

## Community/Recreation

Residents of Bleckley County will feel a sense of pride for their close-knit and friendly community. Community engagement will be encouraged through a variety of organizations. By pursuing a campaign to decrease litter in the County, residents will enjoy living in an environment that is clean and attractive. There will be a diverse range of opportunities for citizens and younger generations to influence the decision-making process for their community. Bleckley County has the advantage of building upon existing natural resources in the areas to promote different recreational activities, such as fishing, hunting, and kayaking, through agricultural tourism. The community will also have access to a variety of other outdoor areas including hiking trails, campgrounds, walking trails, community parks, playgrounds, a splashpad, a pickleball court, and even fishing competitions. Residents of all ages will always have something to do in Bleckley County to help keep them happy, fulfilled, and entertained. Throughout the year, Bleckley County will host a range of community events to help bring people together. Residents can look forward to events like outdoor movies, food trucks, fairs, parades, and music concerts that will take place within their community. The Ocmulgee Water Trail and the expansion of the nearby Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park will provide recreational and cultural opportunities and activities for local residents and area tourists. These events will add to the small-town charm and character of Bleckley County that residents can enjoy for years to come.



**U** Paddle in Ocmulgee River  
**B** Biking Event in Bleckley County



## Public Service

Bleckley County understands the importance and need for a high-quality system of public services. The County and City will work to promote collaboration between emergency services that are essential to the safety and wellbeing of the community. Bleckley County is also committed to improving its current infrastructure in order to attract further growth and investment within the area. These improvements will include updating the water, sewer, and drainage system in Bleckley County and in the City of Cochran. Enhancements to sidewalks, bike lanes, community facilities, and road improvements will also be pursued. In order to maintain a high quality of infrastructure, developing a maintenance schedule will be prioritized.

The future of Bleckley County will be a place where the community feels a sense of ownership, empowerment, and is actively involved in decision making. Collaboration efforts between citizens and local government institutions, elected officials, and appointed boards will be established through a sense of trust and open communication policies. These efforts will enhance Bleckley County and will encourage leadership development within the community.



**L** 1st United Methodist Church **R** Bleckley County Court House  
**L** Bleckley Memorial Hospital **R** Cochran City Hall



# Healthcare

Bleckley County will be a place where everyone has access to quality healthcare. Existing hospital and healthcare organizations will be supported and expanded upon; Bleckley Memorial Hospital will be a designated critical access hospital. Residents of Bleckley County will have the ability to receive excellent healthcare within their own community. Access to family healthcare, general practices, urgent healthcare, specialty healthcare, and veterinary care will be available for residents. A variety of excellent long-term care facilities will be accessible to the community. There will also be options for a healthcare transit system. A healthcare transit system will provide mobility options for residents, especially senior citizens, to reach their healthcare providers.

# Housing

Bleckley County will have an expanded supply of affordable housing, senior living options, student housing, and workforce housing options that are available to either rent or own. Residents of all income levels will have access to quality housing that meets their needs. This extended supply of housing options for residents will provide stability for families and improve opportunities for education and career advancement.



**U** Bleckley County Health Center **B** Residential area in Cochran





# City of Cochran

## Description

The City of Cochran is conveniently located in the heart of central Georgia along U.S. Highway 23 between I-16 and I-75 less than one hour's drive south of Macon. It is almost equidistant between Atlanta's Hartsfield Airport and the Port of Savannah and has a local general aviation airport. Cochran is the only incorporated municipality within Bleckley County and has a population of about 5,000 persons. The community is home to the Cochran Campus of Middle Georgia State University, and is known for a cultured, progressive atmosphere almost unheard of in a rural community. Agriculture remains a mainstay of the local economy, although there is major influence from the nearby Robins Air Force Base. Not only does Cochran enjoy many locational, economic, educational, and cultural assets and advantages, the community is surrounded by much natural beauty and outdoor adventure from its scenic and pastoral countryside to the historic and fabled Ocmulgee River, the Ocmulgee Water Trail, and the Ocmulgee Wildlife Management and Public Fishing areas. All of this affords the community an extraordinary quality of life equivalent to an unexpected haven or oasis in a peaceful, relaxing rural area. The community describes itself as an outstanding place of Southern hospitality and charm which offers a tranquil, relaxing place and pace of living with many urban-like amenities and cultural opportunities.

