

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Walker Hall building. The building features a prominent portico with two large, white, fluted columns. Between the columns are large, multi-paned windows. The building is constructed of red brick. The text 'WALKER HALL' is visible on the brickwork above the entrance. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple and blue gradient that curves across the top and right sides of the page.

# GROWING A BETTER BLECKLEY

A Joint Comprehensive Plan for  
Bleckley County and City of Cochran, Georgia

August, 2021

# GROWING A BETTER BLECKLEY

A Joint Comprehensive Plan for  
Bleckley County and City of Cochran, 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 Bleckley County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee  
The Bleckley County Local Governments  
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission





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# INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Growing A Better Bleckley -- The Bleckley County - Cochran Joint Comprehensive Plan is a comprehensive plan prepared under the current Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) with an effective date of October 1, 2018. It is a joint plan for Bleckley County and the City of Cochran.

Bleckley County is a small, progressive rural county of about 13,000 persons located in Middle Georgia. It is located less than an hour south of Macon along U.S. Highway 23 and Georgia Highways 26 and 112 with access to I-16 in the northeast corner of the county. The community is an exceptional small town with the City of Cochran as its only incorporated municipality. There is a long community history and association with education, leadership,





and culture not usually expected in a rural, smalltown. Today the community is home to the main campus of Middle Georgia State University campus, the only university in the Region. Bleckley's fields and forests have provided much past economic influence, and continue to do so today. Agriculture contributes over \$30 million in direct farm gate impacts to the local economy annually, and has been another avenue of local leadership and exceptionalism. The community has experienced some economic setbacks in recent years, but its location, outstanding quality of life, and economic influence from the nearby Robins Air Force Base, have allowed for continuing growth. Its fields, forests, and verdant natural resources including the Ocmulgee River, Ocmulgee Wildlife Management Area and Public Fishing area provide an appealing scenic backdrop and outlets for outdoor fun and adventure which only add to the exceptional quality of life enjoyed by the community.



*Paddle in Ocmulgee River, Bleckley County*

Although Bleckley County is one of Georgia's youngest counties, having been created through impetus of local leadership in 1912, the area has a long history dating to early 1800s frontier days. Early settlers in the county of the Longstreet Community on the old Milledgeville-Hartford postal route helped bring the Macon and Brunswick Railroad to the community (still functioning today as a Class I railroad operated by the Norfolk Southern System), and establish Cochran as a municipality in 1869. These same leaders helped establish an early local school, and Ebenezer College, an early Regional postsecondary college. It was this college campus which later transitioned into a district-wide agricultural and mechanical school (over the competition of much larger cities), and then into Middle Georgia College. In 2012, Middle Georgia College transitioned into a four-year college and university campus, known as Middle Georgia State University. For many years, Middle Georgia College was recognized as the oldest two-year college in the U.S. Cochran leaders constructed an early opera house, and the community was also the center of early agricultural leadership in purebred hog breeding and black angus cattle raising. Middle Georgia State University now has campuses in Cochran, Eastman, Dublin, Macon and Warner Robins, Georgia.



Bleckley County continues to build today on its extraordinary history of leadership, education and culture unique to a rural smalltown. The community boasts of not only the campus of Middle Georgia State University but an awarded, high quality local school system; an outstanding adult learning center; a modern library; a well-managed local hospital; a general aviation airport; many active and involved civic clubs including Pilot Club Rotary, and Maso-



*Middle Georgia State University*

nic lodge; two local golf courses with 45 total holes; and many other amenities. There is an annual biking event, a fall fest, and an annual Christmas parade. All of these community activities and family-friendly events take place in a tapestry of true Southern Charm of well-maintained and lovingly preserved homes and churches, an involved and caring populace, and a surrounding and comforting environment of unmatched natural beauty and outdoor splendor. Cochran-Bleckley County is without doubt an exceptional rural smalltown community and a haven of education, culture, and leadership unexpected in such a small rural location. The community does enjoy an extraordinarily high quality of life as a result, and this, combined with its other advantages of location, transportation resources, and natural and cultural appeal, provides much to offer the entrepreneur, resident, or visitor alike. This community comprehensive plan provides the guide and framework by which the local governments, citizens, and others plan to continue “growing a better Bleckley.”



