A RESOLUTION OF NEWTON COUNTY, GEORGIA, ADOPTING THE 2023 UPDATE TO THE NEWTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update for Newton County Board of Commissioners, Georgia, was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Newton County Board of Commissioners that the 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update for the Newton County Board of Commissioners, Georgia dated 06-27-2023, as approved by the Georgia Department Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 27th day of June, 2023.

The Newton County Board of Commissioners

Marcello Banes, Chairman

Attest:

Jackie Smith, County Clerk

NEWTON COUNTY

Comprehensive Plan Update

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INTRODUCTION

How to Use This Plan

This plan is a guiding document for Newton County's future. It was designed to be used by the Newton County community -- residents, elected leaders, county staff, local organizations, business owners, and workers alike. The information and ideas provided in this document are meant to help the community reach individual and collective goals, pointing to resources and strategies that can support meaningful work along the way. The 2018 Newton County Comprehensive Plan offered a strong starting point, and this update aims to strengthen that foundation with new analyses, community engagement, and implementation strategies created for both short- and long-term projects and programs. This plan update also satisfies the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) requirements to keep Newton County eligible for funding opportunities and programs DCA provides.

Each section focuses on a different aspect of the comprehensive plan, allowing the reader to navigate easily to their area of interest. The summaries below are intended to help all users of this plan find the information they need while also providing opportunities to explore different aspects of Newton County they may not already know.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section provides maps, data, and summary analyses that were used to create the Comprehensive Plan update. Utilizing spatial data and additional information gathered from Newton County staff, this section establishes the baseline of where Newton County is now, which in turn helps identify ways to move forward together.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through a variety of community outreach methods and events, the Community Engagement section shares perspectives from Newton County's diverse and growing community. It captures what residents love about living here and also what their biggest concerns are for the present and the future of their home county. These insights are used in conjunction with the information collected through the Existing Conditions analysis to develop the proposals detailed in subsequent sections.

NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

The Needs + Opportunities section synthesizes the information gathered in the Existing Conditions analysis and Community Engagement activities to identify appropriate projects and programs for Newton County's future. It is organized into a table with nine (9) focus areas: Housing, Transportation, Land Use, Economic Development, Intergovernmental Cooperation, Community Facilities + Services, Parks + Recreation, Natural, Cultural + Historic Resources, and Broadband.

COMMUNITY VISION

This section expands on the Needs + Opportunities table, providing more detailed direction and a deeper dive into county wide concerns. It explains Newton County's new Character Area map and positions it as a planning tool to propose targeted projects and programs to meet community priorities. These priorities are reflected in the Goals, Objectives, and Actions sub-section which offers proposals to address the Needs + Opportunities previously listed. This section also highlights three key elements identified by County staff as high priority items for the Plan: Housing, Economic Development and Parks + Recreation.

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The Community Work Program (CWP), formatted as a user-friendly table, includes prospective timelines, responsible parties and partners, and funding sources that can bring each item to fruition.

The CWP is presented in three parts:

- Report of Accomplishments;
- Short-Term Work Program; and
- Long-Term Work Program

APPENDIX

The Appendix provides detailed information on multiple sources referenced throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update. Documentation includes steering committee meeting agendas, outreach event sign-in sheets, full survey data reports, and more.

Plan Methodology

The Newton County Comprehensive Plan Update was a 10-month long process. As shown in the infographic below, the resulting document was created by multiple processes coming together over this period. Each plan element is explored in-depth in its respective section in the plan.

While most of the planning process is linear, it also requires constant review, revision, and reflection. This iterative approach was made possible through close collaboration with a large team, listed on the next page.

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Planning Team

The Planning Team wishes to express our sincere thanks to the people who devoted their time and talent to bring this Newton County Comprehensive Plan Update to fruition:

The residents, business owners and visitors who attended the public open houses, participated in the online community survey and provided comments, feedback and suggestions.

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- Heidi Stewart

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EXISTING

CONDITIONS

History + Community Profile

Located about 35 miles from downtown Atlanta, Newton County is located east of Atlanta on Interstate 20. Neighbored to the north by Walton County, to the west by Rockdale and Henry Counties, to the south by Butts and Jasper Counties, and to the east by Morgan County, Newton County covers approximately 279 square miles of north central Georgia. Newton County has five municipalities located entirely within the county: Covington, the county seat, Porterdale, Mansfield, Newborn, and Oxford. Social Circle is located partially in Newton County and partially in neighboring Walton County.

Newton County, named after Sergeant John Newton, who fought in the American Revolutionary War, is rich with history from both the Revolutionary and Civil War eras. There are over thirty historical markers and war memorials throughout the County which detail key events and influential individuals throughout the development of Newton County. It is also a popular Hollywood backdrop, having television shows such as In the Heat of the Night, the Dukes of Hazzard, Sweet Magnolias, and Vampire Diaries filmed in Covington.

Formed on December 24th, 1821 from portions of Henry, Jasper, and Walton counties, Newton County had only a brick store, a general store, and a stagecoach stop at the time of its inception. The original county seat was named Newtonsboro, but renamed in 1822 to Covington to honor General Covington, a hero in the War of 1812.

Newton County boasts beautiful landscapes, with extensive trail systems to explore the area, including the Alcovy River, Yellow River, and South River which converge at Lake Jackson. Downtown streets are lined with beautiful trees and antebellum architecture. The historic Newton County Courthouse, located in Covington, was built in 1884 in the Second Empire Style and is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful in the state.

Strategically located off a major interstate and in proximity to Atlanta, Newton County has quickly become a hub for manufacturing, hosting companies such as FiberVisions, Bridgestone, Michelin, and General Mills, to name a few. The electric vehicle manufacturer Rivian also has plans to build a manufacturing facility just outside the limits of the County in 2024.

Newton County's convenient location has also contributed to its ongoing growth. Home to 112,483 people, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, Newton County offers a short commute to Atlanta, appealing for those who don't want to live in a big city. Agricultural land has been converted to housing developments as families have moved into the area, either working locally or taking advantage of the proximity to Atlanta.

Photos courtesy of Newton County
public information department

People

This section provides summary statistics on key demographics for Newton County including population, age, households, racial and ethnic diversity, and health and wellness.

POPULATION

Newton County's total population in 2020 was 112,483. The population has grown by 12,525 people or 12.53% since 2010 and 81.42% since 2000. In comparison to surrounding counties, Newton County had the second highest population growth rate of 12.53% between 2010 and 2020, with Walton County having the highest growth rate at 15.41%. However, Newton County experienced the highest population growth rate of 81.42% between 2000 and 2020. Most of the growth has occurred in the western and central part of the County, which are the more urbanized areas.

While the Rivian manufacturing facility is expected to bring an immediate influx of development, the County is projected to exhibit a continued trend of strong population growth into the future.

HOUSEHOLDS

Total housing units in 2020 was 39,737 with a total of 27,747 families. Households with single parents decreased by 6.05%, while households with persons over age 60 increased by 40.61% between 2010 and 2020. Average family sizes are also increasing, in 2000 it was 3.13 and in 2020 it was 3.39, which represents an 8.31% increase.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Decennial Census

Single-person households demonstrated the highest growth rate between 2000 to 2020 with a growth rate of 182.97% followed by four or more person households at 126.09%. Households with persons over the age of 60 surpassed those with children under the age of 18 in 2020, showing that the population is trending older rather than younger.

Households receiving SNAP total 5,800 and make up 15.4% of all the households in the County. This is fairly low in comparison to the nation (24.4%) and the state's (26.7%) share of households on SNAP in 2020.

Average household size is 2.89 which is a 4.33% increase from 2000 when it was 2.77.

AGE

With a median age of 36.5 (2020 ACS), Newton County's median age is steadily increasing. In 2000 the median age was 33.5, then it rose 1.5 years in 2010 to 35 years old, and another 1.5 years to 36.5 years old in 2020. It is very close to the state's current median age of 36.9.

The largest share of the population in 2020 is the age group between 45 and 64 making up 25.9% or one-fourth of the total population. The age group with the highest growth rate of 46.16% between 2010 and 2020 was that of 65 years and older. The youngest age group, that of 0 to 4 years old, decreased by 6.83% between 2010 and 2020. Households with retirement income increased by 130% since 2000, going from 3,609 households in 2000 to 8,297 in 2020.

RACIAL + ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Since 2010, the non-white population of Newton County has grown by 37.1%% or by 17,774 people. A twenty-year view further demonstrates Newton County's increasing diversity. The percentage of residents of color has increased 311% or 49,743 people since 2000. Within this large increase in racial diversity, the Black and Hispanic communities are experiencing the largest share of growth accounting for 38,556 people and 6,007 people respectively between 2000 and 2020.

The share of the population that is white increased slightly by 1.6% between 2000 and 2020, but has decreased by 10.1% between 2010 and 2020.

HEALTH + WELLNESS

Among Georgia counties, Newton County ranks 49 of 159 or in the higher middle range (50-75%) in overall health outcomes according to a nationwide Health Outcomes analysis by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2022.

Based on this study, Newton County has less income inequality, and less air pollution and slightly less alcohol related driving deaths than the statewide averages. However, Newton County has less access to exercise opportunities, more adult obesity, more suicides and more violent crime than the statewide averages. The County shared similar statewide averages for low birth weights, uninsured, food insecurity and drug

Newton County Population by Race, 2020

- 0.65%
- 0.10%
- 0.93%
- 0.16%
- 3.79%
- 6.37%
- 41.6%
- 46.4%

Legend:
- White alone
- Black or African American alone
- American Indian and Alaska Native alone
- Asian alone
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone
- Some Other Race alone
- Population of two or more races:
- Hispanic or Latino

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Decennial Census

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

overdose deaths. Similar to the state, the leading causes of death in the County are cancer and heart disease, both of which have been linked to obesity. Roughly a little over one third of the residents in Newton County are obese.

Newton County's rate of driving related fatalities is 4% higher than the statewide average.

EDUCATION

Between 2010 to 2020, there was a 10.38% increase of adults over the age of 25 with a Bachelor's, Graduate and Professional Degree. In 2020, the share of adults with a Bachelor's, Graduate and Professional Degree in Newton County was 11.3% lower than the state average. In 2019, the Newton County school system's overall performance score was higher than 12% of other Georgia

districts, but lower than it was the year before. The school system rated a 63.9 percent in the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) in 2019, while the state performed at 75.9 percent. In terms of a letter grade, the overall score of 63.9 percent translates to a D.

In 2019, 52.1% of Newton County school district graduates were college and career ready, while the state received a score of 56.8%. Between 2017 and 2019, the school's college and career readiness score increased by 2.5%.

Newton County school system has a four-year graduation rate of 86.9%, which is higher than 40% of districts and 4.9% higher than the state average.

Economics

Newton County's economy is steady and expanding. The job growth rate between 2010 and 2019 was very high at 34.4% or by 7,013 jobs. The largest employment sectors are the Manufacturing sector, Educational Services and Retail Trade. The sectors that experienced the highest loss in terms of negative growth rate were Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction sector followed by the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting sector. The majority of Newton County residents (79.3%) work outside the county. The unemployment rate has decreased since 2010, however, the unemployment rate is still slightly higher than the Atlanta Metro Area's and the State's in 2020. The County's median household income has been increasing each decade, but it is lower than the state and Atlanta Metro Area's.

EMPLOYMENT
The number of jobs in Newton County is increasing. The total number of jobs in Newton County has increased by 11,428 jobs since 2002 and by 7,013 jobs since 2010. The job growth rate was 34.4% between 2010 and 2019 when it grew from 20,411 jobs in 2010 to 27,424 jobs in 2020.

