



# *Rising to* **Greater Heights**

A Joint Comprehensive Plan for  
Appling County, City of Baxley, City of Graham, and City of Surrency, Georgia



# *Rising to* **Greater Heights**

A Joint Comprehensive Plan for  
Appling County, City of Baxley, City of Graham, and City of Surrency, Georgia in accordance with  
the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 and the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures  
established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
with an effective date of October 1, 2018

Prepared By:

The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee  
The Appling County Local Governments  
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission

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# Introduction & Executive Summary



***Rising to Greater Heights*** -- The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan is a comprehensive plan prepared under the current Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan was first adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on January 1, 2013, and after minor changes, an effective date of March 1, 2014. It is a joint plan for Appling County and its municipalities, the cities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency.

Appling County is a rural community of almost 20,000 persons located in the heart of Southeast Georgia along the major transportation arterial thoroughfares, the four-laned U.S. Highways 1 and U.S. Highway 341. Important Georgia Highway 15, the Traditions Highway, and Georgia Highway 121, the historic Woodpecker Trail, also traverse the county. The com-

munity's location is less than an hour away from Georgia's coast and Interstate highways I-16 and I-95. There is much more than location to Appling County which makes it welcoming and remarkably appealing to business, industry, residents, and visitors alike. The community is a true treasure with a rich history, world-class natural beauty, almost limitless economic opportunity, top-notch facilities, and maybe best of all, a laid-back, comforting lifestyle and truly caring, family-friendly atmosphere. Old South hospitality, community caring, and cooperative attitudes permeate and punctuate civic endeavors. Yet this ethos are not anachronistic. The community's amazing spirit easily functions with available modern conveniences and amenities, and only serves to make the already outstanding community even



*Cotton Bale Sunset*

more special, and to further enhance an extraordinary quality of life. Appling County has experienced continuing recent economic success and is a bustling rural small-town community with expanding economic diversity and opportunity. The comforting, welcoming persona of the community is made more appealing given that the exceptional community is nestled in such a stunning and soothing bucolic landscape. Appling County includes three municipalities, the cities of Baxley, its county seat, Graham, and Surrency. Baxley is the center of local commerce, government, education, and social community life, and has a population of about 5,000 persons. The heart of Baxley lies at the crossroads of U.S. 1 and U.S. 341. Graham and Surrency are both located on U.S. 341 about 8-10 miles from Baxley (west and east, respectively), and both are engaging small towns of less than 300 persons. All three towns began

as railroad towns in the late 1800s, and have all been influenced by the county's never-ending green forests of Southern pines and their bounty, whether for naval stores, lumber, or other products. Graham and Surrency's heydays as centers of commerce relate back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but they still retain much charm and residential appeal. Appling County was an early Georgia county established in 1818 from Indian Treaty lands. Its initial settlement and economic activity relied on subsistence farming, raising livestock, and the timber/naval stores industry. The Altamaha River first provided access to Coastal Georgia markets through water borne transportation. The county was at the center of Georgia's enormously successful and profitable turpentine/naval stores industry. It was the home to the first commercial turpentine still, the first fire still, probably produced more rosin/turpentine products than any one area in the South, and the largest individual turpentine operator in the world. Even today, Baxley is known as "The Turpentine City," and was home to the last large-scale commercial turpentine producer in the United States, with production not ceasing until the early 2000s. Lumber and other wood products from pine trees have also been important economic outlets of much importance to the county throughout its history and continues to be so today. Surrency, in the early 1900s, was known as "The Crosstie Capital of the World," and today a pine lumber sawmill and wood pellet plant operate with significant economic impact. Other agricultural interests, from cotton to dairies to vegetable production, remain with significant economic impact. Appling County continues to diversify economically with a varied set of industry and a rapidly expanding retail/service sector. There has been slow, but steady, population growth in the county since 1970. The location of Plant



*L Moody Forest Natural Area R Lake Mayers*

Hatch, one of two Georgia nuclear power generation plants; the four-laning of U.S. 1 and U.S. 341; the geographic location near the Georgia Coast and ports; the opening of a local Walmart Supercenter in the early 2000s; the development of auto dealership superstores in the 2010s by a local entrepreneur; the unparalleled natural beauty; the genuine hometown atmosphere; and the overall quality of life are all positive factors which have, and will continue to, influence and stimulate further growth and development. The natural beauty of the community includes not only soothing pastoral scenes of open spaces and agricultural uses, towering trunks of seemingly never ending evergreen pines, but the national park-wor-

thy Moody Forest Nature Preserve and the incredible wildness of the Altamaha River. Moody Forest contains 200-300 year old growth longleaf pines, tupelo-cypress considered more than 600 years old, and the last known example of the longleaf pine-blackjack oak ecosystem. The Altamaha River is considered Georgia’s “Amazon,” its most ecologically diverse ecosystem, and has much historical importance. It is largely undisturbed, and has been labeled by The Nature Conservancy as one of the last 75 Great Places on Earth. Both of these wonderful resources, as well as others in the county, are open to the public for astounding outdoor fun



*Appling County Recreation Center*



*L Appling Hospital R Appling County High School*

and adventure. Appling County is truly welcoming on many levels, and is an outstanding, almost without parallel, place to do business, work, live, play or visit, especially in rural Georgia. Not surprisingly, is the fact that the local Chamber of Commerce invites people through a “welcome to Appling County, where hometown friendliness still shines through a spectacular setting,” or that the Georgia Tourism website notes that the community is “the ideal place to leave troubles behind, canoe the pristine Altamaha River, or just enjoy the laid



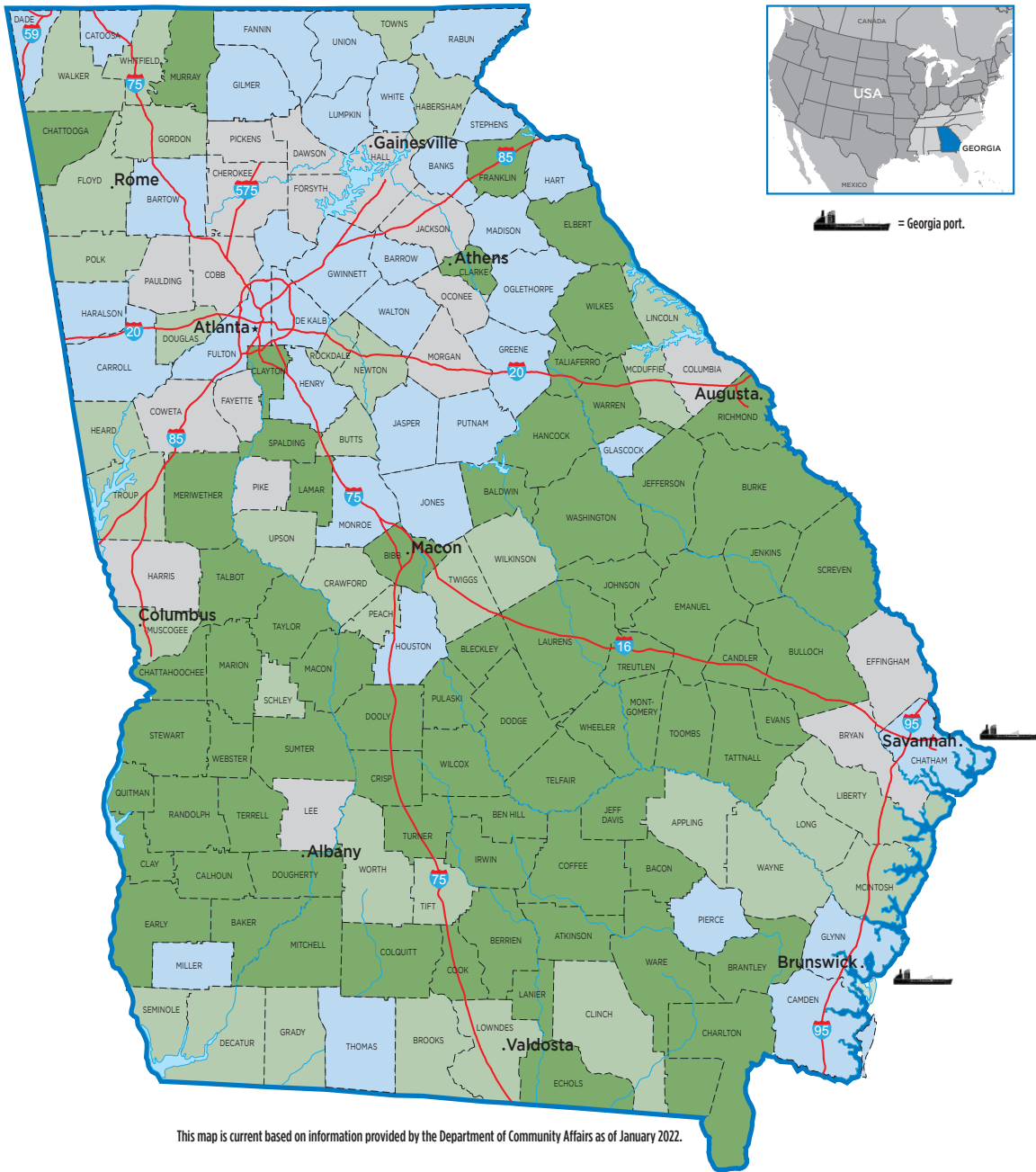
back hometown atmosphere.” The community continues to modernize and improve facilities, and to make itself an even more accommodating and welcoming hometown and place to do business. The old Macon and Brunswick Railroad continues to be a vital logistics center, as it is a Class I railroad of the Norfolk Southern System. There is also a Level II general aviation airport with a 5,500 foot runway, and a new terminal building which looks and feels like a home. There are all new schools within Baxley, and two renovated, modernized elementary schools in the outlying countryside, all managed to award-winning levels. Other outstanding infrastructure and services include, but certainly are not limited to, a solar-powered wastewater treatment plant, an updated local hospital, a health department, a senior citizens/ Head Start facility, a regional recreation complex, and several industrial parks, including a new rail-served one east of Baxley. The community operates a heritage center, and many involved civic clubs and churches.



*L Baxley Municipal Airport R Appling County Solar Farm Construction Site*

Appling County truly does strive to maintain its appealing character and small-town atmosphere, to expand its economic capability and opportunity, and to further strengthen itself as a welcoming hometown for all. While there is much to celebrate and be optimistic about both existing and future growth and development within the community, there are issues requiring attention. According to the 2020 U.S. Census report on poverty rates, income, unemployment, and age, about 18.6% of Appling Countians are 65 or older, compared to about 14.7% in Georgia. Appling County has poverty rate of 19.9%, compared to 14.0% in Georgia. Incomes overall are low. Per capita money income in the county, as measured by the Census Bureau from 2016-2020, (\$21,675) compared to Georgia’s (\$32,427). The county median household income for the same period was (\$37,924) compared to Georgia’s (\$61,224). According to the Appling County Unemployment Rate Report 2022, unemployment in the county was 2.7%, as of April 2022, dropping from 4.4% in the first fiscal quarter of FY20. The gap between the county’s unemployment percentage and the state has narrowed significantly. Georgia’s unemployment rate has dropped to (2.5) percent as of April 2022. The Georgia Community Affairs’ 2022 Annual Job Credit Ranking Memo report ranks Appling County 79 in the Tier 2 bracket, jumping up from Tier 1 in 2021.

# GEORGIA 2022 JOB TAX CREDIT TIERS



This map is current based on information provided by the Department of Community Affairs as of January 2022.

TIER	JOB TAX CREDIT \$ (FOR 5 YEARS)	MIN. NEW JOBS	CREDIT ALLOWANCES	CARRY FORWARD
1	\$4,000*	2	100% of tax liability - excess to withholding up to \$3,500 per job	10 years
2	\$3,000*	10	100% of tax liability	10 years
3	\$1,750*	15	50% of tax liability	10 years
4	\$1,250*	25	50% of tax liability	10 years

SPECIAL ZONE	JOB TAX CREDIT \$ (FOR 5 YEARS)	MIN. NEW JOBS	CREDIT ALLOWANCES	CARRY FORWARD
MZ/OZ	\$3,500	2	100% of tax liability - excess to withholding	10 years
LDCT	\$3,500	5	100% of tax liability - excess to withholding	10 years

The job tax credit tier has the advantage of offering Georgia’s second largest tax breaks for job creation within Appling County, and thus a big incentive for business job creator entities and further economic improvement. Appling County’s economic future have many positive factors which hold much promise. The future Appling County will continue to take advantage of its assets and opportunities. Appling County will continue to be at the forefront of rural family-centric living, hometown pride, a high quality of life with progressive hometown and collaborative leadership, and an involved and caring citizenry. The community will be a desired address for both business and residential growth, and an outstanding place to live, work, recreate, or visit. Growth will be well managed and guided to locate near the existing infrastructure and services of Baxley, and will be respectful and protective of existing character, and the community’s fields, forests, open spaces, and its unique and special natural and cultural resources. The community will truly be recognized as a unique and special place of rural development and life known for its enviable and coveted quality of life, its urban-like amenities, its progressive and collaborative leadership, its hometown appeal, and its growing economy which respects and maintains its outstanding character and small town atmosphere-



*L Surrency United Methodist Church R Lake Mayers*

re. Many more will enjoy living, working, playing, and doing business in Appling County as it continues to become an even more welcoming hometown. The current DCA planning standards reduced and simplified requirements seeking to engender local plans more attentive to individual needs and generating more local pride, ownership, and use. This Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan was developed with this as an overarching objective. It was intended to be a locally driven plan principally addressing local needs and cultivating widespread community interest, support, and buy-in, while meeting state standards. The plan’s title “Rising to Greater Heights” widely captures reference to Appling County’s well-deserved reputation of caring and friendly hospitality and warmth and to its future aspirations to further capitalize on the community’s rich history and heritage, natural and historic resources, its advantageous location, its superior transportation resources, and to make itself an even better place to live or work. The Appling County community, including its municipalities, wants to protect its heritage and rural character; enhance its growing and diversifying economy,

conserve its fields and forests and natural splendor; maintain its warmth and caring; improve its infrastructure; attract new residents and retirees; locate businesses and compatible jobs; utilize and celebrate its natural resources and heritage; and grow tourism, among its guiding aims and principles outlined herein. The community truly wants to be a recognized address of exceptional rural life, overall quality-of-life, and progressive, collaborative leadership welcoming of business, residents, families, and visitors alike.



*L Appling County Health Department R Baxley Downtown Storefront*

**Previous Plans.** This comprehensive plan follows a number of previous plans since the enactment of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. The first two plans were adopted in 1991 and 2007. These plans were intensively data and state requirement driven. Local objectives are outlined and portrayed in these plans however, the second plan does contain some local information which may not easily be found elsewhere and may remain of use. The previous plan from July 2017, “Strengthening a Welcoming Hometown” should remain available at the Appling County local governments and the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission ([www.hogarc.org](http://www.hogarc.org)) and state ([www.georgiaplanning.com](http://www.georgiaplanning.com)) websites.

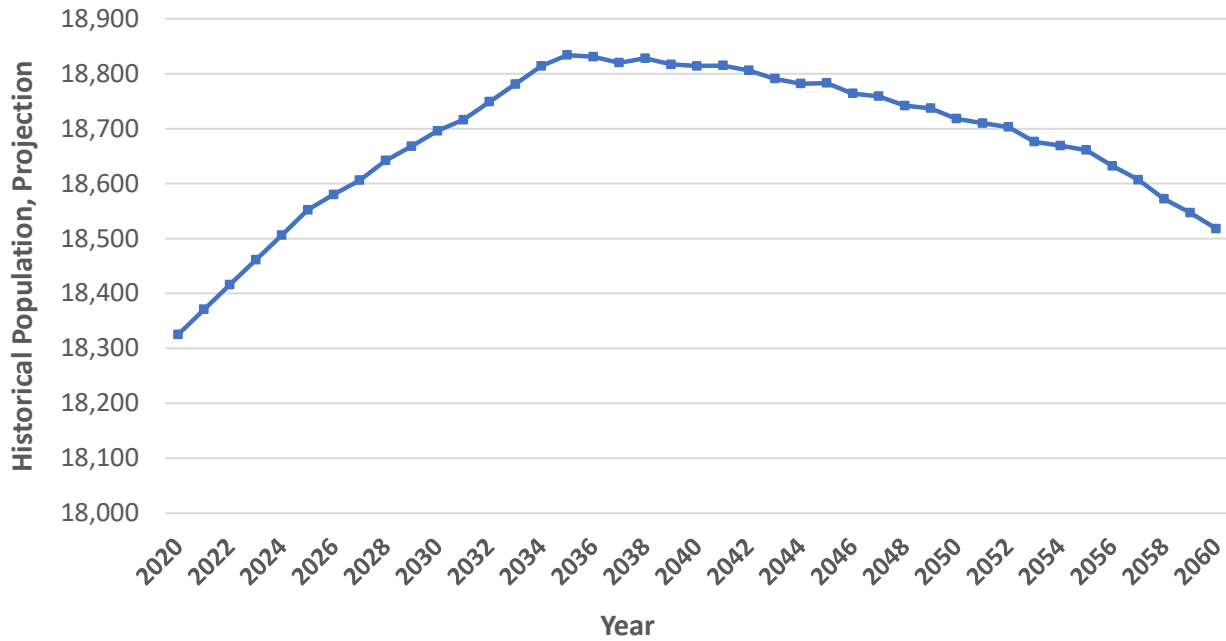
**Data.** The emergence of the world wide web with its vast data repositories accessible through free search engines allows anyone easy access to significant amounts and a wide variety of data, and profiles of any jurisdiction, including Appling County and its municipalities. For this reason, this comprehensive plan includes only limited data to depict or illustrate points. The current DCA planning standards actually encourage such non-inclusion of data. Almost any data depicted at a moment in time quickly becomes dated, and maybe irrelevant. The world wide web offers the opportunity of more relevant and up-to-date data at the time of access.

There are a variety of reliable public and private sources of data. Of course, the traditional source of official community data is the U.S. Census Bureau. Data on Appling County, its municipalities, or any other jurisdiction is quickly accessed at [census.gov/quickfacts](http://census.gov/quickfacts) which

provides a summary community profile on many popular data items, and links to even more data. Another quality source of data is the website, [www.statsamerica.org](http://www.statsamerica.org), which provides a compilation of primarily government data on many items for any county, city, or town of any size in any state of the U.S. The site is maintained by Indiana University in partnership with the federal Economic Development Administration. The University of Georgia maintains a website, [georgiadata.org](http://georgiadata.org), where county snapshots, detailed county profiles, and county level data for nearly 1,300 variables related to a wide variety of subjects on population, labor, natural resources, government, health, education, transportation, crime and more can be accessed. The data can be compared to other counties and the state as well as on a historical change basis, among various user options. The data is compiled from a variety of sources, including The Georgia County Guide and the Farmgate Value Report prepared by UGA's Extension Service. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs has available data for cities and counties under "Community Planning Resources," and will also prepare community data reports when requested. The State of Georgia has official labor and economic data in its Georgia Labor Market Explorer as organized by the Georgia Department of Labor at [explorer.gdol.ga.gov](http://explorer.gdol.ga.gov). Additional state sponsored economic data is available at [www.georgia.org](http://www.georgia.org). Excellent overall private data sources include [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com), [www.usa.com](http://www.usa.com), and [data-usa.io](http://data-usa.io); while [headwaterseconomics.org](http://headwaterseconomics.org) is an excellent source for socioeconomic information, including data and interpretation through its economic profile system.

**Population Projections.** The official 2020 Census population of Appling County was 18,444, up by 1.13% from 2010's 18,236. This growth was much less than that of Georgia's 10.3%, and or the national U.S. rate of 7.0%. This continues the slow, but steady growth of the county since 1970. Appling County's location; its transportation resources; its proximity to I-16, I-95, and the Georgia ports; its current economic base; its outstanding natural and historic resources; its family-friendly, caring atmosphere; its progressive and collaborative leadership; and its high overall quality of life portend well for the future. The U.S. Census Bureau estimate for 2021 Appling County population is 18,488, up by 44 from 2020. This suggests stability and little current growth, but unlike many rural places, does a show positive upward nudge to continue current and past trends. The high mark of population in Appling County is now, having grown steadily since 1970 when major employers such as Plant Hatch established operations in Appling County. Appling County's location, its rich history, progressive and collaborative leadership, community spirit, outstanding natural and cultural resources, strong agricultural economy, existing businesses, industry, and entrepreneurship, high quality of life, and excellent transportation access to Georgia's ports and interstate highways are positive factors and influences for continued future growth and development. While past and present population levels are readily available on the world wide web, population projections are not so easily accessed. The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) is responsible for generating official state population projections for Georgia counties. Current OPB projections for Appling County in 2022 are 18,696 persons in 2030, 18,814 persons in 2040, and 18,718 persons in 2050, showing a slight decline in growth over the next few decades (Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2022).

### Historical Population and Population Projections, Appling County, OPB



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

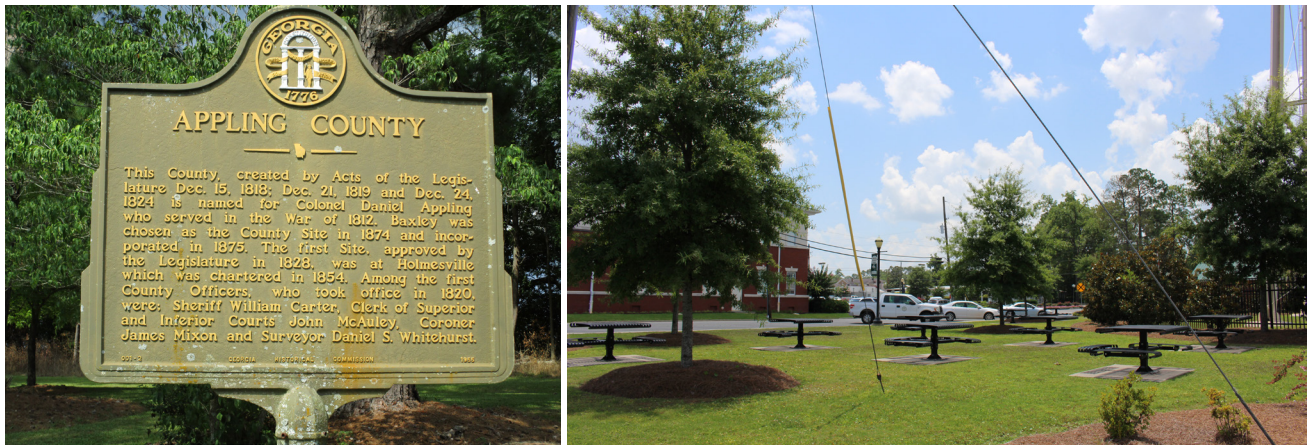
The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) also prepares population projections which have proven to be relatively accurate in the past. HOGARC's population projections for Appling County, as noted in the 2019 HOGARC Regional Plan, show higher projection population levels than the current OPB projections. Slow but steady population growth is expected over the next two decades (HOGARC, 2019).

### Historical Population and Population Projections, Appling County, HOGARC

	2020	2030	2040	2050
OPB Long Term Population Projections, 2021	18,325	18,696	18,814	18,718
HOGARC Regional Plan 2040	19,605	21,107	22,724	--
Regional Commission	18,444	19,714	20,697	--

Source: Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission

**Coordination with Other Plans.** Appling County has an approved and adopted hazard mitigation plan prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to remain eligible for federal disaster assistance. This Hazard Mitigation Plan's preparation was coordinated with past comprehensive plan preparation. It is clear that the two most prominent hazards facing Appling County that can be influenced by the comprehensive plan are the hazard mitigation plan goals to reduce damage from flood hazards and wildfire, and thereby protect life and health. The comprehensive plan objectives to conserve the county's river and stream corridors, to maintain healthy working forests and fields (including employing proper management techniques), to improve fire/emergency management and other public safety services, and to enhance growth management/code enforcement regulation are generally consistent with, and offer implementation to, the hazard mitigation plan.



L Appling County Introduction R Water Works Park, Baxley

The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan is also consistent with the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy's goals and objectives to develop industrial parks; develop/improve local infrastructure; enhance telecommunications infrastructure; retain existing businesses/industry; attract new industry; and spur non-traditional economic development, like tourism and downtown development, are repeated as principal goals in the Appling County Comprehensive Plan. The local plan is similarly supportive of espoused state economic goals.

**Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria Consideration.** Appling County is part of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council. The adopted regional water plan, Altamaha Regional Water Plan (2011), and its 2017 update was considered by the Appling County Local Plan Coordination Committee and the local governments in preparation of this plan. This local comprehensive plan's objectives to maintain viable agriculture/forestry uses, protect/conservate natural resources, to enhance intergovernmental coordination and government/efficiencies, and upgrade local infrastructure all help implement, and maintain consistency with, the regional water plan. The continuing vision of the regional water plan, "to wisely manage, develop and protect the region's water resources...to enhance quality of life..., protect natural systems..., and support the basin's economy," is inherent in this com-

prehensive plan's community vision and goals. In the Regional Water Planning Council's 2017 implementation report, Appling County's CDBG for water and sewer improvements was specifically cited as a supportive implementation activity. Other water/sewer improvements in the county's municipalities would also be supportive implementation.

Similarly, the Environmental Planning Criteria were also considered in the development of this comprehensive plan. The local governments of Appling County, including Appling County, the City of Baxley, the City of Graham, and the City of Surrency, are not currently in compliance with the Environmental Planning Criteria, as they have not yet adopted implementing, consistent ordinances. The local governments, with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, have plans to adopt the Region's model "to gain compliance and to comply with the Regional Commission's Minimum Local Government Performance Standards.

**Consistency with Quality Community Objectives.** In 2011, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs changed its Quality Community Objectives to a more general listing and summary of the 10 objectives. These include: Economic Prosperity, Resource Management, Efficient Land Use, Local Preparedness, Sense of Place, Regional Cooperation, Housing Options, Transportation Options, Educational Opportunities, and Community Health.

The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan directly espouses (many of) these objectives and therefore, is very consistent with, and supportive of them. This comprehensive plan has goals to achieve a brighter future and better community for Appling County and its municipalities, which is consistent with a quality community and the DCA Quality Community Objectives. The Appling County Local Plan Coordination Committee reviewed and considered these Quality Community Objectives at one of its meetings.

**Community Involvement.** Throughout the planning process, Appling County, and its municipalities, actively collected and incorporated input from community members. Creating civic engagement was an essential and central component to developing the comprehensive plan. Several opportunities, including stakeholder meetings, an online community survey, and community drop-in sessions, were provided to the community in order to gain as much input as possible.

The first step that was taken in the civic engagement process was to identify a list of stakeholders. Each stakeholder was invited to participate as a member of the Plan Coordination Committee. The committee met regularly over a period of several months and was responsible for guiding the development of the comprehensive plan.

In addition to holding regular stakeholder meetings, several other opportunities were also given to the community to participate in the planning process. An initial public hearing was held on March 17th, 2022 and was advertised in the newspaper in order to make citizens aware of the plan update and the planning process. On March 31st, 2022, a community input



drop-in session was held at Appling County Ag Center in order to provide citizens with another opportunity to discuss their opinions on what changes they would like to see with the plan and with their community. Fourteen residents attended and an open discussion occurred. In addition, a final public hearing was held on August 23rd, 2022, in order to provide the public with the opportunity to review the updated final comprehensive plan draft.

### 1. Interactive Website

In order to provide the community with a clear understanding of how the planning process would work and to keep residents updated throughout the process, an interactive website was developed. Through the website, citizens could access documents and notes from each stakeholder meeting and could submit responses to the survey questions at any time throughout the planning process. In addition, a planning timeline was made available on the website so that community members were always aware of when different meetings and planning sessions were occurring.