Although Bleckley County is one of Georgia's youngest counties (established in 1912), the City of Cochran has a much older and fascinating history. The community has long been associated with education, leadership, and culture. The city traces its municipal history to the mid-1800s location of the Macon and Brunswick Railroad. The City of Cochran is named for Judge Arthur E. Cochran who first campaigned as a state legislator for a railroad to develop the area, and who resigned a superior court judgeship to return to the legislature to seek state development support for the railroad. Judge Cochran subsequently served as the Macon and Brunswick Railroad's president. The community is still served by the railroad, a Class I rail line operated by the Norfolk Southern system.

Before the railroad, the Cochran area was on the Indian frontier and settled in the early 1800s after Creek Indian cessations. Cochran was actually located on the Uchee Indian Trail, and truly was an oasis for the Native Americans as it was the known location of several Creek Indian wells/watering holes. The nearby Longstreet Community of early settlers along the federal postal road between Milledgeville, when it served as the state capital, and Hartford on the Ocmulgee River frontier, played pivotal roles in Cochran's establishment, and its educational and cultural leadership. These settlers, particularly the Walker family, helped first establish an early school, the Longstreet Academy; then facilitated routing the railroad throu-





gh Coley’s Station and Cochran; and later championed the town, and the development of a postsecondary school, Ebenezer College, in Cochran. Cochran was formally incorporated as a town in 1869 as Station #15 on the Macon and Brunswick Railroad soon after its completion. The Town of Cochran was reorganized as the City of Cochran in 1904. Ebenezer College later transitioned into the 12th Congressional District Agricultural and Mechanical School on the



*Downtown Cochran*

same campus in World War I, and then to Middle Georgia College in 1929. For many years, this school was recognized as the oldest junior college in the United States. Local leadership was also evidenced in the establishment of Bleckley County itself when the newspaper was purchased primarily to campaign for separate county status. Leadership in the agricultural sector has also been quite evident within the community. Cochran was the center of early 1900s establishment of purebred hog breeding, and later the breeding of Black Angus cattle. A 1950s history noted the community was well-known then as the “Home of the Champions” as the city and county could boast of several all-time high records in the farm production of cotton and corn. This community agricultural leadership continues today with the “Back to Basics 101” organic whole wheat farm and business which garnered 2016 Flavor of Georgia recognition.

The City of Cochran currently carries on its rich tradition with an awarded and honored local school system, a modern library, a self-sufficient community hospital, the Middle Georgia State University campus, a local facility of the Oconee Fall Line Technical College, churches of many faiths, an impressive array of civic clubs, an involved populace, and many other amenities. The City of Cochran truly is an unexpected haven and bastion of Southern charm and culture with an extraordinary high quality of life which rivals many urban areas, while being located in a bucolic and pleasing rural environment. The City has many advantages and much appeal to the entrepreneur, resident, or visitor alike.



## Vision

The City of Cochran wishes to continue to cultivate and nurture its image and reality as a unique and special place where Southern hospitality and charm is a way of life and which continues to exhibit progressive leadership, extraordinary educational and cultural opportunities, and an outstanding quality of life. The community will continue to exhibit a comfortable, caring, and involved family atmosphere and cooperative civic pride which celebrates, protects, and improves its heritage and rural environment. Cochran will continue to build on its many social and economic strengths; and to modernize and improve its infrastructure, facilities, and amenities. Commercial amenities will be expanded with the introduction of additional downtown incentives; promotion of the downtown business district; development and blight control regulations implemented through land use, zoning, and other ordinances; and active restoration of historic properties. Desired business and industry will be aggressively pursued to provide the community with jobs and amenities for citizens and visitors to the area. Existing healthcare facilities will be supported and access to specialty healthcare will be expanded as new healthcare services are sought. Safety and emergency service capability will be strengthened as the city will pursue cooperative efforts with the County to continually



**UL** Walker Hall   **UR** US Post Office in Cochran   **BL** Ebenezer Hall   **BR** Downtown Cochran



improve services. The community will remain vibrant and interesting as its transportation corridors improve, its downtown is revitalized and teeming, the University, Oconee Fall Line Technical College, and the local school system expand and improve, and other opportunities for economic growth are realized.