The fastest growing employment sector in terms of number of jobs between 2010 and 2019 was the Wholesale Trade sector, which grew by 1,844 jobs. The second fastest growing employment sector between 2010 and 2019 is the

NEWTON COUNTY JOBS BY NAICS INDUSTRY SECTOR, 2019

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2019).

Administration + Support, Waste Management and Remediation sector which grew by 1,366 jobs, then the third is the Retail Trade sector, which grew by 1,071 jobs. The industry that lost the most jobs between 2010 and 2019 is Educational Services, which lost 147 jobs, but still remains the second largest employer in the County. The Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction Sector completely shut down, losing 100% of its jobs between 2010 and 2019 to zero jobs.

With the forthcoming Rivian Manufacturing facility and the JDA Industrial Site development, the County expects to gain more jobs in the future.

OCCUPATIONS
The top 3 employment industries that made up the most share of jobs within the county in 2019 are Manufacturing at 16.4%, Educational Services at 13.1%, then Retail Trade at 12.2%. In 2020 the

Median Household Income was $59,178 and the mean was $72,358. The County's median household income was slightly lower than the state's which was $61,224 in 2020.

WORKFORCE
Newton County's unemployment rate is trending downward with a significant decrease from 7.5% in 2010 to 3.9% in 2020. Newton County's unemployment rate decreased by 48% between 2010 and 2020, but it is still slightly higher than the Atlanta Metro Area's and the State's which are both 3.5%. A large majority (79.3%) of Newton County's residents commute out of the county to work. In 2019, 37,304 county residents worked outside the county.

More than 17,000 people commute to work inside the County. In 2019, 17,670 people commuted to Newton County to work. A total of 9,754 county residents both lived and worked within the county.

PERSONAL PROSPERITY

Newton County's median household income has steadily increased since 2000. The median household income for Newton County was $59,178 in 2020. Since 2010, the median household income has increased by 13.02% up from $52,361. During this same time period, the state's median household income increased 24.1% from $49,347 to $61,224.

Since 2010 (ACS 5 yr est.), the poverty rate has increased by 0.3% from 14.7% in 2010 to 15% in 2020. African Americans are at most risk for poverty. The poverty rate for African Americans in Newton County is 6.1% higher than it is for the white population, which follows the trend for the state.

Homeownership in Newton County is in decline. The homeownership rate in 2020 was 71.2%, which is 5.8% lower than it was in 2010. However, the county has a higher rate than the state by 7.2%, which has also seen a decrease in homeownership by 1.2% since 2010.

A significant share of residents are cost-burdened by housing, with renters sharing the brunt of it. Almost half of all renters, 57.7% to be exact, pay more than 30% per month of their gross income in housing costs compared to 28.2% of homeowners in 2020.

NEWTON COUNTY MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2000-2020

Source: U.S. 2000 Census, American Community Survey 2010 5-Year Estimates, American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates

Place

Newton County is a steadily growing county and is included in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell Metro Area. With a total of 279 square miles, Newton County has a wide variety of natural resources from rivers and lakes to farms and nature trails. There are two major lakes, Lake Jackson and Lake Varner, and three main rivers, the Alcovy, Yellow and South River. The Cricket Frog Trail is a well-established and well-used nature trail in the County that is continuing to grow and expand. Covington, the County seat, is well known for serving as a popular filming location for the GA film industry and adds significant value to the local economy. The county's rural land is slowly seeing more residential and industrial development and the population is expected to continue growing.

HOUSING

There is growth in the overall number of housing units within the county. Between 2010 and 2020, 1,395 new housing units were added to the County's housing stock, representing a growth rate of 3.64%. This was a slower rate than the state which had a 7.7% growth rate of housing units between the same time period. Additionally, only 5.5% of the housing units are vacant while 94.5% are occupied.

Housing Stock by Type Newton County, 2020

Legend: 1 Unit, 2 units, 3 or 4 units, 5 to 9 units, 10 to 19 units, 20 or more units, Mobile home, Boat, RV, van, etc.

Source: American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates

The housing stock, however, is not very diverse. The majority of housing is single-family homes at 87.6%. Only 8.1% is multifamily options and the remaining 4.3% is mobile homes. Of the 87.6% of single-family homes, 86.1% are detached and 1.8% are attached. The majority of multi-family units are 10 or more unit apartment complexes, which made up 3.5% of this type of housing.

Newton County's housing stock is somewhat young, with the majority (78.1%) of the existing homes being built by 1980 and after. Between 1980 and 1999 is when most of the existing homes were built, representing 37% of the housing stock. The remaining 22% were built in 1979 or earlier. The County has experienced more housing construction between 2000 and 2009 than the state by 14.4%. Since 2015, the vacancy rate among owner-occupied housing has decreased by 0.6% and the vacancy rate for renter-occupied housing decreased by 2.5%.

MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

The main interstate in Newton County is I-20 which had a GDOT Average Daily Trip (ADT) count of 51,500 ADT in 2021 and reached as high as 80,000 ADT the closer it got to Atlanta and has seen an increase since 2018. Highway 278 hits 31,700 ADT when it runs through Covington, but drops to 16,300 ADT when it is heading East out of Covington, where it steadily decreases. The interchange between I-20 and US-278 East in Covington (Exit 90) has the highest ADT of all the I-20 exits at 11,700 ADT a day.

In terms of major local roads in Newton County, Salem Road had the highest traffic count near the intersection with

Spring Rd at 22,100 ADT followed by Brown Bridge Road at the intersection with Jack McNeely Rd at 16,400 ADT. Another major local road is Highway 36, which reached its highest traffic near the intersection with County Rd 653 NW at 15,800 ADT. As with most rural and urban areas, ADTs increase on roads as they get closer to urbanized areas and decrease as they lead closer to rural areas.

For most of the major roads in the County, traffic has increased according to GDOT ADT data between 2019 and 2021.

According to the 2018 Newton County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, which utilized the ARC Regional Travel Demand Model, Newton County can expect an increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) of about 49% from 2015 to 2040, which represents approximately 1.2 million more vehicle miles traveled each day by 2040.

The Newton County Comprehensive Transportation Plan completed in 2018 and the most recent Newton County Master Transit Plan, each evaluate local conditions and are substituted for documentation in this Community Analysis.

The County has a recreational trail known as the Cricket Frog Trail, which runs along the old railroad line in the County, but it has been identified as needing some improvements. A survey by the County conducted in November 2022 revealed that residents want a bridge replaced on the trail and a need to extend it further throughout the County.

COMMUTING PATTERNS IN NEWTON COUNTY

Source: Newton County Development Services, U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2019).

COMMUTING PATTERNS

Most county residents travel outside the county to work, almost 80% in 2019. Over 17,000 people commute from surrounding counties to work in Newton County. In 2019. 9,754 people both lived and worked within Newton County. In 2019, 40.7% or 19,153 people living in the County commuted mostly to Covington (12.8%), Atlanta (10.8%) and surrounding areas (60.3%).

The second largest group of residents drive less than 10 miles to work, 26.4%. In 2019, 12,409 people living in Newton County drove less than 10 miles to work.

In 2019, 4,515 people living in Newton County, representing 9.6%, were reported to have commuted 50 miles or more to work. The share of county residents commuting 50 miles or more

to work has increased 3.2% since 2002.

Most residents commuting to work, a total of 37,304 residents, drive out of Newton County and back in their daily commutes.

PARKS AND RECREATION

There are 12 parks in Newton County. The majority of the parks are in the central more urbanized portion of the county, and three of these parks are located in the rural areas. In the Comprehensive Plan online survey, 42.9% of residents expressed they were satisfied with the existing sidewalk and trail system, however, following closely (33.6%) behind this result, was a desire to expand the existing sidewalk and trail system.

Population Projections

Population projections were calculated based on a review of the existing local growth and development plans, historical population changes along with the expected growth trends.

Newton County saw consistent growth at an average of 35% per decade over the past five decades. However, the population growth between 2010 and 2020 show growth has slowed down, which has been the trend for the majority of the Country.

While all of the existing population projections differ on the amount, they all predict that the County population will grow by at least 14% between 2020 and 2030 and at least 12% between 2030 and 2040. The existing population projections did not take into consideration the recent announcement of the Rivian Manufacturing facility and the 7,100 new jobs it will bring to the County, making them a reflection of "natural" or "base" growth. For 2020 to 2030, a baseline growth of 19,685 people was

Newton County Population Projections 2020-2040

Year	Population
2000 Census	62,001
2010 Census	99,958
2020 Census	112,483
2030 Projection	136,073
2040 Projection	158,524

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, GMC.

Calculation of Population Projections 2020-2040

	2020 Census	2030 GMC Projection	Change	2040 Projection	Change
Baseline Growth	112,483	132,168	17.5%	153,975	16.5%
Rivian Impact	--	3,905	21%	--	--
Newton County	--	136,073	21%	158,524	16.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, GMC.

projected to be added to the Newton County population (132,168 total population) by 2030, while a baseline growth of 21,807 people (153,975 total population) was projected to be added by 2040.

New population projections were then calculated to include the baseline growth projections and the percentage of new jobs expected to move to Newton County. It was projected that the County would capture 20% of the 7,100 new Rivian jobs by 2030, which results in 1,420 new hires expected to move to the County by 2030. No new Rivian hires were expected to move to the County between 2030 and 2040 and instead the population would grow as it would have done naturally, which was a projected 16.5% growth rate. Consequently, new jobs also mean new families. Therefore, when multiplied by the 2021 ACS average household size of 2.75 persons per household, the 1,420 new hires expected to move to the County then becomes 3,905 new people.

To get the final 2020 to 2030 population, the 3,905 people expected as a result of

the growth from Rivian was added to the 132,168 baseline growth projection. This leads to a total population of 136,073 by 2030 and a 21% growth rate between 2020 and 2030.

To get the final 2030 to 2040 population, the 16.5% baseline growth rate projected for this decade is applied to the 2030 projected population calculated above of 136,073. This leads to an increase of 22,451 residents, which is added back to the new 2030 baseline population projection (136,073) to get a final population of 158,524 for 2040.

The Newton County Population Projections graph shows the new population projections at each stage of the calculation process.

The Calculation of Population Projections 2020-2040 table shows the final population projections for 2020 to 2040 alongside the historical population census data for Newton County dating back to year 2000.

Neighborhoods

The Newton County Community Agenda dated February 19, 2008 included a Future Development Map. This map focused on defining local character and helping foster a better sense of community identity and sense of place. The scale of this map was prepared on the neighborhood level. The entire unincorporated County was divided into twenty-four (24) Character Areas. Each Character Area has its own vision, description, policies, and implementation strategies. The primary component of the 2008 Future Development Map was to promote new development within village centers and activity centers.

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update included a statement that "due to the extensive work and time used in creating the Character Area designations and map for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, and since this information is still viable, it has also been incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan, where it has been updated, edited, and/or revised as needed to bring it current." As a result, the twenty-four (24) neighborhoods were brought forward as the Character Area Map for that plan. Since this map was created, the neighborhood referred to as Gaither's Plantation has been renamed and is now known as Bear Creek.

