



## COVER SHEET FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING SUBMITTALS

Name(s) of Submitting Government(s): **Baker County and City of Newton**

RC: **SWGRC**

Submittal Type: **Comp Plan Update**

Preparer:  RC  Local Government  Consultant: **Specify**

Cover Letter Date: **6/13/22**

Date Submittal Initially Received by RC: **6/13/22**

Explain Unusual Time-lags or Other Anomalies, when present:

The City of Newton signed resolution was received on August 12, 2022

*Inaccurate/incomplete information, above, and nonconformity with the standards articulated, below, are reportable as performance errors under the terms of the annual DCA/RC contract and may lead to adverse audit findings.*

- **ALL SUBMITTALS MUST BE TRANSMITTED ELECTRONICALLY USING THE DEPARTMENT'S SHAREPOINT SITE.**
- **COMBINE ALL INDIVIDUAL IMAGES, DOCUMENTS AND SPREADSHEETS INTO ONE SINGLE, SEARCHABLE PDF (INCLUDING COVER LETTERS, APPENDICES, ETC.), PUT THIS COMPLETED FORM AS THE FIRST PAGE OF THE PDF AND THEN UPLOAD IT.**
- **REVISED SUBMITTALS MUST INCLUDE THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT, NOT ONLY THE REVISED PORTION.**
- **EMAILED OR HARDCOPY MATERIALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR DCA REVIEW.**
- **ALL SUBMITTALS MUST BE CHANNLED THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE REGIONAL COMMISSION.**



229-734-3000

## Baker County Board of Commissioners

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Connie C. Hobbs, Chairman    Vann Irvin, Vice-Chairman  
Tommy Rentz, Commissioner    Matt Bryan, Commissioner    Chris Moore, Commissioner  
Randy Johnson, County Manager

June 13, 2022

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission  
PO Box 346  
Camilla, GA 31730

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Baker County has completed an update of its comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in the development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Connie C. Hobbs, Baker County Commission Chairman, at 229.220.4220

Sincerely,

Connie C. Hobbs  
Chairman, Baker County Commission

Enclosures

# CITY OF NEWTON

PO Box 238 146 Hwy 91 Newton, GA 39870 229.734.5421 office 229.734.8536 fax

COUNCIL

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MAYOR

GARY COKER

CITY CLERK

PAT HART

June 13, 2022

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission  
PO Box 346  
Camilla, GA 31730

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

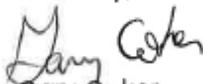
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If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Gary Coker, Mayor, at 229.603.1344.

Sincerely,



Gary Coker

Mayor, City of Newton

Enclosures

# BAKER COUNTY AND THE CITY OF NEWTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2017

2022 PLAN FIVE-YEAR UPDATE



The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to provide a guide for local government officials and other community leaders for making everyday decisions that are supportive of the community's stated goals for its future.

Prepared by Baker County and the City of  
Newton  
with the assistance of the  
Southwest Georgia Regional Commission  
181 East Broad Street  
Camilla, Georgia 31730  
229.522.3522  
[www.swgrc.org](http://www.swgrc.org)

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## **Introduction**

The Baker County Comprehensive Plan was mandated by the Georgia Planning Act 1989. The plan represents participation by both the City of Newton and Baker County. The plan guides city and county officials as they make decisions and manage and promote quality growth and development that is sustainable. Georgia Comprehensive Planning process has been simplified, and communities are required to include the following elements. However, other elements may be included based on community needs and desires. The Comprehensive Plan consists of a Community Work Program Element which outlines specific strategies communities will strive to meet in the following five years and must also include a report of the local government's accomplishments. The Plan also includes a Service Delivery Strategy (SDS), which is a process that allows local governments and authorities to agree on the delivery of services in an effective and cost-efficient manner to its citizens. The Act intends to provide flexibility for local governments, minimize duplication or competition, and resolve disputes regarding local service delivery.

The Baker County Comprehensive Plan was prepared using the process outlined in Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures that became effective on October 1, 2018. The required planning elements include Community Goals, Needs and Opportunities, Community Work Program, Broadband Services, Capital Improvement, Economic Development, Land Use, Transportation, and Housing. The Baker County Plan includes a Transportation element made possible through Georgia Department of Transportation funding.

Baker County and Newton, Georgia, were formed from the eastern portion of Early County and named for Colonel John Baker, a hero of the American Revolutionary War. Baker County is included in the Albany Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The county seat is the City of Newton. The City and County suffered economic blows and are trying to turn things around. The county and city are home to the Flint River, an abundant resource.

### **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Role**

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission's Planning Department facilitated the 2017 Comprehensive Plan update for Baker County. Leading community input sessions and Steering Committee meetings, the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWGRC) team gathered feedback and guidance from the public, used this information to assemble the Comprehensive Plan, and made recommendations reflective of the community's desires. The elected officials of each local government hold ultimate responsibility and authority to approve and direct the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan documents.

## Public Involvement

The Baker County Plan had strong community support. All meetings were well attended, and the City, County, and identified stakeholders were present and engaged. The elected officials from both municipalities also participated and were actively involved and served on the steering committee. The selection of the steering was based on the recommendation from the participating citizens, council members, and county commissioners and the evaluation of the existing steering committee members. The Steering Committee included both public and private citizens. Although being a county with a fewer population of less than three thousand five hundred and the City of Newton with less than six hundred and five based on the United States Census Bureau 2020, it was evident that Newton and Baker County residents wanted to be involved by the number of individuals that participated.

The planning process began with initial public hearings at the county commission and city council meetings on August 10, 2020, and June 7, 2022. At the first advertised public hearing, the plan requirements were discussed, and an overview of the comprehensive planning process and various ways the public could participate. Also, Baker County and the City of Newton met separately on March 22, 2022, respectively, to review the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Eight people participated in the two advertised public hearings meeting, and seven people attended the second meeting. Comments included were changes in city council members, county clerk, SWOT, and additional projects to the community work program. All the comments received were incorporated into the plan update. In addition, the final draft plan was sent to contiguous counties and cities for comments, and no comments were received.

Baker County and the City of Newton are extremely small, but all efforts were made to work with officials to identify stakeholders. The member of the steering committee include citizens, stakeholders, business owners, organization representatives, county commissioners, and council members. Some of the existing committee members relocated to another state, thus, they were removed because they were not reachable. Comments such as change of name and position, rephrase of sentences, adoption of a broadband ordinance, evaluation of community projects, etc., were received and used to develop the draft plan. The draft version of the Baker County Comprehensive Plan is available for public view on the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission's website at:

[https://www.swgrcplanning.org/uploads/6/1/8/4/61849693/baker\\_county\\_comprehensive\\_plan\\_final\\_dca\\_6-21-2022\\_.pdf](https://www.swgrcplanning.org/uploads/6/1/8/4/61849693/baker_county_comprehensive_plan_final_dca_6-21-2022_.pdf)

## Community Profile

This section examines the demographics of Baker County and the City of Newton. The following is a more detailed profile of the County and City. The information on the following pages was obtained from the U.S. Census 2019 and 2020.

Baker County is the least populous county in the region, and over the past decades, the population has been declining. The estimated total population for Baker County was 3,038 based on U.S. Census Bureau 2019. However, the new 2020 U.S. Census population estimate for Baker County is 2,876. As a result, a negative percentage change of 5.3% between 2019 and 2020 was experienced. The population of 18 years and over accounts for 79.1%, and the age 65 years and over was 23.7%, according to American Community Survey 2019. Those over 65 are growing in Baker and Newton and the region. This number is expected to continue to increase and can be explained by increased longevity, a pattern that has been apparent for several decades. People are living longer and having fewer children. However, the impacts of COVID-19 may have affected the population decrease due to the death rates caused by the pandemic. It may also be a migration of people from Baker County to another county. Following the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and Department of Health, safety precautions will help mitigate the COVID-19 death rates and cases. Despite the demographics, local leaders should focus on transportation and recreation to make the community more age-friendly.

Single-family housing predominates the housing stock for Baker County and the City of Newton. The owner-occupied represents 65.3% (County) and 67.6% (City) of the occupied housing. The total housing units for the county was 1,924 (U.S. Census 2019). Baker and the City of Newton have substandard housing, impacting growth and development like other communities. Residents moving into the area want good quality housing to select from.

Both the City and County suffered severely in the 1994 flood; more than half of their housing stock was lost, and they are working to recover. The County has several plantations that limit the availability of land for development.

Housing in rural communities is challenging, and funding is extremely limited. The median household income for Baker county was \$32,917, and for the City of Newton, \$22,727 based on the U.S. Census 2019. Persons in poverty were 36.3% (Newton) and 24.8% for Baker County. For Educational attainment, 80.6% of high school graduates and 50.6% of households have broadband internet subscriptions in Baker County. The median housing value was \$81,800 in 2019. As for race, 54.6% of the population were white, 39.7% Black or African American, 5.5% Hispanic or Latino, 3.1% Asian, and 0.7% were Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native (U.S. Census 2019). Despite lower costs of living and substantially lower housing costs, the housing opportunities in rural communities are limited in part

due to limited economic opportunities and struggling industries. Local leaders must simultaneously focus on economic development and housing to build a strong economy and community.