While there is much to celebrate and be optimistic about future growth and development within the community, there are issues requiring attention. With the closing of Acuity Brands Cochran lighting plant, which once employed over 1,000 persons, in 2012, the community was left with no major industry. Over seventeen (17) percent of Bleckley Countians are 65 or older, compared to about 13 percent in Georgia. Poverty rates have improved in recent years from 23.2 percent to 18 percent, and equal percentage to the State of Georgia. Incomes overall are low. Per capita money income in the county, as measured by the Census Bureau from 2015-2019, (\$20,458) is about 65 percent that of Georgia (\$31,067). The county median household income for the same period (\$48,174) is 77 percent that of Georgia (\$61,980). Unemployment in the county was 6.5 percent as an annual average in 2020, a net decrease of 2.6 percent since 2015. This rate is relatively higher when compared to the surrounding area, however it is equal to Georgia's 6.5 percent. Such statistics have resulted in Georgia ranking Bleckley County as a 2021 Job Tax Tier 1 county. While this ranking is for Georgia's bottom 40 percent of counties needing an economic boost, it has the advantage of offering Georgia's largest tax breaks for job creation within Bleckley County, and thus a big incentive for business job creator entities and further economic improvement. The issues also somewhat hide the fact that Bleckley County may have more to offer than many of its surrounding counties.



**L** Residence in Cochran **R** Cotton Field at Harvest, Bleckley County

The future Bleckley County will continue to take advantage of its assets and opportunities, and address its issues. It will continue to be at the forefront of rural family-centric living and a high quality of life with progressive leadership, and a recognized haven of rural education, culture, and life. The community will take steps over the next five years to encourage redevelopment in the downtown area. Efforts have already begun with a reconstituted Cochran Downtown Development Authority, and partnerships with the local university for greater community participation by the student population. Growth will be well managed and guided to locate near the existing infrastructure and services of Cochran, 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. Many will enjoy the welcoming Southern hospitality and charm, and living, working, playing, or doing business in Bleckley County.

This Bleckley County Joint Comprehensive Plan was developed with current local needs, and perceived capital improvement needs. Growth management and community interest was an 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. As a result of the planning coordination meetings held over several months, the



**L** Biking in Bleckley County    **R** At Home Senior Living

Bleckley County committee is able to comfortably assert the community wants to protect its heritage, rural character, and smalltown charm; enhance its economy; conserve its fields and forests and natural splendor; improve its infrastructure; support the university and other educational venues; attract new residents and retirees; locate businesses and compatible jobs; celebrate its heritage; and grow tourism, among its guiding aims and principles outlined herein. The community truly wants to be a recognized as an exceptional rural smalltown widely known for its many attributes, its educational, cultural, and business opportunities; and its celebrated balance and overall quality-of-life.

**Previous Plans.** This comprehensive plan is the fourth within the County prepared under the auspices of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. The first was adopted in 1994, the second in 2011, and most recently the third was adopted in 2016. The community also prepared a partial update, which was adopted in 2008 in accordance with state requirements. All of these previous plan efforts were intensively data and state requirement driven, although local objectives are outlined and portrayed. The second plan and the partial update do contain some local information which may not easily be found elsewhere and may remain of use. These plans should remain, at least in hard copy, available from the Bleckley County local governments and the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission. At the time of this plan preparation, the 2016 plan is available in digital format on the state ([www.georgiaplanning.com](http://www.georgiaplanning.com)) and region ([www.hogarc.org](http://www.hogarc.org)) 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 Bleckley County and Cochran. 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 Bleckley County, its municipalities, or any other jurisdiction is quickly accessed at [quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov) which will provide 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 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, [www.georgiadata.org](http://www.georgiadata.org), where county level data for nearly 1,300 variables related to a wide variety of subjects on population, labor, natural resources, government, health, education, and crime 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 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 under "Other Resources." 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), [datausa.io](http://datausa.io), and [www.usa.com](http://www.usa.com), while [www.headwaterseconomics.org](http://www.headwaterseconomics.org) is an excellent source for socioeconomic information, including data and interpretation through its economic profile system.