During the development of this 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update, the results of data analysis, growth projections, community input and site visits pointed toward a fresh strategy for Character Areas in Newton County. This new strategy is organized around less categories – eight (8) instead of twenty-four (24) – to describe the unique characteristics of each Character Area. While the previous character area map was created by activity and village centers with a neighborhood focus, the updated character area map is anchored by larger areas that share common characteristics, such as density levels and development patterns. These updated Character Areas also contain community crossroads and village centers, some from the previous map. However, they are more comprehensive in highlighting areas with similar characteristics versus being neighborhood-centric. This approach to presenting more holistic Character Areas is strategic, intentional and designed to provide a stronger relationship between and among those areas that share common features and qualities.

While the proposed 2023 Character Area Map (included in the Community Vision section of this plan) represents the policy for future growth and development in Newton County, the previous version of the map featuring the twenty-four (24) neighborhood level areas is being retained and carried forward as an important resource for guiding development activity within established neighborhoods. It is important to recognize that these individual neighborhoods each have a unique identity, development pattern and history.

Gum Creek

Flint Hill

Almon

Cedar Shoals

Salem

Alcovy Trestle

Harris Springs

Station Springs

Hub Junction

Dixie

McGuirts Crossing

East End Starrsville

Flat Shoals

Lower River

Highway 11 Preservation Corridor

High Point

Gaither's Plantation

Newton Factory

Oak Hill

Rocky Plains Stewart

Lake Jackson

I-20

City Limits

1:140,000

Miles

0 0.5 1   2   3

Newton County, City of Covington, and all other entities involved in the GIS mapping process hereby disclaim any warranty or any other liability for the accuracy of this data, whether in printed or digital format. All data provided by said entities is for informational / planning purposes only and may not be relied upon as evidence of the location of property lines, topographical features, landmarks, monuments or any other legal purpose. Any questions about the GIS mapping process can be answered by contacting Newton County/City of Covington GIS at gis@co.newton.ga.us.

Source: previous Newton County Comprehensive Plan, 2018

Community Resources

Mapping a community's various resources is a useful tool in future land use and transportation planning. Identifying these areas and analyzing their spatial relationship and distribution throughout the county can highlight areas that are underserved with facilities such as parks, schools, and employment centers.

The Community Resource Map at right focused on three community resources spread throughout Newton County:

• Schools

• Parks

• Industrial Sites

The school locations are concentrated were population is most dense, confirming that school sites are well placed to serve existing communities. On the north and east side of the county -- areas that have been reserved mostly for conservation and low-density residential -- schools are unsurprisingly sparse. There is only one alternative school in the county, which could demonstrate an opportunity to diversify educational options for students and families.

This map also illustrates the large gaps in park service for Newton County. Parks are shown as the light green parcels. In the more dense area of the county, park space is few and far between. The large potential for park improvements is explored in detail in the Parks and Recreation subsection of Community Vision and is also included in the Parks and Recreation subsections of Needs + Opportunities, Goals, Objectives, and Actions and the Short-Term Work Program.

The dark blue areas on the far east of the map demarcate three large industrial sites -- including one megasite -- that Newton County is currently working to develop. These sites are laden with economic development potential, providing an opportunity for large-scale employment, population growth, and increased customer base for goods and services, which in turn can lead to increased development investment. Because of this potential, it is imperative for the county to think critically and strategically about these sites, leveraging programs and policies to make the most of what these sites have to offer. More details about these sites can be found in the Economic Development subsection of Community Vision, and throughout the Needs + Opportunities, Goals, Objectives + Actions and the Short-Term Work Program.

Newton County Community Resources

- College/University
- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- Alternative School
- Public Library
- Newton County Park
- Industrial Site

Watersheds

Newton County is home to multiple lakes, rivers, and streams. All of these bodies of waters are associated with one of the nine watersheds of the county. These watersheds, as shown in the Newton County Watershed map on the next page are:

- Big Haynes Creek

- Yellow River

- Cornish Creek

- City Pond

- Alcovy River

- Little River

- Murder Creek

- Bear Creek

- South River

These watersheds map the relationships between the county's natural water systems and the areas they connect. As such, watershed maps are helpful in identifying areas for conservation and water protection, offering guidance on what kind of development is suitable near these bodies of water.

Newton County's watershed maps currently serve as environmental overlays in the land development process. Covering almost 2/3 of the county's land area, these watersheds are important factors in the review of potential development patterns than can help meet the community's needs for housing and economic development while remaining environmentally responsible and sustainable.

Newton County Watershed Boundaries

Legend

Watersheds

- Alcovy River
- Bear Creek
- Big Haynes Creek
- City Pond
- Cornish Creek
- Little River
- Murder Creek
- South River
- Yellow River

Big Haynes Creek

Cornish Creek

City Pond

Yellow River

Alcovy River

Little River

South River

Bear Creek

Murder Creek

N

Newton County, City of Covington, and all other entities involved in the GIS mapping process hereby disclaim any warranty or any other liability for the accuracy of this data, whether in printed or digital format. All data provided by said entities is for informational/planning purposes only and may not be relied upon as evidence of the location of property lines, topographical features, landmarks, monuments or for any other legal purpose. Any questions about the GIS mapping process can be answered by calling Newton County/City of Covington GIS at 678-625-1620.

Regional Water Plan

Newton County is located in the Middle Ocmulgee Water District, which is composed of 12 counties in central Georgia. This district is forecasted to increase approximately 32% in residents over the next 35 years. This growth will increase the amount of water related features needed to support the major economic catalysts in the district, specifically water supplies, wastewater treatment, and infrastructure. The projected population increase will affect the volume of wastewater generated while simultaneously creating more demand for groundwater and surface water in the district.

Similar to the population growth, the percentage of water use by sectors such as industrial, energy, and municipal will increase significantly over the next 35 years. Concurrently, the amount of wastewater generated is forecasted to increase by 31% during the same timeframe. Having an adequate and efficient supply of water resources is critical to this area's sustainability and long-term resiliency. Therefore, it's imperative for Newton County to coordinate with other local governments in the area in proactive measures to protect the district's water resources.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning require local governments to evaluate their Regional Water Plan to assess if additional measures or mitigation efforts are required for compliance. In 2017, the Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Planning Council conducted an update to their Regional Water Plan. This updated plan report recommended actions, standards, and other statistical information for the Middle Ocmulgee Region's water resources for the next 35 years. Some of the features referenced in the document were issues such as water quality, water supply, and water conservation. For Newton County, the unincorporated county government (Water and Sewer Authority), along with cities of Covington, Porterdale, Oxford, Mansfield, and the town of Newborn (water only), all provide water and wastewater services to the local residents. Through various coordination and cooperative efforts, these local governments continue to work to comply with the applicable management and mitigation measures described in the Regional Water Plan.

River Basins

- Flint
- Ocmulgee
- Oconee

Source: Georgia Water Planning Regional Water Plan: Middle Ocmulgee Georgia, March 2023 (contrast added)

BROADBAND

In compliance with DCA requirements, this plan provides the following review of broadband services and access within Newton County.

The majority of Newton County has access to broadband, with only 7% remaining unserved according to the most recent Georgia DCA Broadband data. In 2022, there were 3,300 unserved locations (7%), while there were 46,326 (93%) served locations.

Broadband statistics are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, and where the broadband service is available to more than 80% of locations in a census block. Areas that did not meet this definition are delineated as 'Unserved'. The map depicts access to broadband, not subscription to broadband.

Source: GA Department of Community Affairs 2022 Georgia Broadband Availability Map

TRANSPORTATION

Newton County's transportation system has a strong network of arterial, collector, local roads and most notably access to the I-20 Interstate, which includes three exits for the County. Other major arterial roads include Highways 278, 11, 36, 162, 138, 81 and Brown Bridge Road all of which connect to collector and local roads to provide extensive access to the County. It is important to note that traffic was cited as a major concern among the residents during the community engagement process, which presents a transportation as a high priority for the County to address moving forward. There is no public transit, though the public has expressed a desire for an intercounty bus system.

In terms of alternative modes of transportation, the County is lacking a sufficient supply of options. There are a few County parks along with the Cricket Frog Trail, which serves as it's main trail, but it is in great need of improvement and expansion. There are no stand alone bike lanes and no known data on sidewalks. A comprehensive sidewalk and bike path study needs to be conducted to collect accurate data in order to increase the County's supply of alternative modes of transportation.

Source: Newton County Development Services, Esri

WATER + SEWER

The two maps included here, created by the Newton County Water and Sewer Authority, show the water providers and wastewater areas throughout the county. These maps are important considerations for this plan because they identify areas that can support development with existing sewer and water service and they also demonstrate gaps in service where development may be difficult or unsustainable.

Water Service Areas
Newton County
2020

Wastewater Areas

- Covington Sewer
- Mansfield Sewer
- NCWSA Sewer
- Oxford Sewer
- Porterdale Sewer

City of Social Circle

City of Oxford

City of Covington

City of Porterdale

City of Mansfield

Town of Newborn

Wastewater Collection and Treatment Areas
Newton County
2019

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N

0   1   2   4
Miles

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Outreach Methods

Meaningful community engagement is foundational to any successful comprehensive plan. Such input from community members serves as the plan's bearing, setting its course for well-formed goals and achievable implementation.

This plan's community engagement efforts launched in Fall 2022 and concluded in Spring 2023. These efforts included five open house workshops, three steering committee meetings, seven stakeholder interviews, and two online surveys. Full details including sign-in sheets, meeting agendas, and comprehensive data reports can be found in the Appendix.

During these community outreach efforts, the planning team's priority was two-fold: 1) encourage and facilitate resident participation and 2) listen. The goal at this stage was to gather what residents were sharing and document that feedback for in-depth review. This documentation was combined with the analysis presented in the Existing Conditions section to identify community priorities across a range of subjects. The results of this outreach are detailed in the **Findings + Trends** subsection.

OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS
With the help of the Newton County Development Services and GIS Departments, GMC held five (5) public open house workshops, one in each County district to garner public opinion and feedback during the comprehensive plan. The workshops were held on November 9th, 10th, 14th, 16th and 17th, 2022 at various locations in each district. A total of 88 residents, business owners, and other related actors attended.

After visitors signed-in, they could visit the prepared four stations and complete different activities. The activity at each station is detailed below:

Station 1: Online Survey. Visitors used one of the tablets or scanned the QR code to take the online community survey.

Station 2: Setting Priorities for Goals. Visitors used dot stickers to indicate their priorities for 10 goals related to Newton County's development.

Station 3: Map Exercise. Visitors placed numbered stickers to indicate their favorite places and places they feel need improvement or attention.

Station 4: Financing Bucket Exercise. Visitors "spent" money on the discretionary projects they felt are most important for the future of Newton County.

Newton County and GMC staff were stationed at each table to answer any questions and listen to comments and concerns from residents, and an input form was provided for longer comments.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee for this plan consisted of a diverse range of local leaders nominated by Newton County Board of Commissioners. This group of ten individuals included residents, business owners, local officials, and other relevant perspectives and expertise that helped guide this plan's overall trajectory. The steering committee gathered for three different meetings, October 19, 2022, January 11, 2023 and March 15, 2023, completing different exercises at each session. These exercises included prioritizing goals, identifying favorite places and areas that need improvement, discussing character areas, and creating short-term work program items.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Newton County staff identified a list of local stakeholders for additional outreach. These 14 stakeholders participated in individual interviews with the planning team to share more about their specific experiences of and visions for Newton County. Notes from these interviews were transcribed and integrated into the overall community outreach findings.

ONLINE SURVEYS

Two online surveys, one of which was available to the general public and one limited to youth and college students, were designed to gather residents'

feedback on a range of topics. The general public had a total of 296 respondents, and the youth survey had an impressive 791 respondents.