<b>Baker County, Georgia</b>	
2019 Population Estimates	<b>3,038</b>
<i>Source: Vintage 2019 Population Estimates</i>	
Median Household Income	<b>\$ 32,917</b>
<i>Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>	
Persons in poverty, percent	<b>24.8 %</b>
<i>Source: 2019 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)</i>	
Educational Attainment: Percent high school graduate or higher	<b>80.6 %</b>
<i>Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>	
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	<b>18.1 %</b>
<i>Source: Source: 2019 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE)</i>	
Median Housing Value	<b>\$ 81,800</b>
<i>Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>	
Total Housing Units	<b>1,924</b>
<i>Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>	
Veterans	<b>188</b>
<i>Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>	
Percent of households with a broadband Internet subscription	<b>50.6 %</b>
<i>Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>	
<a href="#">Explanation of Symbols</a>	

Source: U.S Census Bureau (Vintage 2019 Population Estimates)

## Baker County Demographics ( Cont'd)

All Topics	Baker County, Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA
<b>PEOPLE</b>	
<b>Population</b>	
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2021)	NA
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2021, (V2021)	NA
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	2,876
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	3,451
<b>Age and Sex</b>	
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.8%
Persons under 18 years, percent	19.5%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	23.7%
Female persons, percent	50.8%
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>	
White alone, percent	52.9%
Black or African American alone, percent (a)	44.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	0.5%
Asian alone, percent (a)	1.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent	1.3%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	6.4%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	47.9%
<b>Population Characteristics</b>	
Veterans, 2015-2019	188
Foreign born persons, percent, 2015-2019	5.0%
<b>Housing</b>	
Housing units, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	1,664
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2015-2019	65.3%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2015-2019	\$81,800
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$903
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$410
Median gross rent, 2015-2019	\$513
Building permits, 2020	0
<b>Families &amp; Living Arrangements</b>	
Households, 2015-2019	1,425
Persons per household, 2015-2019	2.20
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2015-2019	94.1%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2015-2019	7.7%

Source: U.S Census Bureau 2020

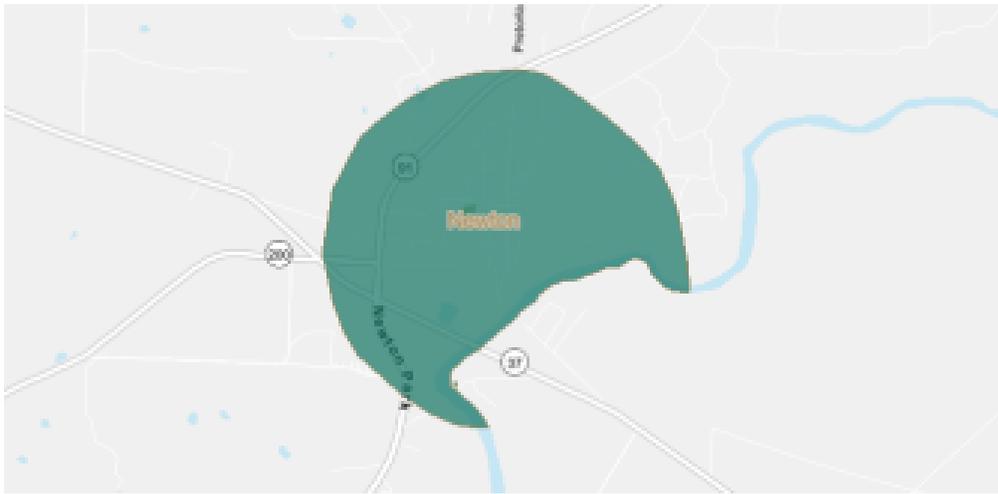
## Baker County Demographics ( Cont'd)

All Topics	Baker County, Georgia
<b>Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)</b>	NA
<b>Computer and Internet Use</b>	
Households with a computer, percent, 2015-2019	63.7%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2015-2019	50.6%
<b>Education</b>	
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2015-2019	80.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2015-2019	12.9%
<b>Health</b>	
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2015-2019	11.7%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	18.1%
<b>Economy</b>	
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2015-2019	46.0%
In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2015-2019	35.9%
Total accommodation and food services sales, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	0
Total health care and social assistance receipts/revenue, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	D
Total manufacturers shipments, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	0
Total retail sales, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	4,703
Total retail sales per capita, 2012 (c)	\$1,397
<b>Transportation</b>	
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2015-2019	29.1
<b>Income &amp; Poverty</b>	
Median household income (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$32,917
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$22,525
Persons in poverty, percent	23.7%
<b>BUSINESSES</b>	
<b>Businesses</b>	
Total employer establishments, 2019	30
Total employment, 2019	262
Total annual payroll, 2019 (\$1,000)	9,579
Total employment, percent change, 2018-2019	-1.5%
Total nonemployer establishments, 2018	193
All firms, 2012	335
Men-owned firms, 2012	173
Women-owned firms, 2012	102
Minority-owned firms, 2012	129
Nonminority-owned firms, 2012	199
Veteran-owned firms, 2012	F
Nonveteran-owned firms, 2012	277
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	
<b>Geography</b>	
Population per square mile, 2010	10.1
Land area in square miles, 2010	341.94
FIPS Code	13007

Source: U.S Census Bureau 2020

# Newton city, Georgia

Place in Georgia



Newton city, Georgia is a city, town, place equivalent, and township located in Georgia. Newton city, Georgia has a land area of 2.9 square miles.



Total Population  
**602**



Median Household Income  
**\$22,727**



Bachelor's Degree or Higher  
**14.6%**



Employment Rate  
**36.4%**



Total Housing Units  
**282**



Without Health Care Coverage  
**11.8%**



Total Households  
**312**



Hispanic or Latino (of any race)  
**32**

Source: U.S Census Bureau 2020

## Needs and Opportunities

Identifying needs and opportunities is a critical step in developing strategies to address those needs and opportunities. The City and County's desire is to move forward in the future. Public and community input was a vital part of identifying needs and opportunities.

Needs:

- Development of the Flint River
- Commercial development of the Town Center
- Establish a Recreation & Parks Department
- Recruitment and Retention of Businesses
- Expansion of broadband facility to underserved and unserved areas

Opportunities:

- The addition of more Restaurants Downtown
- Collaboration between local governments and the local school
- Develop a Keep Baker Beautiful Committee
- Increase City/County operations with increased technology (i.e., Online payment; Use of debit/credit cards for payments)
- Find ways to meet State/Federal threshold requirements

## SWOT Analysis

RC staff met with Baker County and the City of Newton for (2) meetings on November 4, 2015, and December 10, 2015. Both sessions were very well attended for such a small community. The stakeholders and community were representatives of a very diverse group. The following is a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that were discussed:

### **S**TRENGTHS

- The presence of the Bank to save and borrow money is an asset for economic development
- Broadband Internet Services
- Great Inter-Government Relationships
- Regional Collaboration

- Low Tax Base
- Availability of land space for the RV Park Area (Rocky Bend)
- Benton Activity Park (Potential)
- Easy access to Corn Express (Buy Corn by the drum; Locally grown)
- The presence of Jones Center
- Employment, Economic, Educational Environment
- Flint river
- Plantation, Ag Tourism
- Lofton's Funeral Home
- Lofton's BBQ
- Volunteer Fire Department
- The presence of a Beauty Shop/Salon
- The center of businesses is in Town Center
- The presence of Dollar General store
- Single Family Home (American Homes)
- County Website (Working On)
- Volunteerism
- East Baker Historical Society
- Summer Camp
- Commercial Kitchen
- Baker County Primary Health
- Emergency Services



- Roads (Unpaved)
- Lack of Recreation & Parks
- Lack of Recreation Department
- Dilapidated Business and Signage
- Dilapidated Housing
- Lack of restaurants
- Old Tires & Furniture are being dumped in creeks and side the road
- No Landfill
- No Newspapers/Communication

- Sewer System
- Inability to transfer payments (City/County Fines) electronically
- No Bail Bondsman
- No Jail

## O PPORTUNITIES

- Consolidation of government
- Business start-up (Restaurants/Places to Eat)
- School Involvement/Collaboration
- Volunteers-School Credit
- Baker County/City of Newton Clean-Up Day
- Development of Keep Baker Beautiful Committee
- “Build a Better Baker.”
- Solar Panels ( 2 Solar Panels Farms in Baker; County has ordinance)
- Purchase Debit/Credit Machine(City/County) for more manageable payments
- Hire Bails Bondman
- Library Relocation
- Establish Animal Control Program

## T HREATS

- People (Unconcerned Citizens)
- Apathy/unconcern
- Low-income earners (money)
- Decrease in population
- No response to Census
- Lack of togetherness
- Competition from Businesses outside of the area
- Impact of Natural Disasters (Floods, etc.)
- Flint River flooding and underutilization for economic development
- Inability to meet State/Federal threshold requirements

- Politics between governments



## Local Facts

### Baker County ~ Newton

National Register Listings: Baker County Courthouse, Notchaway Baptist Church and Cemetery, Pine Bloom & Tarver Plantations

Historical Resources(Not listed on National Historic Register): Ichauway Plantation, Blue Springs Plantation, Pineland Plantation, Nilo Plantation, Newberry Angus Farms, W.C. Newberry Farms, Pinegrove School and Cemetery, East Baker High School & Clare Cross House

Baker County High school complex (the main building used as County Courthouse) has some parts built by Civilian Conservation Corps.