*Appling County Comprehensive Plan Intial Meeting*

### 2. SWOT Analysis

An initial steering committee meeting was held on February 23rd, 2021. During this meeting, members of the steering committee participated in a SWOT analysis where they identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Appling County. Figure 1 shows the results of the SWOT analysis. This activity provided a starting point in identifying the overall Needs and Opportunities of Appling County, which are addressed in "Needs and Opportunities".

The SWOT analysis showed that one of Appling County's greatest strengths is its diverse group of businesses and industries that has enjoyed continued growth within the community. These major employers, such as Plant Hatch Nuclear Power Plant, Woody Folsom Auto Group, Lawter Inc., Interfor, etc. have been steadily serving as robust economic engines for the community to continue to grow and thrive. Additionally, Appling County takes pride in its excellent school

system offerings – Appling County Schools and Appling Christian Academy. Apart from the apprenticeship program provided by Appling High School, Appling schools partner with Coastal Pines Technical College to provide the nation’s top customized workforce training program to help their students succeed. Other strengths that were identified included the county’s abundant natural resources such as the Altamaha River, Moody Forest Natural Area, Falling Rocks park and its agricultural and forestry resources, the community health programs, the hospital and the airport.

During the SWOT analysis, several weaknesses of Appling County were discussed. One of the major concerns is the lack of younger workforce. Median age of Appling County population is 40.3, about 3.5 years older than that of the state of Georgia. And there’s a need for more higher-paying jobs to attract younger and skilled people to stay. Another concern which also exacerbated the situation described in the former one is the need for more affordable housing and rental options for students, seniors, and middle to low-income families. Other weaknesses identified include the lack of public transit, no mixed-use development allowed, the arts council being dormant after the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the Downtown Baxley area lacking for wanted businesses and entertainment.

The next portion of the SWOT analysis pertained to identifying opportunities in Appling County. The latest nation-wide growing trend of remote jobs would encourage more people to reside in Appling County, enjoy the community’s rural character and high quality of life while work remotely. Chosen as one of the initial PROPEL (Planning Rural Opportunities for Prosperity and Economic Leadership) communities in 2021, Appling County is connected with the expertise provided by Carl Vinson Institute of Government to further realize the county’s economic potential. Another important opportunity highlighted during the SWOT analysis is the joint efforts of both private and public sectors in promotion of its historic downtown in the City of Baxley. Other opportunities include having access to U.S. Highway 1 and 341 thoroughfares, and Appling County Ag Center, a space of 43,000 square feet established in 2021 for youngsters to learn about agriculture.

The final portion of the SWOT analysis included the discussion of possible threats to Appling County. The major threat for the county is younger populations leaving and the shortage of skilled labor. Though local schools provide high-quality education and apprenticeship programs, well-trained young people tend to leave the county after graduation to reside and work somewhere else. Other threats identified include the lack of youth leadership programs, an increase in homelessness and drug use, and the decay of infrastructure.

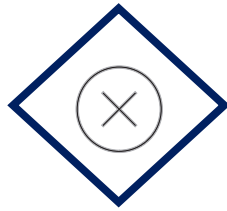
### **3. Community Survey**

With the help of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, Appling County, and its municipalities, developed a survey to distribute to community members. The survey consisted of 18 questions and the goal of the survey was to gain additional public input on the needs and opportunities of the community, which are addressed in Chapter 3. The survey was distributed to community members through email, through paper copies, and a link was made available on the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update webpage. Results of the survey were discussed at a later stakeholder meeting where the needs and opportunities community were being addressed. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.



### Strengths

- Significant natural resources such as Altamaha River
- Recreation resources including Moody Forest Natural Area/Wildlife Management Area/Lake Mayers, Lake Tara, Falling Rocks Parks
- Altamaha River
- Agriculture and forestry resources
- Proximity to ports
- Excellent School system
- Sense of community, pride, hometown feel
- Level II Baxley Airport
- New Agricultural Center
- Thriving downtown development
- Diverse industries and businesses, such as nuclear power plant, Auto Group, Forestry industry
- Growth of existing industry
- Workforce training program and High School Apprenticeship Program
- Downtown Baxley Water Works Park and Farmer’s Market
- Renovated Junior High Gymnasium
- Award-winning Appling Healthcare system
- Community support
- Continued support of Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce
- Appling County Library
- Appling County food bank
- Hotels/Motels/TLC
- Transitional living cottage
- Rail Park development



### Weaknesses

- Lack of public transit
- Lack of youth leadership program
- Shortage of younger workforce and skilled workforce
- Lack Childcare facilities
- Need for broadband
- Need for Recycling facilities
- Need better transportation planning in Downtown Baxley
- Need multi-modal improvements
- Lack of affordable housing, rental options, and short-term housing
- Few options for restaurants, clothing stores and amenities
- Lack of cultural opportunities
- Need new industrial park development
- Lack of retail options
- Lack of local delivery
- Lack of higher-paid job opportunities
- Need mixed-use development
- No golf course
- Need bicycle trails to Moody Forest
- Inactive Arts Council



### Opportunities

- US 1 and 341 Hwy
- PROPEL program
- Full hookups for trucking stops
- Continued Downtown Baxley Revitalization support
- Peaches to Beaches Yard Sale
- Ample undeveloped land
- Expanding retail/service sector
- Active civic groups/churches
- Woodpecker trail
- Agri-tourism
- Collaboration with local farmers
- Career academy partnership with Coastal Pines Technical College
- Construction of solar array
- Low cost of living



### Threats

- Decay of infrastructure
- Road maintenance
- Drug use
- COVID-19
- Younger populations leaving
- Passive community
- Homeless issues

Figure 1. SWOT Analysis Result

# Community Goals



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The Community Goals Element is described in the State Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive planning as the most important part of the comprehensive plan. It is a concise summary of future community desires and wishes. It provides clearly referenced roadmap for community leaders and all concerned with growth and development of the community and its future. The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes three of the four possible components detailed in the Minimum Standards for the required element. These include: a general Community Vision, separate municipal descriptions/visions, listing of Community Goals, and a description of Long Term Community Policies. These components seek to paint a picture of the desired future community, and answer the planning question, **“Where does the community wish to go?”** To some degree, the Long Term Community Policies also outline guidance strategy of, **“How are we going to get where we desire to go, and also, what do we desire for other development parties to pursue?”**

# *Rising to* **Greater Heights**

## **Community Vision**

**T**he future Appling County will be known as a progressive rural growth leader with a high quality of life and hometown appeal. This appeal will be enhanced and supported by beautiful, scenic greenspaces, protected natural resources which attract respective economic development, quality residential developments, and increasing tourism. The high quality of life will be further enriched by improved educational opportunities, upgraded and enhanced infrastructure, better healthcare, quality local jobs, economic diversity for all ethnic groups, and a healthy local retail and service sector. The desired community would be proactive with proper attention to continued public investment in facilities, services, and economic development; solid long-range planning; and well-managed land use regulation. All the while, the small town and rural character enhanced by the continuing cooperation, collaboration, caring and special hometown spirit will be maintained and strengthened.

Appling County is a rural community located in the heart of southeast Georgia with a current population of almost 20,000 residents. Its geographic location, on the south bank of Georgia's impressive Altamaha River, along U.S. highways U.S. 1 and U.S. 341, and less than an hour away from Georgia's coast and Interstate highways I-16 and I-95, offers much for businesses and residents alike. The community is nestled in an appealing and soothing bucolic landscape of family farms and seemingly never-ending green forests of tall Southern pines. Municipalities include Baxley, the county seat, with about 5,000 residents, and the much smaller municipalities of Graham and Surrency, all located along U.S. Highway 341, also known as the Golden Isles Parkway. Baxley is actually located at the crossroads of U.S. 1 and U.S. 341. Both of these highways are now four-laned through the county, and are part of Georgia's designated developmental highway system, the Governor's Road Improvement Program. Other important highways traversing the county include Georgia Highway 15, now known as Traditions Highway and a designated developmental highway as well, and Georgia Highway 121, also known as the historic Woodpecker Trail.



*L Rural Scene in Appling County R Baxley Downtown Mural*

Appling County today is a welcoming and growing hometown community. It is a smalltown of friendly people and expanding economic diversity and opportunity. Hometown is a theme echoed by the community's history, social life, and the current Chamber of Commerce promotion. The promotion, a "welcome to Appling County, where hometown friendliness still shines through a spectacular setting," encapsulates the small town feeling of friendly people and the enthralling, scenic landscape. The City of Baxley's website encourages businesses and people to find out more about a hometown of "quiet streets, downtown shopping, excellent schools, clean air and water, and friendly people." Even the state tourism website notes that Baxley is "the ideal place to leave troubles behind, canoe the pristine Altamaha River, or just enjoy the laid back hometown atmosphere." Although the community is a welcoming and comforting hometown treasure, it has been home to many outstanding firsts, and key economic fortunes. While the community retains its small town appeal and the tranquil pastoral openness of being engulfed in a sea of pines and farmland, it offers an abundance of urban-like amenities and an expanding array of businesses, industries, and job opportunities.

Since 1970, the community has exhibited slow, but steady population growth, and expanding economic diversity.

Appling County was created in 1818, and its original boundaries stretched from the Altamaha River south to the St. Mary's River. The county was established from Creek Indian territory ceded in the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson and the 1818 Treaty of the Creek Agency. In appropriate spirit of Appling County's hometown image, Appling County is the home parent county for all or part of 12 current Georgia counties. It was certainly a principal component of the so-called wiregrass or Pine Barrens region of South Georgia. As impressive as Appling County's current natural resources are, the county was once the home of the Okefenokee Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, one of the world's largest freshwater ecosystems.



*L Turpentine Cabin in Appling County R Mid-1800s, Turpentine Harvesting*

Appling County has a long history with turpentine/naval stores. The first commercial turpentine still in Georgia was established from 1858 to 1861 by two brothers from North Carolina at the site of old Fort James in Appling County, which is now in Wayne County and known as Tar Landing. The first fire still in Georgia was said to be located at Pine Grove. One of the largest turpentine operations in Georgia was established by another North Carolinian, Adrian Van Bokkelyn, in the 1870s at Pine Grove. His operation included two stills under one roof, and produced over 100,000 casks of gum spirits within 10 years. Pine Grove is reported to have produced more turpentine and pine rosin than any one spot in the South, with stills having been in continuous operation for more than 70 years. The Van Bokkelyn stills burned in the 1880s, but were rebuilt by L. A. Johnson and later came under the ownership of Miles and Dunn, and operated until the 1940s. According to the local history, in 1925, the largest individual turpentine operator in the world was J. E. Dyal of Appling County. Mr. Dyal also was instrumental in pine reforestation, and the establishment of the paper company industry in Georgia. Filtered Rosin Products established a naval stores plant in Baxley in 1940, and this plant's successor became the last large-scale commercial turpentine producer in the United States. This natural turpentine operation closed in the early 2000s, but the company's successor remains in operation today as a synthetic chemical producer. Even today, the City of Baxley uses the moniker, "The Turpentine City."

Lumber from the tall pines was also an important part of the Appling County economy from its beginnings, and remains so today. The hand-hewn lumber was utilized locally by the farmers as they cleared land, then through log rafts down the Altamaha, and after the railroads, through major sawmill operations mostly established by northern investors and prominent local businessmen. In the early 1900s, the City of Surrency became known as “The Crosstie Capital of the World,” as it shipped as many as five train carloads of railroad crossties a day. Interestingly, the source for the crosstie production was principally pine trees felled by the Great Georgia Hurricane of 1898. Even today, the Interfor Baxley sawmill, a pine lumber sawmill operated by a Canadian company after acquisition from Rayonier in 2013, is the county’s fifth largest employer.



**L** *Pine Forest in Appling County*  
**R** *Moody Forest Natural Area*  
**B** *Altamaha River*



Tall pines and their verdant sea of green landscape not only continue to contribute greatly to the local economy, but also remain a sentinel component of the abundant natural resources and open spaces of Appling County. The Moody Forest Natural Area, located in northern Appling County along the impressive Altamaha River, is a national park caliber nature preserve with varied habitats of bottomland hardwood forests, river swamp, and virgin longleaf pine forests. This one-of-a-kind treasure now consists of 4,500 acres in a preserve which boasts some of the nation's last remaining old-growth longleaf forests and tupelo-cypress swamps. Some of the pines are estimated to be 200-300 plus years old, while some of the tupelo-cypress are considered more than 600 years old. The preserve contains the last known example of the longleaf pine-blackjack oak ecosystem. Moody Forest is jointly owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. In 2001, the two entities purchased most of the property at auction from the Moody family in the first public-private cooperative conservation effort in the State of Georgia. That the outstanding natural resource remained intact is testament to hometown pride, collaboration, caring, and stewardship of the Moody family, even at a price of personal sacrifice.



*L Lake Mayers R Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area*

The treasured landscape of Moody Forest is appropriately part of the Altamaha River ecosystem and valley which has contributed much, and continues to contribute today, to the history, charm, economy, and natural beauty of Appling County. The Altamaha River is a central component of Appling County, Georgia, and U.S. history, development, and environmental quality. The Altamaha River has a long history of great natural beauty, and ecological and historical significance. The largely undisturbed Altamaha has been labeled by The Nature Conservancy as one of the last 75 Great Places on Earth. It is Georgia's most ecologically diverse ecosystem, is home to numerous rare and endangered species, and offers a wide array of outstanding outdoor adventure opportunities. Other outdoor fun and adventure opportunities in Appling County also contribute to its peace and beauty, and unrushed small, rural hometown lifestyle. Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area offers nearly 14,000 acres in Appling and

Jeff Davis counties for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and other activities along the Altamaha River. The community's 170 acre Lake Mayers and 50 acre Lake Tara provide the public with fishing, swimming, skiing, picnicking, and many other family activities. Further access to the majestic Altamaha River and family fun activities is provided by a 26 acre Falling Rocks Park, which includes a campground, picnic area, and boat landing. Four other public landings are located along the river, several with facilities, and all providing recreational access available throughout the year.



*Peaches to Beaches Yard Sale Annual Events in Downtown Baxley*



The peace, contentment, and uncrowded spaces afforded by the tall pine landscapes, family farms, and outstanding natural resources of Appling County only solidify and confirm the family-friendly, hometown atmosphere of the community. The community boasts of numerous churches, civic clubs, and a caring populace where the people truly come together as a family, and are as warm as the weather. Collaboration and cooperation between people and their governing bodies are not just a lip-synched anachronism of the Old South and Southern Hospitality, but a way of life in Appling County. Parades to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., High School Homecoming, or other events are held where it seems the entire town turns out, and traffic on the major highways through town is made to pause and delay. Every March, the community is a major stop and participant in Georgia's largest yard sale, the annual Peaches to the Beaches Yard Sale. Long standing traditions are focal points throughout the year and include pancake breakfasts and chicken plate fundraisers for civic causes, or for those in need; sharing local produce or selling it at the Farmer's Market; Fourth of July fireworks; homecoming potluck dinners on the grounds; and cooking for those with family losses or suffering. The community truly functions where the entire town is considered family. The community honors its fascinating history, folklore, and Southern Hospitality. Community collaboration and pride is apparent by the organization of the community maintained and volunteer staffed Appling County Heritage Center. It is with little wonder that Baxley/Appling County and its hometown atmosphere, have been the inspiration for two Georgia Writers Hall of Fame inductees: Caroline Miller of the Pulitzer Prize winning book (*Lamb in His Bosom*), and more recently the award-winning environmental author Janisse Ray's (*Ecology of*

a Cracker Childhood). Cooperation, collaboration, and hometown pride and loyalty are also displayed by the local governments and school system through joint ventures and funding/ use of facilities. Baxley and Appling County pioneered a groundbreaking Municipal Services Agreement long before the state mandated a formal Service Delivery Strategy for service delivery cooperation. Baxley and Appling County truly practice and exhibit a hometown ethic which is deeply engrained into its soul and everyday life.



*1920s Baxley Depot*

Appling County's development history is, and its future may well too, be tied to transportation, pine forests, and the hometown and natural appeal. The county grew steadily from its beginnings in the early 1800s and the use of the Altamaha River for transportation and commerce until the turn of the century, with a particularly strong surge of growth in the 1890s because of the Macon and Brunswick Railroad's development. All three current municipalities trace their beginnings to the railroad's location and completion in 1870. They were designated Station numbers 6, 7, and 8, respectively. Baxley soon was designated the County Seat, instead of the earlier Holmesville, and was officially granted state incorporation in 1875. The town had been named for log and general store proprietor, Wilson Baxley, who sold the right-of-way near his store for the railroad. Surrency, Station Number 6, was named for A.P. Surrency, a large landowner and State Representative who was largely responsible for the selected location of the Macon and Brunswick Railroad through the county. In the late 1800s, Surrency gained notoriety for the Surrency Ghost, widely reported poltergeist activities at the A.P. Surrency house. Even the railroad advertised the Surrency Ghost and offered special tourist trains to Surrency to view the phenomenon. Surrency was formally incorporated locally in 1904, but was first granted a state charter of incorporation in 1911. Its heyday was during the aforementioned crosstie boom. Graham became important as the railroad shipping location for the Pine Grove turpentine stills, and incorporated locally in 1897. Graham was not formally incorporated by the Georgia General Assembly until 1991.

The Macon and Brunswick rail line, now part of the Norfolk Southern Railway, remains active and one of the most important in Georgia, connecting the Georgia ports and Atlanta. All three municipalities are now located on U.S. 341 as well. After the surge of growth near the turn of the century, growth continued slowly, but was relatively stable until WWII. The City of Baxley is known as “The Nuclear City” which acquired its name from Edwin Irby Hatch Nuclear Power Plant located along the Altamaha River in Appling County. Since its establishment in the 1970’s, the nuclear power plant has been Baxley’s largest employer, with an average 1,000 employees. Additionally, each year from January to March the plant conducts shut-down operations, bringing in 1,000 additional contractors into the Baxley area. This seasonal influx of personnel to Baxley, stimulates the local economy each year. After the war, there was slow decline until the 1970s and the location of the Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Power Plant along the Altamaha River. The growth of the 1970s was stabilized in the 1980s and has been slow, but steady since 1990 because of the county’s location, transportation access, and small business economic diversification. Growth appears to be accelerating in the early 2000s due to the location of a Wal-Mart Supercenter, other continued economic growth, the two U.S. highways, and resident in-migration. In the 2010s, a home-grown entrepreneur, Woody Folsom, developed a wide-ranging small business presence in Baxley, and has made the community a major auto-shopping superstore with the development of four new car dealerships for most major brands along U.S. 341. This has spurred additional retail/service developments. The community continues to improve its facilities and infrastructure to support growth and be a better, more welcoming hometown. It has constructed new schools within Baxley, and has renovated two older outlying elementary schools to better serve its children and the surrounding countryside.



L Woody Folsom Dealership R Plant Hatch

The community has invested in its general aviation airport through both aviation modernization, runway extension, and construction of a new terminal with a comforting home-like appearance and appeal. There is also a new health department, a functioning and improved local hospital, a new senior citizens/Head Start facility, DFCS center, and many other similar civic improvements. Again, as a testament to local and regional cooperation and collabora-

tion, and in a somewhat unique arrangement to formally share both costs and revenues, the community joined with two neighboring counties to develop one of Georgia’s first regional industrial parks. It is now called Sweetwater Industrial Park, located near Pine Grove and adjacent to both U.S. 341 and the railroad. A wood pellet plant utilizing and supporting local pine timberland production is the current occupant. Property has been purchased to develop a new rail-served industrial park east of Baxley. The community also continues to develop its family-oriented recreational and leisure facilities, including a passive Water Works Park complete with picnicking, splash pad, and public gathering space in downtown Baxley. Water



*L Farmer's Market R Appling County PROPEL Launch*

Works Park downtown was also chosen as the location of a new, formal Farmer’s Market building constructed in 2017 to further promote and make available locally grown produce. An important event in the community each year in early December is the “Winter Wonderland” Farmer’s Market sponsored by the City of Baxley where artificial snow and a small sliding slope is created to bring joy and fun to local children who rarely get to experience natural snow given the warm climate. It is no wonder that Baxley was designated by the state in 2000 as a “Better Hometown.” In late 2021, Appling County was chosen as one of the initial PROPEL (Planning Rural Opportunities for Prosperity and Economic Leadership) Communities. Appling County and the City of Baxley will work with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government to stimulate local economic growth.

Appling County views itself as experiencing increasing growth because of its highway locations, particularly on U.S. 341 and U.S. 1, its access to Georgia’s ports and Florida, its abundant natural resources, its quality of life, and outstanding hometown appeal. Commercial and industrial growth will concentrate in and near Baxley along the two major highways and west along U.S. 341 to the Jeff Davis County line and Hazlehurst. Residential growth will accelerate, particularly south and west of Baxley. This growth may be gaining momentum because of recent local economic growth; improving transportation assets and access; burgeoning Georgia ports and Coastal Georgia growth; expanding markets for pine timber; Hispanic in-migration; greater attention to quality of life; and the overall hometown appeal.

Appling County wants this growth to be managed, planned, and controlled. The future Appling County will be a rural, regional commercial and financial hub located in an aesthetically pleasing community surrounded by a verdant landscape of protected greenspace, outstanding natural resources, and a comforting, caring populace. The resulting outstanding quality of life which balances bustling economic growth and development with environmental uniqueness and natural beauty and hometown appeal will be the envy of many. Appling County will be a desired address for living, working, and operating a business, and will be a destination for many tourists and visitors. The county will be known nationally as the access point for the mighty Altamaha River. Moody Forest will be a national drawing card, and the many travelers along a revitalized Woodpecker Trail, Georgia's Traditions Highway, the Golden Isles Parkway, and U.S. 1 will mark Appling County as a can't miss stop. The county's agriculture and forests will remain important components of the county's economy, both traditionally and through alternative enterprises. The county will be a recognized leader in both nature-based tourism and agritourism. Downtown Baxley will be a bustling, revitalized area of quaint shops, restaurants, and successful entrepreneurship.



*L Herrington Farm R Residence in Appling County*

Appling County will be widely known as a progressive, beautiful, and even safer, familyfriendly community with an emphasis on a rich quality of life, attractive environment, improved services, high-quality housing, and better paying jobs. The desired community would be proactive with proper attention to continued public investment in facilities, services, and economic development; solid long-range planning; and well-managed land use regulation. Appling County will continue to be a welcoming and fulfilling hometown for its residents, visitors, and new businesses and industries that want to be a part of the exceptional community, Appling County, Georgia!

# City of Baxley

## Description

The City of Baxley is a welcoming small town of about 4,500 persons in an accommodating location of Southeast Georgia at the intersection of U.S. highways 1 and 341. Both of these highways are four-laned highways designated as important Georgia developmental highways, providing access and highlighting the community's strategic central location between Georgia Interstate highways I-16, I-75, and I-95. Economic development has always been an important part of community history, and today Baxley is a teeming and growing community of both business and people alike. As a result, Baxley appears to be a community larger than its stated population, and certainly one with more traffic and economic activity. The community boasts of outstanding schools, impressive and modern facilities and infrastructure, extensive park and recreation facilities, a community hospital named Georgia's (4-Star Rated) Community Hospital of the Year in 2013, four industrial parks with ongoing and diverse businesses, an impressive general aviation airport, other attractive amenities, and most importantly, a caring and cohesive populace and leadership. Baxley truly is a welcoming hometown in a number of aspects, and to make it even more appealing, is nestled in a comforting and scenic panorama of much pastoral and outdoor beauty. There is a wide array of outdoor adventure and outlets for fun and activities for relaxation. It is no surprise that hometown friendliness is a theme embraced and expressed directly and indirectly by the community. The City of Baxley and the local chamber of commerce websites both encourage outsiders to explore and discover the special hometown characteristics exhibited by the community. It is no wonder that the State of Georgia officially proclaimed Baxley one of its "Better Hometowns," or that the state tourism website notes that "Baxley is the ideal place to leave troubles behind,... or just enjoy the laid back hometown atmosphere." The City of Baxley is truly a hometown of much appeal and small town friendliness and caring, but which offers an abundance of urban-like amenities and an expanding array of businesses, industries, and economic opportunities. The community has exhibited slow, but steady population growth since 1970, and expanding economic diversity. Baxley is the county seat of Appling County, and is its economic, social, cultural, educational, and governmental center. It is the principal location for economic activity within the county.

Baxley was founded after completion of the Macon and Brunswick Railroad in 1870, and was first known as railroad stop Station Number 7. It was named in honor of Wilson Baxley, who came to Appling County in the 1820s, and was a successful cattle farmer and one of the first men to carry cattle to Savannah for sale. Wilson Baxley sold the land for the railroad right-of-way, and opened a store just south along what is now Main Street. The town was named by Dr. Phillip Ketterer, who was one of the area's first physicians and became the town's first postmaster. Because of the railroad, Appling Countians quickly voted in 1872 to move the county seat and courthouse from Holmesville, despite Baxley having a less desirable physical

geography described as encompassing many ponds. Drainage in the city remains somewhat of an ongoing concern today. Baxley was formally incorporated as a town in February, 1875 as a one-half mile circle from the railroad depot. In December, 1896 the Georgia General Assembly revised the charter for Baxley transforming it from a town to a city, and allowing the city council to extend the corporate boundaries to “not exceed more than a mile circle from the Southern Railway depot if deemed in the best interest.” The Georgia General Assembly again granted a modernized new charter in 1911, and has several times again since. Baxley’s population was recorded as only 110 at its first official census in 1880, but had grown to 337 by 1890, 488 by 1900, 831 by 1910, 1,142 by 1920 and 2,122 by 1930. Despite the Great Depression, Baxley’s population continued to grow every decade until 1960, and not withstanding a slight dip between 1960-1970, has again grown every decade since 1970 to a current all-time high of 4,942 in 2020. (United States Census Bureau, 2020) This is a testament to its agricultural heritage, diverse economy, its location, and its cohesive, progressive leadership.



*L Downtown Baxley R Statue "Those Who Sacrificed All" in the City of Baxley*

As Wilson Baxley had been a leader in cattle farming, Baxley and Appling County became a leader in turpentine production and lumbering, with nearby Pine Grove a production center. Agricultural row crops surged, particularly cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, and tobacco, as pine tree production waned. Baxley and Appling County made quite a name for itself in agricultural plant and seed production. W.H. Morris was a major supplier of tomato plants to the Campbell Soup Company, and the Fosset Plant Company brought national attention to the community through the production and shipment of millions of sweet potato plants in the early 1930s.

The sweet potato plant business was so successful that it caused the Baxley Post Office to move from a fourth class to a second class status. In 1933, the local Kiwanis Club celebrated “Sweet Potato Day,” and presented the City of Atlanta with over a million sweet potato plants to relieve Great Depression unemployment. Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge and Atlanta Mayor James L. Key were speakers. Baxley/Appling County was also the location for the only certified tobacco seed producers in Georgia, at least in 1948 and 1965. Baxley Frozen Foods



was Georgia's fourth largest chicken freezing plant when it opened in 1945. Morris Canning Company opened in 1940 in Baxley and patented a "Monteen Morris Soup Mix" which utilized tomatoes, okra, and corn. The company was packing 1.3 million cans of the soup mix at its sale in 1972. The first Georgian to grow more than 200 bushels of corn per acre was L.W. Hutchinson of Appling County. Mr. Hutchinson was also the national champion in production of soybeans in 1975, producing 76.004 bushels per acre when the Georgia average was only 42 bushels per acre.

