businesses which create jobs, attract customers, and in turn generate additional private investment. Essentially, the creation of a TAD generally leads to an increase in tax revenues, above what already existed.

Community Improvement Districts

A Community Improvement District (CID) is a self-taxing district that uses additional property tax dollars to make improvements within a defined district. CIDs are controlled by the private property owners and the property owners decide how to spend the money raised via a Board of Directors. In order to form a CID, a simple majority of the commercial property owners within the CID must agree to form a CID. In addition, these property owners must represent at least 75% of the assessed tax value within the proposed CID boundaries. CIDs typically use the tax dollars they receive as matching funds (matched with state and federal dollars) for various infrastructure improvements. Successful CIDs in North Georgia have received as much as \$50 of state and federal grant money for each \$1 collected locally and have funded projects such as:

- Marketing and Promotion
- Maintenance
- Construct roads, sidewalks, street lights, and devices to control the flow of traffic.
- Parks and recreational areas and facilities.
- Storm water and sewage disposal systems.
- Development and distribution of water
- Provide off duty police for traffic control during peak traffic periods



Appendix A: Glossary

The following pages provide a comprehensive list of terms and phrases used throughout this plan and other community planning documents. The list provides a brief description for each term or phrase shown.

Accessory dwelling unit - Garage apartments, granny flats, or similar secondary housing units located on the same lot with a single family residence.

Adaptive reuse or adaptive use - The redevelopment of existing older or abandoned structures for new development opportunities. These activities provide for the revitalization and redevelopment of older urban areas by providing new uses for existing structures. (e.g., residential loft units in former warehouse buildings).

Alleys - Service easements running behind or between rows of houses. Alleys provide access to utilities and sanitation, garages, backyards and accessory units.

Annexation - A change in existing community boundaries resulting from the incorporation of additional land.

Big box retailer - Large, stand-alone discount stores, such as Wal-Mart and Office Depot

Best Management Practice (BMP) - Refers to the practice considered most effective to achieve a specific desired result for protection of water, air and land and to control the release of toxins.

Brownfields - Sites that are underutilized or not in active use, on land that is either contaminated or perceived to be contaminated.

Buffer zone - A strip of land created to separate and protect one type of land use from another.

Capital facilities (Infrastructure) - Public facilities characterized by a one-time cost, a useful life generally exceeding five years, significant land acquisition, site preparation, development planning, engineering and construction costs and long-term financing requirements.

Certified local government (CLG) - A local government that protects local historic resources with a preservation ordinance, preservation commission and local designation. A designated CLG is eligible to receive federal funds for historic preservation activities.

Choice - The availability of a wide variety of housing, transportation and shopping options that meet the needs of community residents from different economic levels and age groups.

Cluster development - A pattern of development in which industrial and commercial facilities and homes are grouped together on parcels of land in order to leave parts of the land undeveloped. Cluster development is often used in areas that require large lot sizes, and typically involves density transfer. Zoning ordinances permit cluster development by allowing smaller lot sizes when part of the land is left as open space (also known as Conservation Subdivision).

Commercial - Land use that is primarily for businesses, which may include shopping, restaurants, gas stations, etc.

Community identity - Physical, natural or cultural assets that represent distinctive qualities unique to an individual community. A community's identity is enhanced by embracing and respecting the history and character of those existing features that nurture a sense of attachment and uniqueness within the area.

Community services - Services provided to citizens by a local government that may include police, fire, hospital, schools, trash removal, water treatment, recycling, etc. These services are paid for by local taxes and user fees.

Commuter rail - Train service that takes suburban commuters to jobs close in and back again

Compact building design - The act of constructing buildings vertically rather than horizontally, configuring them on a block or neighborhood scale that makes efficient use of land and resources, and is consistent with neighborhood character and scale. Compact building design reduces the footprint of new construction, thus preserving greenspace to absorb and filter rain water, reduce flooding and stormwater drainage needs, and lower the amount of pollution washing into our streams, rivers and lakes.