### Steering Committee

Connie Hobbs County Commission Chair	Tommy Rentz, Jr. County Commissioner	Vann Irvin County Commission Vice-Chair	Matt Bryan County Commissioner	Chris Moore County Commissioner	Gary Coker Mayor	Gail White City Council
Jack Henderson City Council	Gus Jackson City Council	John Spann City Council	Randy Johnson County Manager	Eddie Hopkins	Alvin Lofton	Grace Miller
Mollie Hawkins	Willie Mitchell	John Mitchell	Debbie Williamson	Melinda Clemons	Kevin Coker	Louise Broadways
Trudie Spears	Melvin Burns	Priscilla Snow	Cathy Majors	Carrie Hall	Kenneth Deese	Mona Smith
Francis Deese	Cozetta Simmons	Sherry Bailey				

## **Vision Statement:**

A very interactive session took place to create the vision statement for both the county and city:

*Baker County and the City of Newton will provide professional, economical, and innovative services to promote health, safety, and quality of life for all residents.*

## **Goals and Policies**

The Community Goals are the most essential part of the plan, for they identify the community's direction for the future. The purpose of the goals is to lay out a road map for the community's future through a public process involving community partners and other stakeholders in the decision-making process about the future of Baker County and the City of Newton.

The following goals and policies were identified to guide the City and County in their decision-making process and produce the desired outcome for county and city officials. Both municipalities sought goals and policies that would positively impact the community.

### **Economic Prosperity**

Baker County and the City of Newton will encourage the development or expansion of businesses and industries suitable for the community.

- We will support programs for retention, expansion, and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements and linkages to existing businesses.
- We will target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites, or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- We will consider access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.

## Resource Management

Baker County and the City of Newton will promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.

- The protection and conservation of our community's resources will play an important role in decision-making when making decisions about future growth and development.
- We will minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage development to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.

## Efficient Land Use

Baker County and the City of Newton will maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.

- Our community will use land efficiently
- We will encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant community center to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- We support new land uses that protect the environment and preserve meaningful open space.
- We will review land-use policies to accommodate the installation or establishment of infrastructures such as broadband and other economic development investments.

## Local Preparedness

Baker County and the City of Newton will identify and place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.

- We will seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- We will use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) suitable for such development.
- We will make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.

## Sense of Place

Baker County and the City of Newton will protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.

- We will encourage new development to locate in suitable locations to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological, or cultural resources from encroachment.
- We will work to redirect development pressure away from agricultural areas to conserve farmland to protect and preserve this important component of our community.
- We will ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through the protection of ground and surface water sources.

## Regional Cooperation

Baker County and the City of Newton will cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. Developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of transportation network, creation of a tourism plan, and internet and broadband services.

- We will seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- We will work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, and watershed protection)
- We will pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions

## Housing Option

Baker County and the City of Newton will promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community.

- We will increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- We will seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location to each other.
- We will stimulate infill housing development in existing neighborhoods

- We will eliminate or rehabilitate substandard houses through grants such as Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP)

## **Transportation Options**

Baker County and the City of Newton will address all community residents' transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities.

- We will take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- We will make decisions that encourage walking, biking, carpooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- We will target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas)
- We will promote and encourage mobility programs that assist senior citizens and people with disabilities to safely connect to outdoor events through collaboration with SWGRC AARP programs.
- We will ensure safe mobility facilities such as the sidewalk, pedestrian crossing, road signs, etc. that prevent an accident and connect people safely.
- We will continue to ensure a safe ride to school for the schools in the County and Newton.
- We will be involved and corporate in the development or update of the regional and local transportation plan.

## **Educational Opportunities**

Baker County and the City of Newton will make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances or pursue life ambitions.

- We will work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- We will consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.

## Community Health

Baker County and the City of Newton will ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities.

- We are committed to providing quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare and recreational opportunities that ensure the quality of life for all citizens.
- We are committed to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.

## Goal: Broadband Options

Provide and expand high-speed internet service to the underserved and unserved areas for quick access to the World Wide Web.

- Apply for grants for the provision of high-speed internet connectivity and accessibility
- Amend the Land-use policies to accommodate broadband installation without jeopardizing the safety of the citizens and the environment.
- Develop a Broadband ordinance that will guide the installation and provision of internet services.

## Economic Development

Baker County and the City of Newton do not currently have an Economic Developer or Chamber of Commerce. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was developed by the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission under a grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration and is hereby incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan to serve as the Economic Development Element for Baker County and the City of Newton.

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission's (SWGRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The SWGRC CEDS analyses the regional economy and serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, and investment priorities and funding sources. Portions of the CEDS for Baker County are included in this planning element and are listed below.

Baker County is a rural county with a population of 3,038, according to the 2019 U.S Census. However, the 2020 Census data show a decrease in population with a negative percentage change of 5.3% (Population decrease of 162) between 2019 and 2020. The median household income is \$32,917. Primarily an agricultural community, Baker County produces peanuts, cotton, canola, poultry, and beef. Baker County has 125 businesses that employ 565 people.

There is one incorporated city in Baker County, the City of Newton, that also serves as the County seat. The City of Newton was incorporated on January 20, 1872, and is located on the Flint River.

Baker County is home to two significant water bodies, the Flint River and the Ichawaynochaway Creek. Baker County has numerous strengths, attractions, and commodities for enjoying

life. Some include the many plantations, large agricultural life, forest areas, river corridor, a



flood plain, downtown Newton and crossroads community. Also, you can add additional strengths such as residential areas, commercial nodes, boating, hunting, fishing, new county schools, beautiful canopy roads, and growth in the minority population. In 2001, the Baker County Board of Education voted to separate their school system from the Mitchell County School System and build a K-12 facility with about 334 students. There are also weaknesses, continued flooding, inadequate cultural and recreational facilities, high demand for public services and facilities due to increased youth and elderly populations, high levels of poverty, and possible water contamination from aging septic systems.

In recent years, the economy of Southwest Georgia has faced formidable challenges from powerful storms and the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2017, Hurricane Irma hit Southwest Georgia, but another hurricane would prove far more devastating to the region the following year. On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael ripped through Southwest Georgia, destroying crops, and flooding homes and businesses. The storm, the first category three hurricanes to impact Southwest Georgia in over a century, had devastating effects on the region's agricultural industry. Crops such as cotton, vegetables, pecans, and timber each suffered from estimated losses of hundreds of millions of dollars. Because of the lengthy time, it takes for the new plant to grow and mature, Southwest Georgia's economy will be affected due to the loss in the agricultural sector.

Traditionally, Baker County's economy has been based on agriculture, and over 90% of the Baker County territory is dedicated to it. Some 64% of the population in Baker County work outside the county in the MSA area (Dougherty County,) resulting in a loss of sales tax revenues. Having such a high percentage of the economically active residents of Baker commuting proves the severe absence of local jobs. Baker County encompasses 347 square miles (222,080 acres) and has one of the lowest population densities in the state. Most of the land is used for agriculture and forestry. Agriculture accounts for 28% of land use in unincorporated areas. Nearly half (47%) of the agricultural and forestry lands are on large plantations. Many of these plantations have active farming and forestry operations although. However, a significant portion is in conservation use, including the large tract home to the J. W. Jones Ecological Center.

The J. W. Jones Ecological Research Center was established in 1991 as a research, conservation, and education center. It is a 29,000-acre outdoor laboratory. It is a nonprofit organization that employs over 100 people. Graduate students from all over the country have completed thesis research with on-site advisors. The original acreage was established as a quail hunting reserve in the 1920s by Robert W. Woodruff, who became the long-term chairman of the Coca-Cola Company. The center has an enormous economic impact on the City and County.

Included below are goals and objectives from the CEDS which are aligned with the current economic development goals of Baker County and the City of Newton:

Goal:

Our community will expand existing industries.

Objective:

We will support or accommodate new businesses and existing industries to increase job availability and growth in the economy in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Goal:

Our community will provide a well-trained, professional, technical, and skilled workforce capable of accommodating new and maintaining existing industries.

Objective:

We will improve education attainment by reducing the high school dropout rate.



## Transportation

Baker County and the City of Newton’s estimated population is 2,876 ( U.S Census 2020). The county has more than sufficient roadway networks for the types of functions it now serves. This system provides for the existing land use activities and the ample for the years to come. Residents in the City of Newton have expressed concern due to the lack of paved roads and the problems they cause when it rains. This prompted the City of Newton to apply for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to help repair some of the roads in the city.

Public transportation provides the only means of transportation for some people within the county. The existing public transportation system, however minimal the service, enables people to travel to many commercial, medical, and residential locations. The Southwest Georgia Rural Transportation System provides demand-responsive services to 14 counties in Southwest Georgia. This system serves human service agencies and the general public in Baker County from 6 am to 8 pm Monday through Friday. These transportation services are provided through the Department of Human Resources (DHR). Access to some form of public transit is already and will remain a significant issue for residents of both Baker County and the City of Newton.

The transportation system in Baker County is sparse. Baker County has 353 miles of road, roughly half of which are paved. Seventy-eight miles of the road system is State Highway, while the county maintains 275 miles of road, of which 181 miles are unpaved. The county’s major federal and state routes are GA 91, GA 37, GA 216, GA 200, and GA 253. Most of these routes are two-lane routes.

The annual average daily traffic (ADDT) in Baker County is moderate on the most used roads in Baker County. These roads are GA 91, GA 37, GA 216, GA 200, and GA 253. The Georgia Department of Transportation maintains the state roads, Baker County maintains unincorporated county roads, and the City of Newton maintains the roads within the city limit.