The City of Cochran will enjoy an expanded reputation as a pleasing and enviable haven located in a bucolic backdrop of an appealing and comforting rural countryside. Existing community events will be promoted, and new community events will be introduced. Public spaces and community parks will be constructed and designated to enhance quality of life and public use. Greater efforts in intergovernmental collaboration will result in effective communication, efficiency in project coordination, and inspire public participation and sense of ownership in the community. Cochran will seek opportunities to engage and empower and retain younger generations and young families. A Cochran address will be a much desired and coveted badge of honor for businesses, and residents alike.



**L** Cochran Police Department **M** Bleckley County Court House **R** Rural Scene, Bleckley County

Issues	Opportunities
Economic development/jobs	Location
Downtown revitalization	U.S. Highway 23
Water and sewer infrastructure improvements	Middle Georgia State University
Transportation improvements	Oconee Fall Line Technical College
Recreation/park improvements	Involved citizenry and civic clubs
Housing stock improvements	Robins Air Force Base
	Cochran Municipal Airport
	Biking Bleckley



# Community Goals

## Economic Development



1. Nurture existing businesses/industries/entrepreneurs
2. Utilize/support Cochran-Bleckley Chamber of Commerce, local Industrial Development Authority, and other local/regional/state agencies
3. Develop detailed economic development marketing strategy/ community branding
4. Develop/extend/maintain infrastructure to facilitate/guide development
5. Seek diversified economic development
6. Attract new businesses/industry/jobs
7. Support entrepreneurial/small business development
8. Address continuing education/job skills improvements
9. Retain local graduates
10. Improve adult literacy rate
11. Support Oconee Fall Line Technical College/local Dr. Peyton Williams, Jr. Adult Learning Center and expanded offerings
12. Continue support for Middle Georgia State University

**L** Downtown Cochran

**R** Paddle in Ocmulgee River





## Economic Development



13. Upgrade local school system infrastructure/facilities/services, as needed
14. Improve transportation access/quality
15. Continue to develop/maintain existing sites and new industrial park through technological, infrastructure, and other enhancements
16. Enhance/grow tourism
17. Support continued downtown revitalization of Cochran
18. Maintain economic viability/support/enhance agriculture/forestry land uses
19. Seek additional enterprises/venues/markets supportive of agriculture/forestry
20. Guide/direct appropriate development along U.S. 23/Cochran Bypass
21. Promote location on I-16/facilitate desired GA 112 interchange development
22. Proactively manage/guide growth and development through coordinated planning
23. Seek compatible development supportive of community's rural character and quality of life
24. Promote appropriate infill development
25. Improve community appearance/aesthetics
26. Seek county-wide broadband/fiber availability upgrades



*Cotton Field at Harvest, Bleckley County*





**U** Park Scene  
**B** Ocmulgee River



## Natural & Cultural Resources

1. Protect significant natural resources of Bleckley County
2. Conserve/protect Ocmulgee River and its corridor
3. Seek compatible utilization/recreational development supportive of existing rural character/quality of life
4. Conserve existing agricultural/forestry land uses
5. Address growth management/natural and cultural resources protection
6. Utilize existing and new public infrastructure to guide desired growth and development
7. Conserve/protect Ocmulgee Wildlife Management Area and Ocmulgee Public Fishing Area
8. Maintain/utilize/preserve/promote/adaptively use historic resources/heritage of Bleckley County
9. Continue downtown revitalization of Cochran
10. Support existing/encourage development of new nature-based, heritage, recreation, and agri-tourism opportunities
11. Improve community's appearance/aesthetics through countywide planning and appropriate regulation
12. Support the expansion of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park along the Ocmulgee River to include preserve status







## Housing



1. Encourage use of state/federal programs
2. Improve housing quality/appearance
3. Seek to encourage more diverse housing mix
4. Guide location of compatible housing developments through planning/infrastructure location/regulation
5. Upgrade community appearance through coordinated, comprehensive regulations

1. Plan/manage/guide future growth and development
2. Encourage compatible development/utilization
3. Preserve rural, small town character/quality of life
4. Develop/implement/enforce cooperative land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing/growth management/nuisance/environmental and code enforcement regulations
5. Continue downtown Cochran revitalization
6. Explore feasibility of annexation into Cochran
7. Conserve/protect significant natural/cultural resources through compatible development/utilization
8. Utilize existing and new infrastructure to guide desired growth/development
9. Encourage appropriate infill development
10. Preserve/maintain forestry/agriculture/open space
11. Improve community's appearance/aesthetics