Baxley/Appling County's agricultural heritage and leadership continues today. Baxley is now called "The Turpentine City" both in honor of its heritage, and the fact that the last commercial turpentine plant in the U.S. operated in the city from its beginnings as Filtered Rosin Products in 1940 to the early 2000s. County Farm Plant Company located near the city, is now a major plant nursery and vegetable plant wholesaler, and is one of the largest in Georgia. Interfor, the largest lumber producer in Georgia, operates a Baxley sawmill. Fram Fuels operates a wood pellet plant, and Fries Farms, Inc. has recently constructed a large poultry feed grain mill in the county. Baxley in 2017 has completed a Farmers Market adjacent to its downtown Water Works Park to allow its farmers additional sources of income, and its citizens more accessibility to fresh, locally grown produce.

Baxley today has an outstanding quality of rural, small town life and an economy which continues to diversify and expand. There are persisting improvements to its facilities and infrastructure, including new, modern schools, a health department constructed in 2017, a 43,000 square foot agricultural center, a new farmers' market adjacent to a much used downtown water works park, recent upgrades to its community hospital, and many others. The community has approved plans to expand its recreational facilities by upgrading its airport, roads, and streets; and develop a fourth rail-served industrial park and business center. Private business continues to expand as well, particularly in the retail and service sectors. A local entrepreneur has made Baxley a regional auto shopping hub with four new dealerships constructed in recent years, and there are expanding new restaurants, hotels, and shops being constructed, primarily along U.S. 341 (Parker Street) and near the Walmart Supercenter. The community has a number of active civic clubs, many churches, a local food pantry, a Goodwill store, and other outlets of a very caring citizenry quick to lend support and a helping hand for individuals and causes alike. Baxley truly is a welcoming hometown where the entire community comes together and feels like family in thoughts and actions. Further support and comfort is afforded by the seemingly never-ending sea of tall, green pines, and other pastoral serenity which envelops the community. The nearby Altamaha River, Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area, and Moody Forest Natural Area/Wildlife Management Area offer easily accessed, and unparalleled natural beauty and environments of a national park and world class level. Baxley, on many levels, is unquestionably a family friendly welcoming hometown without much equal, and with much to offer resident, visitor, or entrepreneur alike.

## Vision

The City of Baxley will continue its position and status as the heart and soul of a most welcoming and caring hometown community, and an expanding economy. The community will continue to modernize and upgrade its infrastructure, facilities, and amenities to better serve both existing and new residents and visitors, and to continue to grow its economy. There will be multi-faceted efforts to attract more families, visitors, and new business and industry, but all the while retaining the cohesive and caring attitudes and leadership which make the community a special hometown family. The intrinsic beauty, rural character, and natural appeal will be maintained, and agriculture and forestry will continue to be supported as viable economic and quality of life uses. Many more will recognize Baxley as a special and welcoming hometown with an appealing high quality of life on many levels.

Needs	Opportunities
Continuing water/sewer infrastructure and service improvements	Location in proximity to major shipping thoroughfares
Continuing drainage improvements	Expanding retail/service sector
Continuing street improvements	Water Works Park
Truck route/overpass in downtown Baxley	Farmers Market
Continuing recreational facilities improvements	Ag Center development
Continued Airport improvements	Altamaha River
Tourist development/expansion	Moody Forest Natural Area
Sidewalk/bicycle/multi-modal improvements	Wildlife management areas
New industrial park development	Proximity to major shipping thoroughfares
	Coastal Pines Technical College
	Cooperative/collaborative leadership
	Civic groups/churches
	Appling Heritage Center
	Downtown Baxley Streetscape
	Appling County Health Department
	Water Works Park
	Available RV Parks
	Plant Hatch and other industries

# City of Graham

## Description

The City of Graham is a small town of about 300 people located along U.S. Highway 341 in western Appling County adjacent to the Jeff Davis County line. The tranquil little town is noted today by a simple, relatively new city hall and fire station, with a water tank and park visible immediately behind them and adjacent to the railroad. There is a new Dollar General just east and across the road, both it and City Hall facing the five-laned U.S. Highway 341 near the center of town. There is one caution light in town located at the crossroads of the Graham Methodist Church/Graham-Zoar Road and U.S. 341 west of City Hall. There is a Citgo service station/convenience store just west and north of this intersection, the only cross-street intersection along U.S. 341. Graham does appear from U.S. 341 to be sparsely settled, to have few residences, and to be a sleepy place easily overlooked. In fact, Graham was only incorporated by the Georgia General Assembly in 1991, but the community does have a colorful and long history and heritage dating all the way back to the early settlement of Appling County. There are understandable reasons the local government's website notes that the City of Graham is "a wonderful place to call home."

The first settler in the present Graham area was Seaborn Hall, born in Tattnall County only 12 miles across the Altamaha River from Graham. Seaborn Hall held extensive land holdings from the Altamaha to the Graham area. Hall was not only one of the county's early settlers, but one of Appling County's leaders and most influential citizens. He is listed as one of the earliest postmasters of Appling County as the 1834 postmaster of "Camp Ground." Hall also served as a State Representative, State Senator, was a delegate to Georgia's Secession Convention in 1861, and a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention in 1877. He opened a general store in what became Graham in 1866, knowing and influencing that the Macon and Brunswick Railroad would come through there. Hall was listed as Appling County's largest individual landowner in 1876. Graham and Seaborn Hall also played an interesting role in the Civil War. After the last Confederate Cabinet meeting in Washington, Georgia in early May, 1865, Cabinet members split up to try and avoid capture. While Jefferson Davis was captured in Irwin County on May 10, John C. Breckinridge, a General and then the Confederate Secretary of War, traveled farther south and crossed the Altamaha at Towns Bluff and was hosted by Seaborn Hall at his home. Hall's home was likely at "Camp Ground," where he was postmaster in 1834, and which was the training ground of the "Appling Grays," and had long been a training area for the local militia. After learning of Davis' capture, Hall assisted and escorted Breckinridge in escaping to Florida, where he boarded a steamer and made good an escape first to Cuba, then England, and Canada. Hall, although too old for service in the War, did captain a riverboat on the Ocmulgee and Altamaha rivers between Hawkinsville and Doctortown. Breckinridge has an interesting history himself as he was, and still is, the youngest person to ever serve as Vice President of the United States. He also was a Presidential candidate in the Election of 1860 as a Southern Democrat, winning 11 states and

actually finishing second in electoral votes to Abraham Lincoln. He continued to serve in the U.S. Senate during the early part of the War in 1861 as a Kentucky Senator, only resigning in the fall of 1861 after Kentucky formally seceded from the Union. He then became a Confederate General with notable roles in the Shenandoah Valley campaigns, and participation with General Jubal Early on the bold Confederate raid on Washington.

The Macon and Brunswick Railroad was completed in 1870, and Station Number 8 was constructed in Graham. The land for this railroad station was donated by Middleton Graham, the son-in-law of Seaborn Hall, who was married to Hall's daughter, Adeline. Naval stores and lumber interests caused Graham to prosper. Seaborn Hall owned one of three sawmills in Graham in 1878 and Alexander Sessoms, from North Carolina, who leased and then bought a large tract of land from Hall, began a large naval store operation there in 1879. Station Number 8 became an important shipping point for Adrian Van Bokkelyn's large operation and other naval store operations in nearby Pine Grove. Graham was formally incorporated locally by the Superior Court after an election held March 6, 1897. The town limits were described as one mile in each direction from the Southern Railway Depot. Graham was described in the 1906 "Georgia: Comprising Sketches of Counties, Towns..." as "a village of Jeff Davis [sic] county located on the line of the Southern railway, about half-way between Hazlehurst and Baxley. It has a money-order post office, express and telegraph service, school and church privileges [sic], some mercantile interests, and is a shipping point of some importance. The population in 1900 was 290."



*L City of Graham City Hall R Graham Walking Track*

Graham's 2020 population was recorded by the Census as 291 (United States Census Bureau, 2020), but things have not remained the same. Only a couple of old homes from Graham's heyday at the turn of the century remain. The local school closed in 1955 upon consolidation with Baxley. One significant historic structure that does remain is the often photographed Graham United Methodist Church. Land for this church and cemetery was donated by Adeline Hall Graham (Seaborn's daughter and Middleton's wife) in 1881. A local sawmill owner, Lemuel Johnson, donated both the materials for the building and the services of his English architect, William Armitage, and his master builders from England, Scotland, and Sweden. The Graham United Methodist Church was organized in 1885, and the beautiful building constructed in 1885-86. Another

important story in the history of Graham is also associated with the still standing and functioning Graham United Methodist Church. For a period of nearly 20 years from the early 1980s to the late 1990s, Graham UMC members held an annual “Buffalo Tro” as a fundraiser. A “Buffalo Tro” is an event of cooking steaks placed directly on red-hot coals which memorializes Plains Indians techniques of cooking buffalo meat directly on burning buffalo chips. Graham UMC utilized pecan wood to limit any ash residue getting on the meat. The event was ended when the crowds grew too large and the organizers too old.

Graham today is a relatively new small town first incorporated in 1991 by the General Assembly upon request by local citizens primarily to enable the town to obtain a cable franchise. Since that time, the small city has built a city hall; installed a water system, through USDA assistance; constructed a park with pavilion and walking track; and enlarged its fire station. The Graham water system has been extended to serve the regional Sweetwater Industrial Park east of town along U.S. 341. City Hall was burned by arson during a period of conflict with former City officials in 2012, but was quickly rebuilt in less than three months. The railroad through town remains an active and important Class I railroad of the Norfolk Southern Railway with increasing use. The City of Graham launched its first website in January, 2017. In this website, the city appropriately described itself as “A Place to Call Home.”

The website details, “In the City of Graham, we are defined less by boundaries on a map than by the sense of shared values our residents hold dear. Small town values, guided growth, preservation of historical, cultural, and natural heritage are just a few of the core principles that make the City of Graham a wonderful place to call home.”

## Vision

The City of Graham wishes to remain a small town atmosphere which attracts and supports those who would live or do business in a caring community in an excellent location with easy access to nearby larger towns and more urban amenities. The community will continue to honor its history and heritage while improving its facilities and services and advancing the overall wellbeing of its citizens and economy. The caring, small-town atmosphere will be retained and nurtured. Graham will continue to be a “wonderful place to call home.”

Needs	Opportunities
Continuing water system improvements	Water system
City park improvements	U.S. 341/location
Street and sidewalk improvements	History/heritage/Graham UMC
City vehicle	Dollar General
Public works equipment	Lake Mayers
	City Hall and Community Shelter
	Graham United Methodist Church

# City of Surrency

## Description

The City of Surrency is a quiet, unassuming, and appealing small town located at the intersection of Georgia Highway 121, the historic Woodpecker Trail, and U.S. Highway 341, the now four-laned Golden Isles Parkway. Today, most travelers view Surrency as the location of a large Parker's Convenience Store at this intersection, one of the first stores for this growing regional chain. There are also a number of stately and charming historic residences which do give some clue to Surrency's celebrated past and intriguing notoriety. It can truly be said there is much more to the town beyond or below its superficial appearance.

Surrency was founded by Allen Powell Surrency from Tattnall County, who settled in the area in the 1850s, after marrying Wealthia Roberson of Appling County. A.P. Surrency constructed a 10-horse power sawmill in what later became the town, as well as a general store which was said to be the only one between Wayne County and the Forks of the Ocmulgee and Oconee rivers. He served as the local tax collector, sheriff, the first State Representative from Appling County, and as county tax receiver during the 1855-1866 time period. Mr. Surrency was truly instrumental in putting the town on the map in more than one way. He was chiefly responsible for routing the Macon and Brunswick Railroad through Appling County and his Surrency property, and the areas which became Surrency, Baxley, and Graham, both by providing land to, and purchasing land for, the railroad. The area near his home, sawmill, and store became Station Number 6, and Mr. Surrency was the railroad's first agent. The railroad was completed in 1870.

In 1872, A.P. Surrency and Station Number 6 gained widespread notoriety because of supernatural occurrences at his home, which also served as a boarding house. Mr. Surrency wrote a letter describing strange occurrences happening at his home to the Savannah Morning News and the Macon Telegraph and Messenger. The strange occurrences included flying books, falling kitchenware, clocks striking and moving abnormally, locked doors swinging open, and other objects (including brick bats) dropping randomly. One of Surrency's daughters reported later to have seen a male apparition approaching the house from the railroad. The poltergeist activities at the Surrency house were recounted by reporters from all the major newspapers of the state, and resulted in many curious visitors. The railroad even booked special trains to travel to Station Number 6 to accommodate the hundreds of intrigued tourists. The "Surrency Ghost" has been written about extensively in many types of media since that time, and is noted by some as America's most famous haunted house and ghost story. The Surrency family did eventually abandon the house and move to a farm outside town. A.P. Surrency died in 1877, and the famous ghost house burned in 1925. Even today, the internet is replete with recantings about the famed "Surrency Ghost," and that is not the only supernatural, or maybe more appropriately preternatural, phenomenon associated with the town. There have been many reported sightings of a "Surrency Spook Light," a mysterious yellow orb of light which purportedly floats along the railroad. In

1985, scientists discovered a geologic anomaly, apparently fluid in nature, located about nine miles deep in the earth's crust directly below Surrency. It is said to be unlike anything else in the world, and not easily explained by current scientific hypotheses. The anomaly has been labeled the "Surrency Bright Spot" because of its high reflectivity of radio waves.



*L Historic Residence R Old Surrency School*

In 1879, John J. McDonough opened a sawmill in the town which was a major economic component until about 1889. The Georgia State Gazeteer and Business Directory of 1879-1880 gave the population of Surrency as only 75, and listed J.J. McDonough as owning a store and grist mill, and G. Thigpen as having a store and a still. By 1888-1889, the population was listed by the Gazeteer and Directory as 175. Surrency's heydays came about in the early 1900s as a result of the Great Hurricane of 1898, which downed most of the remaining timber of Appling County. Colonel Ezekiel P. (Zeke) Padgett traveled to Washington and convinced the Southern Railway to concentrate their crosstie buying in the storm swept area. Surrency soon became the "Crosstie Capital of the World," and shipped as many as five carloads of crossties a day. Surrency was incorporated as a town in 1904 upon local petition to the Appling County Superior Court in March, and after an April election in which all voters cast votes in favor of incorporation without even one negative vote against. In the 1906 "Georgia Sketches..." Surrency was described as "a town of Appling County, on the Macon and Brunswick division of the Southern Railroad, twelve miles east of Baxley. It has a money order post office, express and telegraph offices, important shipping interests, several stores doing a good business, and in 1900 had a population of 190." Surrency's first Census population in 1910 showed 259 persons and reached a height of 445 in 1930, when the crosstie boom was coming to an end, and the Great Depression occurred. The only remaining reminder of Surrency's rather fabled past, other than a number of fine old homes, is the railroad which remains active as a Class I line operated by the Norfolk Southern Railway, and the former Bank of Surrency building. This bank, now owned by the City of Surrency and utilized as a museum/community meeting space, was built in 1911, and operated as a branch of the Baxley Banking Company until its closure in 1921. The Surrency Bank also served as the town's post office from 1926 until 1960. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, Surrency's peaceful image

believes much of its colorful past. Its 2020 Census population of 201 persons has fallen back to about the level at its formal establishment in 1904. The once proud Surrency High School constructed in 1926, but abandoned and consolidated to Baxley in the early 1960s, is now also City-owned and in need of repair. Surrency has had street lights since 1949, a public water system since 1965, and has long had a local recreation park with an active ballfield. There are several small businesses in town, including Southern Metal Works and the large Parker’s Convenience Store. Fries Farms, Inc. has constructed a large poultry feed mill east of the city limits along the railroad in recent years, and Everett Dykes Grassing Company has an asphalt plant west of town. Surrency, which remained a town for more than 100 years, received a new charter from the Georgia General Assembly in 2016, and on May 3, 2016 officially transformed into the “City of Surrency, Georgia.”

Surrency remains a charming little town and a close-knit community of family-friendly, caring individuals who know and look out for one another. Its location, conveniences, and atmosphere offer much to those who do and would choose to call Surrency home. Surrency is a shining example of Southern charm and comforting rural small town atmosphere and life. It can truly be said that even though Surrency has a spooky past, it now is a bright spot in South Georgia!

## Vision

The City of Surrency wishes to remain a haven of rural, smalltown charm and a community replete with character, and preserved old homes and history. The community would continue to be an oasis of family-oriented and caring people who look after one another and take pride in their community. There would be further growth in amenities and small businesses to invite others to share in this special and unique community, and to enhance the quality of life.

Needs	Opportunities
Street improvements	Location
Drainage improvements	Ghostly heritage/Surrency Bright Spot
Water system improvements	Railroad
Park/ballfield improvements	Historic Surrency School
Historic Surrency School rehabilitation	Bank of Surrency
Bank of Surrency improvements	Ballfield/Park
Surrency Day expansion	Historic homes
	Available land/space
	Woodpecker Trail
	Golden Isles Highway Historic Bank of Surrency Parker’s, U.S. 341



# Community Goals

## Economic Development



1. Continued support of enhanced youth/adult leadership programs
2. Continued local/regional/state agency coordination/cooperation
3. Ongoing continuing education/job skills improvements
4. Retention/expansion of existing businesses/industries
5. Attraction of new business/industry/jobs
6. Support of local entrepreneurship
7. Continued improvement/enhancement of infrastructure to accommodate desired economic growth and improve service
8. Proactive infrastructure/other improvements at existing industrial parks/sites
9. Development of a new rail-served industrial park
10. Broadband/fiber access/service improvements
11. Improved access to and quality of transportation of all kinds
12. Continued downtown revitalization of Baxley
13. Increased local/regional tourism development/promotion
14. Enhanced nature-based, heritage, and agri-tourism efforts
15. Planned/managed compatible growth and development
16. Compatible development supportive of community's rural character/quality of life
17. Continued economic viability of agricultural/forestry land uses  
Everett Dykes Grassing Company Asphalt Plant Interfor Sawmill, Baxley





## Natural & Cultural Resources

1. Compatible, supportive development of existing rural character
2. Growth management/natural and cultural resources protection, including compatible economic utilization, as appropriate
3. Conservation/protection of Appling County's significant natural resources, including Altamaha River Corridor
4. Wildlife management and natural area/outdoor recreation protection/enhancement/ promotion
5. Continued economic viability of agricultural/forestry/ open space land uses
6. Utilization/preservation/adaptive use of historic resources/heritage of Appling County
7. Continued heritage/culture celebration and promotion
8. Promotion/expansion of nature-based, heritage, and agri-tourism





## Housing



1. Improved quality of existing and new housing
2. Development of a more diverse housing mixture
3. Utilization of available state/federal programs
4. Guided/planned/compatible residential development
5. Community aesthetics/appearance improvements
6. Substandard housing upgrades and blight removal

## Land Use



1. Planned/managed compatible growth and development
2. Rural character/quality of life preservation
3. Protection of existing agricultural/forestry/open space land uses
4. Continued promotion of infill development/location of use management
5. Utilization of existing and new infrastructure to guide desired growth/development
6. Community aesthetics/appearance/gateway improvements
7. Continued downtown revitalization of Baxley
8. Attraction/management of growth in Graham and Surrency
9. Compatible enhancement/development of recreation facilities
10. Implementation of coordinated comprehensive land use planning regulations and code enforcement



## Community Facilities and Services



1. Infrastructure and services expansion/maintenance/upgrades, as needed
2. Utilization of infrastructure to guide desired growth
3. Transportation access/quality improvements of all types and their promotion
4. Maintenance/promotion/upgrade of local Appling Healthcare System and critical healthcare services, as needed
5. Continued upgrades to public safety/fire/emergency medical facilities/services, as needed
6. Continued educational facilities/services/technology maintenance and enhancements, as needed
7. Park/recreational facilities/activities maintenance/improvement/development, as needed
8. Continued support/promotion of local agriculture through provision of needed facilities
9. Continued support for and enhancement of cultural facilities/opportunities
10. Provision/maintenance of adequate local governmental facilities/services
11. Continued development/provision of appropriate solid waste management services/facilities Appling County Courthouse Annex New Senior Center/Head Start Facility/Intergovernmental Coordination
12. Maintenance/enhancement of local, regional, and state cooperation
13. Services sharing/cooperation/consolidation where appropriate and feasible
14. Coordinated land use growth management planning/regulation/code enforcement
15. Support of public/private partnership for service enhancement where appropriate  
Farmer's Market

# Long Term Community Policies



## Economic Development

1. The community will support enhanced leadership programs, such as Appling Leads, Junior Statesman, and others to cultivate involvement and commitment
2. The community will continue to foster local cooperation/collaboration with Appling governments, school system, Coastal Pines Technical College, and civic/faith-based organizations
3. The community will continue to cooperate and coordinate with existing local, regional, and state agencies to improve all of Appling County
4. The community will work together to improve the educational and skills levels and ensure a better qualified workforce for existing and future employers
5. The community will continue to support local post-secondary education opportunities and their expansion, including Coastal Pines Technical College's Baxley Campus, as needed, through infrastructure upgrades, increased program offerings, and other means
6. The community will work together to continue to reduce the school drop-out rate within the county and retain as many youth in local schools as possible
7. The community will support and promote programs for the retention and expansion, as needed, of existing local industries and business in its support and quest for their retention and additional job opportunities
8. The community will continue to support the continuing operation of Plant Hatch Nuclear Power Plant in Appling County and any future expansions, such as the addition of a new unit
9. The community will actively recruit new industry and business development compatible with the resources, infrastructure, existing economy, and natural environments of the county
10. The community will support the development and expansion of local entrepreneurship efforts, and the continued development/expansion of the local retail/service sector
11. The community will support the development of new businesses in Graham and Surrency
12. The community will work to develop, extend, and maintain the necessary infrastructure improvements to facilitate and accommodate desired commercial, industrial, and residential growth
13. The community will continue to cooperate to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure improvements at the Park East, Park West, and Sweetwater Creek industrial parks to support desired economic growth
14. The community will develop a new rail-served and GRAD certified industrial park at the acquired site east of Baxley near U.S. 341
15. The community will support development of the Oglethorpe Power property east of Baxley and adjacent to the planned new community rail-served industrial park

16. The community will seek improvements to Internet access/service and facilities supportive of state-of-the-art communications, fiber-optics, and broadband technology
17. The community will continue to seek and promote transportation improvements (highway, airport, rail, public, and multi-modal/Complete Streets) to further encourage, guide, and accommodate desired growth and development
18. The community will work together to maintain its modern Level II airport and seek improvements as necessary
19. The community will promote to economic prospects its 4-lane transportation access via U.S. 341 and U.S. 1, its central geographic location between three interstates, and the availability of rail access in close proximity to Georgia's ports
20. The community will continue to revitalize/maintain Downtown Baxley as a vibrant, functioning commercial, governmental, and social center
21. The community will work cooperatively to increase promotion and marketing of tourist attractions and facilities/services located in Appling County, and otherwise grow tourism as an important component of the local economy, including agri-tourism, nature-based, and heritage tourism
22. The community will continue to support and grow local participation in the annual Golden Isles Peaches to the Beaches Yard Sale, as well as to organize and develop other local festivals or events
23. The community will seek to attract new residents and retirees through promotion of its climate, location, quality of life, recreation opportunities, active civic organizations, caring people, and other amenities
24. The community will direct, manage, and guide its future growth and development through coordinated planning, land use regulation, increased code enforcement, and nuisance regulations
25. The community will preserve its unique landscapes and natural beauty and foster development compatible with its existing rural character and quality of life
26. The community will encourage and promote the continued economic viability of agriculture and forestry through traditional and alternative enterprises, including nature based and agri-tourism, utilizing the new Agricultural Center, and continued support for the local farmer's market
27. The community will utilize and support the Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce, the Development Authority of Appling County, Downtown Development Authority of Baxley and other agency programs/resources to further develop/grow the local economy
28. The community will continue to celebrate and promote its heritage and provide for cultural outlets through support of the Appling County Heritage Center, the Appling County Library, and other outlets  
Natural and Cultural Resources
29. The community will work to promote growth and development which is compatible with and maintains the existing rural character, open spaces, and landscapes of Appling County
30. The community will seek development which is respectful of and compatible with the environment and natural and cultural resources of Appling County

31. The community will work to conserve and protect the Altamaha River Corridor, the county's significant groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, floodplains, and other important natural and cultural resources, while promoting compatible utilization and recreational development
32. The community will continue to maintain, enhance, and promote Lake Mayers and Lake Tara for public recreational use
33. The community will support protection, expansion of uses, and promotion of the Bullard Creek and Moody Forest Natural Area wildlife management areas, including multi-modal access
34. The community will seek to promote and develop greater compatible economic use and tourism of its parks, lakes, river, and other natural and cultural resources
35. The community will encourage the protection of its greenspaces and landscapes, especially through promotion of the continued economic viability of agriculture and forestry
36. The community will seek to rehabilitate, utilize, and encourage public and private adaptive use/reuse of historic buildings, places, and landmark structures to enhance its sense of place and unique character, and to further tourism/economic development
37. The community will continue to support and help maintain the Appling County Heritage Center in its mission to preserve, interpret, and promote local history
38. The community will celebrate and promote its heritage and culture through development and support of facilities, festivals, special events, plays, exhibits, and activities
39. The community will support efforts to increase nature-based, heritage, and agri-tourism Housing
40. The community will work toward both improving the quality of existing and new housing
41. The community will seek to encourage a diverse mix of housing, including additional affordable, rental, elderly, retiree, and compatible workforce housing, as needed
42. The community will support and encourage the development of additional assisted living facilities
43. The community will encourage the use of state and federal programs to improve availability of quality housing, and to encourage homeownership
44. The community will seek to encourage and manage new residential location within Appling County which is compatible with its community vision and rural character
45. The community will provide guidance to and for location of compatible housing developments through planning, infrastructure location, and regulation
46. The community will continue to support the Baxley Housing Authority and utilize public/private partnerships to improve housing quality and opportunities
47. The community will upgrade its appearance and the quality of its housing developments through the adoption and use of coordinated construction codes, increased code enforcement, subdivision regulations, nuisance ordinances, and other land use regulation



## Land Use

1. The community will plan/direct future growth and development, and encourage growth compatible with its community vision and existing character
2. The community will encourage growth which preserves its rural character and maintains forestry and agriculture as viable, functioning land uses
3. The community will continue to encourage infill and intense development/land uses to locate in Baxley and its fringes, and the U.S. 341 West Corridor, where appropriate and easily served by the community's infrastructure
4. The community will seek to encourage and guide development of U.S. 341 and U.S. 1 and all of Baxley's gateways/corridors to create a sense of place and to invite/attract people/visitors
5. The community will seek to encourage development which will enhance/redevelop existing commercial areas and maintain Baxley as a center of economic, social, and governmental activity within Appling County
6. The community will cooperate to maintain and further the development of the cities of Graham and Surrency as vibrant and growing small towns
7. The community will enhance existing recreation facilities and develop new facilities/uses which will complement/promote tourism and the community's character/vision
8. The community will support the expansion of public access to the Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area, the Moody Forest Natural Area/Wildlife Management Area, the Altamaha River, and other local natural resources, while advocating and supporting their protection
9. The community will cooperate to implement coordinated, comprehensive land use regulation and code enforcement to implement its community vision and protect its rural character and quality of life Community Facilities and Services
10. The community will maintain, upgrade, and expand its existing infrastructure and services to enhance the quality of life, to facilitate its community vision, and to attract desired, compatible growth and development
11. The community will guide growth and development to areas of existing infrastructure and will plan and develop expansions to help bring about its community vision and desired patterns of growth
12. The community will continue to upgrade or develop local government facilities/services to better serve local citizens, attract economic development, and/or improve the quality of life
13. The community will pursue, develop, and promote transportation improvements of all types, including paving of dirt roads, resurfacing of existing paved roads, addressing traffic congestion, overpass and truck route development, public transportation, sidewalk improvements, bicycle trails, multi-modal/Complete Streets, and others, which are compatible with and supportive of Appling County's desired economic development, future growth, and quality of life
14. The community will work together to maintain its modern Level II airport and seek improvements as



necessary

15. The community will continue to support the viability and usage of the Appling Healthcare System facilities and services, the Appling County Health Department, and the expansion of critical local healthcare services conducive to economic development and a high quality of life
16. The community will maintain, and enhance as appropriate, its emergency management and emergency medical facilities and services
17. The community will support the continued development/provision of needed solid waste management facilities/services, as appropriate
18. The community will continue to support and upgrade, as needed, its local public safety facilities and services
19. The community will seek to enhance local educational opportunities by continuing to maintain and upgrade its educational facilities and programs, both local and postsecondary, as needed
20. The community will enhance, expand, and promote existing parks and establish new parks/recreational facilities and programs to serve existing and future populations, and to further cultivate/support tourism in accordance with the community's character/vision
21. The community will continue to enhance Water Works Park as a passive park and focal point for community events
22. The community will support development of youth facilities/after-school and summer programming through reactivation of the local Boys and Girls Club or other efforts
23. The community will continue to support and promote local agriculture through the Farmer's Market, the new Agricultural Center, increased agri-tourism, and other means
24. The community will encourage and support the promotion of existing cultural facilities and opportunities, and will further develop cultural facilities and assets to pursue and promote additional venues/activities, such as an amphitheater
25. The community will continue to support the Appling County Public Library, and the Appling County Heritage Center
26. The community will seek development of additional public meeting space Intergovernmental Coordination
27. The community will continue to cooperate and collaborate locally and regionally to improve, develop, expand, grow, and plan for the desired future Appling County expressed and outlined in its community vision and comprehensive plan
28. The community will continue to coordinate efforts in the delivery of services and will investigate the possibility of shared and consolidated services where appropriate and feasible
29. The community will cooperate in coordinated land use planning and regulation to manage and guide its future growth and development
30. The community will support public/private partnership for facility development or service enhancement where appropriate

# Needs & Opportunities



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The Needs and Opportunities Element is required of all local governments by the Minimum Standards and Procedures. The community needs are those weaknesses or liabilities which have to be addressed, changed, or mitigated to help achieve the desired community future. The community opportunities are strengths and assets which can be utilized as starting points and foundations to easily accentuate or capitalize on to move the community forward on its desired future path.