## Broadband Services Element

Broadband is the latest technology infrastructure that delivers high-speed internet connectivity to access the World Wide Web. It connects people to the internet with high-speed transmission access from home, business, school, and other places that people visit for their daily activities. In 2018, the General Assembly passed SB402, also known as Achieving Connectivity Everywhere, creating the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative (Georgia Department of Community Affairs 2021). A good internet speed is at or above 25 Mbps and 3 Mbps upload speeds (DCA Broadband Deployment Initiative, 2021). It can be delivered via fiber, wireless, satellite, digital subscriber line (DSL), or cable (Pew Charitable Trusts 202). However, some internet providers offer speeds lower than 25 Mbps as a cost-saving internet option. Even though broadband technology delivers high-speed internet, the technology is still underutilized. Studies show a positive, causal relationship between broadband infrastructure and gross domestic product in economic development and education. (Purdue University 2018). Also, the lack of broadband access for K-12 and higher education students affects their performance and can result in low grades based on the study.

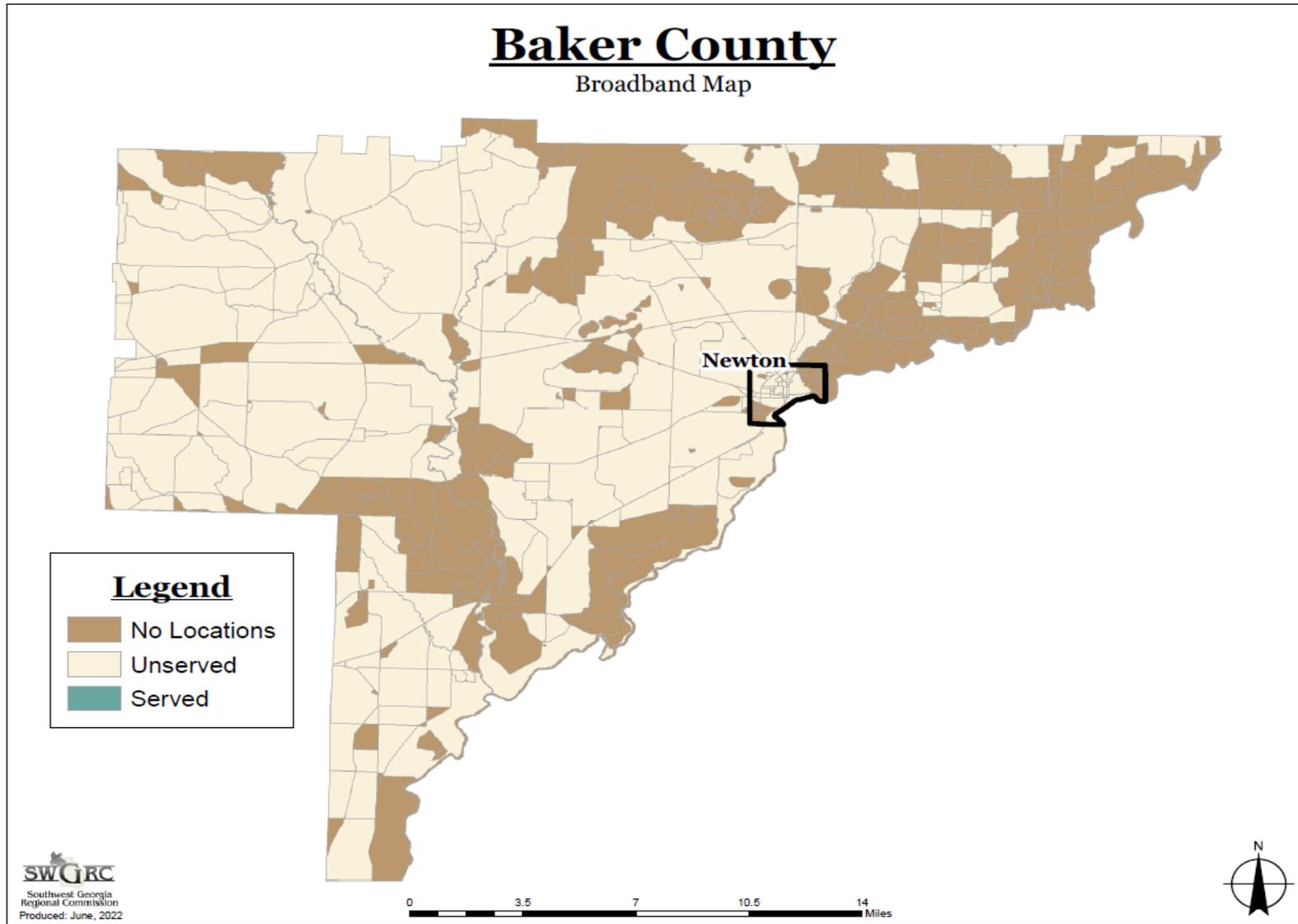
Source: <https://www.freeimages.com/photo/tower-4-1314235>



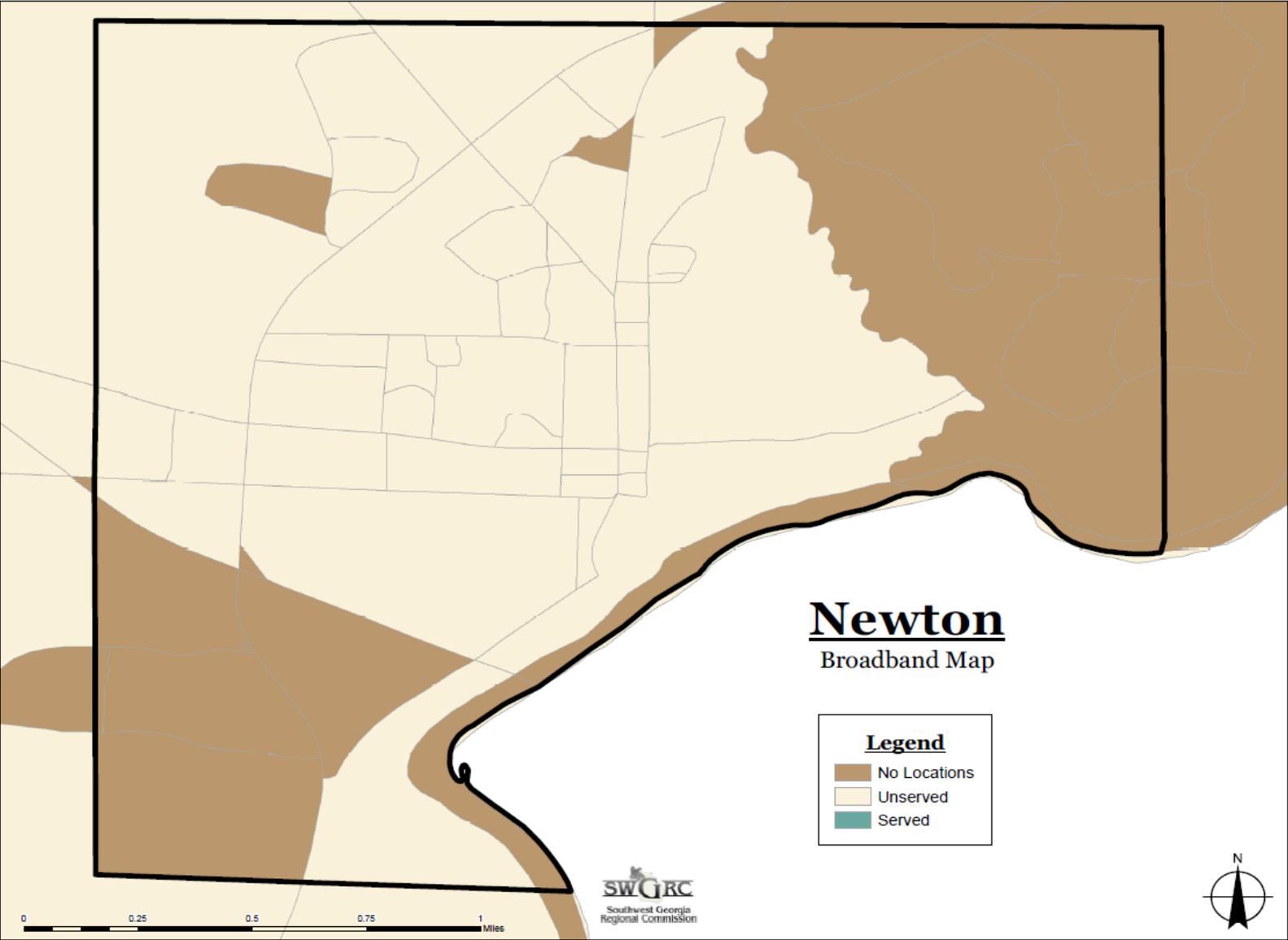
The intrusion of COVID-19 has revealed the importance of internet connectivity and accessibility as schools, healthcare, businesses, and individuals practice social distancing and transition to a virtual world. Transitioning into the new virtual world in rural communities is a more significant challenge since most lack a reliable high-speed connection. According to the Pew Institute, nearly 21 million in all areas still lack a reliable high-speed connection. This can present its challenges with so many people working from home. Access is essential when we work, learn, and socialize from home.

50.6% of households have a broadband internet subscription in Baker County and 44.2% of homes with a broadband internet subscription in the City of Newton ( U.S Census Bureau 2019). However, according to Georgia Broadband Availability Map 2021, Baker County is unserved (100%,) and there are 1,999 locations to be served based on the Georgia Department of Community Affairs broadband deployment initiative, 2021. The broadband map below shows the unserved locations in Baker County, Georgia.