## Land Use



## Community Facilities and Services



1. Utilize to enhance/promote existing and develop new parks/recreation facilities/activities with a master planning approach
2. Improve public access to Ocmulgee River
3. Guide/direct appropriate development along U.S. 23/Cochran Bypass
4. Improve/promote transportation access/quality
5. Continue to improve fire/public safety/emergency medical facilities/services countywide
6. Continue to support/maintain Bleckley Memorial Hospital's status as critical access hospital
7. Provide/maintain adequate governmental facilities/services
8. Maintain/upgrade/expand water/sewer and other infrastructure facilities and service, as needed
9. Utilize existing and planned infrastructure location to guide growth/development
10. Upgrade countywide solid waste/recycling services/facilities/initiatives in conjunction with improving community appearance
11. Continue support for Tessie W. Norris/Cochran-Bleckley Library
12. Maintain/upgrade quality educational facilities/programs
13. Improve countywide broadband technology/fiber access availability
14. Continue support for and enhance cultural facilities/programs/events

## Intergovernmental Coordination



1. Cooperate in coordinated growth management/nuisance/environmental regulation/code enforcement
2. Maintain/enhance local, regional, state cooperation
3. Continue to seek sharing/cooperation/consolidation in service delivery



# Long Term Community Policies



## Economic Development

1. The community will support and promote programs for the retention of existing local industries and entrepreneurs in its support and quest of business/industry retention and additional job opportunities
2. The community will utilize and support the Cochran-Bleckley Chamber of Commerce, Bleckley-Cochran Industrial Development Authority, and other existing local, regional, and state agencies to improve all of Bleckley County
3. The community will work with the Chamber of Commerce and Industrial Development Authority to develop a detailed economic development strategy and enhanced marketing to attract business/industry
4. The community will work to develop, extend, and maintain the necessary infrastructure to facilitate, guide, and accommodate future development
5. The community will seek diversified economic development with jobs and wages of all levels
6. The community will continue to actively recruit new industry and commercial/retail development compatible with, and supportive of, the resources, infrastructure, existing economy, and the natural environments of the county
7. The community will work to support entrepreneurial/small business development to promote job diversification
8. The community will work together to improve educational and skills levels to ensure a better qualified workforce for existing and future employers
9. The community will work together to develop, support, and promote programs which will enhance opportunities for local graduates to both live and work in the community upon graduation
10. The community will collaboratively support efforts to improve the county's adult literacy rate through cooperative efforts with the Oconee Fall Line Technical College at the local Dr. Peyton Williams, Jr. Adult Learning Center and other educational outreach programs
11. The community will continue to support Middle Georgia State University and its future expansion, as needed, through infrastructure upgrades, increased program offerings, and other means
12. The community will continue to support and encourage Oconee Fall Line Technical College to expand course offerings and programs to better serve existing and future students
13. The community will collaboratively support efforts to continuously improve the local school system as needed through infrastructure (technology and otherwise) upgrades and/or additions, the development of a local Career Academy, and other means



14. The community will continue to seek transportation improvements (highway, airport, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian) to enhance and support economic development efforts
15. The community will work to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure and other industrial park improvements to facilitate and accommodate desired economic growth
16. The community will work cooperatively to increase promotion and marketing of tourist facilities/services and attractions located in the community, and otherwise grow tourism as an important component of the local economy
17. The community will continue downtown revitalization efforts in Cochran through the use of the Main Street or similar program, Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and local, state, and federal incentives, as appropriate
18. The community will maintain agriculture/forestry as viable economic land uses through traditional and alternative enterprises, such as agri-tourism and nature-based tourism
19. The community will seek to conserve, protect, and keep viable its valuable agricultural lands and timberlands, and will work to pursue additional public and private supportive enterprises, venues, agribusinesses, or markets
20. The community will work to guide and direct appropriate development along the U.S. 23/Cochran Bypass
21. The community will increase promotion of its location on I-16 and facilitate desired interchange development at GA 112 interchange
22. The community will support the continuing improvement and utilization of the Cochran Municipal Airport
23. The community will proactively manage and guide its future growth and development through coordinated planning, and will seek development which protects its existing rural character and quality of life
24. The community will cooperate to promote appropriate infill development; upgrade gateways, commercial areas and substandard housing; and otherwise improve the appearance and aesthetics of the county and Cochran