The general public survey featured twenty one (21) questions total, the majority of which addressed comprehensive planning topics such as economic development, land development practices, parks and recreation, housing, and transportation. The last two questions were open-ended, allowing respondents space to provide written feedback. Responses for this survey were gathered from October 19, 2022 to December 6, 2022.

After reviewing the general public survey results, Newton County

leadership expressed a desire to hear more from the youth in the community. The planning team created a youth survey to satisfy this request. The survey was open from January 30 to February 17, 2023, and featured seven (7) questions which were tailored to the youth population. It was designed with more open-ended questions to provide youth an opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns about Newton County and the comprehensive plan process. The survey was then opened to youth and college students in the area.

A summary of the results from both of these surveys is included in the Findings and Themes subsection, and full data reports are included in the Appendix for this plan update.

YOUTH SURVEY SCREENSHOTS

NEWTON COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Findings + Trends

The five outreach methods detailed in the previous section resulted in a range of useful information that guided this plan update, specifically the formation of the Needs and Opportunities, Goals, Objectives + Actions, and Short Term Work Program sections. While each method offered a unique engagement opportunity and every participant brought their own perspective, examining these outreach efforts as a whole allows for the identification of key findings and trends where there is potential for compromise and collective action.

OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS
The open house meetings revealed that while each of Newton County's five districts hold differing priorities, there are some areas of agreement especially when it comes to support for potential investment. The prioritizing goals exercise highlighted the district's distinct needs as well as their possible overlaps. District 1 prioritized transportation options and was the only district to do so. District 2 and District 3 both focused on support for existing businesses and economic development. District 4 and District 5 both highlighted green spaces, with District 4 prioritizing a higher level of parks and recreational service and District 5 emphasizing protecting and accessing natural and cultural resources. The top five favorite places identified in the map exercise from all districts were: Turner Lake Park/Senior Services, Covington Square, Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center, Cricket-Frog Trail, and Lake Varner/Cornish Creek Reservoir. In the

financing bucket exercise, the districts allocated the most to Recreational Services + Programs as well as Zoning Code Update. This encouragement for potential investment demonstrates widespread support for increasing park facilities and access to greenspace as well as a comprehensive review of and update to the County zoning ordinances and land development regulations. Roadway Improvements + Beautification also received a lot of support across districts while Transportation Alternatives were lower on the list, demonstrating that residents support increasing vehicle amenities but are not as supportive of options for active transportation or transit.

STEERING COMMITTEE
At their first meeting, Steering Committee members identified their highest priorities for this plan as Housing, Transportation, and Economic Development. These three priorities remained throughout the three sessions. For housing in particular, the committee was most concerned with responsible management of growth and development, diversifying the County's housing stock, and providing affordable options for workers. Committee members also discussed increasing public transit options but emphasized the importance of keeping these systems in scale with community needs. The committee discussed development patterns in depth, exploring the pros and cons of a nodal development strategy and investigating how the County's zoning ordinances

and overlays could best support the growing population's needs. In terms of economic development, steering committee members were interested in zoning overlays and incentives that could attract high-quality employers, and they also discussed ways to increase County resident's options for "after work" activities including restaurants, bars, movie theaters, et cetera.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews also focused on a variety of issues for Newton County. Despite their diverse backgrounds and interests, stakeholders agreed that there is a need for more housing options specifically on the east side of the County. There were multiple mentions of how important it is to develop workforce housing and ensure the County provides

GENERAL PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent's Residence by District

District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5
28%	12%	10%	11%	16%

Highest & Lowest Priority Issues for County

Traffic   Walking/Biking Trails

TOP 3 REASONS FOR LIVING IN NEWTON COUNTY

1. Small Town Character
2. Proximity to Family and Friends
3. Affordability of property and homes

Housing

Respondents would like **more Single-family residential** future housing and **less mobile homes.**

48%

More Single-family Residential

Q4: Do you want to live in Newton County when you are older?

- I don't know/Maybe/Depends 10%
- 1.9%
- No 70%
- Yes 18%

Legend: ■ No ■ Yes ■ I don't know/Maybe/Depends ■ Unclear

Q2: What are the best things about Newton County?

Categories: Places to hang out, Shopping, Parks/Open Space/Nature, Proximity to Atlanta, Small Town Character, Other (please specify), Opportunities to get involved in the...

Legend: ■ Responses

a good balance of homes for all users, from entry level homes and multi-family developments to more high-end options. Stakeholders also expressed the need for more amenities for youth to retain long-term residents and attract young families. Some strategies and ideas they discussed included increasing sidewalks and trails, improving broadband service, and revisiting zoning ordinances and overlays to make sure they can support economic development to foster employment opportunities and improve resident access to amenities.

ONLINE SURVEYS
The general public online survey captured important data on resident priorities and concerns. It is important to note that the general public survey respondents were disproportionately from District 1, with 28% of responses coming from that area. The median respondent age was just under 44 years old. Survey respondents identified their top three reasons for living in Newton County as small town character,

proximity to family and friends, and affordability of property and homes. Respondents said that they believe the top economic development concern is attracting more retail and restaurants to the area, with a specific focus on family entertainment options.

The youth survey offered different but equally important insights into Newton County and its future. When asked what they liked best about Newton County, 52.3% of youth respondents chose "Places to hang out," however, the answer "places to hang out" also ranked 2nd on the youth survey list of worst things about Newton County. These responses gain significance also when compared to the open-ended responses. Among the 775 answers to "Do you want to live in Newton County when you are older?", 543 respondents (70%) either explicitly said "No" or essentially expressed the answer no ("I would not like to", "I don't want to", etc.). Most said no because they thought Newton County lacked things to do and future career and college opportunities, as well as a desire to explore other places

to live or move near family and friends who live elsewhere. Overall, the youth survey demonstrates that while youth and college students may have favorite spots in the County, they do not see themselves staying as lifelong residents.

Three themes that emerged throughout all outreach methods were traffic, housing, and economic development.

Traffic was identified as the highest priority item in the general public online survey, and the open house meetings collectively agreed that Highway 278 traffic was the area needing the most improvement in the County. Similarly, steering committee members identified traffic congestion as a major problem and expressed the County's need for long-term planning around transportation in general. Even the youth survey listed traffic among one of their least favorite things about living in Newton County. With this nearly unanimous concern so clearly expressed, this plan offers multiple suggestions for transportation and traffic congestion in the Transportation section of the Goals, Objectives + Actions and Short Term Work Program chapters.

Housing was also identified as a priority item across outreach methods, but the concerns with and suggestions for housing differed between groups. For example, 48% of respondents to the general public online survey said they would prefer to see more single-family residential housing in the County. The steering committee, however, expressed concerns about a lack of housing diversity and suggested an evaluation of what housing types are missing and what is needed based on anticipated demand. This tension is one that many communities face as they try to find common ground between providing housing for growing populations and preserving the residential character existing residents know and prefer. Newton County residents appear to agree on the issue of affordability. Open house participants, survey respondents, steering committee members, and stakeholders all expressed the need to provide affordable housing options. This input is integrated into planning proposals in the Housing section of the Goals, Objectives + Actions and Short Term Work Program chapters. Housing is also included as one of three Key Elements of the plan, and that section provides more detailed information on increasing residents' housing options while still maintaining Newton County's small-town environment.

Economic development also ranked high for many participants throughout the community engagement. Online survey respondents said that they would like to see more retail and restaurant businesses as well as more family entertainment options come to the County. Support of existing businesses was a high priority in open house meetings, too. Similarly the Steering Committee echoed the need for economic development including increasing workforce development, diversifying economic development efforts and outreach, and attracting new businesses through industrial and commercial development. This feedback was integrated into the Economic Development section of the Goals, Objectives + Actions and Short Term Work Program chapters. Economic Development is also included as one of three Key Elements of this plan, with more in-depth information about potential programs and strategies to build Newton's economic future for all.

NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

Needs and Opportunities List

• •

This chapter provides the list of needs and opportunities that Newton County has identified during this planning process. It is the intention of the County to address the needs and opportunities listed herein through corresponding implementation measures in the Community Work Program in the following chapters. This list was developed with assistance from the Newton County Steering Committee, Public Open House Input, Staff, Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission feedback. They all utilized various engagement exercises, evaluation of demographic and economic information summarized in the Existing Conditions chapter, analysis of the Department of Community Affair's Quality Community Objectives, and review of the public input received through public workshops and community surveys, summarized in the Appendix.

HOUSING

A Housing Element is required for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Communities, and optional but encouraged for all other local governments. While reviewing and analyzing data included in the Existing Conditions chapter, developing the needs and opportunities listed below, and identifying action items in the Community Work Program related to housing, the following factors were considered in an effort to evaluate the adequacy and suitability of existing housing stock to serve current and future community needs. These factors included housing types and mix, condition and occupancy, local cost of housing, cost-burdened households in the community, jobs-housing balance, housing needs of special populations, and availability of housing options across the life cycle.

The County's goal to provide a range of safe and healthy housing types, sizes, costs, and densities for all income levels and lifestyles promotes housing as a high priority. This involves addressing the pending housing demand expected as a result of the population increase projected in the next 5 to 10 years.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the Housing planning element, the County's goals, and Housing Options Quality Community Objective are listed below.

- The County is lacking a supply of quality and affordable housing stock to meet the demand of a growing population, especially for middle-income families, employees in the service sector and entry-level workers.

- The County needs to consider extending their water and sewer service area to serve existing and future residents as well as encourage more efficient use of land.

- There is a need for updated data on the existing housing stock which includes the types and locations of newly-built housing and current occupancy rates.

- There is a need to protect housing from encroaching industrial development.

- The County needs a well-balanced mix of housing types at a variety of price points.

- The County should continue to adhere to the Zoning Division 430: Open Space Conservation Residential Overlay in order to encourage development that preserves open space and maintains small-town character.

- More aging in place/transitional/assisted living housing is needed to serve the aging.

- The Planning Commission needs to identify areas suitable for higher density residential development and ensure the zoning code encourages the architectural design standards that fit best within the context of the County.

- There is a need to address the jobs-to-housing mismatch.

- There is a need to identify selected rural areas to remain agricultural/low density residential.

- The Highway 278 Corridor presents an opportunity for future locations of higher density residential and mixed-use development.

TRANSPORTATION

The efficient movement of people and goods is important to both residents and visitors. For Newton County, this can include access to work, educational facilities, and leisure activities, both intra-county as well as for commuter traffic. The Transportation element for the 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update will account for recent changes in population growth, demographics, and market/economic development demand. It will also take into account evolutions in new policies, technologies, trends, as well as the vision by both the leadership and residents. The results of a robust community involvement and stakeholder participation effort guided the visioning and development of needs and opportunities for transportation.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the Transportation planning element, the County's goals, and Transportation Options Quality Community Objective are as follows:

- The county needs to continue working with GDOT to prepare for increase in traffic due to the Rivian Manufacturing facility.

- The county needs to expand and connect the existing walking and bicycling infrastructure.

- There is a need to ensure traffic is flowing well and connected to a well-circulated network.

- There is a need in the south eastern part of the county for more transportation improvement projects.

- The county needs to ensure traffic management is incorporated in new development plans.

- There is a need to protect roads from being damaged by increased heavy truck traffic due to the Rivian Manufacturing facility and its suppliers.

- A paving plan and conditions report for currently paved roads is needed.

- Transit options, such as a circulator bus or intercounty transit service, are needed in the County, especially for low-income and senior citizens.

- The County needs to create and pass a TSPLOST as a funding source for transportation.

- Green transportation infrastructure and equipment is encouraged.

- There is a need to keep the commercial corridors clean and free of blight.