The Needs and Opportunities Element generally answers the planning question, **“Where are we currently?”** The answers can provide the compass point guidance necessary to begin and advance along the improvement journey. The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan identifies each community goal as an issue for improvement, and further identifies local needs and opportunities, as appropriate, for each issue.



## Economic Development

### Opportunities:

1. Heart of Georgia Altamaha Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program
2. Access to Georgia Quick Start Program
3. Post-secondary education access locally at Coastal Pines Technical College, Baxley Campus, and other nearby institutions
4. Excellent local schools, including new and renovated facilities, and technology
5. Increasing local high school graduation rate
6. Existing businesses/industries, such as Plant Hatch, Lawter, Walmart Supercenter, Woody Folsom Auto Group, Down to Earth Trailer, Interfor, and others
7. Diverse mix of existing small local and corporate businesses
8. Existing agricultural/forestry uses such as Miles Berry Farm, County Farm Plants, Fram Fuels wood pellet plant, Southeastern Gin & Peanut, Wright's Dairy, Gardner's Apiaries/ Spell Bee Company
9. Agricultural Center
10. Community Center
11. Dollar General stores in Graham and north of Baxley
12. Infrastructure in place for growth/development
13. 3 GRAD certified industrial parks (Park East, Park West, and Sweetwater Creek)
14. New rail-served industrial park site east of Baxley near U.S. 341
15. Oglethorpe Power industrial site near Baxley
16. Ongoing downtown revitalization

17. Growth of existing industry
18. Rail Park development
19. Continued development of a career academy with Coastal Pines Partnership
20. Peaches to Beaches Yard Sale

### Needs:

1. Shortage of skilled labor/Continuing education/Job skills improvements
2. Support for local post-secondary education resources, including Coastal Pines Technical College, Baxley Campus
3. Continuing support for the excellent local school system and increasing its high school graduation rate
4. Existing business/industry/entrepreneur support
5. Support continuing operation of Plant Hatch Nuclear Power Plant in Appling County, including any future expansions
6. New business/industry/jobs attraction/creation
7. Support of retail/service/hospitality sector expansion
8. Maintenance/extension/development of infrastructure necessary for desired growth
9. Development/enhancement/maintenance of needed infrastructure upgrades at Park East, Park West, and Sweetwater Creek industrial parks
10. Construction of solar array and deep well in Industrial Park West



## Economic Development

*("Needs" Continued)*

11. Development of a new rail-served industrial park east of Baxley near U.S. 341
12. Revise the alcohol sales policy for the county
13. Develop new educational initiatives to increase the percentage of citizens with post-secondary education
14. Support development of Oglethorpe Power property east of Baxley
15. Seek development of industry-wide shared rail-served loading dock site
16. Continued downtown Baxley revitalization support
17. Additional local lodging, dining, entertainment, and retail options
18. Continuing support/increased participation in Peaches to the Beaches Yard Sale and development of other events/festivals
19. Continued support for local farmers' market
20. Continued utilization/support of Baxley-Applying County Chamber of Commerce, the Development Authority of Applying County, and others
21. Development of new marketing materials and branding for Applying County Economic Development
22. Coordinated countywide land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing regulations/increased code enforcement/nuisance ordinances/growth management implementation and enforcement
23. Redevelopment/enhancement of existing commercial areas and maintenance of Baxley as hub of economic/social/governmental activity in Applying County
24. Further development of Graham and Surrency to maintain them as vibrant/growing small towns
25. Promotion of available land for economic development/residential attraction
26. Downtown revitalization
27. Clothing stores
28. Local delivery
29. Young people entertainment



## Natural & Cultural Resources

### Opportunities:

1. Local/regional tourism events/venues such as Winter Wonderland in Baxley, Appling Heritage Center, Surrency Day, and Peaches to the Beaches Yard sale
2. Nature-based, agri-tourism, recreation, and other tourism venues, including the Altamaha River, Moody Forest Nature Preserve; Bullard Creek and Moody Forest wmas, Falling Rocks Park, Lake Mayers, Lake Tara, Appling County Farmers' Market, local produce and farm markets/businesses; Woodpecker Trail, and Traditions Highway
3. Local cultural/historic resources, such as Appling County Courthouse, Appling Heritage Center, Caroline Miller House, Graham Methodist Church, Bank of Surrency building, and Surrency School
4. Significant natural resources, including Altamaha River Corridor, Moody Forest Natural Area/Wildlife Management Area, Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area, and others
5. Recreation resources, such as Lake Mayers, Lake Tara, Falling Rocks Park, Altamaha River landings, Moody Forest and Bullard Creek wildlife management areas
6. Lower cost of living and housing costs
7. Continued use of historic Appling County Courthouse
8. Active civic organizations, such as Lions Club and Rotary

9. Existing cultural facilities/services
10. County Library
11. Appling County Fine Arts Center (ACHS facility)
12. Stewardship of historic Surrency School and Bank of Surrency building
13. Carter's Bite Landing RV Park/picnic areas/ boat launch

### Needs:

1. Local/regional tourism enhancement/growth through events, such as Baxley's Winter Wonderland and Surrency Day; recreation/leisure activities; heritage tourism; agri-tourism; nature-based tourism; and other means
2. Increased promotion/marketing of local/regional tourist attractions, including the Altamaha River; Appling County Heritage Center; the Moody Forest Natural Area/Wildlife Management Area; the Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area; Appling Farmer's Market and other local produce and farm market businesses; the new Agricultural Center; Woodpecker Trail; Traditions Highway; and others
3. Bicycle trails to Moody Forest
4. Compatible development supportive of community's unique landscapes; natural and cultural resources; and rural character/quality of life



## Natural & Cultural Resources

*("Needs" Continued)*

5. Agricultural/forestry land uses economic viability support and increased marketing
6. Altamaha River Corridor conservation/protection, including water level
7. Continuing protection of Appling County's significant natural and cultural resources
8. Adoption/enforcement of model ordinance based on Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for significant wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and protected river corridors
9. Development of countywide floodplain management control ordinance
10. Adoption of local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance
11. Compatible development/utilization of natural and cultural resources, as appropriate
12. Continued maintenance/enhancement/promotion of Lake Mayers and Lake Tara for public recreation
13. Bullard Creek and Moody Forest wildlife management areas protection/use expansion/promotion, including multi-modal access
14. Promotion/development of greater compatible economic use/tourism of parks, lakes, river, other natural/cultural resources
15. Historic resources preservation/reuse/promotion, such as former school as Appling County Heritage Center
16. Continued stewardship and local government use of National Register-listed historic Appling County Courthouse
17. Continued support/maintenance of Appling County Heritage Center
18. Celebration/promotion of local heritage/culture through plays/facilities/ exhibits/activities/festivals
19. Enhancement of existing recreation/leisure facilities and development of new facilities/programs as needed to complement community's character and promote tourism
20. Further development of Falling Rocks Park to help improve Altamaha River access, including campsite upgrades, such as individual dump stations, and improvements to dock
21. Additional recreational areas to include trails/ rental areas/ river tours/ new playground at Carter's Bite Landing



## Housing

### Opportunities:

1. Utilization of state/federal programs
2. Public housing
3. Senior Center Housing
4. Low Cost of Living
5. Hospitable character of area

### Needs:

1. Existing and new housing quality/appearance improvements through rehabilitation, removal, code enforcement, and regulation
2. Matching funds for repair of occupied, blighted housing in Graham
3. Support for diverse housing mix, including additional affordable, rental, elderly, retiree, and compatible workforce housing, as needed
4. Development of additional assisted living facilities
5. State/federal housing programs utilization
6. Utilization of existing and new infrastructure location to guide desired/compatible residential growth/development supportive of community's vision/rural character
7. Entry-level housing, all levels of housing within 5 miles of city limits
8. Mixed-use development
9. Address homeless issues/ homeless shelter



## Land Use

### Opportunities:

1. Ample undeveloped land
2. Existing zoning in Baxley
3. Land available for sale

### Needs:

1. Continued promotion of infill and intense development/land uses in Baxley and its fringes, U.S. 341 West Corridor, and where appropriate/easily served by community infrastructure
2. Development of zoning and other supportive countywide land use regulations
3. Total update of Baxley's existing zoning ordinances



## Community Facilities and Services

### Opportunities:

1. Graham's new backup well
2. Mercy Ministries- Graham Campus
3. Transportation improvements, including 4-laned U.S. 1 and U.S. 341 through county and TIA funded resurfacing, paving projects, and new U.S. 1 Altamaha River Bridge
4. Sidewalk expansion along GA Highway 15 South to middle school in Baxley
5. Appling County Food Bank
6. COINS Foundation
7. Coalition for a Healthy Appling County
8. Transitional Living Cottage (TLC)
9. 24-7 House
10. Level II Baxley Airport and ongoing upgrades
11. Norfolk Southern Railroad crossing Appling County
12. Central location between I-16, I-95, and I-75 and proximity to Georgia ports
13. Downtown Baxley revitalization, including streetscape improvements
14. Hotels/ Motels
15. New planned local restaurants
16. Appling Heritage Center's planned SPLOST-funded maintenance/repairs
17. Community's rural character/quality of life/ vision
18. Planned new Agricultural Center
19. Award-winning Appling Healthcare System and other local medical facilities, including planned new Geriatric Behavioral Health Unit
20. New Appling County Health Department

21. Soon to be completed new Senior Center/ Head Start facility
22. Water Works Park in Downtown Baxley
23. Renovated former Junior High Gymnasium
24. Strong local public safety/enforcement and low crime rate
25. New (TIA-2) projects funded improvements, including completion of Band 1 and some Band 2 Local Projects
26. AAA meetings

### Needs:

1. Improvements to Internet/broadband access/service/facilities
2. Continued improvements/promotion of all kinds of transportation access/quality, including highway, airport, rail, public, pedestrian, bicycle, and multi-modal/Complete Streets
3. Continuing street and road improvements, including paving and resurfacing projects utilizing TIA and other funding
4. Completion of TIA Band 3 projects
5. Youth leadership initiatives (Junior State-men/ Youth Leadership Program- Propel Grant)
6. Address traffic congestion in/near Baxley through construction of truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means
7. Enhancements to pedestrian pathways in/ around Baxley and Appling County
8. Acquisition of a new utility tractor for the City of Graham





## Community Facilities and Services

*("Needs" Continued)*

9. Road safety improvements per GDOT safety audit and state mandates along county roads, such as signage, widening, striping, and others
10. Completion of sidewalk expansion along GA Highway 15 south from Satilla Church Road to Appling County Middle School in Baxley
11. Renovation of the Appling County Courthouse
12. Development of local bicycle facilities
13. Continuing street and drainage improvements in Baxley, including equipment acquisition, and in the Thomas/Wildes streets target area in Surrency
14. Continuing upgrades to Baxley Airport to maintain its modern, Level II status, including additional instrument approaches, completing clearing of approach path, widening/overlaying runway, and others as needed
15. Promotion/marketing of 4-lane transportation access via U.S. 1 and U.S. 341/central location between three interstates/proximity to Savannah and Brunswick ports
16. U.S. 1 and U.S. 341 and all community gateways appearance improvements/beautification
17. Completion of installing radio-read water system meters citywide in Baxley
18. Continue pursuit of solar power options when feasible by City of Baxley
19. Replacement of elevated water tank at Water Works Park
20. Acquisition of new vehicle for City of Graham
21. Construction of new Appling County Road Department facility
22. Continued maintenance/promotion/upgrades, as needed of Appling Healthcare System facility and other local healthcare facilities/services
23. Construction of new SPLOST-funded addition for Geriatric Behavioral Health Unit
24. Continued improvements to excellent local public safety services, equipment, and facilities, as needed
25. Establish new administrative facility for the Baxley Police Department
26. Purchase of trucks, suits, equipment, and other necessities for Appling County and city fire departments
27. Establish a county-wide fire department training facility
28. Complete installation of full-time Baxley Fire Department
29. Acquisition of three (3) new ambulances for Appling County EMS
30. Construction of addition to Appling County Detention Center
31. Construction of new Appling County Judicial complex
32. Continued maintenance/upgrades to retain excellent quality local educational facilities/services/technology
33. Parks/recreation facilities/activities maintenance/improvements/development



## Community Facilities and Services

*("Needs" Continued)*

34. Additional psychiatric facilities and services throughout the county
35. Youth Junior Public Safety Program projects
36. Establish a Young Professional Organization in Appling County
37. Continued enhancement of Downtown Baxley's Water Works Park as passive park/ focal point for community events
38. Construction of new indoor pool for year-round use
39. Construction of two (2) additional multi-purpose athletic fields and other facility upgrades at Appling County Recreation Complex
40. Funding to renovate/improve Surrency Ballfield and Surrency Park
41. Development support for local youth facilities/after-school/summer programs through possible reactivation of the Appling County Boys and Girls Club or other efforts
42. Continued maintenance and provision of adequate local governmental facilities/services
43. Complete construction of new Senior Center/Head Start facility
44. Continued support for and enhancement of cultural facilities/programs/events
45. Construction of a community amphitheater
46. Continued support for local Appling County Public Library through facility, equipment, staffing, program, and other improvements/expansions, as needed
47. Renovations to the National Register-listed Bank of Surrency building
48. Flooring renovations at the historic Surrency School
49. Congestion growth/ Better transportation planning in downtown area
50. Better broadband
51. Stabilize workforce, develop workforce program
52. New truck stop
53. Public transit system
54. Rural supplying services
55. Ongoing efforts to address trash on side of roads
56. Need urgent care, specialists
57. Childcare
58. Recycling center/facilities
59. Need more stream-line public outreach/ technology
60. Install electric vehicle charging stations



## Intergovernmental Coordination

### Opportunities:

1. Existing adult and youth leadership programs, such as Appling Leads and Junior Statesman
2. Excellent local collaboration among Appling governments, school system, civic/faith based organizations, and others
3. Continuing existing local, regional, and state agency cooperation/coordination
4. Strong local governments/leadership/partnerships, such as Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce; Development Authority of Appling County; and others
5. Existing local, regional, and state partnerships, including Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, others

### Needs:

1. Continuing support for and enhancement of local leadership groups, including Appling Leads, Junior Statesman, and others, Natural and Cultural Resources, Housing, Land Use, Community Facilities and Services, Intergovernmental Coordination
2. Continued fostering of local cooperation/collaboration among Appling governments, school system, civic/faith-based organizations, private entrepreneurs, and others
3. Continuing local, regional, and state agency cooperation/coordination
4. Utilization of coordinated planning, land use regulations, increased code enforcement, and nuisance regulations to direct/manage/guide future growth/development
5. Continued maintenance/enhancement of local, regional, state cooperation
6. Continued efforts to seek sharing/cooperation/consolidation in delivery of services
7. More local engagement

# Broadband Services



Since the discovery of electricity, people all over the world have dreamed about the exciting possibilities of technology sure to be right around the corner. Each new invention or innovation brought increased excitement. What made electricity service vital to people and industry of the United States in the 20th century will make broadband service a necessity in the 21st century. We recognize that high speed technology has developed in disparity across the nation and the state of Georgia. This is largely due to population densities and cost- return on infrastructure investments. It is Appling County's goal to determine the broadband infrastructure shortfall within the county and seek ways to improve its current position.

Broadband is defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as a minimum of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed. It should be noted the broadband definition has changed twice since its inception in 1996 due to technology

advancements. Broadband delivery methods include, but are not limited to, digital subscriber lines, cable modems, fiber, wireless, broadband over power lines, and satellites. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, within which Appling County is located, was determined in a 2015 Digital Economy Plan to rank 12 out of 12 areas of Georgia for technological capability. It is significant to note the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is the only region of Georgia without a metropolitan area included. Nationally, 94.0 % of the population have access to either fixed terrestrial service at 25 Mbps/3 Mbps or mobile 4G LTE at 10 Mbps/3 Mbps; this percentage drops to 77.4.0% in rural areas (FCC, 2021, p.22, fig. 3b). Rural areas in the State of Georgia are 81.1% served with broadband capability as compared to 98.1% in the urban communities. According to the 2022 Georgia Broadband Availability Map's data, Appling County has 51% broadband availability. Percentages and numbers may differ when comparing multiple sources.



**L** Downtown Baxley **R** Residence in Appling County

DSL service is available with a speed up to 25 Mbps in an area within and around the city of Baxley. Various blocks in the unincorporated county have access to DSL technology with download speeds up to 6 Mbps. Cable line access is available within Baxley and blocks near the city limits in each direction. The areas served by cable service have download speeds near 25 Mbps. As of the 2021 FCC Broadband Deployment Report, few Census blocks are served by a fiber optic network in Appling County.

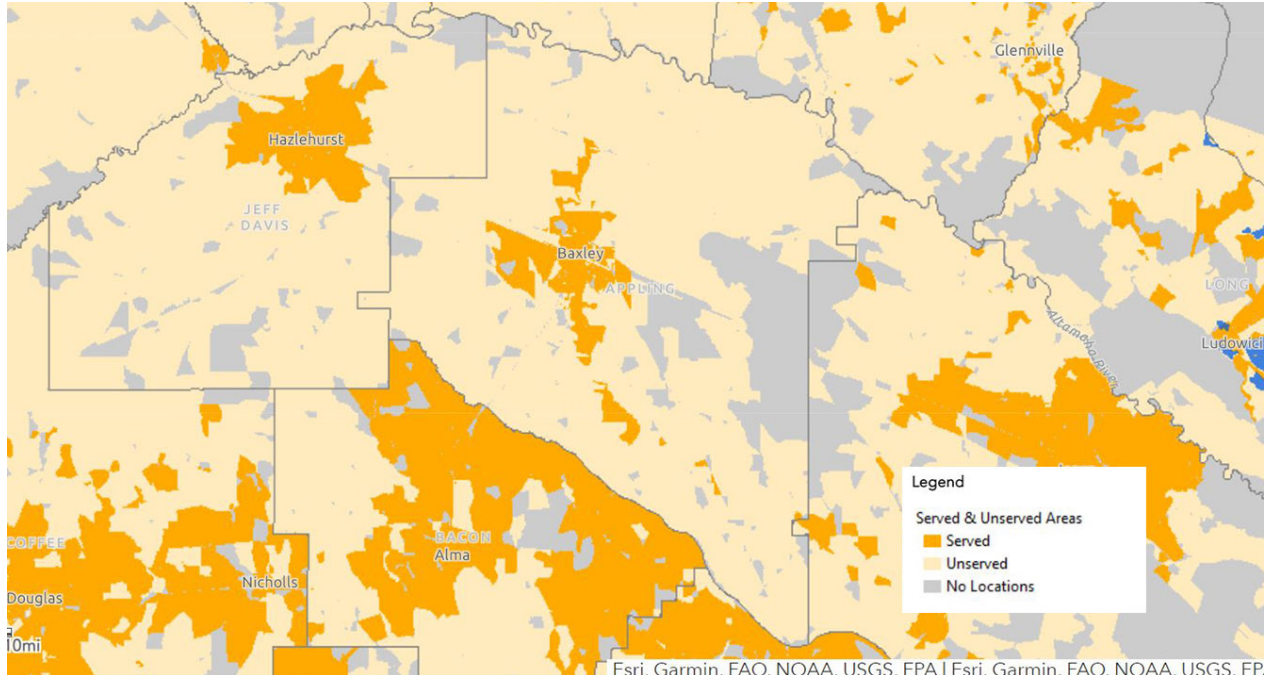
Data reported by the State of Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative's (GBDI) 2021 Broadband map indicates a higher percentage of locations being served with broadband than the FCC data. This data varies due to the methodology of calculating the locations unserved. The FCC data considers an entire census block and population within as served if one location is served within the block. The data presented by the GBDI reports consider a census block served if 80% of locations are served with broadband capable speeds. At present, the State



of Georgia recognizes 55% of Appling County as unserved by broadband technology. Currently 5,083 locations within the county have access to at least 25 Mbps download speed and 6,291 remain unserved. (Georgia Broadband Program County Report, 2022) Agricultural interests within the County may benefit from improved internet capabilities, the farming operations to see the greatest benefit are located in the unserved areas.

Other avenues of broadband service technologies available in the community are through either satellite or wireless 4G LTE service. Satellite service speeds are generally slower download speeds compared to wired infrastructure and are prone to weather related outages. Wireless 4G LTE technology is widely available throughout the State of Georgia and is used by smartphones and tablets to download content reliably, although speed is determined by proximity to a communications tower and the speed at which the tower is capable. Appling County has a reported 4G LTE coverage area over the entire county. This avenue of service is generally sufficient for a homeowner or cell service subscriber; however, according to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission's Digital Economy Plan in 2015, service reliability can be an issue with this technology.

An industry desiring an improved communications network will likely seek a fixed connection service provider and will need at minimum 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. According to data provided by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the FCC, the infrastructure for broadband services is in portions of Appling County, the fixed broadband technology reaches 45% of the population and 5,083 present day locations within the county (see Figure 1). Increased competition among providers may also decrease the cost charged to the consumer. According to FCC data, three fixed network providers operate within Appling County; these providers include Alma Telecom (Fiber), ViaSat and HughesNet (Fixed Wireless). Satilla EMC partnered with Conexon Connect began a "building fiber-to-home network project" in 2022. Once complete, this project will give every home and business in Appling County access to fiber network. Wireless 4G LTE in the county meets minimum speeds of wireless broadband, but it is inadequate for industry seeking to locate in the county. The need for broadband service competition in Appling County is critical as it is determined to have limited-service providers. Satilla EMC and Conexon Connect are expected to be complete with their project in 4-5 years. Rural Appling County residents are expected to have access to fiber network beginning mid- 2022. Appling County and the City of Baxley desire to be fully served by broadband capability through broadband deployment, with service areas reaching not only the minimum speeds to be considered "Broadband Service", but an exceptional service offering speeds equal to 1 gigabit per second (Gbps) (1 Gbps = 1,000 Mbps).



**Broadband Availability within Appling County**

Source: Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative 2022; <https://broadband.georgia.gov/maps/gbdi-unserved-county>

The Appling County community has chosen a multi-faceted approach and strategy to improve the availability of broadband and broadband deployment. The following items are actions steps the community will take to increase economic, educational, and social opportunities for citizens and businesses through the deployment of universal broadband and other communications technologies.

1. Develop and maintain an inventory of Community Anchor Institutions (schools, library, medical and healthcare providers, public safety entities, and higher education facilities) within the community to determine areas of greatest broadband need.
2. Develop or otherwise enact a model ordinance which determines a contact person for any broadband projects within the community, outlines a streamlined permit process for broadband projects, keeps broadband project permit fees reasonable, and ensures equal treatment for applicants applying for use of jurisdictional rights-of-way.
3. Apply to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for certification as a “Broadband Ready Community” or similar certification by the State of Georgia.
4. Partner with state agencies (Georgia Technology Authority, Department of Community Affairs, and Department of Economic Development) and area local governments to promote broadband deployment in the community, region, and state.
5. Identify broadband expansion projects eligible for OneGeorgia Authority funding and/or other state and federal grant or loan opportunities.

# Economic Development



Economic prosperity is a key to community improvement. A community's comprehensive plan seeks at its core to make the community a better place to live, work, and recreate. To improve quality of life, there is a need for income and an increased tax base to help enhance the ability to afford needed and desired improvements, and afford better housing and a higher standard of living. Commerce and economic development have a major influence on overall population growth and development. The relationship is quite evident in Appling County and has been throughout its history. The Altamaha River and the forested lands of Appling provided avenues of exploration and access to life sustaining wildlife populations both to Native Americans and European explorers long before the county's formal establishment. The area's settlement in the early 1800s related to Indian treaties and land lotteries for persons seeking new lives, fortunes, and religious expression. The first county development related to waterborne commerce on the Altamaha River, and then to the opening of stage-coach routes and early public roads, and general stores to serve the surrounding countryside.



The completion of the Macon and Brunswick Railroad in the late 1800s led to the establishment and growth of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency. The railroad also opened up markets and fierce competition over the county's abundant yellow pine forests, lumber resources, and agricultural products. Significant economic influence ensued for Baxley, Graham, and Surrency, particularly as service and processing centers for naval stores, turpentine, and area agriculture. The resulting economic influence and prosperity led to more market availability and local development. Similarly, the decline of turpentine and the cutting of the large pine trees, and then the railroads, as highways and the flourishing of larger regional service centers led to local stagnation or decline, particularly in Graham and Surrency. The location of U.S. 1 and U.S. 341 in Baxley served to soften these blows there. The opening of Plant Hatch in the county in the 1970s was a new economic stimulus, as have diversifying industry, Walmart, and the Woody Folsom Auto Group. Economic attributes and transportation continue to impact the Appling County community's future. The county's highways, the active Class I Railroad, and the community's airport have had many positive impacts on Baxley/Appling County. The location of Plant Hatch turned around a long period of decline for Appling



L 1920s Appling Hotel, Baxley R Railway in Baxley

County after WWII until the 1970s. Location, transportation resources, local entrepreneurship, and leadership; agriculture; proximity to Georgia's ports and interstates; abundant and outstanding natural and cultural resources; the continuing civic consciousness and caring of the community; the continuing importance and local attention to education; and the overall family-friendly quality of life within the county remain key factors and attractors in future growth and development. Because of its economic history and successes, its progressive leadership, its cooperative spirit, its significant cultural and natural resources, and its overall quality of life, Appling will continue to be a thriving and welcoming hometown. As a result, the community continues to enjoy slow, but steady growth and development.