## Baker County Broadband Map



# City of Newton Broadband Map



Produced: June, 2022

## Goal and Objectives

The primary goal is to make broadband services available in the county through collaboration with companies that provide broadband services. Also, ensure that broadband services meet the needs of the residents, businesses, schools, and other organizations with affordable prices that allow residents flexibility to make choices that meet their needs.

- Objective 1:** Examine and evaluate the cost of broadband deployment in Baker County and the City of Newton
- Objective 2:** Dialog with broadband service providers or contiguous counties that are broadband ready to establish collaborations for the provision of high-speed internet services.
- Objective 3:** Apply for grants for broadband deployment in Baker County and the City of Newton.
- Objective 4:** Review and amend land-use policies to accommodate a broadband installation.
- Objective 5:** Develop a broadband ordinance that will guide the development of broadband services, residents' safety, and the environment.
- Objective 6:** Apply for a broadband designation as a county and city.

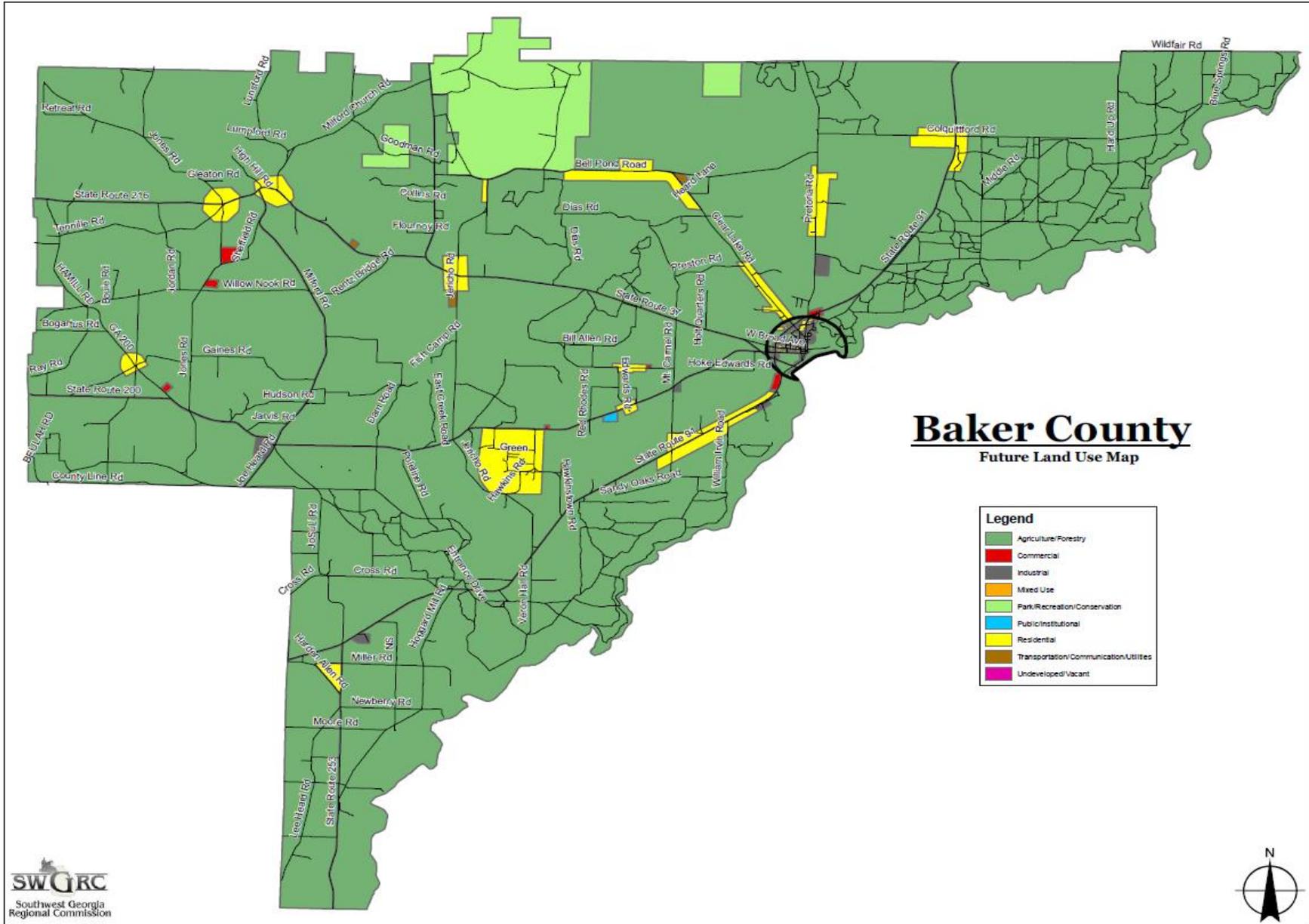
## Future Land Use

Land use for small communities must maintain rural characters and strong economic potential. Rural communities must identify strategies they can implement with their limited resources. Appropriate land use supports the establishment of agricultural and non-agriculture activities that encourage sustainable rural development while respecting the rights of the rural community and residents.

The future land use categories are not zoning classifications. Instead, they act to inform leaders on decisions regarding rezoning and development. They will identify the specific use that is proposed for a parcel. The future land use categories are defined below:

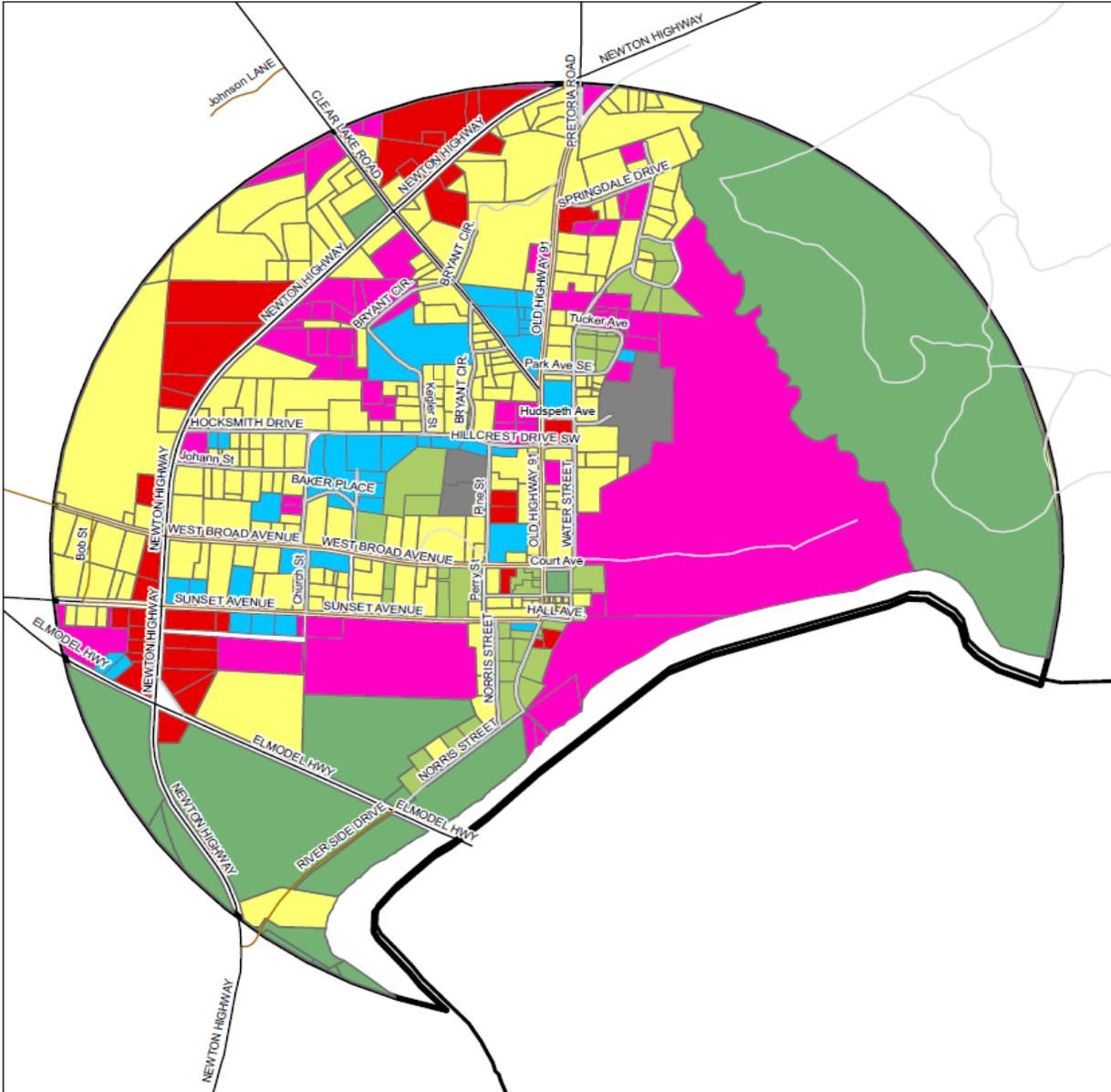
<b>Land Use Classifications</b>	
<b>Residential</b>	The predominant use of land is residential, single-family, and multi-family dwelling units.
<b>Commercial</b>	Non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities, are organized in one building or grouped in a shopping center or office building.
<b>Industrial</b>	Land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.
<b>Public/Institutional</b>	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.
<b>Transportation/Communication/Utilities</b>	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.
<b>Parks/Recreation/Conservation</b>	Land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, or similar uses.
<b>Agriculture/Forestry</b>	Land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting.
<b>Undeveloped/Vacant</b>	Lots of tracts of land are served by typical urban public services (water, sewer, etc.) but have not been developed for a specific use or were developed for a specific use that has since been abandoned.
<b>Mixed Use</b>	Land that can be used for the development of residential, commercial, parks, and recreational purposes