Comprehensive plan - Regional, state or local documents that describe community visions for future growth. Comprehensive plans describe general plans and policies for how communities will grow and the tools that are used to guide land use decisions, and give general, long-range recommendations for community growth. Typical elements include, land use, housing, transportation, environment, economic development and community facilities.

Conservation easements - Conservation easements are voluntary, legally binding agreements for landowners that limit parcels of land or pieces of property to certain uses. Land under conservation easements remains privately owned and most easements are permanent.

Conservation subdivision - See Cluster Development.

Context sensitive design (CSD) - A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources. CSD is an approach that considers the total context within which a project will exist.

Corridor - A connecting strip of habitat that facilitates the migration and movement of species between core habitat areas, preventing the isolation of populations and enhancing the chances of survival.

Density - The average number of people, families, or housing units on one unit of land. Density is also expressed as dwelling units per acre.

Density bonus - Allows developers to build in specified areas densities that are higher than normally allowed.

Design flexibility - Allows for flexibility in parking and open space designations, setbacks and height limitations in order to facilitate the production of a range of affordable housing types.

Design standards - Guidelines which serve as a community's expression to control its appearance, from within and without, through a series of standards that govern site planning policies, densities, building heights, traffic and lighting.

Development rights - Development rights give property owners the right to develop land in ways that comply with local land use regulation.

Flood hazard area - Total stream and adjacent area periodically covered by overflow from the stream channel containing 1) the floodway which is the channel itself and portions of the immediately adjacent overbank that carry the major portion of flood flow, and 2) the flood fringe beyond it which is inundated to a lesser degree.

Flood plain - Nearly level area adjacent to a water body, subject to inundation under heavy rain or blockage conditions (overflow area).

"Granny units" housing - Typically, this refers to an accessory dwelling attached to or near the main residence (a.k.a. granny flats or mother-in-law suites)

Green infrastructure - A strategically planned and managed network of parks, greenways, conservation easements and working lands with conservation value that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air

and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for communities and people.

Green spaces and/or open spaces - Areas left relatively natural and undeveloped in urban and suburban settings, such as parks, bicycle and pedestrian trails and natural wildlife areas. Also includes the living environment of a species, that provides whatever that species needs for its survival, such as nutrients, water and living space

Greenfields - Newly developed commercial real estate on what was previously undeveloped open space.

Greenspace - Permanently protected land and water, including agricultural and forestry land, that is in its undeveloped, natural state.

Greenway - A linear open space; a corridor composed of natural vegetation. Greenways can be used to create connected networks of open space that include traditional parks and natural areas.

Groundwater - All water below the surface of the land. It is water found in the pore spaces of bedrock or soil, and it reaches the land surface through springs or it can be pumped using wells.

Growth management - A term that encompasses a whole range of policies designed to control, guide, or mitigate the effects of growth.

Historic area - An area or building in which historic events occurred, or one which has special value due to architectural or cultural features relating to the heritage of the community. Elements in historic areas have significance that necessitates preservation or conservation.

Impervious surface - Any surface through which rainfall cannot pass or be effectively absorbed. (Roads, buildings, paved parking lots, sidewalks etc.)

Incentive zoning - Provides for give and take compromise on zoning restrictions, allowing for more flexibility to provide environmental protection. Incentive zoning allows a developer to exceed a zoning ordinance's limitations if the developer agrees to fulfill conditions specified in the ordinance. The developer may be allowed to exceed height limits by a specified amount in exchange for providing open spaces or plazas adjacent to the building.

Industrial - Land use that is primarily for businesses, such as warehouses, manufacturing plants, automobile service shops, etc.

Infill - Development that occurs on previously developed land within established communities.

Infill development - The reuse of urban land or vacant lots in developed neighborhoods and urban areas. Infill development (buildings, parking, and other uses) is most successful when it is accomplished at a scale and with design features that are compatible with the existing and surrounding neighborhoods.

Infrastructure - A general term describing public and quasi-public utilities and facilities such as roads, bridges, sewers and sewer plants, water lines, power lines, fire stations, etc.

Land trust - Nonprofit organization interested in the protection of natural resources and historic areas.

Land use - The manner in which a parcel of land is used or occupied.