Appling County is a rural community located in the heart of southeast Georgia with a current population of almost 20,000 residents. Its geographic location, on the south bank of Georgia's impressive Altamaha River, along U.S. highways U.S. 1 and U.S. 341, and less than an hour away from Georgia's coast and Interstate highways I-16 and I-95, offers much for businesses and residents alike. The community is nestled in an appealing and soothing bucolic landscape of family farms and seemingly never-ending green forests of tall Southern pines. Municipalities include Baxley, the county seat, with about 5,000 residents, and the much smaller municipalities of Graham and Surrency, all located along U.S. Highway 341. Baxley is actually located at the crossroads of U.S. 1 and U.S. 341. Both of these highways are now four-laned through the county, and are part of Georgia's designated developmental highway system, the Governor's Road Improvement Program. Other important highways traversing the county include Georgia Highway 15, also known as Traditions Highway and a designated developmental highway as well, and Georgia Highway 121, also known as the historic Woodpecker Trail.



**L** Southeastern Gin & Peanut    **R** U.S. 1 Bridge over the Altamaha River

Appling County remains an agrarian-based economy but one with much diversification in a number of small businesses, separate industries, and a rapidly expanding retail and service sector. The community's fields and forests remain a vital and vibrant part of community life through functioning farms and related industries such as dairies, blueberry producers, a regional plant nursery, pine straw concerns, a Canadian-owned sawmill, and a wood fuel pellet plant, amongst others. The Altamaha River is now a world class and widely recognized natural paradise, but once was the heart of the local economy. The community's countryside now reflects endless rows of planted pines which provide both mesmerizing color and dimension to an evergreen landscape as well as much economic contribution. These same pine trees were the source of much of the county's economic influence and rapid growth in the late 1800s. They led to Appling County being the center of Georgia's naval stores/turpentine industry, and to Graham and Surrency's heyday, including Surrency being the "Crosstie

Capital of the World." The community's bucolic and appealing landscapes and world class natural resources are worthy of national park or greater status. These resources not only offer economic outlets and potential, but also offer solace, comfort, and appeal, as well as outdoor fun and adventure for the human psyche.

After WWII, the local economy lost ground to many factors, including mechanization, growth of larger and metro retail centers, and greater influence of the automobile. As a result, Appling County suffered slow, but gradual decline in population and an economic wane. The location of Plant Hatch, the first Georgia nuclear power plant, along the Altamaha River in the 1970s turned these trends around. The four-laned construction of U.S. 1, and then U.S. 341, has Accelerated this turnaround. The growth trend has been supported by a diversifying economy known for many small companies and not reliance on a single large concern. The opening of a Walmart Supercenter in the 2000s, and now the development of an automotive dealership megastore by local entrepreneur Woody Folsom in the 2010s has served to solidify and magnify these positive economic influences. This has also led to further expansion of the retail/service sectors, particularly the location of new restaurants.



**L** Plant Hatch **R** County Farm Plant Company

During all of this expansion, Appling County has maintained a well-deserved reputation for cooperative and collaborative leadership and a caring, involved populace which makes for a true hometown treasure. The community is full of welcoming, family-friendly people, activities, and authentic Southern charm and hospitality. These attitudes and atmosphere keep the community moving forward to modernize facilities, and welcome and support facility and service improvements, business, and both visitors and new residents. This down-home authenticity provides even more support and appeal for continued growth and development and progress in all its aspects. There are resulting award winning schools, top-notch facilities,

and cultural outlets, among many avenues for progress. All this serves to further enhance the superlative local quality of life, and to reinforce community attractiveness and appeal for additional growth and development.

As a result, the Appling County community enjoys a functioning balance and a family-oriented high quality of life as well as continuing economic success. The community's hometown atmosphere, progressiveness, and economic appeal and success are evident. After rapid population growth and economic influence from 1870 to 1960 associated with the railroad development, then a short period of decline from 1900-1920 and a short growth spurt from 1920-1940, there was a period of slow decline from WWII to 1970. Since the 1970s (and the opening of Plant Hatch), the county has realized relatively steady growth, although this growth in many ways has slowed slightly here in the 2010s. The community does appear to be nicely recovering from the 2008 Great Recession. Location, transportation, natural and cultural resources, and community leadership and hometown appeal are key to this growth as they have been since the community's inception, although the specific avenues have changed with the times.



*L County Farm Plant Company R Lake Mayers Picnic Area*

Since the previous plan update, Appling has progressed from Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 to Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 2, which reveals that Appling County has more attractive assets for growth and is much better off, in many respects, than a number of surrounding regional counties. The updated placement from Tier 1 to Tier 2 means that Appling County is now designated among the seventy-second through one hundred sixth least developed counties instead of the bottom 40% of Georgia counties in consideration of factors including unemployment rate, per capita income, and percentage of residents below the poverty level. Tier 2 status allows a business creating new jobs to claim Georgia's job creation tax credit of \$2,500 per job created once 10 new jobs have been created.

There are certainly continuing needs for Appling County's economic development. The median household income is \$37,924, in the county. Nearly one-fourth of Appling County citizens are in poverty 23.4%, compared to only 14.3% in Georgia as a whole. This high poverty has persisted for a number of decades. There are needs for more jobs, and higher paying jobs. Unemployment in the county was 6.1% in 2020, compared to 3.8% in the state, and this is slightly above the Appling Area average of 6.1%. Job skills of local residents are also a concern; about 23% of local residents are without a high school diploma compared to 12% statewide.

Transfer payments represent almost 29% of total personal income compared to about 18% statewide. On a more positive note, there is more home ownership in the county 74.8% than Georgia 64%, and housing costs are cheaper within the county. The median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2016-2020, was \$87,100 in Appling County as compared to \$190,200 in Georgia, and median gross rents, 2016-2020, were \$571 in the County as compared to \$1,042 in Georgia. Compared to the rest of the country, Appling County's cost of living is 18.1% lower than the U.S. average.



*L Moody Forest Natural Area R Graham Walking Track*

There are other opportunities and cause for optimism for future economic development in Appling County beyond housing and cost of living advantages. Employment within the county is concentrated within the government, manufacturing, retail trade/services, and agriculture sectors, and there is relative employment stability, with advances in 2016. There remain many unrealized opportunities related to the abundant fields and forests and outstanding natural resources of the county, as well as its location. The cost of living in Appling County is relatively very low, and the crime rate is low making it even more attractive as a place to live for families and new residents and retirees, especially given the appealing quality of life. Continuing population growth is anecdotal evidence that the outstanding quality of life, local culture, outdoor fun, and community location are contributing to attraction success. The county's location, its pastoral landscapes punctuated by world class natural and cultural re-

sources, the abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, the low cost of living, the wonderful family-friendly hometown atmosphere, and the progressive and collaborative community spirit and leadership present locally provides even more opportunity for success. The Appling County community has chosen a multi-faceted approach and strategy to improve its economic status and further economic development in the county. The following goals and objectives were chosen to address identified economic development issues in Appling County.

### **Address Low Educational Levels/Improve Jobs Skills**

Appling County has a long history of educational leadership, and will continue to support its outstanding school system, its Coastal Pines Technical College campus, and regional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs. It will develop public/private partnerships through its Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, the technical college, and continuing inter-governmental cooperation.

### **Support/Enhance/Maintain Viability of Agriculture/Forestry Uses**

The community will support efforts to create additional markets, explore alternative crops, and seek value-added businesses which keep such uses viable and profitable. The marketing and development of agri-tourism and nature-based tourism are other means. The support of the new Farmers' Market, existing agricultural operations and outlets, the development of the new Agricultural Center, and others are tremendous assets and opportunities.



*L Moody Forest Natural Area R Farmer's Market, Baxley*

### **Address/Improve Infrastructure/Facilities**

The Appling County community will jointly work to solve any infrastructure and facility deficiencies or needs, including highway needs, and otherwise address water/sewer, drainage and other needs, particularly for fire protection. The new Health Department, Senior Center, Farmers' Market, Agricultural Center, and planned recreation improvements are all evidence that the community is committed to this policy. They will also work with the Department of Transportation on implementing transportation plans that facilitate travel and benefits commerce.

### **Nurture Existing Businesses/Entrepreneurs/Industries**

This ongoing effort has been critical to past successes and will continue with passion. The Appling County community will work through its Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce, and in cooperation with Coastal Pines Technical College and state agencies, to meet local needs and encourage expansions and new local business development. Special efforts will be made for agricultural/forest interests. The Woody Folsom Automotive Group development and Holdings LLC is an excellent example of recent success, and has stimulated other local economic development. Appling County will establish a schedule of public sector-private sector meetings to determine and update industry and business needs on a regular basis and expand and enhance Baxley-Appling Chamber of Commerce/IDA programs and offerings.

### **Attract New Businesses/Jobs**

The Appling County community, through its Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and intergovernmental cooperation, will seek compatible business and industrial development. The community will participate in state designation programs, and will cooperate in providing appropriate funds in making full-time economic development efforts more efficient and effective. State tax credits and local tax incentives for job creation will be marketed. The GRAD certification of local industrial parks is another important and valuable tool in community marketing. Further enhancing existing industrial sites and developing the new rail served industrial park east of Baxley will assist. The U.S. Highway 1/341 crossroads location and the rail and airport facilities are major assets and calling cards. The location, family-friendly hometown atmosphere, many natural and cultural amenities, and overall high quality of life will attract more than people. The success of such efforts have born witness in recent retail/service expansions.

### **Develop/Enhance Tourism**

Appling County's extraordinary natural and heritage resources, outdoor amenities and splendor, starring the Altamaha River, Moody Forest Natural Area, Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area, Woodpecker Trail, and Traditions Highway; unique existing and potential festivals and events such as Baxley's Winter Wounder Land and Surrency Day; its location along important highways; as well as its farms and scenic countryside offer much more potential to increase visitors. The establishment of Altamaha River tours, Appling Farmer's Market, the Agriculture Center, the addition of trails and recreational rental availability will be sought to further highlight the area's natural resources and promote recreational tourism.

### **Improve Transportation Access/Quality/Location Advantage**

The Regional T-SPLOST, which will result in many needed local resurfacings and other road improvements, will enhance the community as a place to live and work. It may open up other opportunities for job creation, as well. The U.S. 1 Bridge and planned four-laning of U.S. 1 in Toombs County has added much benefit to the county's transportation infrastructure. These and other improvements could enhance local travel and make business markets more

accessible. They will also make it more attractive to live in Appling County but work elsewhere. Promotion of trails and bicycling and other nature-based or heritage tourism would also help quality of life and economic development. The expansion of Georgia's ports will make the county location even more attractive, especially given the railroad availability. The local airport and its continued improvement is also important. They must take advantage of the centralized location for fostering development. Development of greater airport capacity for easier access to the county. These benefits include the proximity to Ports/Highway 1/ Highway 341. County needs preparation for infrastructure for growth and expansion through transportation planning and the construction of specific buildings.

### **Revitalize Downtown**

The historic fabric and available buildings in Baxley allow for much opportunity. Their historic nature allows for development incentives, preservation of unique character, and enhanced quality of life. Community projects in historic structures create civic pride and community cooperation. They also can stimulate private investment. Investing in downtown structures will promote, support, incentivize, and nurture downtown activity and business development. Establishing downtown entertainment options such as skating, movies, arcades, bowling, bars, etc. will aid in revitalizing the business and traffic.



*Downtown Baxley*



### **Develop/Improve Local Industrial Parks/Sites**

The community has a number of available industrial parks, sites, and buildings to market. The existing industrial parks need further improvement, and the new rail-served park east of Baxley and the Oglethorpe Power site await development. There is further need to continue and build on recent successful efforts in industrial expansion and location. County will also work on developing a new 341 rail park.



### **Stormwater Infrastructure and Flood Plain Management**

Appling County and the municipalities within will continue efforts to protect and conserve natural resources while preventing the consequences of natural hazard events by and through developing a county-wide local Flood Plain Management control ordinance, conservation of the Altamaha River Corridor, adopting and enforcing the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands and groundwater recharge areas, and adopting a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance. The City of Baxley has adopted a Flood Management control ordinance and will continue to enforce the directive set in place by said ordinance.



*L Appling County Library Ribbon Cutting R Extreme sports event in Appling County*

### **Promote Quality of Life/Civic and Community Pride/Location**

Appling County has additional opportunities to promote its small town and rural character, hometown atmosphere, and overall quality of life through its Chamber and other means. The welcoming, family-centric hometown atmosphere; low crime rate; low cost of living; the world-class natural areas; the local charm and history; the heritage center, and other cultural outlets; the many, active churches and civic clubs; the general outdoor fun; and the landscape and outdoor amenities are all easy selling cards. The overall county location and easy access to larger urban areas further contribute and facilitate promotion of the county as an excellent place to live, visit, or do business. Expanding and enhancing the opportunities and leisure family activities within the community will attract and retain younger generations and families. These will include recreation, local events, and afterschool activities. Incentivizing and supporting business that offer amenities will attract young families as well as affordable housing options for seniors, students and middle to low-income families.

### **Build and Establish a Strong Workforce**

Promoting and supporting local business will be taken care of by Appling County performing a few tasks. Creating a business incubator model to start out with for support of new business. Collaborating with industry, local high schools, technical schools, and colleges to recruit

and train a future workforce. Following this, developing apprenticeship and shadowing programs to train for local industry. Encouragement to local business to offer delivery services to compete with global retail delivery. They will incorporate and promote youth leadership programs and after school programs and create career-development workshops, classes, and support with resume drafting and professional development skills. Establish worker support programs that assist in issues with workers transport and childcare. Strengthening a workforce would also involve incentivizing and promoting the establishment of childcare centers. A new career academy to be opened in 2022, created in partnership with Coastal Pines Technical College and area high schools, will enhance pursuits in training local youth as well as building and retaining a local workforce.



*L Appling County Court House R Caroline Miller House*

### **Enhance Intergovernmental Cooperation**

Community efforts working together both within the county, and through neighbors, the region, and state agencies can only facilitate success and scope of effort. This will build on, and take advantage of, the strong tradition of local cooperation and adaptive and progressive leadership. Continue to support and enhance local leadership groups, including Appling Leads, Junior Statesman, Natural and Cultural Resources, Housing, Land Use, Community Facilities and Services, and Intergovernmental Cooperation. An active chamber of commerce and many civic groups can only make public/private partnerships easier to achieve and more successful. Active participation in regional economic, tourism, and natural resource partnerships offers much potential and benefit. Broadband service improvements, in particular, lend themselves to public/private partnership efforts.

### **Address Growth Management/Rural Character Preservation**

A well-planned community and one which appears neat, orderly, and attractive supports and encourages additional investment. The community has developed limited individual land use regulations to address specific issues and nuisances, but stronger, general, and coordinated efforts and joint code enforcement are needed, beyond those in Baxley. The community can also utilize infrastructure location and civic organizations and programs to assist.

### **Enhance Economic Development Marketing**

Appling County has long been noted for its progressive local leadership and community cooperation and collaboration. Reenergized efforts supported by the local governments, local chamber, and local civic groups can accomplish much to help the community cooperate and advance in economic development. Participation in regional and state partnerships and utilizing state designation programs can help. State job tax credits and recently developed local tax incentives can be highlighted.



*L Cotton Field Sunrise R Balloon Glow*

### **Continue Support of Adult/Youth Leadership Programs**

Progressive, cooperative leadership with a strong civic consciousness and concern for the greater good has long been a hallmark of Appling County. There is always a need to nurture new leadership and continue the tradition as times does not stop for anyone. The Appling Leads program and the Junior Statesman youth program need to be further nurtured and improved.

### **Attract New Residents/Retirees**

Appling County has much to offer both business and residents alike from location to built and natural environment, to family-friendly hometown atmosphere, low cost of living, an extraordinary quality of life and much opportunity. To grow the economy and tax base which allows better incomes and the ability to afford improved services, there is a need for more people. Marketing the community and allowing others to realize how truly unique and special the community is can help accomplish this.

### **Broadband Implementation**

The goal is to establish and maintain access to high-speed internet throughout the county and cities.

# Land Use



The landscape and the way land is used is often visible and tangible evidence of planning or the lack thereof. It reveals the pattern of growth and development, and how we relate to the natural environment. It often defines what we view as the character of our community, and is a major component in our determination of quality of life. As science evolves, we realize with greater certainty that the way our land is used and managed has definite implications for air and water quality, and the diversity and health of our ecosystems.

The awareness of the impacts and consequences of the way land is used illustrate the need for wise use of our finite supply of land, and the necessity of sound decisions in its development or protection. The need for sustainable growth and development, which accommodates our development needs while maintaining balance and control, and limiting impacts on the natural and built environment, is recognized in the state quality community objectives.

Sound, quality growth and development results from effective and balanced land use planning that anticipates, prepares, and exercises control over development decisions. It guides and directs growth and development into a desirable and efficient pattern of land use to achieve compatibilities in use, proper return and effective use of public investments in infrastructure and services, and minimal impacts to environmentally or aesthetically important natural and cultural resources.

The lack of planning, on the other hand, can result in uncontrolled and unmanaged growth which can wreak havoc on community desires and plans, negatively impact property values, degrade the environment and landscape, and foster other detrimental effects or burdens in a short period of time. It can destroy important natural functions and treasured views or other parts of the landscape. It can cause new public tax or service burdens while lowering return or lessening use of public infrastructure already paid for or invested in. Public desires or future plans or options can be precluded or prevented by such uncontrolled growth, while other ill-advised consequences or burdens upon the general public can result.



*L Altamaha River R Solar Farm Construction Site, Balxey*

A community's land use planning efforts are an attempt to provide a policy guide and framework or blueprint for desired growth and development. Sound planning provides for managed growth and development, allowing for necessary land use and development, but guiding it in such a manner that balances and protects resources, systems, and other aspects of the landscape important to the community. Such planning tries to lessen, mitigate, or avoid inconsistencies, inefficiencies, or conflicting land use efforts. Existing patterns and trends of land uses, community investment in and location of facilities and services, important natural and cultural constraints, and overriding community desires are considered and accommodated in developing and delineating the desired pattern of growth and development.

Appling County and its municipalities are united in their vision and desires for growth. It is a rural county with abundant and exceptional natural and cultural resources, great pastoral and natural beauty, enviable location, excellent transportation access, and many assets for growth. The community has a long history of balancing agriculture and industry, preserving and celebrating past heritage while advancing the new and modern, utilizing and conserving natural and cultural resources, and exhibiting community caring and cooperative leadership for the general good. For these reasons, particularly with the impetus of Plant Hatch, the four-laning of U.S. 1 and U.S. 341, and the diversifying economy and growing retail/service outlets, the community has enjoyed and continues to enjoy steady growth somewhat unusual in its consistency for a rural area since 1970. The community's vision for its future growth and development is one that maintains and builds upon this growth while protecting the existing character and atmosphere. This growth would protect and utilize the community's exceptional natural and cultural resources and scenic landscapes, while continuing to grow and develop in a manner conducive and compatible with such beauty, family fun, outdoor adventure, community caring, and overall high quality of life. Land uses would



*Altamaha River*

continue to look similar to those existing, and the small-town, family-friendly rural character and atmosphere would be maintained. Infrastructure and amenities would be expanded and developed to support and attract both population and business growth, primarily in or adjacent to the existing municipalities and developed areas. Agricultural and forestry uses would be kept viable and remain the principal land uses of the county. The superlative natural and cultural resources would be protected and utilized for increased tourism and recreational uses. These rural open landscapes would be an integral component of the economy of the county, and the preservation of rural character supportive of open space and natural and

cultural resource protection. Commercial and industrial growth would be compatible and supportive of continued agricultural/forestry uses, and would maintain the high quality of life and small-town, rural character while providing additional jobs and economic opportunity. All of this would be components of a concerted strategy to attract new residents, retirees, and economic development supportive and complementary to existing uses and character which further adds to the quality of life.

While technically only the City of Baxley is required, because of its zoning ordinance, to have a Land Use element in its comprehensive plan under the current DCA planning standards, all Appling County local governments have chosen to include the element in this joint comprehensive plan. Existing land use maps visually convey to all concerned the current landscape and correlation of extant development. Future land use maps illustrate to all concerned the community's vision and desires for additional growth and development. Such depictions also lend credence and supporting background information important to understanding and illustrating official local government policy in designating lands unsuitable for solid waste handling facilities in local solid waste management plans. Land use maps do provide official display of community desires and goals for compatible future growth and development.



*L Water Works Park, Baxley R Baxley City Hall*

The community's land use maps are, however, a general policy guide and framework, not necessarily a rigid or unchangeable picture of future growth and development. Not all growth or developments can be foreseen, and other events could necessitate a change in community vision or desires. The depicted pattern of desired future growth and development displayed on future land use maps is a current statement and reflection of community expectations and desires. It provides a context, framework and background for the public and private sector to utilize to plan, evaluate, shape, guide, and evaluate proposed developments and other decisions affecting the use of the land and community growth and development. The plan provides a context for forethought, examination of impacts and consequences, and mitigation of land use decisions on the community's growth and development and desired future patterns and community vision.

## Existing Land Uses

Existing land use patterns for Appling County and the cities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency are depicted on the following maps. A table depicting the existing distribution of land use acreages is shown below.

Land use categories utilized in the development of this plan and in the land use maps are the standard categories established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and defined in the planning standards as below.

**Residential.** The predominant use of land within the residential category is for single-family and multi-family dwelling units.

**Commercial.** This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities, located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.

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

**Public/Institutional.** This category includes certain state, federal or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc.

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

**Park/Recreation/Conservation.** This category is for land dedicated to active or passive recreational and conservation uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, other wild lands, golf courses, recreation centers or similar uses.

**Agriculture.** This category is for land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or similar rural uses.

**Forestry.** This category is for land dedicated to commercial timber, pulpwood production, or other woodland use.



**Existing Land Use Distribution, Appling County, 2022**  
(Acres)

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent of Total
Agriculture	121,300	37.01
Commercial	1,916	0.58
Forestry	150,084	45.79
Industrial	2,751	0.83
Park/Recreation/Conservation	9,520	2.90
Public/Institutional	1,865	0.56
Residential	32,171	9.81
Transportation/Communications/Utilities	8,085	2.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>327,695</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Geographic Information System, 2022.

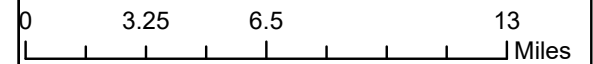
Appling County is a rural community located in the heart of southeast Georgia with a current population nearing 20,000 persons and continuing to grow. The community enjoys many assets for even more growth and development. First, the community enjoys a fortuitous geographic location at the crossroads of two of Georgia’s developmental highways, U.S. 1 and U.S. 341, both now four-laned through the county. These highways afford easy access to Georgia’s ports, its coast, and Georgia’s metropolitan centers. Both I-16 and I-95 are less than an hour’s drive away. Other important highways also serve Appling County, including Georgia Highway 15, also known as Traditions Highway, which is another designated Georgia developmental highway serving much of interior Georgia with connection to Florida and North Carolina. Georgia Highway 121, the historic Woodpecker Trail, also traverses the county and has interstate connection from South Carolina to Florida. Other important transportation assets for the county include the Class I Norfolk Southern Railway. This railroad is the successor to the old Macon and Brunswick Railroad which led to the initial establishment of all three current Appling County municipalities and precipitated much of the late 19th century/early 20th century growth in the county. The Norfolk Southern Railway now provides important economic connection to both Atlanta and the Georgia ports. The community also has a Level II general aviation airport with a 5,500-foot runway, fuel depot, inviting homestyle terminal, and up-to-date modern appurtenances.

Another important asset for Appling County growth is its impressive natural resources. The community is seemingly engulfed in a mesmerizing and beautiful green sea of evergreen tall pines, lush pastures, and verdant agricultural fields. These scenic landscapes, while reassuring and soothing to the soul, remain important economic contributors. Agriculture and forestry are a mainstay of the economy, both directly and through value-added concerns, including a large sawmill and a modern wood fuel pellet plant. There are also local natural resources of extreme ecological, recreational, and tourism importance and potential. The-

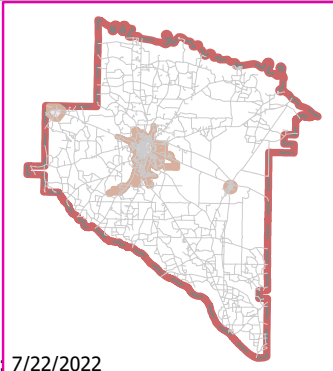
# Appling County Existing Land Use

## Existing Land Use

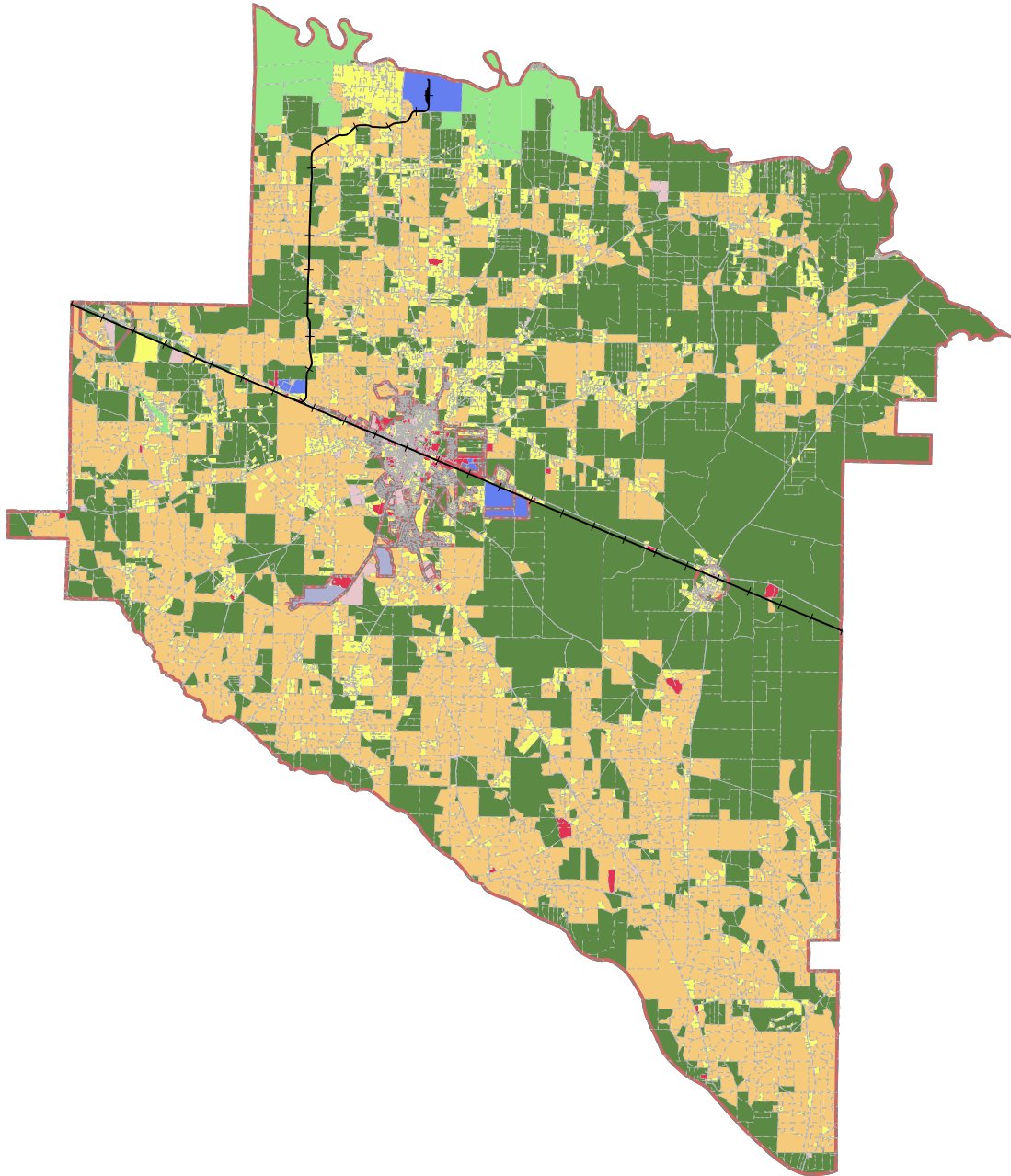
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- County Boundary
- City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads



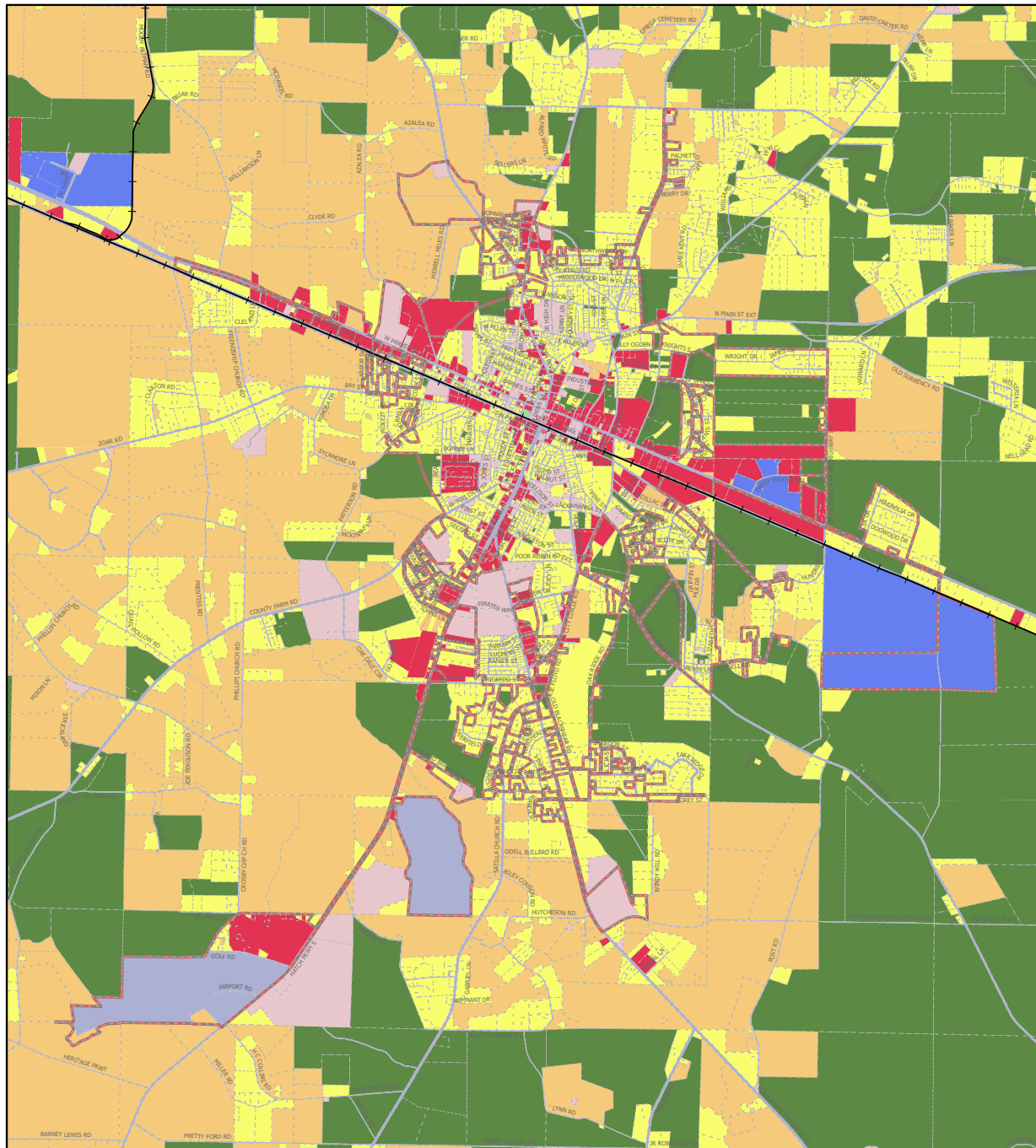
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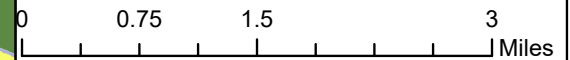


# City of Baxley Existing Land Use

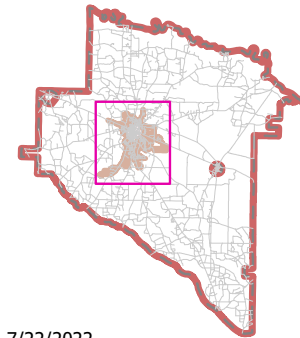


## Existing Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Baxley City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads
- Roads



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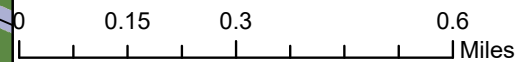


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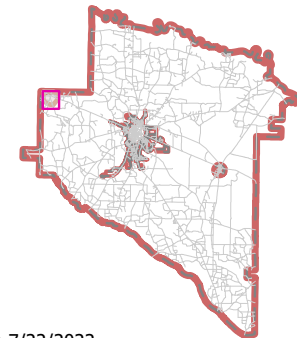
# City of Graham Existing Land Use

## Existing Land Use

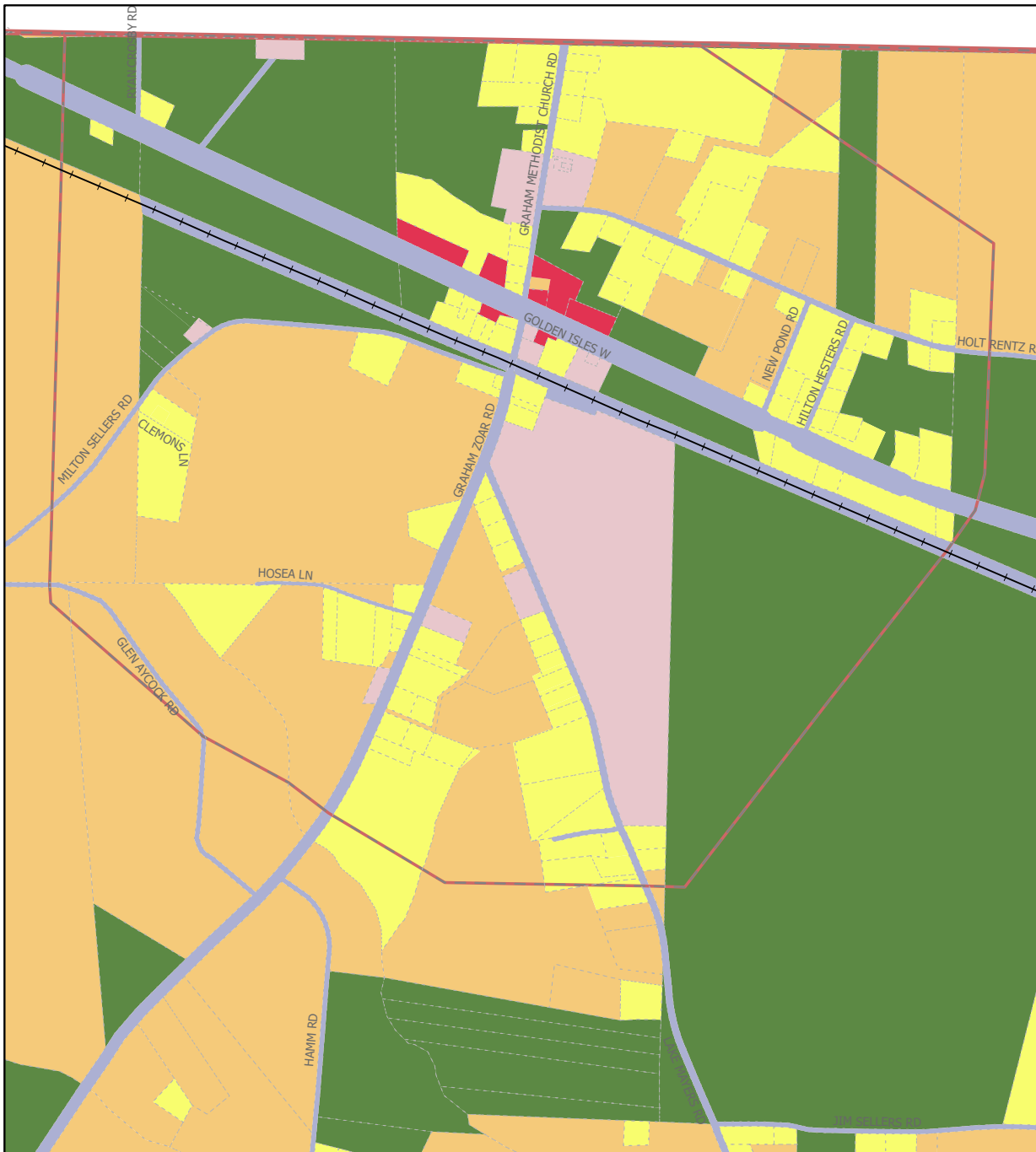
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Graham City Limits
- Rail Roads
- Tax Parcels



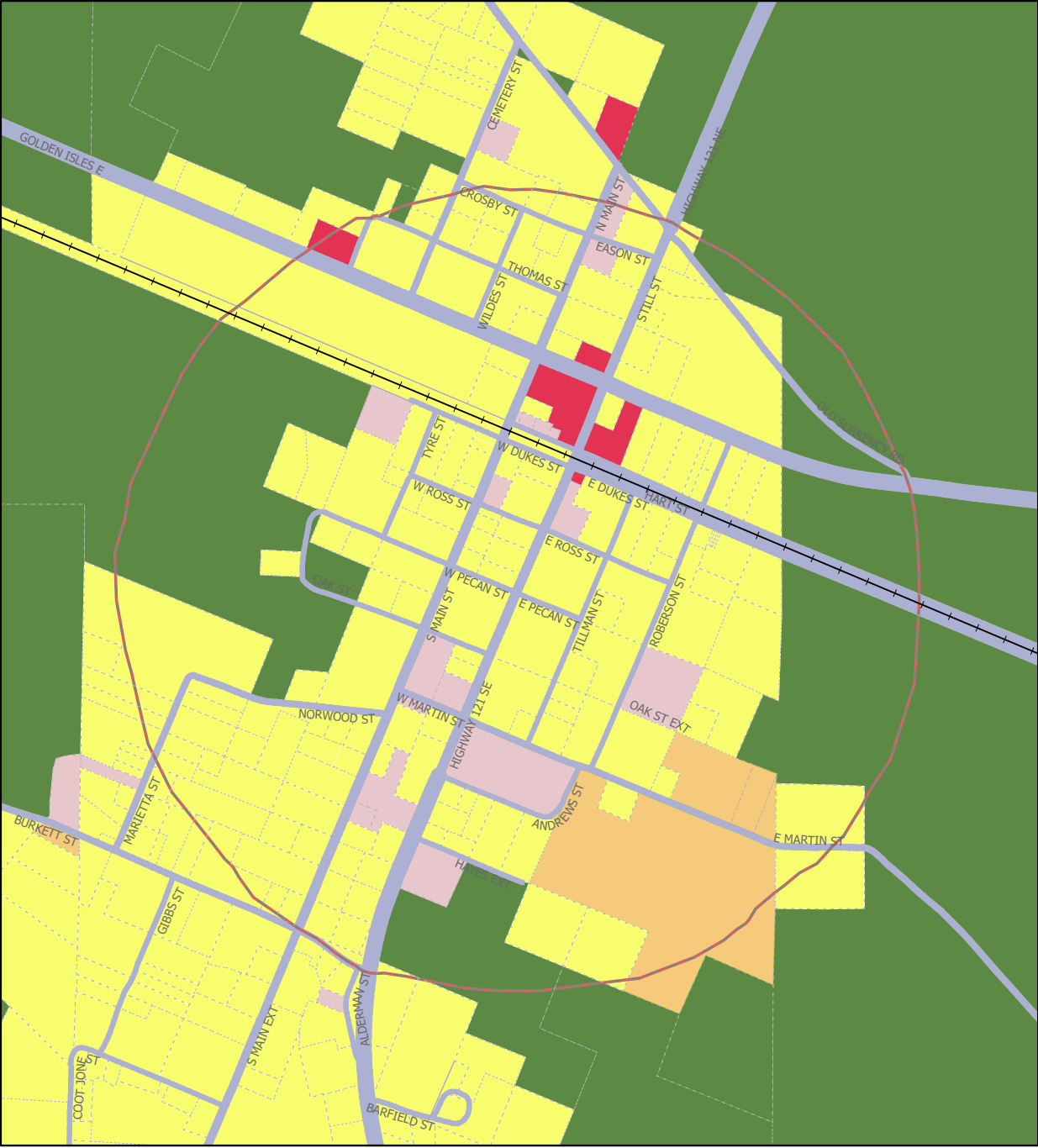
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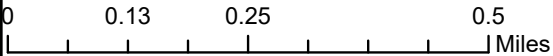


# City of Surrency Existing Land Use

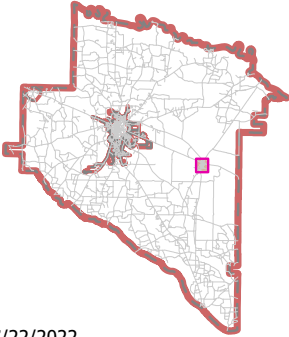


## Existing Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Surrency City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads



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se include the national park- caliber Moody Forest Natural Area with unique old-growth trees and ecosystem, and the Altamaha River with ecosystem and historic importance on a worldwide level. This is not surprising given that the county’s pine trees were a principal component of its early economic development and growth through lumber and naval stores. Appling County was the center of Georgia’s naval stores/turpentine industry, the home of the last U.S. commercial turpentine plant (which operated to the 2000s), and the City of Baxley is still known as “The Turpentine City.”

Other assets for Appling County community growth include its existing industry and economic base. Commerce and industry are steadily growing within the community, particularly along U.S. 341 in Baxley. Relative economic stagnation, and even population decline, were reversed with the location of Plant Hatch, a Georgia Power nuclear power plant in the 1970s. These positive growth influences were strengthened by a diverse group of small business and industries established or located within the county, including a number which were home-grown. The completion of U.S. 341 four-laning, the opening of a Walmart Supercenter in the 2000s, and the development of an auto market megastore in the 2010s by a local entrepreneur (all on U.S. 341) have only solidified and magnified the strong trends of growth.



*Plant Hatch*

One would be remiss if the caring and welcoming family atmosphere and the cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices of both the Appling County leadership and its citizenry were not mentioned as contributing influences on the positive growth which the community enjoys. These selfless attributes strengthen an ingrained community ethos which benefits all, works for the common good, and facilitates a more advantageous quality of life. Appling County is truly a hometown treasure of which others have recognized, and which is an integral part of the community’s statewide reputation. This only further adds to community appeal and development success. Appling County should continue to nurture these many assets, and as a result, positive growth and expanding development will likely be sustained.

These assets and admirable traits have allowed Appling County to continue with remarkably steady growth despite globalization, the mechanization of agriculture, the decline of individual

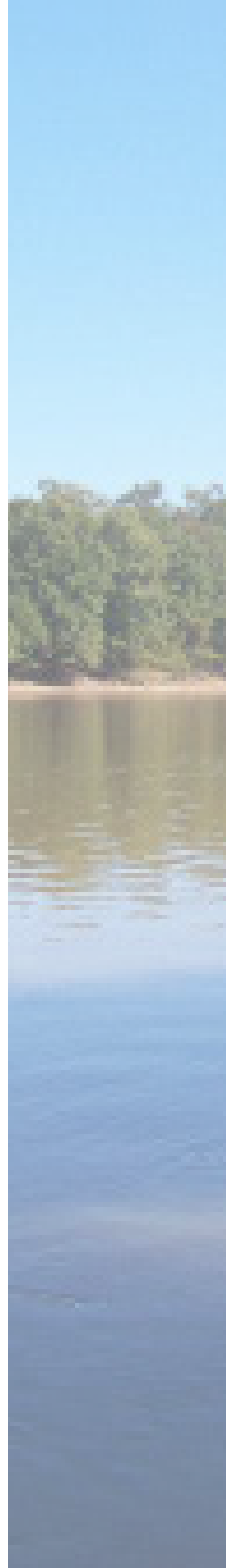
manufacturing concerns, or recessionary periods which have devastated many rural communities. The community exhibits relatively strong growth now, and still has many assets for continued growth and development. These include location, transportation facilities, cooperative and collaborative leadership, undaunted community spirit and caring, and outstanding natural and cultural resources. The community continues to invest in its infrastructure, public facilities, and other amenities to encourage, support, and attract compatible future growth and development.

Similar growth and development trends are expected to continue as a result. There continues to be much potential for additional residential and business growth and more diverse economic development by embracing and augmenting its backdrop of facilitating community resources, impressive heritage, abundant cultural and natural resources, and overall quality of life. The community truly should continue to enjoy success and expanding growth and development by utilizing its many assets to continue to welcome even more people, business, and industry.

Most current growth is concentrated in or near Baxley, including residential, commercial, and industrial. Commercial development has concentrated in Baxley, particularly along U.S. 1, and even moreso along U.S. 341. In just the last few years, areas west of the city along U.S. 341 has seen multiple restaurant's, shopping boutiques, a new meat market, and many other service type businesses. The City of Baxley, the Downtown Development Authority of Baxley, and the Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce are currently pursuing efforts to promote renewed economic development within the City's historic downtown area. Zoning and code enforcement ordinances in Baxley are expected to be updated in conjunction with these efforts within the next five years. The industrial park areas near Baxley have been, and will likely be, the home of most industrial development. There is also the regional Sweetwater Industrial Park in western Appling County along U.S. 341 and the railroad, and the new rail-served industrial park to be developed east of Baxley adjacent to the railroad and near U.S. 341. The Oglethorpe Power site is also located just east of Baxley and adjacent to the new community rail-served industrial park. Graham and Surrency could also see some limited commercial growth. Residential growth within the county has been relatively limited, and not particularly concentrated. It has been scattered single-family housing, predominantly manufactured housing, within existing agricultural/forest uses, but again more generally near or north and west of Baxley off and between U.S. 1 and U.S. 341. This is west towards Graham and north towards the river. There has been only limited growth in Graham and Surrency, although both have land available for development.

These development trends and growth patterns are expected to continue. The county's future land uses will closely resemble existing land uses. Agricultural, forestry, and conservation uses will continue to predominate the landscape, and maintain the outstanding existing small-town and rural character and appealing high quality of life.

Future land use maps for Appling County, Baxley, Graham, and Surrency are included following this description.



## Land Use Goals

Appling County and the municipalities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency seek future growth and development respective of the small-town and rural character, abundant natural and cultural resources and agricultural/forestry/conservation uses, and the existing high quality of life. The community desires balanced growth patterns which promote economic development, but maintain and keep viable existing agricultural, forestry and conservation uses, which sustain its heritage, abundant natural and cultural resources, and which are otherwise compatible and complementary of existing uses and scale of development. The community has chosen the following land use goals to help bring about its desired future and delineated community vision.

### **Address Growth Management/Guide Compatible Development**

A well planned community and one which appears neat, orderly, and attractive supports and encourages additional investment. The community has developed zoning only in Baxley, and otherwise has only limited individual land use regulations to address specific issues and nuisances, but more general and coordinated efforts and joint code enforcement are needed. The community can also utilize infrastructure location; improvement of facilities and services; support of agricultural, forestry, and conservation uses; downtown revitalization; and involvement of its citizenry to assist.

### **Maintain Open Spaces/Agricultural/Forestry Uses/Rural Character/Quality of Life**

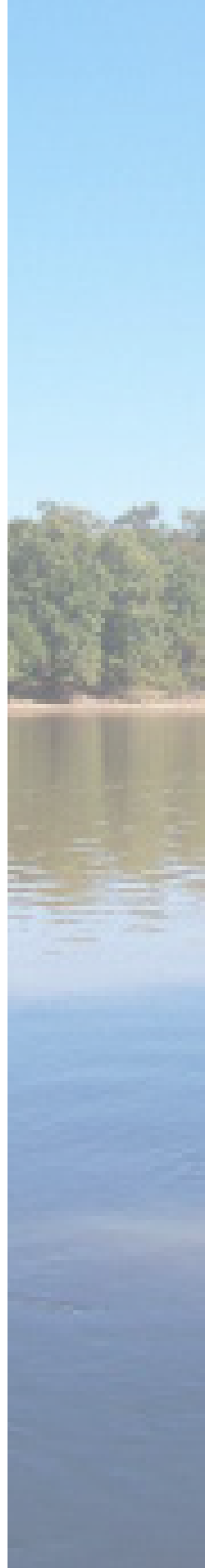
Development of new markets, supporting creation of alternative crops and uses, celebrating the heritage of these uses, providing professional support, and attracting compatible agribusiness or other supportive economic development ventures all can help achieve this. Support and facilitation of existing local outlets, like the Farmers' Market and others, and the Agricultural Center will also help. Developing and supporting outdoor events/facilities/festivals, and encouraging more tourism will provide additional support.

### **Encourage Infill Development**

It only makes sense to utilize lands and buildings where taxpayers and private interests have invested in providing costly infrastructure and construction in the past before extending additional infrastructure or incurring completely new construction costs. There are an abundance of available vacant commercial, industrial and residential structures within the community, as well as areas with readily available infrastructure. Available historic buildings located in downtown Baxley, the smaller municipalities, or elsewhere are avenues for preservation of character and heritage and opportunities for economic and community development utilizing existing served areas. Attractive and relatively low-cost historic homes are a potential attraction for retirees and families alike.

### **Improve Community Appearance/Aesthetics**

Appling County and its municipalities have much intrinsic natural and cultural beauty and Old South and family-friendly charm attractive to residential location and tourism. Landscaping/beautification efforts, general clean-up, and rehabilitation/upgrade of existing structures/areas will serve to accent and highlight this.





### **Seek Compatible Development/Utilization**

Growth supportive, not disruptive through use, scale, or intensity, of the community's existing rural character, small-town atmosphere, extant heritage, abundant natural and cultural resources, and current agricultural/forestry/conservation uses is desired.

### **Utilize Infrastructure to Guide Growth/Development**

It only makes investment sense to utilize infrastructure and areas where the community has already invested tax dollars to the extent possible to realize greater returns and avoid disruption of agriculture/forest or other lands important to the economy or character of the community. If necessary, the extension of new infrastructure and facilities can steer development to areas desired by the community for new growth to occur.

### **Protection of Local Property Values/Existing Open Space Land Uses**

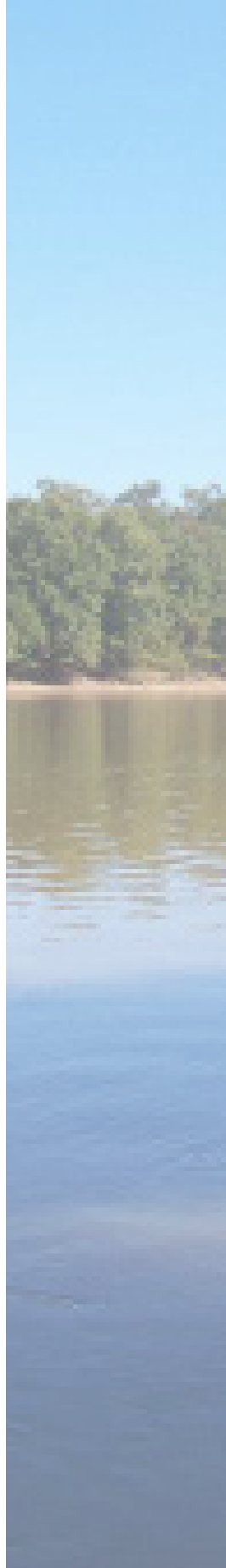
The location of non-compatible land uses out of character and scale to existing uses can become uncontrollable cancers which destroy the desired character and change the surrounding current land use by making them economically infeasible, impossible to continue, or degrading their resale value. Guiding growth and protecting and encouraging the viability of existing uses can mitigate such impacts. The rural character and small town atmosphere is a critical community feature to retain and maintain.

### **Protect Altamaha River Corridor**

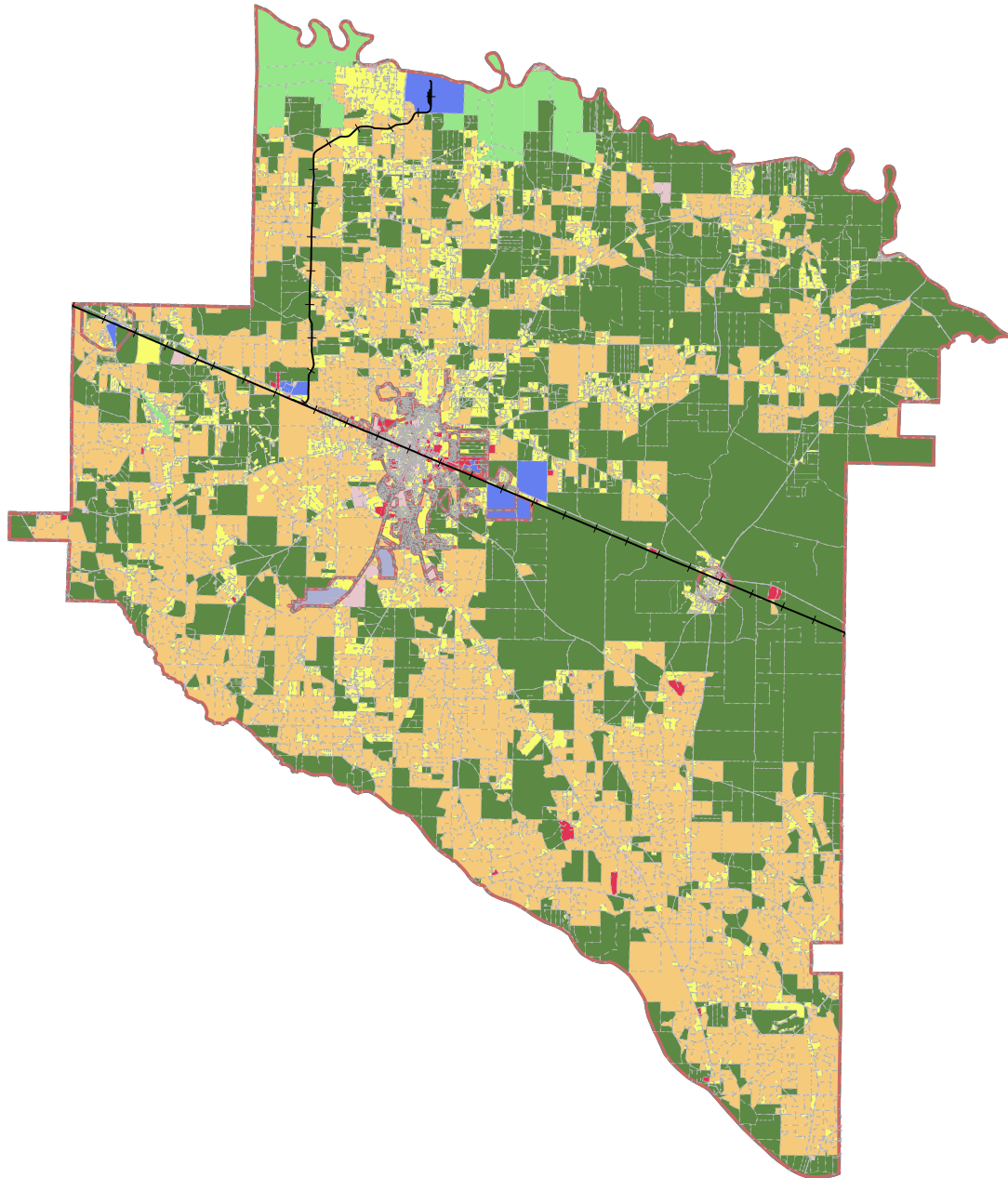
The community is known for the Altamaha River and its access, the Moody Forest Natural Area/WMA, and the Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area, and other outdoor splendor and adventure. All are in the Altamaha River Corridor. Protection of this corridor from degradation of inappropriate development is to everyone's advantage. Pristine natural and scenic beauty is a cornerstone advantage for quality of life and economic development within the county. Increased utilization and improved access for tourism and recreation are compatible uses when properly designed and managed.