**Population Projections.** As noted earlier, the official 2010 Census population of Bleckley County was 13,063, up by about 12 percent from 2000's 11,666. This growth slightly tapered in the official U.S. Census Estimate of 2019 with a population total of 12,807. This slight retraction in population shows that despite economic difficulties, Bleckley's location and



**L** Social Facility, Gully Branch Tree Farm **R** Bleckley County Jail

attributes are allowing a sustained population with some ebb and flow, but with a general growth trend since 2000. Bleckley County’s location, transportation access, Middle Georgia State University, the nearby influence of Robins Air Force Base, outstanding natural and historic resources, its family-friendly attitude and venues, its heritage of progressive and adaptive leadership, its cultural opportunities and overall high quality of life portend well for the future. The high mark of population in Bleckley County was that recorded in 2010, and there has only been a short period of declines from 1920 to 1930 and 1980 to 1990 in county history, with general stability from 1930-1960.

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 Bleckley County from 2020 are 12,755 persons in 2030 and 12,830 persons in 2040. 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 project for Bleckley County, as noted in the 2019 “Regional Plan 2040,” show significantly higher projected population levels than the current OPB projections. More recent Regional Commission projections, which take into account lower 2019 Census estimates, are relatively higher than the Regional Plan estimates. These latest Regional Commission projections include 13,995 in 2030 and 14,796 in 2040. All of these projections indicate continued relative slow, but steady, expected population growth.

### Population Projections, Bleckley County

	2010	2020	2021	2025	2030	2035	2040
OPB, 2020	13,063	12,778	12,697	12,946	12,755	12,798	12,830
HOGARC Regional Plan	13,063	13,136	-	13,494	13,861	-	14,626
Regional Commission	13,063	-	13,310	13,610	13,995	14,390	14,796

*Sources: State Office of Planning and Budget, 2021; Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Regional Plan, 2019; Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission staff projection using Microsoft Excel GROWTH formula, 2021; Excel Forecast method using the AAA version of the Exponential Smoothing (ETS) algorithm at a 95% confidence interval.*

**Coordination with Other Plans.** Bleckley County and Cochran has an approved and adopted a joint 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 Bleckley 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.

The Bleckley 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 Bleckley County Comprehensive Plan. The local plan is similarly supportive of espoused state economic goals.

**Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria Consideration.** Bleckley County is part of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council. The adopted regional water plan, Altamaha Regional Water Plan (2011 and 2017 update), was considered by the Bleckley 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 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 comprehensive plan's community vision and goals. In the Regional Water Planning Council's previous implementation reports, Cochran's Community Development Block Grant for water improvements was specifically cited as a supportive implementation activity. Other water/sewer improvements would also be supportive implementation.

Similarly, the Environmental Planning Criteria were also considered in the development of this comprehensive plan. The local governments of Bleckley County, including Bleckley County, and the City of Cochran, are in compliance with the Environmental Planning Criteria, having adopted implementing, consistent ordinances in 1999. The local governments, with the assistance of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, adopted the Region's model "Environmental Conservation, On-Site Sewage Management, and Permit" Ordinance.

**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 Bleckley 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 Bleckley County, which is consistent with a quality community and the DCA Quality Community Objectives. The



Bleckley County Local Plan Coordination Committee reviewed and considered these Quality Community Objectives at one of its meetings.

**Community Involvement.** Throughout the planning process, the City of Cochran and members of the plan coordination committee actively collected and incorporated input from community members. Creating civic engagement was an essential component to developing the comprehensive plan. Several opportunities, including stakeholder meetings, a community survey, and community drop-in session, were provided to the community in order to gain as much input as possible.



**L** Rural Scene in Bleckley County **R** Public Meeting

To accomplish this, they created a steering committee, the Bleckley County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee, of all local stakeholders who could be envisioned to help guide this plan's development, and make the community a better place to live, work, recreate, and learn. This committee did include elected and appointed members from the governing authorities, local economic development practitioners, and local government staff, as well as many others concerned with community and economic development and other issues within the entire community. This Coordination Committee had notable participation; was actively involved in the development of all facets of this comprehensive plan; and had numerous opportunities to both help develop, review, and revise all components. The first orders of business at any Coordination Committee meeting were review of any revisions to previous elements based on committee input, and chances to return to and modify earlier elements, if desired. The initial meeting of the Local Plan Coordination Committee included a formal identification of strengths and weaknesses of the community, including opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). This identification was utilized in developing all plan elements. A total of five stakeholder meetings were held throughout the planning process.