Leapfrog development - Development that occurs beyond the limits of existing development and creates areas of vacant land between areas of developed land.

Level of service (LOS) - A qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream in terms of speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience and safety.

Linkages - Features that promote the interconnectedness of neighborhoods, commercial and office areas, open space resources and public places, and provide convenient access between these different uses.

Live-work unit - Buildings that offer the opportunity for individuals to live and work in the same structure. Units may be rental or condominium. Purchase of home and office may be accomplished through a single mortgage.

Lot area - Lot area is the total square footage of horizontal area included within the property lines.

Minimum density standards - Standards that establish minimum higher densities to ensure that existing land available for development is not underutilized.

Mixed use - Development that combines two or more of the types of development: residential, commercial, office, industrial or institutional.

Mixed use development - Development that is created in response to patterns of separate uses that are typical in suburban areas necessitating reliance on cars. Mixed use developments include residential, commercial and business accommodations in one area.

Neo-traditional development - A traditional neighborhood, where a mix of different types of residential and commercial developments form a tightly knit unit. Residents can walk or bike to more of the places they need to go and municipal services costs are lower due to the close proximity of residences. A more compact development also reduces the amount of rural land that must be converted to serve urban needs.

New urbanism - A planning and design movement that promotes artfully designed urban neighborhoods that host diverse income groups and races, a mix of homes, stores, and restaurants, and useful public spaces.

Nodal development - Nodal development concentrates mixed used development (such as commercial, office and higher density residential) to provide required densities and service to make transit affordable and to foster community hubs where daily services can be reached within walking distance.

Overlay zone - A set of zoning requirements that is superimposed upon a base zone. Overlay zones are generally used when a particular area requires special protection (as in a historic preservation district) or has a special problem (such as steep slopes, flooding or earthquake faults). Development of land subject to overlay zoning requires compliance with the regulations of both the base and overlay zones.

Pedestrian-friendly - A term used to describe streets or areas that are laid out in an interconnected network providing convenient and safe pedestrian access between important destinations. Areas that are pedestrian-friendly, are attractively landscaped, provide visual interest and a sense of security to encourage walking.

Planned unit development (PUD) - PUDs are areas that are planned and developed as one entity, by a single group. Planned unit developments usually include a variety of uses, including different housing types of varying densities, open space, and commercial uses. Project planning and density is calculated for the entire development rather than individual lots.

Planning - The process of setting development goals and policy, gathering and evaluating information, and developing alternatives for future actions based on the evaluation of the information.

Public spaces - Places that create community identity, foster social interaction and add community vitality. They may include major sites in central locations such as urban riverfronts, downtown plazas and parks, shopping streets and historic districts. Public spaces may be libraries, post offices or other civic building areas. Smaller, less central sites include neighborhood streets and parks, playgrounds, gardens, neighborhood squares and older suburban commercial centers.

Public-private partnerships - A collaborative arrangement between public and private entities in which resources and information are shared in order to serve a particular public purpose. Public-private partnerships specify joint rights and responsibilities and imply some sharing of risks, costs or assets, thereby allowing parties to effectively achieve common goals.

Purchase of development rights (PDR) - Programs through which local governments may purchase development rights and dedicate the land for conservation easements, protecting it as open space or agricultural areas.

Qualified local government (QLG) - A county or municipality which has a comprehensive plan in

conformity with the minimum standards and procedures and has established regulations consistent with its comprehensive plan with the minimum standards and procedures.

Quality of life - Those aspects of the economic, social and physical environment that make a community a desirable place in which to live or do business. Quality of life factors include those such as climate and natural features, access to schools, housing, employment opportunities, medical facilities, cultural and recreational amenities and public services.

Redevelopment - Reinvestment in older elements of a region – a historic structure, long-time residential community, brownfield, shopping center or main street – offers an opportunity to revitalize communities while preserving social and environmental values.

Rehabilitation - In communities with a large stock of older housing or other structures that could lend themselves more easily to conversion into residential units, rehabilitation can be a very affordable and environmentally-friendly way to provide more housing, commercial areas and offices.