- The County needs to address traffic congestion issues .

LAND USE

The County has established thoughtful land use development patterns as a goal in order to encourage a balanced mix of uses and meet the needs of current and future residents. Newton County seeks to prepare for growth while still maintaining the rural quality historically characteristic of the County. This growth would involve the incorporation of land use and transportation in zoning decisions, design standards upheld in new development, introducing new economic opportunities, and ensuring land uses ultimately benefit residents in Newton County.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in support of the Land Use planning element, the County's goals and Efficient Land Use and Local Preparedness Quality Community Objective are as follows:

- The County should consider availability of existing infrastructure and/or costs of new infrastructure in new development, and encourage developers to contribute to the costs in some way when possible.

- There is a need to expand the water and sewer infrastructure to prepare for future growth.

- The County should promote orderly development and avoid "spot rezoning."

- There is a need to develop infrastructure and connectivity based on alternative transportation such as bikes, walking, etc.

- There is a need to recruit employers that offer workers a wage sufficient to purchase and maintain the County's current housing stock.

- There is a need to better coordinate land use and transportation planning.

- Watersheds are a significant environmental constraint to development in Newton County and need to be carefully developed as well as protected, there is a need to research strategies to reduce the required buffer along watersheds.

- The County needs to encourage nodal development and discourage strip development patterns.

- There is a need to revisit and update the overlays and consider expanding or combining overlays.

- There is a need to review the zoning code to ensure it is properly encouraging positive growth.

NATURAL, CULTURAL + HISTORIC RESOURCES

The County's goal for natural, cultural and historic resources is to protect, revitalize and promote the local natural, cultural and historic sites and areas. Cultural and historic resources, such as the Brick Store and the Newton County Courthouse, are what make Newton County unique and give it a sense of place that should be enjoyed and remembered for generations to come. The County also commits to environmental preservation and resiliency by encouraging the protection of the natural watersheds, creeks, and rivers that decorate Newton County.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources planning element, the County's goals, and Resource Management and Sense of Place Quality Community Objective are as follows:

- The County should protect its natural resources and recognize its surrounding agricultural areas, wetlands, floodplains, and habitats that convey a sense of place.

- The County should provide more volunteer opportunities to citizens for County clean-up events.

- The County's Park system needs updating and expanding, especially Factory Shoals, to provide better parks and recreation opportunities for residents.

- The county needs to better prepare for natural disasters with a hazard mitigation plan.

- There is a need to develop land in a way that does not encroach on watersheds, such as a conservation subdivision.

- The County needs to ensure industrial development does not harm the environment.

- There is a need to preserve open space and the tree canopy in new development.

- The County should improve its existing view sheds, scenic overlooks, and recreation areas.

- There is a need for more public events and public spaces to hold them.

- There is a need to better promote the cultural and historic sites in Newton County.

- The County needs to better utilize its historic sites and areas for tourism.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is very important for the quality of life of a local community. It can lead to employment growth, job training opportunities, and an increased tax base. For the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Economic Development element is key for analyzing labor force trends, employment rates, and the type of infrastructure needed to bolster the local economy. Working with the local residents as well as the county's stakeholders, a vision was established to assess the current economic development climate as well as recommend strategies for future economic growth. From the extensive public engagement process, the following needs and opportunities for economic development were established.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the Economic Development planning element, the County's goals, and Economic Prosperity Quality Community Objective are as follows:

- There is a need for more retail and restaurants throughout the County to prevent leakage to other counties.

- The County needs to actively recruit and incentivize businesses.

- There is a need to improve the quality-of-life amenities in the county in order to attract high quality employers and better serve its current residents.

- The County needs flex spaces to encourage entrepreneurial activity and help grow small businesses.

- The County needs to revitalize blighted or vacant commercial areas, especially those near disadvantaged neighborhoods.

- There is a need to review and update the zoning code and streamline the development review process to encourage commercial development.

- The County needs to target industries such as: advanced manufacturing/high tech; bio-life sciences/medical; film/TV/music; headquarters for commercial/retail.

- The County should limit the number of food processing businesses and distribution centers located in the County.

- The County should continue the strategy of selling water to the NCWSA who in turn sells to the Development Authority as an incentive for development.

- There is a need to recruit more medical facilities and companies to the County.

- The County needs to increase amenities and shopping options for the youth and families (entertainment/retail/parks).

- There is a need for more workforce development opportunities.

- There is a need to focus on retaining and supporting existing businesses.

- There is an opportunity for the County to attract the film industry to Newton County Unincorporated areas, especially as the film industry is already well-established in Covington with a film studio very close to the City boundary with the County.

- Expanding the local airport is an opportunity the County should consider.

- The County should continue to recruit industrial businesses to the three established industrial sites.

- There is a need to extend water and sewer infrastructure to attract growth.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The County's goal of intergovernmental cooperation encourages the communication and collaboration of Newton County with the surrounding municipalities including all incorporated cities and other governing organizations to address shared needs through adequate funding, legislation and technical assistance.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the regional planning element, the County's goals, and Regional Cooperation Quality Community Objective are listed below.

• In the past, there have been differences and miscommunication between the County and the City of Social Circle when it comes to annexation and water/sewer services.

• There is a need to work with incorporated cities to expand water and sewer service to areas that have failing septic tanks or higher density is desired.

• As the County continues to grow, departments and agencies across jurisdictions will have to work together to create larger scale solutions.

• Opportunities exist to increase efforts of regional coordination and cooperation.

• When the Service Delivery Strategy requires an update, there are opportunities between Newton County and the incorporated cities to solve problems broader in scope than any one entity could solve alone.

• As the County continues to grow, the need will arise for additional law enforcement and emergency response staff.

• As the County continues to grow, the need will arise for additional planning, water, and street personnel to maintain an expanding infrastructure.

• Opportunities exist for staff, board member, and volunteer training on a regional level to respond to regional issues.

• There is a need to periodically assess existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as appropriate.

• There is a need to work with incorporated cities to plan and implement extension of water service, and sanitary sewer service to areas that have failing septic tanks, where cost effective to do so or where redevelopment to higher density is desirable.

• The County should incorporate the County Strategic Plan into the comprehensive plan recommendations.

COUNTY FACILITIES + SERVICES

The County's goal for its facilities and services encourages the County and relevant actors to focus on providing an excellent level of public services and inclusive facilities for existing and future residents. There should be a safe environment for youth and people of all ages to socialize and sufficient utilities and infrastructure for families to take root for generations.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the Community Facilities and Services planning element, the County's goals, and the Community Health, Local Preparedness and Resource Management Quality Community Objectives are listed below.

• The current water and sewer infrastructure needs to be expanded to meet the needs of current residents and prepare for future residents.

• There is some infrastructure that is aging and in need of repair.

• There is a lack of sidewalks, trails and parks in Newton County.

• The county is in need of more access to mental health services.

• There is a need for more facilities and opportunities for public gatherings and events.

• There is a need for more community centers where the youth in Newton County can gather and socialize.

• There is a lack of entertainment-based businesses in the county geared toward youth and families.

• There is a need to develop a strategy to effectively deal with and prevent future illegal dumping throughout the county.

• There is a need to provide public facilities, services and programming for all ages, especially youth.

• The County needs to expand library services to include more digital and online services.

BROADBAND

The County's goal for broadband involves increasing cost-effective access to broadband internet where needed and ensuring service is reliable. Newton County believes access to broadband is a critical need for all of its residents and will make broadband deployment a high priority.

The needs and opportunities that were identified in association with the broadband planning element, the County's Goals and Economic Prosperity, Local Preparedness, and Educational Opportunities Quality Community Objective are as follows:

- Recognize the importance of the availability of quality broadband services as a valuable component of economic development and livability.

- Ensure equitable access to broadband services.

- There is a need to ensure reliable telecommunication services is available for emergency use.

- A comprehensive broadband plan is needed as well as designation as a Broadband Ready Community.

- There is a need for affordable broadband services for children in school.

- There is a need to work with providers to offer service to rural residents when installing or upgrading fiber or other broadband technology that utilizes public right of way.

- The County needs to Identify and consider adopting policies that facilitate broadband deployment, such as appropriate streamlined project permitting, a county "dig-once" policy, or master lease agreements that allow the installation of broadband infrastructure on utility poles and light standards.

PARKS + RECREATION

The County's goal for Parks and Recreation involves maintaining and supporting a high level of parks and recreation services throughout the County. Newton County believes access to parks and recreation services is an important need for all of its residents and will devote resources to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to utilize safe and high-quality parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

- Recognize the importance of the availability of quality parks and recreation facilities and services as a valuable component of economic development and livability.

- Ensure equitable access and maximize access to parks services.

- There is a need to construct river trails, especially in the Porterdale River District.

- There is a need for utilize the reservoir, Lake Varner, for increased recreation or leisure activities.

- Consider establishing pocket parks as a way to improve connectivity throughout the community.

- There is a need to ensure future parks and trails are well-lit and safe.

- The County could explore innovative public private partnerships to help improve parks throughout the County.

- There is a need to continue large scale planning for recreation parks, 50 acres or more, in the North West and South Eastern part of the County.

- The County should incorporate the recently adopted 2022 County Parks Master Plan by LOSE Design Group into the recommendations for parks and recreation in the Comprehensive Plan update.

- There is a need to increase the number of parks in underserved parts of the County and improve existing parks to meet the needs of all Newton County residents.

COMMUNITY VISION

Vision Statement

This section gathers all the information from the Community Engagement exercises and Existing Conditions analysis and synthesizes them into Goals, Objectives, and Actions for Newton County's future. It provides the framework for County departments, local organizations, and residents to strategize and work together to reach collective goals.

The County has adopted the following vision to guide future development and decision making:

> Newton County seeks to provide a high quality of life for its residents and actively preserves its cultural, historic, and natural value while welcoming new growth and encouraging new economic and developmental opportunities for the betterment of its residents.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

Character Areas

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This plan provides Newton County with an updated Character Area map, re-designed to serve as a guiding tool for strategic development that aligns with the County's community goals. The former Character Area Map that was created as part of the 2018 plan now serves as a Neighborhood Map for the County (see the Neighborhood Map in Existing Conditions for more details). The updated Character Area Map shown at right is the result of multiple sources including the Neighborhood Map, watershed overlays, rezoning requests, Future Land Use Map, and input received from Newton County staff and community outreach. The goal was to combine these sources to identify character areas that reflect existing conditions and demonstrate the potential for desired development patterns. These character areas may include diverse land uses, but they are distinguished from one another through fundamental characteristics and/or a specific future vision.

The updated Character Area Map is consistent with the Goals, Objectives, and Actions outlined in the rest of this section, and it satisfies the DCA's guidance for comprehensive plans to identify character areas based on existing and future land use. As such, this map can be used for review and revision of Newton County's Future Land Use Map as well as applicable zoning ordinances. On the neighborhood level, the Character Area Map can help residents, decision makers, and developers make informed and strategic choices about future development.

The Character Areas selected by the planning team and detailed in this section are:

• Low Density Rural Residential
• Emerging Suburban
• Established Suburban Core
• Conservation + Recreation
• Industrial + Heavy Commercial
• Live/Work Areas
• Village Centers
• Community Crossroads

In the pages that follow, each of these character areas is explained in detail including overall vision, included neighborhoods, applicable land use and zoning, and corresponding community goals from the Goals, Objectives, and Actions subsection of this plan. This new Character Area Map is the first step toward meeting Land Use Goal #4 in this plan, which is to update zoning codes to better serve the needs of the county.