# Future Land Use Maps



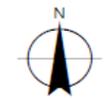
# Newton

Future Land Use Map



**Legend**

<span style="color: green;">■</span>	AGRICULTURAL
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	COMMERCIAL
<span style="color: grey;">■</span>	INDUSTRIAL
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span>	PARKS/RECREATION/CONSERVATION
<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	RESIDENTIAL
<span style="color: brown;">■</span>	TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNICATION/UTILITIES
<span style="color: magenta;">■</span>	UNUSED/UNDEVELOPED



Produced: June, 2022

## Report of Accomplishments

In this section, the projects listed within the ROA are evaluated by the municipalities and assessed. The status of each project was assessed and classified. Four classification responses were used to determine the project’s status. These classifications are:

- Completed
- Currently Underway (Include a projected completion date)
- Postponed (Include an explanation of the reason)
- Not Accomplished and will no longer be undertaken or pursued by the local government (Include an explanation for the reason)

Any projects that are not completed and active are moved to the new community work program (2022-2026).

Baker County Report of Accomplishments					
Work Program	Year 2017-2021	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Status
<b>Element: Housing</b>					
Identify dilapidated manufactured housing and develop a demolition plan	2017-2021	County	\$5,000	Grants	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2023
Seek grant funding for demolition of manufactured housing	2017-2021	County	\$200,000	Grants	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2023
Develop an efficient permitting and fee system to license contractors	2017-2021	County	\$2,000	General Fund	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2023
Examine the possibilities of the remediation of dilapidated manufactured housing stock	2017-2021	City/County	\$1,000	General Fund	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2023
Adopt Building Codes	2019-202	County	variable	General Fund	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2023
<b>Element: Natural Resources</b>					
Work with DNR to develop a plan for preservation and use (eco-tourism) for activities on the Flint River	2017-2021	County	\$10,000	Grants, College & University Programs	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2023

### Baker County Report of Accomplishments (Cont'd)

Continue to support and implement Best Management Practices as advocated by Natural Resources agencies, and enforcement of the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, environmental ordinances, Soil and Sedimentation Act, and related agricultural regulations.	2017-2021	County, NRCS, Forestry Service, RC	N/A	Operating Budgets	Currently underway, 2026
<b>Element: Historic/Archaeological Resources</b>					
Identify properties eligible from the survey for historic designation	2017-2021	County/RC	\$2000	General Fund	Not Accomplished and will no longer be undertaken due to COVID-19 and Hurricane Michael's recovery
Work with Baker County Historical Society to nominate properties or districts to the National Register with assistance from the RDC planner.	2018-2021	County, Historical Society, RC	\$1000	General Fund, Grants	Not Accomplished and will no longer be undertaken due to COVID-19 and Hurricane Michael's recovery
<b>Element: Economic Development</b>					
Work with GA Tech or UGA to research and formulate a plan for agritourism	2017-2021	County	No cost if University or Tech School utilized	N/A	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date 2024
Develop a county economic development plan which outlines projects of the committee	2018-2019	Economic Development Committee	N/A	County Operating Budget and Grants	Currently Underway, 2023
Present county economic development plan to County Commission for approval and funding of projects.	2020-2021	ED Committee	N/A	Grants, General Funds	Currently Underway, 2023
Collaborate with the city to develop the downtown Newton area	2017-2021	County, ED Committee	N/A	General Fund and Grants	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date 2024
Expand of County Website with links to local businesses to emphasize the agri-tourism opportunities, promote the Quail festival, and the actions of local Governments. The website should be linked to other online regional resources sites	2017-2021	County, ED Committee	N/A	General Fund, Grants	Currently underway, 2026
Create a County/City Capital Improvement plan and budget	2019-2021	County/ City	\$2,000	General Fund	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date 2023
<b>Element: Community Facilities</b>					

**Baker County Report of Accomplishments (Cont'd)**

Work with the local school to utilize the school building as a community resource center	2017-2021	County/ School System	N/A	N/A	Currently underway, 2026
Continue road and drainage projects according to the current annual priority list	2017-2021	County, DOT	\$1 million	County, DOT, Grants	Currently underway, 2026
Continue Bridge Construction and ROW acquisition according to the current annual priority list	2017-2021	County, DOT	Variable	County, DOT, Grants	Currently underway, 2026
Continue development of long-term maintenance plan for governmental facilities	2017-2021	County, RC	N/A	Operating Budget, Grants	Currently underway, 2026
Develop a plan for the facility and operational improvements to fire protection to improve ISO rating for the county, including consolidation of city and county departments	2017-2021	County/City	N/A	Operating Budget	Currently underway, 2026
<b>Element: Recreation Facilities/Services</b>					
Formulate a plan for developing small community parks in the most heavily populated sections of the county	2018-2021	County, RC	N/A	General Fund	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2024
Research and pursue funding to develop small community parks through available grants	2017-2021	County, RC	Varies	General Fund, Grant	Postponed: Responded to multiple federally declared disasters and changes in administrative personnel. Completion date: 2025
<b>Element: Land Use</b>					
Review comprehensive plan for updates	2017-2021	County, RC	N/A	DCA	Completed
Update Community Work Program (CWP)	2017-2021	County, RC	N/A	DCA	Completed

City of Newton Report of Accomplishments					
Work Program	Year 2017-2021	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Status
<b>Element: Housing</b>					
Apply for grants for Housing Rehab (CHIP)	2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	City	\$10,000	Grants	Not accomplished due to lapses in the State Audit
Apply for grants for conducting surveys for newcomers to make into flood zone – Develop a study of all flood properties	2017-2021	City	\$500/home	Grants/ Resident	Not accomplished due to lack of funds
Conduct a housing needs survey in cooperation with Housing Authority	2017-2021	City, Housing Authority	variable	Operating Budgets	Not accomplished due to unavailability of land to build new houses. No longer considered
Develop and implement housing plan based on findings of housing needs survey	2020, 2021	City, Housing Authority	\$500,000	CDBG, CHIP	Not accomplished due to unavailability of land to build new houses. No longer considered
Examine the possibilities of the remediation of dilapidated manufactured housing stock	2018, 2019, 2020	City/County	variable	General Fund, Grants	Completed and will continue
<b>Element: Economic Development</b>					
Revitalize Baker County Leadership Program	2018, 2019, 2020	City	\$500	General Fund, Grants	Not accomplished, and will no longer be undertaken due to cancellation.
Develop a cost analysis for developing a Chamber of Commerce	2019, 2020, 2021	City	\$500		Not accomplished due to lack of funds
Conduct a study to explore requirements for designation as “film ready” for future projects		City	\$700		Not accomplished due to lack of funds
Develop a city plan to support the development and implementation of the county economic development plan	2017, 2018	County Economic Development Committee	\$1,000	Grants, General Fund,	Currently underway, 2026
Develop City Website with links to community businesses	2017, 2018	City, County	\$500	General Fund	Currently underway, 2026

**City of Newton Report of Accomplishments (Cont'd)**

Develop city-wide sidewalks with context-appropriate street lighting	2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	City	\$500,000	GDOT, grants, General Fund	Completed
Study the possibility of Weekend Farmers Market in Commercial node	2017, 2021	City	N/A	General Fund	Currently Underway, 2026
<b>Element: Community Facilities</b>					
Develop strategy/plan for construction of Waste Water Treatment Plant	2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	City	3 million	Bonds, SPLOST, Loans	Not accomplished and no longer considered due to the cost of construction and maintenance.
Develop a plan for a Sewer System	2019, 2020, 2021	City	2 Million	Bonds, SPLOST, Loans	Not accomplished and no longer considered due to funds
Continue road and drainage projects according to the current annual priority list		City	\$1 million	City, DOT, Grants	Completed and will continue
Continue Right of Way acquisition according to the current annual priority list	2017- 2021	City, DOT	variable	City, DOT	Currently Underway, 2026
<b>Public Safety</b>					
Apply for grants for personnel and equipment when available	2017-2021	City	\$100,000	Grant	Completed and will continue
Develop perk-based staff retention package including lowered taxes and utility fees	2017-2021	City	N/A	Operating Budget	Completed and will continue
<b>City Operations</b>					
Develop a Capital Improvement Plan.	2017-2021	City	N/A	General Fund	Completed and will continue
Implement annual audit recommendations		City, Accountant	N/A	General Fund	Completed and will continue
Host periodic citywide public meetings to discuss citizen interests and build community spirit and pride.	2017-2021	City	N/A	General Fund	Completed and will continue
Update Community Work Program	2020, 2021	City	N/A	DCA Contact, General Funds	Currently Underway, 2022