Residential - Land use that is primarily for houses, townhouses, apartments or other dwelling types.

Riparian area - Vegetated ecosystems along a water body through which energy, materials, and water pass. Riparian areas characteristically have a high water table and are subject to periodic flooding.

Runoff - The water that flows off the surface of the land, ultimately into our streams and water bodies, without being absorbed into the soil.

Rural character - Rural character consists of qualities such as horse farms, lakes, pastures, farms, estates and undisturbed roadsides. Areas contain mature and natural landscape with informal placement of trees and indigenous vegetation is characteristic of the area.

Scale - Urban designers typically emphasize the importance of human scale in successful environments. Considerations of human scale include building height and bulk regulations to ensure that new development and redevelopment efforts are pedestrian-oriented and compatible with the existing built environment.

Scenic byway - Any designated highway, street, road or route which features certain resources (cultural, natural, archaeological, historical and recreational) that should be protected or enhanced (Georgia Scenic Byways Project: 1998, p. 2)

Sediment and erosion control - Practices and processes that effectively protect the soil surface from the erosive force of rain, storm water runoff

and, in some cases, wind. Higher rates of erosion and sediment loss typically accompany urban development. A variety of planning, design and engineering practices are used to minimize the negative impacts of erosion on urban streams.

Sedimentation - Build up of soils in streams and lakes via runoff from surrounding land, especially land cleared of vegetation.

Sense of place - A feeling of attachment and belonging to a particular place or environment having a special character and familiarity.

Setback - A minimum distance required by zoning to be maintained between two structures or between a structure and property lines.

Shared parking - Parking area that is utilized by more than one business, development or property to minimize parking surfaces in an area. Shared parking works best when the various users have customers with parking needs at different times of the day.

Siltation - Process by which loose soil is transferred and builds up in streams, rivers, and lakes, causing changes in stream channels and in depth. It may result in filling in an area and/or causing flooding.

Site plan - A scaled plan showing proposed uses and structures for a parcel of land. A site plan could also show the location of lot lines, the layout of buildings, open space, parking areas, landscape features, and utility lines.

Smart growth - - Well-planned, environmentally-sensitive land development that protects open space and farmland, revitalizes communities, keeps housing affordable and provides more transportation choices.

Sprawl - Out-of-control, poorly planned development that destroys habitat and open space and diverts resources from existing communities.

Stream - A body of water flowing in a channel.

Stream corridor - The area (containing wetlands, flood plains, woodlands, unique habitats, and steep slopes) which lies between relatively level uplands and stream banks and through which water, draining from the uplands, flows and is naturally cleansed and stored. Base flow for streams comes from ground water as springs and seeps.

Streetscape - The space between the buildings on either side of a street that defines its character. The elements of a streetscape include: building frontage/façade; landscaping (trees, yards, bushes, plantings, etc.); sidewalks; street paving; street furniture (benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, fountains, etc.); signs; awnings; and street lighting.

Subdivision - A subdivision occurs as the result of dividing land into lots for sale or development.

Sustainable development - Development with the goal of preserving environmental quality, natural resources and livability for present and future

generations. Sustainable initiatives work to ensure efficient use of resources.

Taking - A taking occurs when a government action violates the 5th Amendment property rights of a landowner by taking a piece of property without offering fair compensation. "Takings" include physical acquisitions of land, and may include regulations that unduly deprive landowners of certain uses of their property or have the effect of diminishing the value of property.

Tax increment financing - A program designed to leverage private investment for economic development projects in a manner that enhances the benefits accrued to the public interest (includes creation of a Tax Allocation District).

Tax-base sharing - redistribution of a portion of revenue resulting from growth in the property tax base of individual jurisdictions to a taxing district in which multiple jurisdictions share in regional economic development; the purpose is to spread the benefits of growth equitably throughout a region.

Traditional neighborhood development (TND) - A combination of mixed uses and integrated street designs to create a land use pattern that minimizes travel distance and makes it easier for residents to travel by foot between their houses, jobs and commercial services.