### **Encourage Tourism**

Appling County has a rich history, much of it related to its superlative natural and cultural resources and its pastoral landscapes. Certainly, the Altamaha River and Moody Forest are world-class assets with much unrealized potential for increased recreation and tourism within the county. There is extensive history and heritage related to naval stores and agriculture which begs for attention and promotion. In addition to utilization as an economic development venue, such tourism can build larger audiences and citizen support for further protection and enhancements of these special resources themselves. Agritourism, Georgia Grown Trail 1, Peaches to the Beaches Annual Yard Sale, County Farms, Appling County Agricultural Center, Carter's Bite Landing, and community events such as Smoketember Fest, also hold much promise for increased visitors. Trail and bicycle path development connecting resources/venues within the county, and on a regional basis, also has much potential. The built environment and its historic structures such as the Caroline Miller house, the historic bank and school of Surrency, and the Heritage Center, offer much potential for more tourism.

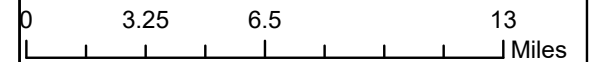


# Appling County Future Land Use

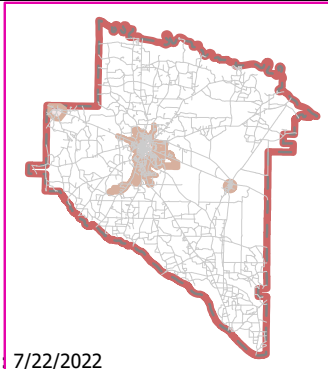


## Future Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- County Boundary
- City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads



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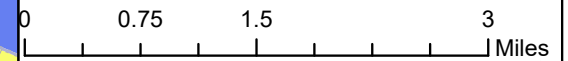


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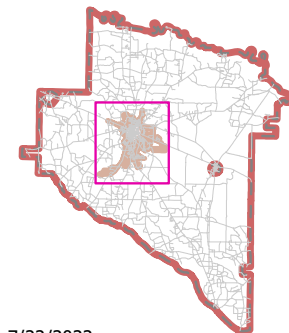
# City of Baxley Future Land Use

## Future Land Use

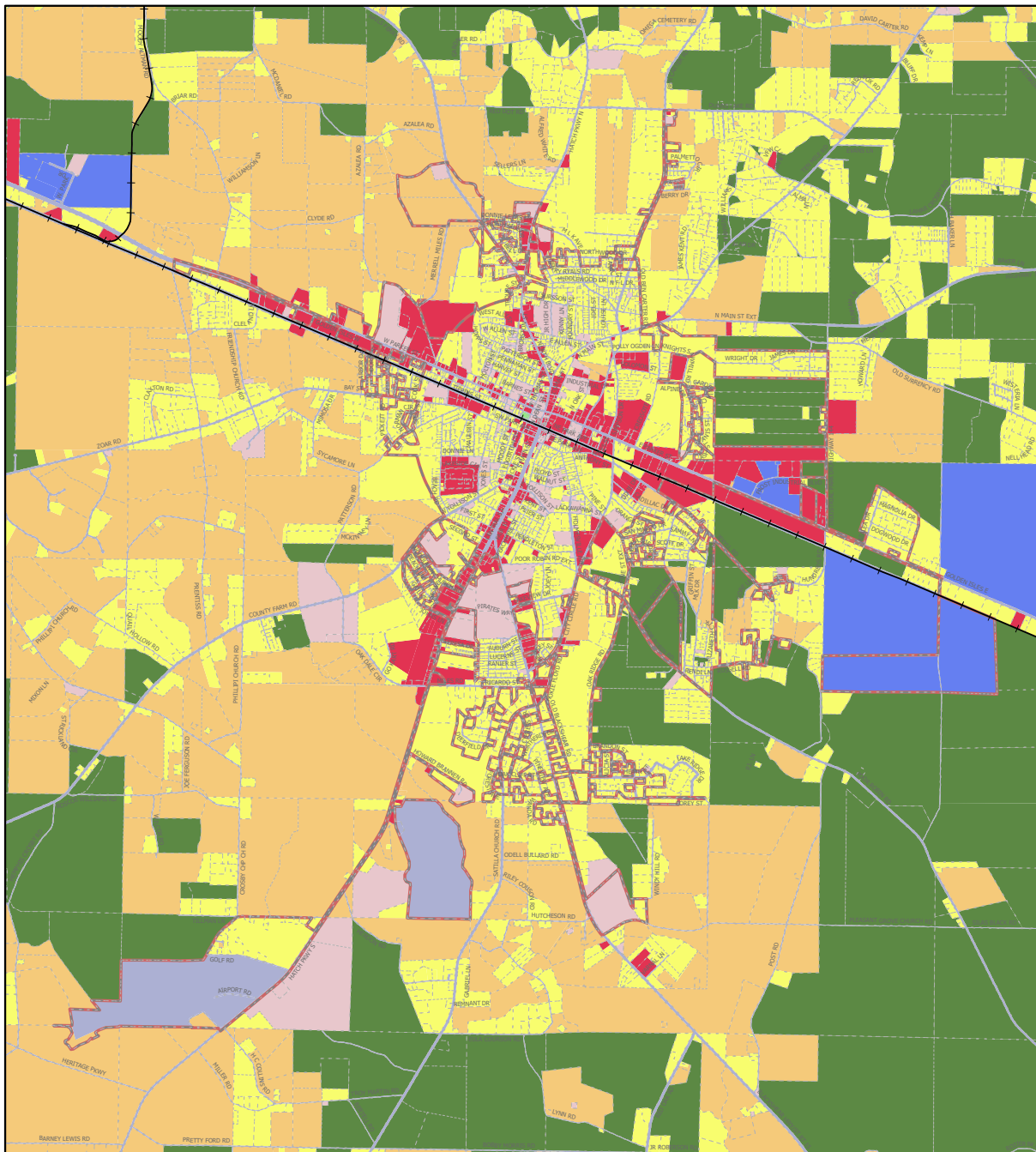
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Baxley City Limits
- Rail Roads
- Tax Parcels



"The data sets represented here-in are presented to the user with the understanding that, because of the nature of some GIS datasets, there is no guarantee of completeness or accuracy. Conclusions drawn from, or actions taken on the basis of this data are the sole responsibility of the user."



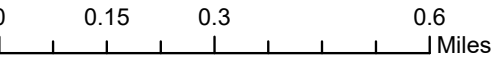
Date Saved: 7/22/2022  
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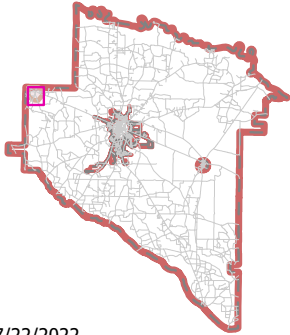
# City of Graham Future Land Use

## Future Land Use

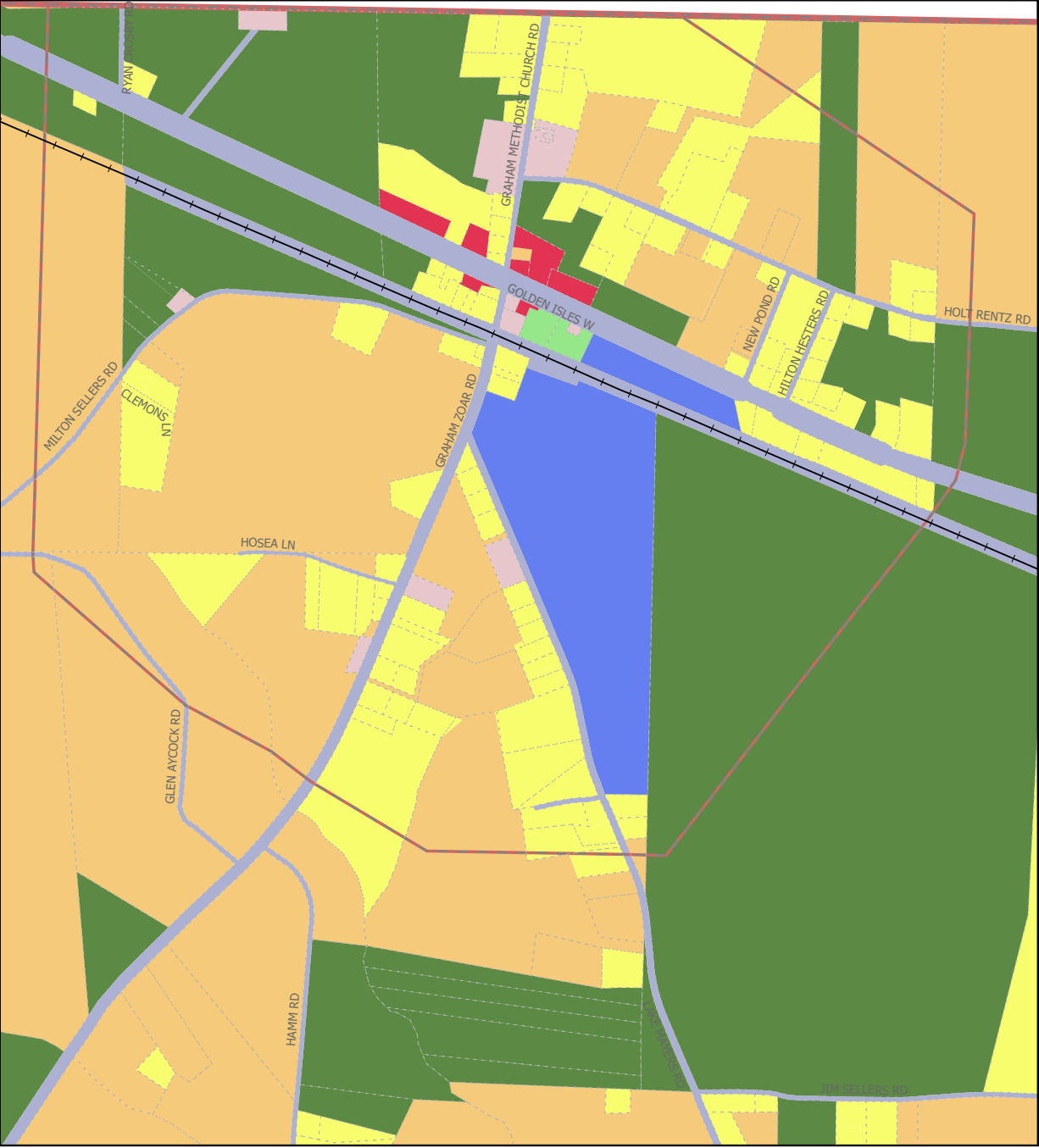
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Graham City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads



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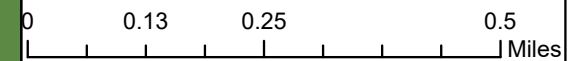
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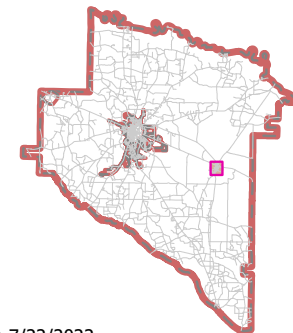
# City of Surrency Future Land Use

## Future Land Use

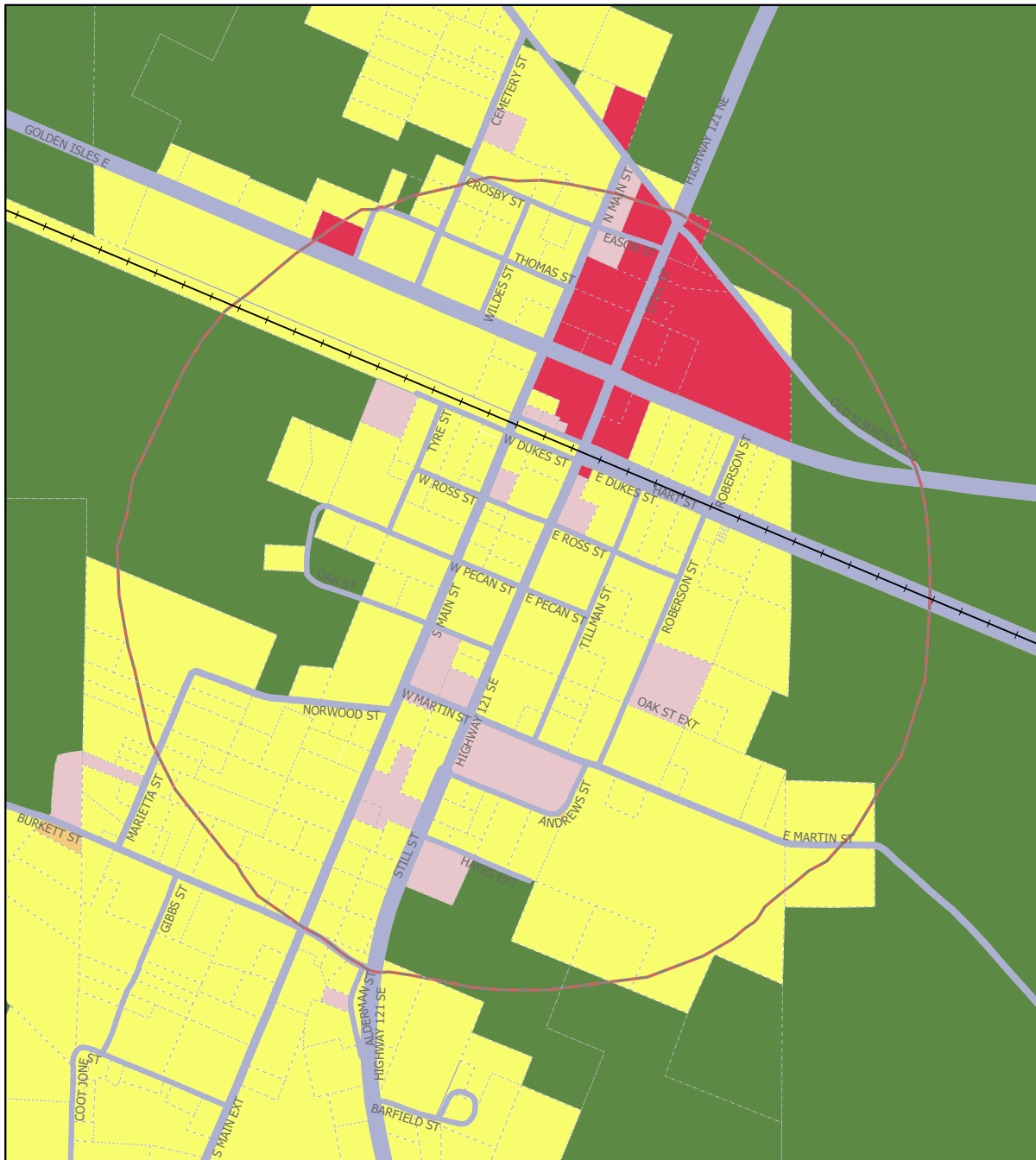
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Roads
- Surrency City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads



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# Community Work Programs



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The Community Work Program Element is the chosen implementation strategy which the community has identified to begin its path toward improvement and its desired future growth and development. These are the immediate steps the community has chosen to address identified community issues, needs, and opportunities, and begin the journey to achieve the desired community vision.

This plan element answers the questions, **“How are we, as a community, going to get where we desire, given where we are?”** The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes a separate community work program for each local government involved, as well as a report of accomplishments on their previous work program. The Long Term Policies identified under the Community Goals element identifies implementation activities and ideals which may take longer than five years, or because of circumstances involved, including finances, are not envisioned to begin in the near future.

# Appling County

## Community Work Programs

Appling County Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program

**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2020	Continue to pursue improvements to the Baxley Airport, including additional instrument approaches, and widening and overlaying the runway.			Y	2027				Clearing the approach path was completed in 2017; PAPI navigation system installed in 2018; widening and overlaying the runway completed in 2020; fuel upgrades applied 2021; A project involving the construction of an 8-Unit T-Hanger Building and three corporate hangers is underway in 2022. This item remains on the CWP as an ongoing action to be completed as funding becomes available.
2020	Pursue funding as appropriate to further develop Falling Rocks Park to help improve access to the Altamaha River for camping and other recreational activities (ex: individual dump stations at camp sites)			Y	2022				Improvements to dock are started; further improvements are in the planning stages now; improvements estimated to be complete in 2022.
2018	Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR’s Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors.					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. County anticipates adoption and enforcement of the DNR’s Part V Environmental Planning Criteria in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.



**Appling County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2022	Pursue the development of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. County anticipates the development and adoption of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2022	Seek to adopt a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. County anticipates adoption and enforcement of a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same
2022	Seek funding to replace traffic congestion in/near Baxley through the construction of a truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means			Y	2027				Action item initiated and is currently in the planning stages. Appling County and City of Baxley are working with GDOT to consider viable options for addressing traffic congestion. Action item estimated to be complete in 2027.
2018	Construct an addition to the Detention Center			Y	2024				Action item to be initiated with upcoming 2024 SPLOST.

**Appling County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2018	Enhancements to pedestrian pathways in and around the City of Baxley and Appling County	Y	2022						This action item has been completed each year in the previous 5 years. This item remains on the CWP as an ongoing effort to be completed on an annual basis during the next 5 years.
2018	Conduct road safety improvements along county roads (signage, widening, striping, etc.)			Y	2027				This action item has been completed each year in the previous 5 years and remains an ongoing action item as a consistent annual pursuit; this item remains on the CWP as an ongoing action to be completed on an annual basis.
2018	Continue countywide road resurfacing			Y	2027				This action item has been completed each year in the previous 5 years and remains an ongoing action item as a consistent annual pursuit; this item remains on the CWP as an ongoing action to be completed on an annual basis.
2022	Construct a new judicial complex					Y	2027		Action item has been postponed due to lack of funding. Item remains on the CWP to pursue beyond 2027 or as soon as funding becomes available.
2020	Development of a new community center	Y	2021						Action Item was completed in 2021.
2018	Establish a community garden							Y	Action item dropped/deleted as this item is no longer considered a priority and the County has no interest in pursuing the establishment of a community garden at this time.

**Appling County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2020	Pursue site prep and development of an industry-wide shared rail-served industrial park			Y	2022				Property for site has been purchased; County currently in process of moving water tower and building road entry. Action item estimated to be complete in 2022.
2022	Pursue development of an industry-wide shared rail-served loading dock site			Y	2022				Property for site has been purchased; County currently in process of moving water tower and building road entry. Action item estimated to be complete in 2022.
2018	Develop new marketing materials and branding for Appling County Economic Development			Y	2024				Underway; New marketing materials and branding are in the process of being developed; estimated for completion and installation in 2024.
2020	Complete TIA Band 3 Project: Altamaha School Road Resurfacing			Y	2022				Altamaha School Road Resurfacing is underway and is on track to be completed in 2022.

**Appling County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Continue to pursue improvements to the Baxley Airport, including additional instrument approaches, and widening and overlaying the runway.	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	BAXLEY	FAA	\$250,000	X		X	
Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors.	X							X	ALL	HOGARC	N/A				
Pursue the development of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance	X							X	ALL		\$1000	X			
Seek to adopt a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance	X							X			\$1000	X			
Seek funding to replace traffic congestion in/near Baxley through the construction of a truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means					X			X	BAXLEY	GDOT	N/A (CURRENT GDOT ESTIMATE IS NOT AVAILABLE)	X	X		
Construction of a new Senior Center/Head Start Facility				X				X		DCA (CDBG), SPLOST	\$1,250,000	X	X	X	

**Appling County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Construct an addition to the Detention Center		X						X		SPLOST	\$2.5 MIL	X			
Enhancements to pedestrian pathways in and around the City of Baxley and Appling County		X						X	BAXLEY	GDOT	\$200,000	X	X		
Conduct road safety improvements along county roads (signage, widening, striping, etc.)						X		X	BAXLEY	SPLOST	\$50,000/ YR	X	X		
Continue county wide road resurfacing						X		X		SPLOST	\$1 MIL/ YR	X	X		
Construct a new judicial complex							X	X			\$4 MIL	X			
Pursue funding to complete sidewalk expansion along GA Highway 15 from Satilla Church Road to Appling County Middle School					X		X	X		GADOT, SPLOST, TSPLOST	\$500,000	X	X		
Develop new marketing materials and branding for Appling County Economic Development		X						X		DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	\$50,000	X			
Implement Planning and Zoning Ordinances for Appling County	X							X			\$25,000	X			

**Appling County** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Implement a Subdivision Ordinance for Appling County	X							X			\$25,000	X			
Hire a building inspector; implement a strategy and process for conducting building and wiring inspections within Appling County	X							X			\$60,000/YR	X			
Complete TIA Band 1 Project: Resurface Nails Ferry Road	X	X	X							GDOT TIA	\$1,267,456	X	X		
Complete TIA Band 1 Project: Resurface Satila Church Road	X	X	X							GDOT TIA	\$2,119,128	X	X		
Complete TIA Band 2 Project: Resurface Ten Mile Road – Phase 1				X	X		X			GDOT TIA	\$2,149,128	X	X		
Complete TIA Band 2 Project: Resurface Ten Mile Road – Phase 2				X	X		X			GDOT TIA	\$1,256,355	X	X		

# City of Baxley

## Community Work Programs

**City of Baxley** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2020	Continue to pursue improvements to the Baxley Airport, including additional instrument approaches, and widening and overlaying the runway			Y	2027				Clearing the approach path was completed in 2017; PAPI navigation system installed in 2018; widening and overlaying the runway completed in 2020; fuel upgrades applied 2021; A project involving the construction of an 8-Unit T-Hanger Building and three corporate hangers is underway in 2022. This item remains on the CWP as an ongoing action to be completed as funding becomes available.
2018	Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors	Y	2018						Complete; City adopted a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria in 2018
2022	Pursue the development of a county wide floodplain management control ordinance	Y	2017						Completed for the City of Baxley in 2017; Baxley developed a floodplain plan & ordinance. The city manager is assigned as floodplain manager. Floodplain management plan not yet completed county wide.



City of Baxley Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2022	Seek funding to replace traffic congestion in/near Baxley through the construction of a truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means.			Y	2025 to Beyond 2027				<p>Negotiations are in progress with GDOT and funding is currently being sought for project; item remains in CWP, but has been further divided into three separate action items to reflect separate phases of development: <b>Phase 1:</b> Sunshine Drive to Azalea Road Route (estimated to be complete in 2025)</p> <p><b>Phase 2:</b> Merrell Miles Road Route – Establishing alternate Truck Route (estimated to be complete in 2027)</p> <p><b>Phase 3:</b> Widening and resurfacing Donnie Lewis Lane; (estimated to be complete Beyond 2027)</p>
2022	Complete the installation of a full-time fire department to reduce ISO rating			Y	2023				Underway; A proposal is in process to be presented to city council to install a new fireman position and conduct an ISO rating inspection; Estimated cost modified to \$100,000; estimated completion in 2023. Remains on CWP to reflect the same
2020	Pursue the implementation of an AMI (radio-read) water meter reading system	Y	2022						Complete; AMI (radio-read) water meter reading system installed in 2022
2018	Resurface Fair Street	Y	2018						Complete; Fair Street was resurfaced in 2018

City of Baxley Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2020	Continue to pursue solar power when it is feasibly attractive (including construction of solar array in Industrial Park West – Deep Well)					Y	2025		Not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials; the city intends to continue seeking solar power as feasible and appropriate; this pursuit is estimated to be complete in 2025. This item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2019	Retire Wastewater Treatment Plant Solar Array Debt	Y	2019						Completed in 2019
2020	Replace elevated tank at Water Works Park			Y	2023				This item is on track to be completed in 2023; item remains on the CWP as an ongoing item to be completed in 2023; estimated cost modified to: \$1,000,000
2020	Complete safety upgrades per DOT safety audit and state mandates			Y	ANNUALLY				This item was completed in the last 5 years and remains on the CWP as an ongoing item to be completed annually
2020	Purchase new sewer vac truck	Y	2022						Completed in 2022
2020	Purchase new Gradall					Y	2025		Not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding; the city intends to purchase a new Gradall either in 2024 or 2025 as funding becomes available; this pursuit is estimated to be complete by 2025. This item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.

**City of Baxley** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2020	Curtain replacement at wastewater treatment plant	Y	2021						Completed in 2021
2020	Street and draining improvements (and acquiring related equipment)	Y	2021						Purchased a mini excavator and mower in 2021
2022	Pursue a total update of the City's zoning ordinances			Y	2024				Planning stages and research for this item began in 2021; this item remains on the CWP as an ongoing item to be completed in 2024; cost modified from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in consideration of planning cost, staff time, and materials
2020	Complete Projects Listed in TIA Band 3 (17 Projects)			Y	2022				TIA band 3 projects completed from 2020-2022: final projects on track for completion in 2022

City of Baxley Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Continue to pursue improvements to the Baxley Airport, including additional instrument approaches, and widening and overlaying the runway.						X		X	BAX-LEY	FAA/ GDOT	\$250,000/YR	X		X	
Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors	X							X	ALL	HOGARC	N/A				
Seek funding to replace traffic congestion in/near Baxley through the construction of a truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means.  <b>Phase 1: Sunshine Drive to Azalea Road Route</b>			X					X	X	GDOT/ LOCAL	\$2 MIL	X	X		
Seek funding to replace traffic congestion in/near Baxley through the construction of a truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means.  <b>Phase 2: Merrell Miles Road Route – Establishing alternate Truck Route</b>					X			X	X	GDOT/ LOCAL	\$3 MIL	X	X		

**City of Baxley Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Seek funding to replace traffic congestion in/near Baxley through the construction of a truck route, railroad overpass, and/or other means. <b>Phase 3: Widening and resurfacing Donnie Lewis Lane</b>							X	X	X	GDOT/ LOCAL	\$1 MIL	X	X		
Complete the installation of a full-time fire department to reduce ISO rating	X								X		\$100,000	X			
Continue to pursue solar power when it is feasibly attractive (including construction of solar array in Industrial Park West – Deep Well)			X			X			X	SPLOST	\$500,000	X			
Replace elevated tank at Water Works Park	X								X	SPLOST	\$1 MIL	X			
Complete safety upgrades per DOT safety audit and state mandates (ongoing annual)						X			X	SPLOST	\$150,000/ YR	X			
Purchase new Gradall		X	X						X	SPLOST	\$300,000	X			
Street and draining improvements (and acquiring related equipment) (Every year, ongoing)						X			X	SPLOST	\$1.625 MIL	X			

**City of Baxley** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Pursue a total update of the City's zoning ordinances	X	X							X	HOGARC	\$10,000	X			
Purchase Street Sweeper	X							X	X	SPLOST	\$300,000	X			
Establish county-wide Training Facility for Fire Department		X						X	X	SPLOST	\$400,000	X			
Establish new Administration Facility for Police Department			X						X	SPLOST	\$3 MIL	X			
Sewer Expansion along Highway 341 W	X								X		\$200,000	X			
Sewer Expansion Pine Forest & Oak Ridge	X	X	X	X	X				X	ARPA, SLRF	\$6 MIL	X			
Pursue publishing of Municipal Codes through Municode	X								X		\$18,000	X			
Acquire land from GDOT at Hwy 1 & 15 for LED Scrolling Sign, Beautification, and Landscaping		X							X		\$100,000	X			
Establish an RLF for downtown		X							X	DDA of Baxley/ Baxley-Applying County Chamber of Commerce	5,000 (Staff Time)	X			
Complete TIA2, Band 1 Projects-Resurfacing of Azalea Drive, Bay St., N. Brobston St., W, Tollison St., W. Tollison St.	X	X	X						X	TIA GDOT	\$561,100	X	X		

City of Baxley Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Complete TIA2, Band 1 Project- Planning Study of one-way pair of US 341/SR 27										TIA GDOT	\$37.2 Million	X	X		
Complete TIA2, Band 2 Projects- Resurfacing of Beach Rd., East Tollison St., Lucky St., N. Beach St., N. Main St., Robin St.				X	X		X		X	TIA GDOT	\$452,818	X	X		

# City of Graham

## Community Work Programs



**City of Graham** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2018	Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. City anticipates adoption and enforcement of the DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2022	Pursue the development of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. City anticipates the development and adoption of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2020	Seek to adopt a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. City anticipates adoption and enforcement of a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2018	Pursue funding to replace ¾ inch water lines along Clemens Lane with new, expanded lines	Y	2018						Item completed 2018.