## Community Work Program 2022-2026

Baker County Community Work Program								
Work Program	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<b>Element: Housing</b>								
Identify dilapidated manufactured housing and develop a demolition plan.	X	X				County	\$5,000	Grants
Seek grant funding for the rehabilitation of substandard houses and enforce building codes for manufactured housing/demolition.	X	X				County	\$300,000	Grants
Develop an efficient permitting and fee system to license contractors.	X					County	\$2,000	General Fund
Examine the possibilities of the remediation of dilapidated manufactured housing stock.	X	X				City/County	\$1,000	General Fund
Adopt Building Codes.	X					County	variable	General Fund
<b>Element: Natural Resources</b>								
Work with DNR to develop a plan for preservation and use (eco-tourism) for activities on Flint River.	X	X				County	\$10,000	Grants, College & University Programs
Implement and support Best Management Practices as advocated by Natural Resources agencies, and enforcement of the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, environmental ordinances, Soil and Sedimentation Act, and related agricultural regulations.	X	X	X	X	X	County, NRCS, Forestry Service, RC	N/A	Operating Budgets
<b>Element: Historic/Archaeological Resources</b>								
Work with GA Tech or UGA to research and formulate a plan for agritourism.	X	X	X			County	No cost if University or Tech School utilized	N/A
Develop a county economic development plan which outlines the projects of the committee.	X	X				County	N/A	County Operating Budget and Grants
Present county economic development plan to County Commission for approval and funding of projects.	X	X				County	N/A	Grants, General Funds
Collaborate with the city to develop the downtown Newton area.	X	X	X			County	N/A	General Fund and Grants
Expand of County Website with links to local businesses to emphasize the								

agri-tourism opportunities, promote the Quail festival, and the actions of local Governments. The website should be linked to other online regional resources sites.	X	X	X	X	X	County	N/A	General Fund, Grants
Create a County/City Capital Improvement plan and budget.	X	X				County/ City	\$2,000	General Fund
<b>Element: Community Facilities</b>								
Work with the local school to utilize the school building as a community resource center.	X	X	X	X	X	County/ School System	N/A	Grants
Continue road and drainage projects according to the current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	County, DOT	\$1 million	County, DOT, Grants/ SPLOST
Continue Bridge Construction and ROW acquisition according to the current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	County, DOT	Variable	County, DOT, Grants
Continue development of long-term maintenance plan for governmental facilities.	X	X	X	X	X	County, RC	N/A	Operating Budget, Grants
Develop a plan for the facility and operational improvements to fire protection to improve ISO rating for the county, including consolidation of city and county departments.	X	X	X	X	X	County/ Newton	N/A	Operating Budget
Participate in Hazard Mitigation Plan development, update, and grant application.	X	X	X	X	X	X	County/ City	Grants
<b>Element: Recreation Facilities/Services</b>								
Formulate a plan for developing small community parks in the most heavily populated sections of the county.	X	X	X			County, RC	N/A	General Fund
Research and pursue funding to develop small community parks through available grants.	X	X	X	X		County, RC	Varies	General Fund, Grants
Partner with Southwest Georgia Regional Commission to develop Age Friendly activities that support the Age-Friendly designation.	X	x	x	x	x	RC Staff Time	Region10, SWGA RC.	Grants
<b>Element: Land Use</b>								
Review comprehensive plan for updates.	X	X	X	X	X	County, RC	N/A	DCA
Update Community Work Program (CWP)	X	X	X	X	X	County, RC	N/A	DCA
Review and amend land-use policies to accommodate a broadband installation.	X	X	X	X	X	County	\$3000.00	General Fund, Grants
<b>Transportation Element</b>								
Participate in both regional and local plan development	x	x	x	x	x	County/ RC	N/A	GDOT

Provide facilities that encourage the safe use of alternative transportation modes. (e.g sidewalks, bicycle lanes, etc.)	x	x	x	x	x	County	Varies	Grants/GDOT
<b>Broadband Element</b>								
Collaborate with broadband service providers for the provision of high-speed internet services	x	x	x	x	x	County/ City	Varies	Grants
Apply for grants for broadband deployment throughout the county.		x	x	x	x	County	\$3M	Grants
Work collaboratively with Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative (SRBWI) to implement broadband services in Baker County	x	x	x	x	x	County, City, and SRBWI	Staff Time	General Fund, Grants

City of Newton Community Work Program								
Work Program	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<b>Element: Housing</b>								
Apply for grants for Housing Rehab (CHIP)		X	X	X	X	City	\$300,000	Grants
Apply for grants for conducting a study of all flood properties.	X	X	X	X	X	City	\$500/home	Grants/ Resident
Conduct a study on the possibilities of the remediation of dilapidated manufactured housing stock		X	X	X		City/County	Variable	General Fund, Grants
<b>Element: Economic Development</b>								
Develop a cost analysis for developing a Chamber of Commerce			X	X	X	City	\$1000	General Fund, Grants
Conduct a study to explore requirements for designation as "film ready" for future projects	X	X	X	X	X	City	\$1000	Grants
Develop a city plan to support the development and implementation of the county economic development plan	X	X	X	X	X	County Economic Development Committee	\$3,000	Grants, General Fund,
Develop City Website with links to community businesses	X	X	X	X	X	City, County	\$1000	General Fund
Assess the possibility of Weekend Farmers Market in the Commercial node	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	General Fund
<b>Element: Community Facilities</b>								
Continue road and drainage projects according to the current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	City	\$1 million	City, DOT, Grants
Continue Right of Way acquisition according to the current annual priority list.	X	X	X	X	X	City, DOT	variable	City, DOT, Grants
<b>Public Safety</b>								
Apply for grants for personnel and equipment when available	X	X	X	X	X	City	\$100,000	Grants
Develop perk-based staff retention package including lowered taxes and utility fees	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	Operating Budget
<b>City Operations</b>								
Develop a Capital Improvement Plan.	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	General Fund
Implement annual audit recommendations	X	X	X	X	X	City, Accountant	N/A	General Fund

Host periodic citywide public meetings to discuss citizen interests and build community spirit and pride.	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	General Fund
Update Community Work Program				X	X	City	N/A	DCA Contact, General Funds
Collaborate with broadband service providers for the provision of high-speed internet services	x	x	x	x	x	City/ County	Varies	Grants
Develop and adopt a broadband ordinance	x	x	x	x	x	City	\$ 1000	General Fund, Grants
Apply for grants for broadband deployment throughout the county.		x	x	x	x	City	\$3M	Grants
Work collaboratively with Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative (SRBWI) to implement broadband services in Baker County	X	X	X	X	X	City, County, and SRBWI	Staff Time	General Fund, Grants
Partner with Southwest Georgia Regional Commission to develop Age Friendly activities that support the Age-Friendly designation.	x	x	x	x	x	RC Staff Time	Region10, SWGA RC.	Grants

## Resolutions

**A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE BAKER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
RESOLUTION NO : 2022-0802B**

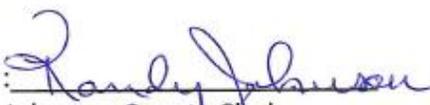
**Whereas,** Baker County, Georgia found it necessary to update their joint comprehensive plan as part of the requirements to maintain its Qualified Local Government Status;

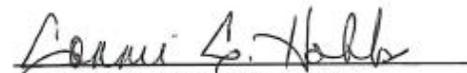
**Whereas,** the County Commission held public meetings and hearings to allow private citizens to review the Comprehensive Plan and gathered citizen input;

**Whereas,** in development of the comprehensive plan, Baker County examined, evaluated, and where applicable, incorporated considerations of both the Flint River Basin Regional Water Development and Conservation Plan, and the Environmental Planning Criteria pursuant to O.C.G.A. 12-2-8, and

**Therefore, Be it Resolved** by the Baker County Board of Commissioners that the Comprehensive Plan shall be adopted, hereby certifying that adequate citizen participation requirements have been met.

Adopted on the 2nd day of August, 2022

Attest:   
Randy Johnson, County Clerk

  
Connie C. Hobbs, Chairman



**A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE BAKER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of Newton, Georgia found it necessary to update their joint comprehensive plan as part of the requirements to maintain its Qualified Local Government Status;

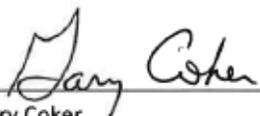
**WHEREAS**, the City Council held public meetings and hearings to allow private citizens to review the Comprehensive Plan and gathered citizens input;

**WHEREAS**, in the development of the comprehensive plan, The City of Newton examined, evaluated, and where applicable, incorporated considerations of both the Flint River Basin Regional Water Development and Conservation Plan and the Environmental Planning Criteria pursuant to O.C.G.A. 12-2-8, and;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of Newton, Georgia that the Comprehensive Plan shall be adopted, hereby certifying that adequate citizen participation requirements have been met.

Adopted on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of August 2022.

Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Coker

# Appendix

## Baker County Broadband Ordinance

### ORDINANCE NO. 21-0510(A)

#### AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BAKER COUNTY, GEORGIA ON BROADBAND READINESS; REPEALING CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners of Baker County, Georgia (the "Board"), as the governing authority of Baker County, Georgia, is tasked with the protection of the health, safety, and general welfare of persons within Baker County, Georgia;

**WHEREAS**, the Board desires for Baker County, Georgia to become a "Broadband Ready Community" as certified through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs ("DCA");

**WHEREAS**, the Board is committed to compliance with the adoption of a comprehensive plan inclusive of the promotion of the deployment of broadband services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board desires to adopt the broadband model ordinance provided by DCA in order to demonstrate compliance with the requirements for being a certified "Broadband Ready Community."

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it ordained by the Board as follows:

#### **SECTION 1: ENACTMENT**

The Code of Ordinances of Baker County, Georgia is hereby amended by adding the following:

**Chapter \_\_**

**Article \_\_ – BROADBAND READY COMMUNITY**

**Sec. 1. – Purpose.**

This article is designed and intended to promote Baker County as a proactive county by being a broadband ready community.