Traditional neighborhood design - A development pattern that reflects the characteristics of small, older communities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The focus of the community shifts from the automobile to the pedestrian. Traditional communities are characterized by mixed land uses, grid street patterns, pedestrian circulation, intensively-used open spaces, architectural character, and a sense of community.

Traditional neighborhoods - Traditional neighborhood design is a development approach that reflects historic settlement patterns and town planning concepts such as gridded, narrow streets, reduced front and side setbacks, and an orientation of streets and neighborhoods around a pedestrian oriented "town center." Such an approach usually requires modifications to zoning and subdivision regulations.

Traffic calming - Street design measures that slow traffic down restrict the areas in which cars are allowed, and otherwise manage the flow of traffic to make other forms of transportation such as walking and bicycling more attractive and feasible options.

Transfer of development rights (TDR) - A system that assigns development rights to parcels of land and gives landowners the option of using those rights to develop or to sell their land. TDRs are used to promote conservation and protection of land by giving landowners the right to transfer the

development rights of one parcel to another parcel. By selling development rights, a landowner gives up the right to develop his/her property, but the buyer could use the rights to develop another piece of land at a greater intensity than would otherwise be permitted.

Transit nodes - Stops along a public transportation route where people board and disembark, often where one or more routes intersect with each other. These sites can provide ideal locations for mixed-use development as well as transit-oriented development.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) - The development of housing, commercial space, services, and job opportunities in close proximity to public transportation. Reduces dependency on cars and time spent in traffic, which protects the environment and can ease traffic congestion, as well as increasing opportunity by linking residents to jobs and services.

Transit-supportive development - A development pattern that reinforces the use of public transportation through efficient, pedestrian-oriented land use design and higher densities. The development, within walking distance of the transit station, center or stop, offers a variety of housing and commercial activities.

Walkability - Areas that are walkable and are safe, comfortable, interesting and accessible. They offer amenities such as wide sidewalks, attractive storefronts that face the sidewalk, shade, shelter and a sense of spatial enclosure provided through landscaping and streetscape elements. These areas are inviting to pedestrians for shopping, recreation and relaxation.

Watershed - Watersheds are nature's boundaries - they are the land areas that drain to surface water bodies such as lakes and streams. Watershed management seeks to prevent flooding and water pollution, to conserve or restore natural systems and to protect human health through integrated land and water management practices.

Wetlands - Area having specific hydric soil and water table characteristics supporting or capable of supporting wetlands vegetation.

Zoning - Local codes regulating the use and development of property. The zoning ordinance divides the city or county into land use districts or "zones", represented on zoning maps, and specifies the allowable uses within each of those zones. It establishes development standards such as minimum lot size, maximum height of structures, building setbacks, and yard size.

Zoning and subdivision regulations - Regulations controlling the use, placement, spacing and size of lots and buildings within specified districts (zoning) and regulations controlling the conversion of land into building lots, including provisions for supporting infrastructure (subdivision).



BANKS COUNTY

RESOLUTION 2008-30

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT
THE BANKS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018**

WHEREAS an update to the Banks County Comprehensive Plan has been prepared for unincorporated areas of Banks County; and

WHEREAS the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 has been prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1 2005 and established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 which includes Community Assessment and Community Agenda components with information about population, housing, economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, existing land use, future development, and plan implementation, and

WHEREAS the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 Community Agenda has been reviewed by the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and determined to have met the applicable minimum planning standards; and

WHEREAS the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 is the product of a planning process which should continue to evolve and periodic updates should take place based on changing conditions and the reassessment of community vision and goals; and

WHEREAS the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 is not, and should not be, a zoning plan, but is intended to be a guide concerning decisions of elected officials regarding development and zoning matters; and

WHEREAS the Short Term Work Program portion of the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 is intended to serve as a guide for local government implementation activities and should be updated on a regular basis;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Banks County Board of Commissioners does hereby approve and adopt the Banks County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 as a general guide for future growth, change, development and progress.

BY: 
Gene Hart, Chairman


Joe Barefoot, Commissioner

Rickey Cain, Commissioner

ATTEST: 
Regina Gaily, County Clerk

DATE: 10/28/2008