Newton County Character Areas

Legend:
- Low Density Rural Residential
- Emerging Suburban
- Established Suburban Core
- Conservation & Recreation Area
- Industrial/Heavy Commercial
- Live/Work Areas
- Community Crossroads
- Village Centers

Low Density Rural Residential

Vision

The areas designated as rural residential are characterized by primarily agricultural and natural areas with majority low-density, large-lot residential development that lacks access to public water and sewer. There may be areas of commercial development, particularly at certain intersections and crossroads.

It is envisioned that this area may receive access to public water/sewer in the long-term, but development should be carefully planned to protect environmentally sensitive areas and maintain small-town character.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are either completely or partially located in the new Low Density Rural Residential character areas:

- Gum Creek
- Flint Hill
- Highway 11 Preservation Corridor
- Starsville
- Bear Creek
- Newton Factory
- Stewart
- Lake Jackson

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Rural Residential (RR), Residential (RES), Agricultural/Forestry (AF), Park/Recreation/Conservation (PRC), and neighborhood level commercial (COM).

Zoning districts most appropriate for this area include Agricultural (A), Rural Estate (RE), Agricultural Residential (AR), Single-Family Residential (R-1) (R-2), Mixed-Use Single-Family Residential (MSR), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI).

LOW DENSITY RURAL RESIDENTIAL EXISTING CONDITIONS - County Road 213

Source: GMC Planning Team

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Low Density Rural Residential Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Low Density Rural Residential Areas. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Implement the Rural Village Overlay for a particular rural area (no less than 100 acres and with the majority agreement of surrounding landowners) the community would like to preserve.

- Improve existing view sheds and scenic overlooks

- Require high quality design standards for rural residential development.

Goals

Housing Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Transportation Goal #3: Ensure there is efficient traffic circulation and roads are well-maintained.

Land Use Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

Economic Development Goal #4: Increase workforce development efforts to better prepare and connect people to jobs.

County Facilities + Services Goal #2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal #3: Protect Newton County's environment and manage its natural resources.

Broadband Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband internet service.

Parks + Recreation Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home.

LOW DENSITY RURAL RESIDENTIAL EXAMPLE

Source: Redfin Real Estate website

Emerging Suburban

Vision

The areas designated as Emerging Suburban include existing suburban neighborhoods in primarily rural parts of the County that are facing pressure to transition to a more dense and urban style of suburban development. Emerging Suburban character areas are suitable for higher density residential subdivisions when future access to public water/sewer services, as well as any necessary transportation improvements, is available. Due to the fact that these areas are typically adjacent to existing dense residential and commercial development with access to public water and sewer services, it is likely that public water and sewer services would be extended to surrounding areas first, especially if there is demand.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are either completely or partially located in the new Emerging Suburban character areas:

- Oak Hill
- Rocky Plains
- Lower River
- Almon
- Alcovy Trestle
- Harris Springs
- McGuirts Crossing
- Dixie
- Hub Junction

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Rural Residential (RR), Residential (RES), High Density Residential (HDR), Agricultural/Forestry (AF), Park/Recreation/Conservation (PRC), commercial (COM), Industrial (IND), Public Institutional (PI), Development Node (DN), and Mixed-Use (MX).

Zoning districts most appropriate for this area include Agricultural (A), Rural Estate (RE), Agricultural Residential (AR), Single-Family Residential (R-1)(R-2), Mixed-Use Single-Family Residential (MSR), Mobile Home Park (MHP), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), General Commercial (CG), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), Light Industrial (M1), Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential Development (CORD-PRD), and Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential-Commercial Development (CORD-PRC).

EMERGING SUBURBAN EXISTING
CONDITIONS - Chapel Heights S/D

Source: GMC Planning Team

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Emerging Suburban Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Emerging Suburban Areas. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Identify areas suitable for lifecycle housing options such as starter homes, multi-family apartments, and assisted living communities
- Guide growth to areas that have infrastructure in place and/or planned
- Preserve and protect the Yellow River, South River, and Alcovy River from development

Goals

Housing Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Transportation Goal #3: Ensure there is efficient traffic circulation and roads are well-maintained.

Land Use Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

Land Use Goal #2: Promote a balanced mix of land uses within the County.

Economic Development Goal #1: Attract more retail businesses and restaurants.

County Facilities + Services Goal #1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

County Facilities + Services Goal #2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services.

Broadband Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband internet service.

Parks + Recreation Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home.

EMERGING SUBURBAN EXAMPLE

Mixed Density Architectural Illustration
By Chris Fothergill

Established Suburban Core

Vision

The areas designated as Established Suburban Core are characterized by the highest level of density with the majority of existing suburban neighborhoods and commercial development being located here. Additionally, this character area has access to public sewer infrastructure whereas most of the County does not. Established Suburban Core character areas are suitable for higher density residential, mixed-use and infill development due to the current development patterns along with the existence of supportive transportation infrastructure.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are either completely or partially located in the new Established Suburban Core character areas:

- Salem
- Cedar Shoals
- Flat Shoals
- High Point
- East End

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Residential (RES), High Density Residential (HDR), Agricultural/Forestry (AF), Park/Recreation/ Conservation (PRC), commercial (COM), Industrial (IND), Public Institutional (PI), Development Node (DN), and Mixed-Use (MX).

Zoning districts most appropriate for this area include Single-Family Residential (R-1)(R-2), Multi-Family Residential (RMF), Mixed-Use Single-Family Residential (MSR), Mobile Home Park (MHP), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), General Commercial (CG), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), Light Industrial (M1), Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential Development (CORD-PRD), and Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential-Commercial Development (CORD-PRC).

ESTABLISHED SUBURBAN CORE EXISTING CONDITIONS - Brown Bridge Rd.

Source: GMC Planning Team

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Established Suburban Core Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Established Suburban Core Areas. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Create a cottage zoning ordinance to allow for smaller single-family homes (600-1,000 square feet) to provide more affordable housing options
- Encourage infill development and division of existing lots where appropriate
- Preserve and protect the Yellow River, South River, and Alcovy River from development

Housing Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Transportation Goal #3: Ensure there is efficient traffic circulation and roads are well-maintained.

Land Use Goal #2: Promote a balanced mix of land uses within the County.

Land Use Goal #4: Update zoning code to better serve the needs of the County.

Economic Development Goal #3: Retain and support existing businesses.

County Facilities + Services Goal #2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal#3: Protect Newton County's environment and manage its natural resources.

Broadband Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband internet service.

Broadband Goal #2: Ensure essential telecommunication services for all residents, businesses, and local government agencies (especially Public Safety and Emergency Services) are reliable.

Parks + Recreation Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home.

ESTABLISHED SUBURBAN CORE EXAMPLE

Source: Daniel Parolek Island Press, AARP

Conservation + Recreation

Vision

The areas designated as Conservation and Recreation are characterized by environmental resources that need the highest level of protection and strict conservation programs. Development is limited to mitigate potential negative impacts on these resources.

Some areas within this designation may be suitable for park and trail facilities, offering residents and visitors access to waterfronts and greenspace throughout the county.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are either completely or partially located in the new Conservation + Recreation character areas:

- Lake Jackson (Partial)
- Flint Hill (Partial)
- Along the South River, Yellow River and Alcovy River watershed boundaries

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Agricultural/Forestry (AF), and Park/Recreation/ Conservation (PRC).

Zoning recommended for Conservation character areas may include some Agricultural (A) and a range of protection overlays: Open Space Conservation Overlay, River Corridor Protection Overlay, Watershed Protection Overlay, and Wetlands Protection Overlay.

CONSERVATION + RECREATION
EXISTING CONDITIONS - Lake Varner

Source: GMC Planning Team

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Conservation + Recreation Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Conservation + Recreation Areas. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Utilize the environmentally sensitive areas which are not suitable for development as passive recreation areas
- Identify wildlife viewing areas in suitable areas along the Yellow and South River
- Continue to extend and update the Cricket Frog Trail

Goals

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Land Use Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

Land Use Goal #4: Update zoning code to better serve the needs of the county.

County Facilities + Services Goal #1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

County Facilities + Services Goal #2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal #1: Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal #2: Promote cultural sites and events.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal#3: Protect Newton County's environment and manage its natural resources.

Parks + Recreation Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home.

CONSERVATION + RECREATION EXAMPLE

Source: Louisa County Conservation Board

Industrial + Heavy Commercial

Vision

Industrial + Heavy Commercial areas are characterized by concentrated industrial development and heavy commercial properties such as large machinery repair, materials processing, and other non-retail uses. These character areas are ideal for attracting large manufacturers, providing opportunities for employment and workforce development as well as increasing Newton County's tax base. As such, these areas are key players in the county's future, and through thoughtful development can drastically impact the county's economics for the better.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are either completely or partially located in the new Industrial + Heavy Commercial character areas:

- Stanton Springs
- Harris Springs (partial)

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for Industrial + Heavy Commercial character areas include: Industrial (IND), Commercial (COM), Public Institutional (PI), Mixed Use Commercial (MXC), Development Node (DN), Agricultural/Forestry (AF), Transportation/Communication/ Utilities (TCU).

Zoning recommended for Industrial + Heavy Commercial character areas may include General Commercial (CG), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), Light Industrial (M1), Heavy Industrial (M-2), Multi-County Mixed Use Business Park (MCMUB).

INDUSTRIAL + HEAVY COMMERCIAL EXISTING CONDITIONS - Stanton Springs Industrial Park

Source: Newton County Industrial Development Authority

N

0   1.25   2.5   5 Miles

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Industrial + Heavy Commercial Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Industrial + Heavy Commercial Areas. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Require mitigation efforts (BMPs) with new commercial/industrial development.
- Establish a maximum allowed square footage of warehouses and industrial development within the County.
- Designate areas for future commercial development and light industrial uses to support major industries.
- Establish buffers between conflicting land uses, especially where Newton's Industrial development borders Morgan County and the City of Social Circle

Goals

Transportation Goal #1: Prepare for increase in traffic due to the Rivian manufacturing facility.

Land Use Goal #2: Promote a balanced mix of land uses within the County.

Land Use Goal #4: Update zoning code to better serve the needs of the County.

Economic Development Goal #2: Attract high paying employers and diverse employment options to the county that will benefit County residents.

Economic Development Goal #3: Retain and support existing businesses.

Economic Development Goal #4: Increase workforce development efforts to better prepare and connect people to jobs.

County Facilities + Services Goal #1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal #1: Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal #3: Protect Newton County's Environment and Manage its Natural Resources.

Broadband Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband internet service.

Broadband Goal #2: Ensure essential telecommunication services for all residents, businesses, and local government agencies (especially Public Safety and Emergency Services) are reliable.

INDUSTRIAL AND HEAVY COMMERCIAL EXAMPLES

Source: Marty Sellars, Huntsville CVB

Live/Work Areas

Vision

The areas designated as Live/Work Areas are characterized by their proximity to high traffic areas, such as Hwy 278 and Hwy 11, making them ideal for mixed-use development. Live/Work Corridors Character Areas are suitable for a mix of neighborhood level commercial, multi-family residential housing and walkable streets

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are partially located in the new Live/Work Areas character areas:

- Cedar Shoals
- Almon
- McGuirts Crossing
- Dixie
- Hub Junction
- Harris Springs
- Alcovy Trestle
- Flint Hill

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Residential (RES), High Density Residential (HDR), Commercial (COM), (light) Industrial (IND), Public Institutional (PI), Development Node (DN), and Mixed-Use (MX).
Zoning districts most appropriate for this area include Single-Family Residential (R-1)(R-2), Multi-Family Residential (RMF), Mixed-Use Single-Family Residential (MSR), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), General Commercial (CG), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), Light Industrial (M1), Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential Development (CORD-PRD), and Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential-Commercial Development (CORD-PRC).