**City of Graham** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2018	Seek to replace roofing at the City's pavilion	Y	2018						Item completed 2018.
2018	Purchase used vehicle for the police department	Y	2018						Item completed 2018.
2018	Seek to acquire additional equipment for the police department, including vests, dashboard cameras, weapons, etc.	Y	2019						Complete; Additional equipment for the police department was acquired in 2019
2018	Purchase a vehicle for the city					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to political infeasibility. City anticipates purchasing a vehicle for the city in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same
2022	Purchase new tractor and backhoe					Y	2024		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding. Anticipated completion in 2024. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same
2019	Pursue funding to aid in match fund for repair of occupied blighted housing in city limits					Y	2026		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding and/or funding received. Anticipated completion in 2026. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same

**City of Graham** Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors	X								X	HOGARC	N/A	X			
Pursue the development of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance	X								ALL		\$1000	X			
Seek to adopt a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance	X								X		N/A	X			
Purchase a vehicle for the city	X								X		\$20,000	X			
Purchase new tractor and backhoe		X							X		\$30,000	X			
Pursue funding to aid in match fund for repair of occupied blighted housing in city limits			X	X					X		\$500,000	X	X	X	
Seek funding to repair road and drainage		X							X	HOGARC/ CDBG	\$600,000	X	X	X	
Seek funding to construct sidewalks from neighborhoods to stores			X						X	TIA	\$200,000	X	X	X	
Seek funding to pave dirt roads			X	X					X	TIA	\$500,000	X	X		X
Seek funding to install pedestrian trails and motorized trails in City			X						X	DNR	\$150,000	X	X		

**City of Surrency Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2018	Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors.					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. City anticipates adoption and enforcement of the DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2022	Pursue the development of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. City anticipates the development and adoption of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2020	Seek to adopt a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance					Y	2023		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years at the discretion and priority considerations of local officials. City anticipates adoption and enforcement of a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance in 2023. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2019	Pursue funding to renovate and improve Surrency Ballfield					Y	2025		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding. Estimated completion in 2025 as funding becomes available. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.

**City of Surrency Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Report of Accomplishments**

Initiation Year	Description	Accomplished		Underway		Postponed		Dropped	Status/Comments
		Y/N	Year	Y/N	Est. Comp. Date	Y/N	Est. Int. Date	Y/N	
2020	Pursue funding to upgrade and improve Surrency Park					Y	2025		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding. Estimated completion in 2025 as funding becomes available. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2019	Purchase a mosquito control chemical spraying truck							Y	Action item dropped as this item is no longer a priority; City now has a process for mosquito control
2019	Conduct street and drainage improvements in Thomas Street and Wildes Street target area	Y	2020						Street and drainage improvements in Thomas Street and Wildes Street target area completed in 2020
2018	Purchase new lawnmower	Y	2021						Item was completed in 2021, however, this action item remains on the CWP, as this is an ongoing pursuit—the purchase of a new lawnmower is required every 4 years.
2021	Renovate Surrency Bank building					Y	2024		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding. Estimated completion in 2024 as funding becomes available. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.
2020	Resurface Norwood Street							Y	Action item dropped as this item is no longer a priority
2020	Renovate the flooring in the historic Surrency School					Y	2025		This action item was not completed in the previous 5 years due to lack of funding. Estimated completion in 2025 as funding becomes available. Item remains on the CWP in reflection of the same.

**City of Surrency Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program**  
**Community Work Program 2023 - 2027**

Activity	Years							Responsibility			Estimated Cost	Funding Source			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Each Year	Beyond 2027	County	City	Other		Local	State	Federal	Private
Adopt and enforce a model ordinance based on the Georgia DNR's Part V Environmental Planning Criteria for wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors.	X								X	HOGARC	N/A				
Pursue the development of a countywide floodplain management control ordinance	X							X	X	ALL	\$1000	X			
Seek to adopt a local soil erosion and sedimentation ordinance	X							X	X		\$1000	X			
Pursue funding to renovate and improve Surrency Ballfield			X						X	DNR (LWCF)	\$150,000	X	X	X	
Pursue funding to upgrade and improve Surrency Park			X						X	LWCF	\$50,000	X	X	X	
Purchase new lawnmower			X						X	TSPLOST	\$15,000	X			
Renovate Surrency Bank building		X							X	DNR (HPD)	\$75,000	X			
Renovate the flooring in the historic Surrency School			X						X	DCA	\$50,000	X	X		
Complete TIA2, Band 2 Project: Drainage improvements- Main St. ditching and piping from Norwood St. S to Burkett St.				X	X		X			TIA GDOT	\$79,679	X	X		

# Appendix A

- **Community Involvement**
- **Public Hearing Notice 1**
- **News Release**
- **Comprehensive Plan Website**
- **Community Vision Survey**
- **Public Hearing Notice 2**
- **Meeting Agendas**
- **Stakeholders Invited to Participate**
- **Active Participants**

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Local Planning Requirements established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) encourage and require that each element of the comprehensive plan “be prepared with considerable opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders, local leadership, and the general public.” The Appling County local governments took this requirement to heart and placed increased emphasis on getting community leaders, stakeholders, and the general public involved. The need for strong community involvement from a broad spectrum of stakeholders was emphasized by the Regional Commission in communications with the local governments. As a result, the local governments put forth considerable effort for broad community involvement and participation in this comprehensive plan’s development.

The local governments coordinated establishment of a steering committee which they called the “Local Plan Coordination Committee” approximately one to two months ahead of the scheduled first committee meeting, and invited through formal e-mail and direct contact as many stakeholders and community leaders as they could envision. Regional Commission planning staff had previously counseled the local governments to make such efforts a priority a number of times, including in a plan implementation meeting held in January, 2022. The Regional Commission offered plan preparation assistance in a letter, and as much in direct communication and follow-up for plan development organization. DCA’s Suggested Community Plan Stakeholder List, some specific known local candidates, and a model invitation for stakeholder participation were provided for local government use. In addition to local government direct contact, the local governments involved local media and their public meetings to notify the general public and any other interested parties to participate. The official public advertising of the required public hearing further invited all those interested to participate. Similar efforts by the local media and local governments occurred prior to the final committee meeting and public hearing to review the draft plan prior to its formal submittal.

These considerable efforts for achieving meaningful community involvement were considered a success by the local governments. The committee meetings participation did include numerous appointed and elected local officials, local economic development practitioners, other local agencies and organizations, and many others. The first committee meeting, as well as the first public hearing, included a strengths/weakness (SWOT analysis) exercise. The results of these strengths/weaknesses exercises were also reviewed at the second committee meeting. In standard practice, the first order of business at each committee meeting was to review all prior committee inputs and their summary by staff for committee amendment before moving to the next input topic. Much community involvement and input was provided in all facets and elements of the comprehensive plan’s development. The local governments were very pleased both with the community involvement/input and the results.

The actual documents utilized or published during the community involvement and comprehensive plan preparation process are provided in this appendix. These include the local government stakeholder invitation, the local government official public hearing advertisements, the community drop-in session notice, and the Local Plan Coordination Committee meeting agendas. A list of stakeholders invited to participate in the comprehensive plan preparation process and a list of active participants on the Local Plan Coordination Committee and involved in plan preparation are also included.



**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**  
**Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan**  
**“Strengthening a Welcoming Hometown”**

*What principles should guide future development in Appling County and the municipalities within Appling County? What can be done to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of all Appling County?*

The local governments of Appling County and the Cities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency are in the initial stages of a process to develop a new joint comprehensive plan in accordance with state law.

The comprehensive plan outlines a community vision, identifies needs and opportunities, defines long term policies, and includes a community work program to provide a guide and blueprint for future growth and development within the community jurisdictions. It is desired that this plan not only meet state requirements, but also truly express the community’s wishes for future growth and development.

An initial public hearing is scheduled to provide an opportunity for citizens to express their thoughts regarding vision for the Community’s future, to receive input on the issues and opportunities facing the Community, and to identify solutions, strategies, and actionable efforts that could be employed to make Appling County and the Cities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency better places to live and work.

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE AND TIME:**

**Thursday, March 17, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.**

**LOCATION OF PUBLIC HEARING:**

**Appling County Commission Boardroom**

**Appling County Annex**

**69 Tippins Street, Suite 201**

**Baxley, Georgia 31513**

Please plan to attend, voice your opinions, and be involved. Help your community thrive, grow, and prepare a better future. If you would like more information, please contact Mandy Britt at the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 912-367-3648 or [mbritt@hogarc.org](mailto:mbritt@hogarc.org). All persons with a disability or otherwise needing assistance should contact Appling County Commissioner’s Office, 69 Tippins Street, Suite 201, Baxley, Georgia, or call 912-367-8189.

# HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA

## Regional Commission



331 West Parker Street  
Baxley, GA 31513  
Phone: 912-367-3648  
Fax: 912-367-3640

5405 Oak Street  
Eastman, GA 31023  
Phone: 478-374-4771  
Fax: 478-374-0703

## NEWS RELEASE

### **PUBLIC INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN DROP-IN SESSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**DATE:** Thursday, March 31, 2022 5:00 PM

**LOCATION:** Appling County Ag Center  
2761 Blackshear Hwy, Baxley

Are you concerned about the future of Appling County, Baxley, Surrency, and Graham? Do you have thoughtful ideas on what needs to be done to make the community a better place? What do you consider to be pressing needs and issues in the community?

The local governments of Appling County, the Appling County Board of Commissioners, and the municipalities of Baxley, Surrency, and Graham are in the process of updating their comprehensive plan required by state law. The current joint comprehensive plan dates from 2017 and is the principal guide to the long-term growth and development of Appling County and its municipalities. The new update will focus on achieving a vision set by the community on what it wants to be and addressing identified needs and opportunities.

You are cordially invited to get involved and to participate in this plan update process. You may do so by attending a public drop-in session concerning the comprehensive plan update to be held at the Appling County Ag Center, 2761 Blackshear Hwy, Baxley at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31, 2022. The session is designed to be informal, to answer any questions you may have, and to allow for one-on-one input at your convenience. Planning staff from the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission will be on hand to discuss the plan and its process, and to receive your input and ideas. There will be no formal presentation. The event is designed as a drop-in at whatever time is convenient for those wishing to participate or learn more.

Please attend and voice your ideas. We want to hear them. Let us know what you think. Do your part in making Appling County an even better place to live, work, and play.

# APPLING COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Appling County, Baxley, Graham, Surrency

Welcome to the home of the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update. The County and the municipalities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency are currently undergoing strategic planning meetings to guide the future growth and development for the community. Issues discussed include economic development, community facilities, natural and cultural resources, housing, intergovernmental coordination, and other important concerns.

In a series of meetings, to be held January-July, local government leadership will be seeking citizen input and participation concerning these topics. This page will provide periodic updates and working documents from the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.



## WHY IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPORTANT?

Effective planning ensures that future development will occur where, when, and how the community and local government wants. There are several important benefits to the entire community that result from the planning process:

- Quality of life is maintained and improved.
- There is a vision, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the future of the community.
- Private property rights are protected.
- Economic development is encouraged and supported.
- There is more certainty about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met.

To encourage local governments' engagement in comprehensive planning, Georgia incentivizes it by allowing cities and counties with DCA-approved comprehensive plans access to a special package of financial resources to aid in implementing their plans. This includes Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), water and sewer loans from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), economic development funding from the OneGeorgia Authority, and a variety of other programs from DCA and partner agencies (a detailed list is available in the 'Fact Sheets' section, below). Eligibility for this package of incentives is called Qualified Local Government (QLG) status.

<https://dca.ga.gov/local-government-assistance/planning/local-planning/local-comprehensive-planning>



### APPLING COUNTY 2022 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TIMETABLE

- Wednesday, 2/23/2022, 10:00 AM: Kickoff Meeting, Vision Making, Community Strengths & Weaknesses
- Tuesday, 3/15/2022, 10:00 AM: Community Threats & Opportunities
- Thursday, 3/17/2022, 5:00 PM: Initial Public Hearing
- Thursday, 3/24/2022, 5:00 PM: Community Drop-In Session
- Thursday, 4/21/2022, 10:00 AM: Needs & Opportunities Goals, Policies, Economic Development
- Tuesday, 5/17/2022, 10:00 AM: Broadband Land-use
- April-July: Draft Plan
- Final Committee Meeting: TBD
- Final Public Hearing: TBD

[Download a copy of the kickoff meeting packet here!](#)

[Download a copy of the 2nd meeting packet here!](#)

[Download a copy of the 3rd meeting packet here!](#)

[Download a copy of the 4th meeting packet here!](#)





**APPLING COUNTY 2022 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TIMETABLE**

- **Wednesday, 2/23/2022, 10:00 AM: Kickoff Meeting, Vision Making, Community Strengths & Weaknesses**
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- **Thursday, 3/17/2022, 5:00 PM: Initial Public Hearing**
- **Thursday, 3/24/2022, 5:00 PM: Community Drop-In Session**
- **Thursday, 4/21/2022, 10:00 AM: Needs & Opportunities, Goals/Policies, Economic Development**
- **Tuesday, 5/17/2022, 10:00 AM: Broadband/Land-use**
- **April-July: Draft Plan**
- **Final Committee Meeting: TBD**
- **Final Public Hearing: TBD**

[Download a copy of the kickoff meeting packet here!](#)

[Download a copy of the 2nd meeting packet here!](#)

[Download a copy of the 3rd meeting packet here!](#)

[Download a copy of the 4th meeting packet here!](#)



**OUR VISION**

Overarching Themes: Ensure a vibrant, resilient, and active community that seeks to implement calculated, sustainable solutions for future development. Take economic advantage of central location; support and incentivize current industrial and commercial business; prepare and incentivize new industrial and commercial opportunities (through public and private sector strides); provide for adequate and reliable infrastructure and public service (water/sewer/solid waste/roads/buildings/broadband/utilities); assist workforce development and retention; provide a variety of options for low to mid-level housing, transportation, transit, amenities, and recreation; take advantage of natural resources and agricultural area for purposes of recreation and tourism; attract and retain younger generations and families; build strong collaborative network among county stakeholders; prioritize youth leadership and development programs; hold a diverse selection of community events annually; encourage and incentivize the development of diverse housing options; improve public sector training of officials and prioritize intergovernmental collaboration; expand and utilize a range of platforms for communication with the public; recognize, nurture, and share valuable local resources, structures, heritage, history, art, music, and culture—incorporating these unique aspects of the community in tourism and local activities. Maintain clean and safe environments county-wide. Support local healthcare facilities and secure the service of specialty healthcare and urgent care providers.

[Download the full version of community vision here!](#)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?



What is your vision for Appling County? Help define it by taking the survey below!



What is your vision for Appling County? Help define it by taking the survey below!

Community Survey

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

1. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Appling County?
2. If you moved to Appling County from somewhere else, please indicate which of the reasons explain your move?
3. Our top 2 priorities in regards to revitalization efforts should be?
4. What are the greatest strengths or assets of your community?
5. What are your community's greatest needs?
6. What types of businesses would you like to see more of in Appling County?
7. How well do you rate your local government with regards to openness and communicating with the public?
8. Please select your top 3 ways that you would prefer to receive information regarding community events, community meetings, or community issues.
9. There are opportunities for the public to engage in community decision making efforts?
10. What is the quality of your internet (broadband) service?
11. What outdoor recreational activities are important to you?
12. Infrastructure Rating (Please rate the quality of infrastructure in Appling County on a scale of one to five, with 1 star being "Poor" and 5 stars being "Excellent")
  - Road Quality - Road Comments - Road Drainage - Drainage Comments
  - Quality of Public Service Buildings - Building Comments
  - Quality of Water/Sewer Systems - Water/Sewer System Comments
13. What type of housing would you like to see more of in the future?
14. Our top 3 priorities with regard to housing should be?
15. 3 priorities with regard to cultural amenities should be?
16. What are your 3 favorite things about Appling County?
17. What are your 3 least favorite things about Appling County?
18. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about your community?

## **FINAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

### **Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan**

The local governments of Appling County including the Cities of Baxley, Surrency, and Graham, are in the final stages of a process to develop a new joint comprehensive plan in accordance with state law.

The comprehensive plan outlines a community vision, identifies needs and opportunities, and delineates long term policies and a community work program to provide a guide and blueprint for future growth and development within the community jurisdictions. The plan is in draft finalization before submittal to the state for review.

The purpose of the hearing is to brief the community on the content and strategies outlined in the draft comprehensive plan; to address the issues and opportunities facing Appling County and the Cities of Baxley, Surrency, and Graham; obtain any final citizen input; and notify the community of the pending submittal of the comprehensive plan for state and regional review.

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, August 23, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.**

**LOCATION OF PUBLIC HEARING: Appling County Commissioners Meeting Room, Appling County Annex, 69 Tippins St, Baxley, Georgia**

All persons with a disability or otherwise needing assistance should contact Appling County Commissioner's Office: 69 Tippins Street, Suite 201, Baxley, Georgia or call 912-367-8189.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing and voice your opinion to help your community achieve a better future. If you would like more information, please contact Mandy Britt at the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 912-367-3648 or [mbritt@hogarc.org](mailto:mbritt@hogarc.org).



**APPLING COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
APPLING COUNTY ANNEX**

**Wednesday, February 23, 2022, 10:00AM**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Background/Committee's Purpose**
- 3. Proposed Timetable for Plan Development**
- 4. Community Vision Input**
- 5. Start SWOT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses)**

**Next Meeting:**

- Review draft of community vision
- Continue SWOT analysis (Opportunities/Threats)
- Discuss plan title

**Adjourn**

# APPLING COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## 2<sup>ND</sup> LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

APPLING COUNTY ANNEX

APPLING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM

69 TIPPINS STREET, BAXLEY

MARCH 14, 2022

AGENDA

1. **Introductions**
2. **Regional Commission Service Agreement - *Baxley***
3. **Brief Review of previous Meeting (02/23/22)**
4. **Plan Title Discussion**
5. **Issues and Opportunities (SWOT)**
6. **Community Vision Outline Review**
7. **Goals/Policies Discussion/Introduction**

### **Adjourn**

### **Upcoming Events:**

#### **Initial Public Hearing**

Thursday, March 17, 2022, 5:00PM

Appling County Annex

Appling County Commissioners Meeting Room

69 Tippins St., Baxley, Georgia

#### **Community Drop-In Session**

Thursday, March 31, 2022, 5:00PM

Appling County Ag Center

2761 Blackshear Hwy, Baxley

#### **Next Committee Meeting:**

Thursday, April 21, 2022, 10:00AM

Appling County Annex

Appling County Commissioners Meeting Room

69 Tippins St., Baxley, Georgia

- Goals/Policies Input
- Economic Development

**APPLING COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE 3RD MEETING  
APPLING COUNTY ANNEX, COMMISSIONER’S BOARD ROOM  
69 TIPPINS STREET, BAXLEY, GA**

**April 21, 2022**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Review of Survey, Public Hearing, Community Drop-In, Previous Meetings**
- 3. Regional Commission Service Agreement – *Baxley***
- 4. Plan Title Discussion – “Appling County Rises to Greater Heights”**
- 5. Issues and Opportunities Draft**
- 6. Goals and Policies Review**
- 7. Economic Development Element**

**Next Meeting:**

Tuesday, **5/17/2022**, 10:00 AM

Appling County Commissioners Board Room

69 Tippins Street, Baxley, GA

- Review Economic Development draft
- Broadband Element
- Land Use Element

**Adjourn**

**APPLING COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
LOCAL PLAN COORDINATION COMMITTEE 4TH MEETING  
APPLING COUNTY ANNEX, COMMISSIONER'S BOARD ROOM  
69 TIPPINS STREET, BAXLEY, GA**

**May 17, 2022**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Introductions/Review**
- 2. Plan Title**
- 3. Survey Update**
- 4. Revised Draft Economic Development Element**
- 5. Broadband Element**
- 6. Land Use Element**

**Next Meeting:**

- Jurisdictional Community Work Program Update Meetings/ Final Jurisdictional Map Updates – TBD
- Final Public Hearing - TBD

**Adjourn**

## Stakeholders Invited to Participate in Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Preparation Process

- Appling County Board of Commissioners
- City of Baxley
- City of Graham
- City of Surrency
- Appling County Board of Education
- Coastal Pines Technical College
- Appling County Development Authority
- Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce
- Appling County Farm Bureau
- Appling County Cooperative Extension
- Georgia Power
- Satilla EMC
- AT&T Southeast
- Georgia Forestry Commission
- Local Attorneys
- Local Banks/Credit Union
- Local Insurance Agents
- Local Churches
- WBYZ Radio
- Appling County Tax Commissioner
- Appling County Tax Assessor
- Appling County Probate Judge
- Appling County Surveyor
- Appling County Clerk of Court
- Appling County Magistrate Court
- Appling County Recreation Department
- Appling County Registrar
- *The Baxley News Banner*
- Appling County Emergency Management Agency
- Southern Nuclear/Plant Hatch
- International Press and Shear (IPS)
- Southeastern Business Machine
- Other Local Businesses
- Appling County Sheriff's Department
- Local Civic Clubs
- Appling Healthcare System

*Note: Both elected and appointed local government and local economic development officials participated.*

**Active Participants in Appling County  
Local Plan Coordination Committee Meetings and Plan Preparation**

<b>Appling County Board of Commissioners</b>
Charlie Leggett, County Commissioner, District 5
Sarah Boatright, Appling County Commission, District 1
Mike Deal, Interim County Manager
Hayden Rozier, Interim County Manager
Doug Harris, Appling County Commission, District 4
Mike Shumans, Chairman
Daryl Edwards, Appling County Commission, District 3
<b>City of Baxley</b>
Tim Varnadore, Mayor
Reid Lovett, City Manager
Ora Hall, City Council
<b>City of Graham</b>
Don Rentz, Mayor
Iralee Clemons, City Council
<b>City of Surrency</b>
Betty Moody, City Clerk
Kyle Blanton, City Council
<b>Appling County Board of Elections</b>
Shonda Carter
<b>Appling County Board of Education</b>
Scarlett M. Copeland, Superintendent
Doug Harris, Board Member
<b>Baxley Downtown Development Authority</b>
Livvy Davis, Executive Director
John Paul Ewaldsen, DDA Board Member/Owner, SGIA
<b>Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce</b>
Keri Orvin, Executive Director
<b>Baxley News Banner</b>
<b>Appling County Development Authority</b>
Keri Orvin, Executive Director
David Douglas, Chair
<b>Appling County Cooperative Extension</b>
<b>Becky Collins, Extension Agent</b>
<b>Baxley Police Department</b>
Jeffery Taylor, Chief of Police

### Active Participants (Continued)

<b>Appling County Sheriff's Department</b>
Gene Davis, Chief Deputy
Mark Melton, Sheriff
<b>Appling County Emergency Management Agency</b>
<b>Darrell Holcomb, EMA Director</b>
<b>Brent Carter, Assistant Director</b>
<b>Appling Healthcare System</b>
Andrea Graham, CEO
Robin Crosby, COO
Michele Walls, Human Resources Assistant
Kim Jowers, Director of Nurses
<b>FNB South Bank</b>
Angela Carter
<b>Healthie Community Center of Baxley</b>
Knicole Lee, DNP, FNP-BC
<b>Southeastern System Technologies</b>
Lamar Turner, President
<b>Renasant Bank</b>
Sharon Brown
Sharon Harper
<b>Pineland Bank</b>
Lee Lewis, Executive Vice President/Branch Coordinator
Cam Mayers, Lender
<b>Community Bank of Georgia</b>
Kenley Lamb
<b>Other Local Businesses</b>
Steve Kauger, SOUTHMAIN, LLC
<b>First United Methodist Church, Baxley</b>
Steve Meguiar, Clergy
<b>WBYZ Radio</b>
Peggy Miles
<b>Local Citizens</b>
Sandy Hiers
Leslie Burch
Angie Denton
Kari Judah
Sean Wells

# Applying County

Joint Comprehensive Plan





RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

WHEREAS, Appling County, Georgia has participated with the municipalities of Baxley, Graham, and Surrency in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

WHEREAS, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, for Appling County and its municipalities; and

WHEREAS, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

WHEREAS, the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

WHEREAS, Appling County is now desirous of adopting *Rising to Greater Heights* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Appling County Board of Commissioners hereby approves and adopts the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, as Appling County's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2017.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Appling County Board of Commissioners hereby instructs and directs that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

SO RESOLVED, this 4 day of October, 2022.

BY: [Signature]
DAVE L. EDWARDS
Charles M. Gifford
Theodore Witter

ATTEST: Lyvonne Peltier
Douglas Harris



## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Baxley, Georgia has participated with Appling County and the municipalities of Graham and Surrency in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, for Appling County and its municipalities; including the City of Baxley; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Baxley is now desirous of adopting *Rising to Greater Heights* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Baxley hereby approve and adopt the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, as the City of Baxley's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2017.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Baxley hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

**SO RESOLVED**, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022.

BY: 

ATTEST: 



**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Graham, Georgia has participated with Appling County and the municipalities of Baxley and Surrency in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, for Appling County and its municipalities; including the City of Graham; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Graham is now desirous of adopting *Rising to Greater Heights* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Graham hereby approve and adopt the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, as the City of Graham's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2017.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Graham hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

**SO RESOLVED**, this 24<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022.

BY: Don Coffey

ATTEST: Vanessa Vann

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all local governments in Georgia to prepare a comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," effective October 1, 2018, under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 for coordinated and comprehensive planning, including standards and procedures for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and implementation thereof, community involvement, and coordinated review; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Surrency, Georgia has participated with Appling County and the municipalities of Baxley and Graham in a coordinated and comprehensive planning process under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning through the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, and with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, to update its existing adopted comprehensive plan with a new full plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, this coordinated and comprehensive planning process has resulted in the development of a new joint comprehensive plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, for Appling County and its municipalities; including the City of Surrency; and

**WHEREAS**, the new joint comprehensive plan has been previously submitted to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, has now been certified by this review as adequately addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning and meeting all requirements as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Surrency is now desirous of adopting *Rising to Greater Heights* as its official comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and as a general policy guide to its future growth and development;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Surrency hereby approve and adopt the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan, *Rising to Greater Heights*, as the City of Surrency's official local comprehensive plan under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, as amended, and thus replacing its previous comprehensive plan adopted in 2017.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Surrency hereby instruct and direct that formal notification of said adoption be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and to other agencies, as appropriate.

SO RESOLVED, this 4<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022.

BY: [Signature]

ATTEST: [Signature]