## Natural and Cultural Resources

1. The community will seek to conserve and protect the Ocmulgee River Corridor, the county's significant groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, other important natural and cultural resources and the open spaces and landscapes of the county while promoting compatible utilization and recreational development
2. The community will work to conserve its existing prime farmland and forest areas while seeking development compatible with its existing rural character and quality of life
3. The community will manage its growth and development, and protect and conserve its important natural and cultural resources, through public infrastructure location/community investment and county-wide land use planning and appropriate regulations





4. The community will seek to conserve and protect the Ocmulgee Wildlife Management Area and Ocmulgee Public Fishing Area, and will work to pursue additional public and private outdoor recreation or nature venues
5. The community will maintain, utilize, promote, and preserve its heritage, and will seek to encourage public and private adaptive use/reuse of its historic buildings, historic districts, and landmark structures and pursue listing in the National Register of Historic Places and/or in local historic district(s), as appropriate
6. The community will work to utilize and promote the county's historic, natural, and agricultural sites and venues for compatible, appropriate heritage, nature-based, and agri-tourism development
7. The community will work to improve its appearance and aesthetics through county-wide planning and appropriate regulation



## Housing

1. The community will encourage the use of state and federal programs to improve availability of quality housing for all residents, and to encourage home ownership
2. The community will address substandard housing and concentrations of blight, including manufactured housing developments, and will cooperatively upgrade their quality and appearance through rehabilitation, removal, code enforcement and regulation
3. The community will seek to encourage a diverse mix of safe, quality housing, including affordable, rental, elderly, starter homes, and compatible workforce housing
4. The community will provide guidance to and for location of compatible housing developments through planning, infrastructure location, and regulation
5. The community will upgrade its appearance and the quality of its housing developments through coordinated and comprehensive land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing/code enforcement regulations

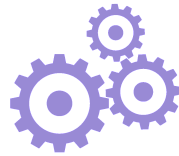


## Land Use

1. The community will plan, manage, and guide its future growth and development, and encourage growth compatible with its existing rural, small town character and quality of life
2. The community will cooperate to develop, implement, and enforce county-wide land use regulations,

subdivision/manufactured housing regulations, growth management/nuisance/environmental regulations, and housing and building codes

3. The community will continue downtown/central business district revitalization efforts in Cochran through use of the Main Street or similar program, Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and local, state, and federal incentives, as appropriate
4. The community will work together to explore the feasibility of annexation into Cochran where appropriate and desired
5. The community will seek to conserve and protect the county's significant natural and cultural resources through their compatible development/utilization
6. The community will work to encourage appropriate infill development through planning, infrastructure location, and regulation
7. The community will encourage growth which preserves and maintains forestry and agriculture as viable, functioning land uses and promotes the preservation of the county's open space
8. The community will seek to improve its appearance and aesthetics, including enhancing gateways/entranceways through litter control, landscaping/beautification, and other means



## Community Facilities and Services

1. The community will enhance and promote existing parks/recreation facilities and work to establish additional such facilities and activities to serve existing and future populations, and to further cultivate/support tourism in accordance with the development of a long range Recreation Master Plan
2. The community will continue to seek to provide improved access to the Ocmulgee River
3. The community will work to guide and direct appropriate development along the U.S. 23/Cochran Bypass
4. The community will continue to seek transportation improvements (highway, airport, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian) to enhance and support community and economic development efforts, future growth, and quality of life
5. The community will continue to seek resources to maintain existing roads/streets and to pave additional dirt and connector roads
6. The community will continue to improve local roads and improve traffic flow through paving, resurfacing, and other means
7. The community will work to improve fire, emergency medical, and public safety services county-wide, including equipment maintenance and upgrades, adequate training of personnel, and facility improvements as needed
8. The community will continue to work together to maintain and upgrade its health care facilities and services, including future services/equipment/facilities improvements and additional physician recruitment