LIVE/WORK AREAS EXISTING CONDITIONS - Roundabout at SR 162 and SR 81

Source: GMC Planning Team

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Live/Work Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Live/Work Areas. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Expand water/sewer to encourage higher density residential development and commercial development.

- Encourage compact mixed-use development within the live/work character areas that is pedestrian friendly.

- Ensure sidewalks are included in new developments and connect to existing sidewalks, trails and parks.

Goals

Housing Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

Transportation Goal #1: Prepare for increase in traffic due to the Rivian Manufacturing facility.

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Land Use Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

Land Use Goal #4: Update zoning code to better serve the needs of the county.

Economic Development Goal #1: Attract more retail businesses and restaurants.

Economic Development Goal #2: Attract high paying employers and diverse employment options to the county that will benefit County residents.

County Facilities + Services Goal #1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal #1: Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal #3: Protect Newton County's environment and manage its natural resources.

LIVE/WORK AREAS EXAMPLES

Source: Daniel Parolek Island Press, AARP

Village Centers

Vision

The areas designated as Village Centers are characterized by its prime location as a major intersection adjacent to residential areas making it ideal for heavy commercial development. Village Center character areas will serve as a commercial and residential center for residents and those that are traveling through the county. It is suitable for highway commercial, high density residential, and mixed-use development.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are partially located in the new Village Center character areas:

- Lower River
- Salem
- McGuirts Crossing
- Hub Junction
- Harris Springs

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Residential (RES), High Density Residential (HDR), Park/Recreation/Conservation (PRC), commercial (COM), Industrial (IND), Public Institutional (PI), Development Node (DN), and Mixed-Use (MX).

Zoning districts most appropriate for this area include Single-Family Residential (R-1)(R-2)(R-3), Single and Two Family Residential (DR), Multiple-Family Residential (RMF), Mixed-Use Single-Family Residential (MSR), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), General Commercial (CG), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), Light Industrial (M1), Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential Development (CORD-PRD), and Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential-Commercial Development (CORD-PRC).

VILLAGE CENTERS EXISTING CONDITIONS - Brown Bridge Rd. and Salem Rd.

Source: GMC Planning Team

Recommended Goals + Action Items

This subsection includes the top three recommended implementation items for Village Centers Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Village Centers. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Revisit policies to support retail development/restaurants in unincorporated portions of the County

- Encourage nodal development in appropriate locations and discourage "strip" development patterns

- Encourage shared access points/ interparcel access to better manage traffic

Goals

Housing Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

Transportation Goal #1: Prepare for increase in traffic due to the Rivian Manufacturing facility.

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Transportation Goal #3: Ensure there is efficient traffic circulation and roads are well-maintained.

Land Use Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

Land Use Goal #4: Update zoning code to better serve the needs of the County.

Economic Development Goal #1: Attract more retail businesses and restaurants.

Economic Development Goal #2: Attract high paying employers and diverse employment options to the county that will benefit County residents.

County Facilities + Services Goal #1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

County Facilities + Services Goal #2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services.
Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal #1: Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal #2: Promote cultural sites and events.

Broadband Goal #2: Ensure essential telecommunication services for all residents, businesses, and local government agencies (especially Public Safety and Emergency Services) are reliable.

VILLAGE CENTERS EXAMPLES

Source: Daniel Parolek Island Press, AARP

Community Crossroads

Vision

The areas designated as Community Crossroads are characterized by an established intersection that has the potential for future public water/sewer infrastructure, featuring neighborhood commercial businesses and rural/ low density residential. Community Crossroads Character Areas will serve as a small commercial center for the surrounding residents and those that are traveling through the area.

Neighborhoods Included

The following neighborhoods, which served as the character areas in the last comprehensive plan, are partially located in the new Community Crossroads character areas:

- Almon
- Flint Hill/Gum Creek
- Oak Hill
- Salem
- Rocky Plains
- Flat Shoals
- High Point
- Highway 11 Preservation Corridor

Land Uses + Zoning

Land uses recommended for this area include Rural Residential (RR), Residential (RES), High Density Residential (HDR), Agricultural/Forestry (AF), Park/Recreation/Conservation (PRC), commercial (COM), Industrial (IND), Public Institutional (PI), Development Node (DN), and Mixed-Use (MX).

Zoning districts most appropriate for this area include Agricultural Residential (AR), Single-Family Residential (R-1) (R-2), Multi-Family Residential (RMF), Mixed-Use Single-Family Residential (MSR), Neighborhood Commercial (CN), General Commercial (CG), Highway Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), Light Industrial (M1), Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential Development (CORD-PRD), and Community Oriented Residential Development - Planned Residential-Commercial Development (CORD-PRC).

COMMUNITY CROSSROADS EXISTING CONDITIONS - SR 11 and SR 142

Source: GMC Planning Team

Related Goals

This subsection includes the top five recommended implementation items for Community Crossroads Character Areas in Newton County. Following these items, there is a list of overall goals that are most relevant for the County's Community Crossroads. These goals are included here to help readers navigate the longer, comprehensive lists in the Goals, Objectives and Actions section and the Community Work Program of this plan.

Action Items

- Encourage shared access points/inter-parcel access to better manage traffic
- Encourage commercial development in appropriate locations at the appropriate scale
- Consider the impact on traffic flow for all new development.

Goals

Housing Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

Transportation Goal #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

Transportation Goal #3: Ensure there is efficient traffic circulation and roads are well-maintained.

Land Use Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

Land Use Goal #4: Update zoning code to better serve the needs of the County.

Economic Development Goal #1: Attract more retail businesses and restaurants.

County Facilities + Services Goal #1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources Goal #3: Protect Newton County's environment and manage its natural resources.

Broadband Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband internet service.

Broadband Goal #2: Ensure essential telecommunication services for all residents, businesses, and local government agencies (especially Public Safety and Emergency Services) are reliable.

Parks + Recreation Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home.

COMMUNITY CROSSROADS EXAMPLES

Source: WALC Institute and TDC Design Studio, AARP

Goals, Objectives, and Actions

Throughout the planning process, the Planning Team, Steering Committee and Public have participated in the review of the 2018 Newton County Comprehensive Plan, and the Department of Community Affairs Quality Community Objectives and identified the following goals to be consistent with the Vision Statement. The objectives and actions listed below each goal are intended to provide direction to County officials, staff, and appointees as they make decisions and work towards achieving these goals.

Housing

The County's goal to provide a range of safe and healthy housing types, sizes, costs, and densities for all income levels and lifestyles promotes housing as a high priority. This involves addressing the pending housing demand expected as a result of the population increase projected in the next 5 to 10 years. Housing goals are identified using the abbreviation H.

- H Goal #1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.

  - H Objective 1.1: Encourage development of quality lifecycle housing where reasonable.

    - H Action 1.1(1): Identify areas suitable for lifecycle housing such as starter homes, workforce housing, townhomes, condominiums, duplexes, multi-family apartments, assisted living communities, etc.

    - H Action 1.1(2): Apply for grants to construct new affordable housing units for sale in the County such as the Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) Grant.

    - H Action 1.1(3): Increase "aging in place" housing options and consider providing incentives for developers of assisted living and age 55 and above housing options.

    - H Action 1.1(4): The County will continue to support developers of traditional subdivisions with careful attention to regulation, zoning and effects on adjacent property.

- H Action 1.1(6): Utilize local, state and federal resources to provide housing for the disadvantaged and special needs population such as the homeless, disabled, veterans, recovering addicts, people with HIV/AIDS, abused spouses, etc.

- H Action 1.1(7): Require high quality housing development design standards.

- H Action 1.1(8): Encourage conservation subdivision style development and make changes to zoning code if needed.

- H Action 1.1(9): Identify areas where infill development is needed and ensure the zoning code provides adequate regulations for the new development, particularly that it fits within the existing context of the surrounding area.

- H Action 1.1(10): Develop strategies to address the jobs-to-housing mismatch.

- H Action 1.1(11): Create more housing for middle income families, employees in the service sector, and entry-level workers.

- H Action 1.1(12): Consider a cottage zoning ordinance to allow for smaller single-family homes (600-1,000 square feet) to provide more affordable housing options.

- H Objective 1.2: Maintain small-town character in new housing development.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

- H Action 1.2(1): Have the Planning Commission and public identify priority areas to maintain low density development, where it isn't already constrained by environmental restrictions (lake, wetlands,etc.), in order to focus preservation efforts.

- H Action 1.2(2): Consider implementing the Rural Village Overlay for a particular rural area (no less than 100 acres and with the majority agreement of surrounding landowners) the community would like to preserve.

- H Action 1.2(3): Examine the current zoning code to determine whether it sufficiently protects and encourages rural character in new development.

- H Action 1.2(4): Require design standards that match the surrounding mix of housing types and styles.

- H Action 1.2(5): Adhere to Zoning Division 430: Open Space Conservation Residential Overlay to cluster development and preserve open space.

- H Action 1.2(6): Identify key cultural sites and features (scenic roads, historic sites, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc) to serve as a community asset that shapes the identity and character of development.

- H Action 1.2(7): Utilize open space for parks, trails and sidewalks.

- H Objective 1.3: Maintain safe and healthy housing in the community.

  - H Action 1.3(1): Amplify code enforcement efforts and continue to allocate funds for code enforcement staff, equipment and municipal court expenses.

  - H Action 1.3(2): Pursue grants, such as the CDBG grant, and alternative funding for rehabilitation of substandard owner-occupied houses.

  - H Action 1.3(3): Coordinate with the Georgia Heirs Property Law Center to provide workshops to citizens to prevent and rectify heirs property issues.

  - H Action 1.3(4): Research local, state and federal legal guidelines regarding holding absentee and neglectful landlords responsible for substandard rental housing conditions.

  - H Action 1.3(5): Consider implementing a Blight Tax to address blighted property.

  - H Action 1.3(6): Conduct a comprehensive housing assessment and create a registry of blighted properties.

  - H Action 1.3(7): Continue to strengthen mobile home ordinance to ensure owner-accountability of substandard, deteriorating or vacant mobile homes.

- H Goal #2: Ensure infrastructure is sufficient to support future residential growth.

- H Objective 2.1: Develop an understanding of growth projections and how much new housing and infrastructure is needed to plan for.

  - H Action 2.1(1): Work with developers to contribute to the expansion cost or implementation efforts of infrastructure and other necessary improvements when possible.

  - H Action 2.1(2): Expand water/sewer to encourage higher density residential development and economic development.

  - H Action 2.1(3): Ensure sidewalks are included in new residential development and connect to existing sidewalks, trails and parks.

  - H Action 2.1(4): Require new development to incorporate traffic calming measures, road and sidewalk connectivity into site plan.

  - H Action 2.1(5): Promote high-end homes to continue to attract quality economic development.

Transportation

The efficient movement of people and goods is important to both residents and visitors. For Newton County, this can include access to work, educational facilities, and leisure activities, both intra-county as well as for commuter traffic. To fully assess the County's transportation network, a Comprehensive Transportation Plan, CTP, was last completed in 2008 and is the framework for transportation needs to 2040. The study identified long-term projects, strategies, and programs for various modes of transportation in Newton County. Transportation goals are identified using the abbreviation T.