**Sec. 2. – Definitions.**

As used in this article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

*Applicant* means a person applying for a permit for a broadband network project.

*Baker County* means Baker County, Georgia

*Broadband network project* means any deployment of broadband services.

*Permit* means any local permit, license, certificate approval, registration, or similar form of approval required by policy, administrative rule, regulation, ordinance, or resolution with respect to a broadband network project.

**Sec. 3. – Single point of contact.**

Baker County shall appoint a single point of contact for all matters related to a broadband network project.

(a) The single point of contact shall be the county manager. The applicable location, phone number, and email address can be found on the Baker County website at [www.bakercountygga.com](http://www.bakercountygga.com);

(b) The single point of contact shall be available for matters related to a broadband network project or a related liaison who may direct such inquiry in real time, with general scope and responsibilities to include permitting and right-of-way; and

(c) The single point of contact information must be current to maintain designation, by updating with such change in contact information on web pages and associated sources, within 15 calendar days of change.

**Sec. 4. – Application completeness review.**

(a) The county manager shall determine whether an application is incomplete and notify the applicant, by email, of the determination by Baker County within 10 calendar days of receiving an application.

(b) If the county manager does not respond to the applicant on whether the application is incomplete, within 10 calendar days, the application shall be assumed to be complete on the 11th day.

**Sec. 5. – Notification of incomplete application.**

(a) If the county manager determines that an application is not complete, the notification by email to the applicant shall specify all required components of the submitted application that were considered incomplete;

(b) The county manager's response shall include a checklist of sequenced items that resulted in the application being deemed incomplete and the review timeline shall be as follows:

(i) The applicant has up to 40 calendar days from the date of notification of incompleteness to respond back with corrections; and

(ii) If the applicant does not respond back within 40 calendar days, the application is deemed canceled.

(c) If within 10 calendar days the county manager does not respond to the applicant on whether the corrected application is incomplete, the application shall be assumed to be complete on the 11th day; and

(d) The county manager shall require a new submission and reset the process and application fees, should an application be deemed incomplete a second time.

**Sec. 6. – Approval or denial notification.**

If, on or before the 11th day as described in section 4(b), an application is deemed complete, the county manager shall approve or deny an application within 10 calendar days unless a joint meeting between the applicant and the county manager is deemed as necessary.

(a) If a joint meeting is deemed necessary, the joint meeting must occur within 15 calendars days of notification of completion and the joint meeting shall include:

(i) Where applicant is going to conduct work;

(ii) When the work will be conducted;

(iii) What type of work will be done;

(iv) Who the county manager can contact for specific details or related questions; and

(v) Any permit seeking approval under application.

(b) Following a joint meeting between the applicant and Baker County, Baker County shall deny or approve the application within 10 calendar days.

(c) Upon final approval, any required permit permitted shall be deemed issued.

**Sec. 7. – Related fees.**

(a) Any fee imposed by Baker County to review an application, issue a permit, or perform any other activity related to a broadband network project shall be reasonable, cost based, and nondiscriminatory to all applicants.

(b) Any application fee that exceeds \$100.00 shall be considered unreasonable unless Baker County can provide documentation justifying such fee based on a specific cost.

**Sec. 8. – Other information.**

(a) *Double fee.* Baker County shall not require an application or permit(s) when already approved by an authorized state or federal jurisdiction. Provider shall notify and provide

a copy of the approved permit to the county manager prior to access of right-of-way within Baker County's jurisdiction.

(b) *Application validity timeline.* Any approved application shall be valid for six months from the date of approval. Should a provider not commence the service request qualified in the approved application within six months, the application shall expire, and it shall require a new permit approval and any associated fees, as applicable.

(c) *Single service drop.* Baker County shall not require a permit for a broadband service provider to perform an installation of broadband service at an individual customer's service address as long as the facility being utilized only transverses a de minimis portion of the public right-of-way to reach the customer's property. The provider must still comply with the provisions of Chapter 9 of Title 25 of the O.C.G.A.

**Sec. 9. – County acknowledgment.**

(a) Baker County acknowledges that a Georgia Certified Broadband Ready Community has an affirmative duty to notify the Georgia Department of Community Affairs of any changes to the information submitted as part of its application; and

(b) Baker County acknowledges that failure to notify Georgia Department of Community Affairs of changes may result in revocation of Baker County's Broadband Ready Certification, should the certification be granted.

**SECTION 2: REPEALER**

All ordinances and resolutions, or part thereof, which conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

**SECTION 3: EFFECTIVE DATE**

This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the Board of Commissioners of Baker County, Georgia.

**SO ORDAINED** this 10th day of May, 2021.



**BAKER COUNTY, GEORGIA**

By: Connie C. Hobbs  
The Honorable Connie C. Hobbs,  
Chair, Board of Commissioners

Attest: Sherry Bailey  
Sherry Bailey, County Clerk

Public Hearing Advertisements

*Baker Co Board of Commissioners*



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Joint Public Hearing Notice

Baker County and the City of Newton are conducting a Public Hearing to begin the Baker County Comprehensive Plan on 7:15 PM, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at The Baker County Court House, 167 Baker Place Newton, Ga. in the Commission Chambers. The current plan will expire on October 31, 2022. In accordance with Georgia Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (Chapter 110-12-1), each community must conduct a public hearing prior to the start of the planning process.

The purpose of the public hearing is to brief the community on the process to be used to develop the comprehensive plan and offer opportunities for public participation in development of the plan and to obtain input on the proposed planning process.

Copies of the current Comprehensive Plan are available for viewing at:

<b>Baker County</b>	<b>City of Newton</b>
167 Baker Place	146 Hwy 91
Newton, Georgia 39870	Newton, Georgia 39870
229.734.3000	229.734.5421
Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
	Close for lunch 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Questions should be directed to the City of Newton or the County Office listed above or alternatively call Barbara Reddick, Southwest Georgia Regional Commission, 229.522.3552.



**PUBLIC  
 HEARING  
 Comprehensive  
 Plan  
 Aug. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
 7:15 PM**

**Baker County Courtroom**

## BAKER COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

Baker County and the City of Newton are conducting a Public Hearing to present a draft of the Baker County Joint Comprehensive Plan **Tuesday, June 7, 2022, 7:00 pm at 167 Baker PI, Newton, GA 39870**. The current plan will expire on October 31, 2022. In accordance with the Georgia Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (Chapter 110-12-1), each community must conduct a public hearing once an update of the plan is drafted and made available for public review, but before transmittal to the Regional Commission for review.

The purpose of this hearing is to brief the community on the contents of the plan, provide an opportunity for residents to make final suggestions, additions, or revisions, and notify the community of when the plan is submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review.



*Remember those who died for our  
freedom this Memorial Day*

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ALL COUNTY



# Enterprise-Journal



May 25 2022

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VOLUME 111 NO. 21





**Baker County Board of Commissioners  
Public Hearing  
Baker County Courthouse, Newton  
August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
@ 7:15 PM**

**Connie C. Hobbs – Chairperson,  
Vann Irvin – Vice Chairman,  
Matt Bryan – Commissioner,  
Tommy Rentz – Commissioner,  
Chris Moore – Commissioner**  
Minutes

The Baker County Board of Commissioners met on the above date with all members present. Mayor Gary Coker, City of Newton, and County Manager, Sherry Bailey were also in attendance.

Chair Hobbs called the meeting to order and Commissioner Moore opened the meeting with prayer.

Chair Hobbs stated this public hearing was scheduled to discuss and express any concerns regarding the Baker County and City of Newton Comprehensive Plan. Chair Hobbs stated the last comprehensive plan was completed in 2017. Southwest Georgia Regional Commission will facilitate the development of an updated plan. Commissioner Bryan made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Rentz seconded the motion. Commissioner Hobbs, Irvin, Rentz, and Moore voted to approve. Motion carried.

Being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Rentz made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Byran seconded the motion. Commissioner Hobbs, Irvin, Rentz, and Moore voted to approve. Motion carried.

Attest Sherry Bailey Clerk

Connie C. Hobbs Chairman  
Tommy Rentz  
Chris Moore  
Vann Irvin







Grace Miller	Retired School Board Member
Mollie Hawkins	General Public
Willie Mitchell	Polls holder for Election
Johnne Mitchell	Member of the Elections Board
Debbie Williamson	General Public
Melinda Clemons	General Public
Louise Broadways	General Public
Trudie Spears	Member of the election polls
Melvin Burns	General Public
Priscilla Snow	Baker County Health Department
Cathy Majors	Retired Health Nurse Baker County Health Department
Carrie Hall	Librarian and DeSoto Trail in Baker County
Kevin Coker	Businessman, Retired School Board Member
Mona Smith	Former Baker County Tax Commissioner
Kenneth Deese	Owner of Rocky Bend Flint River Retreat and a School Board Member
Francis Deese	Owner of Rocky Bend Flint River Retreat (Camping Retreat)
Cozetta Simmons	General Public
Sherry Bailey	Retired County Manager & Contracts with the Board of Commissioners as the Financial Officer

## References

United States Census Bureau

The Pew Charitable Trusts (2021). Fact Sheet. Retrieved:

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2019/07/21-million-americans-still-lack-broadband-connectivity>

Purdue University (2018). Research & Policy Insights. Broadband's Impact. Literature review. Retrieved: <https://pcrd.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Broadbands-Impact-Final.pdf>