In addition to holding regular stakeholder meetings, several other opportunities were given to the community to participate in the planning process. An initial public hearing was held on

April 15, 2021 and was advertised in the newspaper in order to make citizens aware of the plan update and the planning process. On May 4, 2021, a community input drop-in session was held 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. Several residents attended and an open discussion occurred. In addition, a final public hearing was held on August 31, 2021, in order to provide the public with the opportunity to review the updated final comprehensive plan draft. A more detailed summary of community involvement is included in an appendix.

### 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.



**L** Heartland, Bleckley County **R** Public Boat Ramp

### 2. SWOT Analysis

An initial steering committee meeting was held on March 17th, 2021. During this meeting, members of the steering committee participated in a SWOT analysis where they identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Bleckley County. Figure 1, page 15 shows the results of the SWOT analysis. This activity provided a starting point in identifying the overall needs and opportunities of Bleckley County, which are addressed in "Needs and Opportunities".

The SWOT analysis showed that one of Bleckley County's greatest strengths includes its education system. Bleckley County takes pride in its public schools and university. This education system in Bleckley County has helped to create a skilled labor force. Another strength of



Bleckley County is its location. Bleckley County has highway access which is great for industry and those who need to commute. Bleckley County's natural resources are also a strength of the community. The county is home to the Ocmulgee Wildlife Management Area, diverse agriculture, and a portion of the Ocmulgee River runs through the county as well. Other strengths of Bleckley County include its infrastructure, the airport, public library, the hospital, various churches, the county's public services, and affordable land prices.

During the SWOT analysis, several weaknesses of Bleckley County were discussed. A key concern for the county is the lack of industry and the number of people leaving to work elsewhere. There is poor marketing of the local opportunities that do exist, and the retention of the educated and skilled workforce needs to increase. With unresponsive landlords, vacant buildings, and a lack of amenities, Downtown Cochran is perceived poorly by the community. Currently, businesses operate with limited hours and there is a lack of diversity in products available. Other weaknesses that were shown in the SWOT analysis include the lack of funding for infrastructure, broadband is too expensive with limited options, the population of the homeless, a lack of community involvement, and limited housing options.



**L** Public Meeting **R** Downtown Cochran

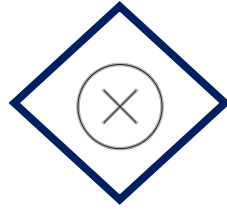
The next portion of the SWOT analysis pertained to identifying opportunities in Bleckley County. The county has the opportunity to expand its relationship with the university and technical colleges in the area which could help to increase economic activity within Bleckley County. Subdivision opportunities also exist within the county given the affordable land prices. While vacant buildings are seen as a weakness, they are also an opportunity for redevelopment. The expansion of the Federal Park Ocmulgee National Monument is also an opportunity for Bleckley County to increase tourism and offer more recreational activities. Another opportunity is for Bleckley County to capitalize on its close proximity to the Air Force base in Warner Robins.

The final portion of the SWOT analysis included the discussion of possible threats to Bleckley County. The County recognizes that Warner Robins and the City of Dublin are possible economic threats, as these cities currently offer more amenities, services, and commercial options. If the Air Force base were to close in Warner Robins, this also would be a threat to Bleckley County as many choose to work at the base but live in Bleckley County. Other threats that were identified include weather conditions, the declining population of the Middle Georgia Region, and an increase in crime and drug use.



## Strengths

- Education System: Public schools and university
- Location to highway
- Skilled labor force
- Infrastructure, roads, bridges, water/sewer, drainage
- Airport
- Public library
- Hospital
- United community
- Churches
- River, water trail location, Dykes landing
- Diverse agriculture
- New Businesses
- Public Services, EMS
- Low land prices
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century resource



## Weaknesses

- Lack of diversity in school system
- Lack of funding for infrastructure and capacity for infrastructure
- Housing options
- Lack of industry
- People leaving to work elsewhere
- Lack of community involvement (volunteers)
- Limited options for broadband, too expensive
- Perception of downtown and its aesthetics
- Lack of communication between residents, lack of unification for information.
- Lack of trained workforce-mostly commuters
- Need more mentorship/apprenticeship programs and opportunities.
- Retention of trained workforce
- Poor marketing of local opportunities and industries.
- Lack of amenities
- Unresponsive landlords and vacant buildings
- Services for aging community
- Lack of operating hours for resources, businesses, essential services, retail
- Diversity of products available
- Population of homeless



## Opportunities

- Joint county industrial development
- Relationship with DCA, DNR, etc. for state funding
- University/technical colleges
- Air Force base
- Subdivision opportunities (land prices)
- Development of amenities
- Vacant buildings
- Expansion of Federal Park Ocmulgee National Monument
- Future business owner's leadership program for high schoolers
- Youth leadership
- Resources for homeless population and mental health resources



## Threats

- Warner Robins
- City of Dublin
- Airforce base closure
- COVID-19
- Weather conditions
- Declining population of Middle Georgia Region
- Aging Community
- Crime and crime organization
- Drug use

Figure 1. SWOT Analysis Results



### 3. Community Survey

With the help of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, Bleckley County, and its municipalities, developed a survey to distribute to community members. The survey consisted of nine 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 "Needs and Opportunities". The survey was distributed to community members through email, through paper copies, and was made available on the Bleckley 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.



**“Growing a Better Bleckley”** is truly a locally developed guide to, and framework for, future growth and development of Cochran-Bleckley County designed to generate local pride and enthusiasm, to accentuate assets and improve weaknesses, and ultimately bring about a desired future which makes the Cochran-Bleckley County community an improved place to live and work with an outstanding and enhanced quality of life. It is realized that to take advantage of opportunities and to make a difference will take time and considered effort, but it is felt this plan is pragmatic and practical in outlining a course and roadmap for steps and actions which can be achieved and which will move the community forward. The plan continues with delineation of the Community Goals element and a Community Vision which essentially and succinctly summarizes the community’s aspirations and plan’s objectives.



# COMMUNITY GOALS



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, and is an easily referenced roadmap for community leaders and all concerned with growth and development of the community and its future.

The Bleckley County - Cochran 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?”**



## Community Vision

**B**leckley County envisions a future where opportunity is embraced. Bleckley County will become a community that capitalizes on diversity and will be a place with a broad range of choices for its residents. The County will embrace and promote its centralized location in order to become a hub for commerce and industry. The goal is to establish countywide prosperity by creating a sustainable system of high-quality education, healthcare, public safety, infrastructure, recreation, commerce, and housing. Bleckley County will be a great place to live with attractive neighborhoods, green spaces, schools, and job opportunities.



## Economic Development

Bleckley County will have a vibrant economy with a skilled workforce, which will attract businesses who value highly educated and technically oriented employees. The diversity of industry and innovation will be encouraged, and residents will have access to high paying jobs with benefits. The expansion of educational training programs will provide the opportunity for all members of Bleckley County to participate in the local economy. Workforce support programs will be implemented within the County in order to train and empower not only members of the current workforce, but also younger generations. By partnering educational institutions with local businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, the Joint Industrial Development Authority, the Cochran Downtown Development Authority, and other government organizations, younger generations will be encouraged to become and remain members of the Bleckley County workforce. The encouragement of technical and vocational training will also be established within the community. This will be provided through the Bleckley County High School and will also be encouraged at the post-secondary level in order to fulfill much need professions within Bleckley County.

Investment and development of local infrastructure will be encouraged. Residents and business owners within the county can expect to have a clean water/sewer system and access to broadband. The development of additional amenities, such as restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, and truck stops, will also be encouraged and promoted in Bleckley County. Visitors to downtown Cochran will experience a thriving and active environment that is filled with shops, restaurants, services, and opportunities. Investment in underdeveloped areas



**L** Chamber of Commerce **R** Downtown Cochran

of downtown will be supported and efforts will be taken to create a set of standards/ordinances for buildings and businesses in downtown Cochran. The unique heritage, small town charm, and architectural style of downtown Cochran will be celebrated and capitalized upon in order to create a memorable and attractive gathering space for residents, businesses, and visitors of Bleckley County.