The Newton County CTP resulted in a policy document that assessed the following elements:

- Existing conditions

- Transportation vision and needs

- List of potential projects and improvements

- Action plan with scopes, schedules, and costs

Building upon this prior effort, the Transportation element for the 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update will account for recent changes in population growth, demographics, and market/economic development demand. It will also take into account evolutions in new policies, technologies, trends, as well as the vision by both the leadership and residents. It will offer a list of improvements and recommendations for the County's transportation network that can be utilized to obtain funding on the federal, state, or local level. The results of a robust community involvement and stakeholder participation effort guided the visioning and development of issues, strategies, and goals for transportation. Some of them are as follows:

Photo by GMC planning team

- **T Goal** #1: Prepare for increase in traffic due to Rivian manufacturing facility.

  - **T Objective** 1.1: Support transportation improvement projects to prepare for the Rivian manufacturing facility.

    - **T Action** 1.1(1): Actively participate in Newton County and GDOT transportation improvement discussions and maintain a flow of communication.

    - **T Action** 1.1(2): Consider, prioritize, and pursue transportation infrastructure projects that enforce Newton County's reputation as a regional hub.

- **T Goal** #2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.

  - **T Objective** 2.1: Identify areas in need of increased access and connectivity to alternative modes of transportation.

    - **T Action** 2.1(1): Conduct a walkability access study to determine where sidewalks and crosswalks are needed.

    - **T Action** 2.1(2): Retain as many trees as possible during the development process to maintain shade and greenery for walking.

    - **T Action** 2.1(3): Improve and maintain a transportation system that will implement a "Complete Streets" policy and minimize detrimental environmental impacts.

- T Action 2.1(4): Support opportunities to provide for alternative modes of transportation, including public transit and multi-use trails/sidewalks.

- T Action 2.1(5): Create transportation options for young adults to attend school, training, internships, etc.

- T Action 2.1(6): Connect shopping areas with neighborhoods via sidewalks.

- T Action 2.1(7): Develop strategy for increasing pedestrian safety along the Highway 278 corridor.

- T Action 2.1(8): Construct more trails and sidewalks where appropriate.

- T Action 2.1(9): Ensure connections to a larger network of sidewalks and trails.

- T Goal #3: Ensure there is efficient traffic circulation and roads are well-maintained.

  - T Objective 3.1: Maintain high level of service in all areas of transportation.

    - T Action 3.1(1): Consider the impact on traffic flow for all new development as well as commercial and residential expansion.

    - T Action 3.1(2): Pursue grant funding from state and federal programs to improve roads.

    - T Action 3.1(3): Increase connectivity of roads in neighborhoods and side streets.

    - T Action 3.1(4): Direct resources to reduce traffic circulation issues in a timely manner.

    - T Action 3.1(5): Create a TSPLOST to fund transportation improvement projects.

    - T Action 3.1(6): Ensure commercial corridors are clean, well-maintained, well-designed and free of blight.

    - T Action 3.1(7): Ensure future transportation improvements focus on keeping commercial corridors clean, well-maintained, well-designed and free of blight.

    - T Action 3.1(8): Promote express bus service/Intercounty transit service.

    - T Action 3.1(9): Develop a circulator system for the dense activity areas.

    - T Action 3.1(10): Create better coordination of land use and transportation planning.

    - T Action 3.1(11): Encourage shared access points/interparcel access to better manage traffic.

    - T Action 3.1(12): Incorporate the 2022 Moving Newton Transit Master Plan recommendations.

Land Use

The County has established thoughtful land use development patterns as a goal in order to encourage a balanced mix of uses and meet the needs of current and future residents. Newton County seeks to prepare for growth while still maintaining the rural quality historically characteristic of the County. This growth would involve the incorporation of land use and transportation in zoning decisions, design standards upheld in new development, introducing new economic opportunities, and ensuring land uses ultimately benefit residents in Newton County. Land Use goals are identified using the abbreviation LU.

- LU Goal #1: Foster smart growth that protects Newton County's small-town sense of place.

  - LU Objective 1.1: Implement smart growth land use principles to best manage growth.

    - LU Action 1.1(1): Encourage infill development and division of existing lots where appropriate.

    - LU Action 1.1(2): Promote development patterns that encourage connectivity between various land use types.

    - LU Action 1.1(3): Effectively manage growth through coordination and communication between staff, Planning Commission, and County Commission.

    - LU Action 1.1(4): Avoid "spot rezoning" by being more consistent with zoning rulings and maintaining a detailed Land Use Plan.

    - LU Action 1.1(5): Continue to expand multi-use pathway infrastructure in order to better connect neighborhoods to downtown, parks, natural areas, and community gathering places.

    - LU Action 1.1(6): Encourage developers to consider smaller, more affordable housing options suitable to the median income of the area.

    - LU Action 1.1(7): Expand water and sewer capacity to meet the demands of future growth, work with developers to contribute when possible.

    - LU Action 1.1(8): Ensure small-town character is maintained as much as possible with new development by implementing strong design standards.

    - LU Action 1.1(9): Continue to support the preservation of floodplains, wetlands and watersheds for future development projects.

    - LU Action 1.1(10): Encourage nodal development that concentrates density in planned developments oriented toward major intersections and, likewise, discourage "strip" development patterns that result in inefficient use of land and traffic congestion.

- LU Action 1.1(11): Guide growth to areas that have infrastructure in place or planned congruent with the timing of new development.

- LU Goal #2: Promote a balanced mix of land uses within the County.

  - LU Objective 2.1: Ensure land uses allow for beneficial and compatible development patterns.

    - LU Action 2.1(1): Encourage land uses that allow for the development of missing middle and lifecycle housing and prevent sprawl.

    - LU Action 2.1(2): Establish a maximum allowed square footage of warehouses and industrial development within the County.

    - LU Action 2.1(3): Promote mixed-use developments in appropriate revitalization or redevelopment area.

    - LU Action 2.1(4): Encourage compact mixed-use development within the live/work corridor character areas and ensure they are walkable.

- LU Goal #3: Resolve any issues with GIS land use data and use it to make informed land use decisions.

  - LU Objective 3.1: Direct resources to resolve inconsistencies in GIS data.

  - LU Objective 3.2: Use GIS data to make informed land use decisions.

    - LU Action 3.2(1): Make GIS data readily available to potential developers and Development Services Department.

- LU Goal #4: Review and update the zoning ordinance an land development code to ensure it is properly encouraging positive growth.

    - LU Objective 4.1: Direct resources to update zoning code.

        - LU Action 4.1(1): Revisit and update the existing overlay districts and consider revising, expanding or combining overlays to other areas to better reflect the desired development patterns.

        - LU Action 4.1(2): Assess the tax benefits of overlays and identify areas for improvement.

        - LU Action 4.1(3): Ensure zoning ordinances and land development codes are reflecting change and encouraging growth.

Economic Development

Economic development is very important for the quality of life of a local community. It can lead to employment growth, job training opportunities, and an increased tax base. For the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Economic Development element is key for analyzing labor force trends, employment rates, and the type of infrastructure needed to bolster the local economy. Working with the local residents as well as the County's stakeholders, a vision was established to assess the current economic development climate as well as recommend strategies for future economic growth. From the extensive public engagement process, the following issues, strategies, and goals for economic development (ED) were established:

- ED Goal #1: Attract more retail businesses and restaurants.

Photo by GMC planning team

- ED Objective 1.1: Develop strategies to attract more retail and restaurants.
    - ED Action 1.1(1): Reduce the economic leakage demand for certain goods/services not in Newton County.
    - ED Action 1.1(2): Create local incentives to attract new businesses.
    - ED Action 1.1(3): Work with Newton County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority to market Newton County.
    - ED Action 1.1(4): Create a Small Business Startup/Incubator Program in Newton County.
    - ED Action 1.1(5): Consider developing flex spaces for shared work spaces, incubators or start-up office space for local small businesses.
    - ED Action 1.1(6): Consider revisiting policies to support retail development/restaurants in unincorporated portions of the County.
    - ED Action 1.1(7): Identify areas suitable for neighborhood level/nodal commercial development.
- ED Goal #2: Attract high paying employers and employment options.
    - ED Objective 2.1: Provide economic incentives to attract new businesses and industry.
        - ED Action 2.1(1): Review zoning code to ensure compliance and relevance with current development trends.
        - ED Action 2.1(2): Provide a clear and streamlined development review process with reliable customer service.
        - ED Action 2.1(3): Consider utilizing Opportunity Zone Tax Credits and other state and federal Economic Development Tax Credit programs.
        - ED Action 2.1(4): Increase quality of life amenities in the County to attract businesses.
        - ED Action 2.1(5): Continue to support piedmont hospital in its recruitment/retention activities.
        - ED Action 2.1(6): Designate areas for future commercial development and light industrial uses to support to major industries.
        - ED Action 2.1(7): Improve the local tax base to provide services to citizens.
        - ED Action 2.1(8): Increase gathering places, amenities, entertainment and shopping options, especially those oriented toward youth and families.
        - ED Action 2.1(9): Seek opportunities to attract the film production industry to unincorporated Newton County, especially as the film industry is already well established in Covington with a film studio very close to the city boundary with the County.

- ED Action 2.1(10): Maximize the use of the local airport as an opportunity for economic development in the County.

- ED Action 2.1(11): Concentrate industrial development in the three targeted and established industrial sites in the County.

- ED Action 2.1(12): Consider extending public water and sewer infrastructure to areas that are suitable for residential and commercial growth.

- ED Action 2.1(13): Consider targeting the following industries: advanced manufacturing//high tech, bio-life sciences/medical, film/television/music production, headquarters for commercial/retail.

- ED Goal #3: Retain and support existing businesses.

  - ED Objective 3.1: Provide a strong support system for existing businesses.

    - ED Action 3.1(1): Coordinate with the Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and other business partners in recruitment and retention activities.

    - ED Action 3.1(2): Provide economic incentives that support the expansion of existing business and industry.

- ED Goal #4: Increase workforce development efforts to better prepare and connect people to jobs.

  - ED Objective 4.1: Support business networking activities within the local community for workforce development.

    - ED Action 4.1(1): Work with community partners to develop and/or expand existing economic development resources.

    - ED Action 4.1(2): Utilize the technical and intellectual resources of volunteers.

County Facilities + Services

The County's goal for its facilities and services encourages the County and relevant actors to focus on providing excellent level of public services and inclusive facilities for existing and future residents. There should be a safe environment for youth and people of all ages to socialize and sufficient utilities and infrastructure for families to take root for generations. County Facilities + Services goals are identified using the abbreviation CFS.

- CFS Goal #1: Ensure the County's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents.

  - CFS Objective 1.1: Improve existing infrastructure and prepare for future growth.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

- CFS Action 1.1(1): Increase current water and sewer capacity and expand infrastructure to better serve current residents and prepare for future growth.

- CFS Action 1.1(2): Identify current condition of existing infrastructure and make repairs/replacements when needed.

- CFS Action 1.1(3): In regards to waste management infrastructure, develop a strategy to effectively deal with and prevent future illegal dumping throughout the County.

- CFS Action 1.1(4): Encourage more community facilities at the same time that new commercial/industrial development occurs.

- CFS Goal #2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services.
  - CFS Objective 2.1: Provide public facilities, services and programming for all ages, especially youth.
    - CFS Action 2.1(1): Direct more staffing and funding towards maintaining and upgrading existing public facilities.
    - CFS Action 2.1(2): Expand public facilities for senior and aging residents.
    - CFS Action 2.1(3): Consider adding recreation programs that would help disadvantaged youth and young children after school.
    - CFS Action 2.1(4): Ensure there is a sufficient number of parks and recreation facilities in the County and create a long-term strategy for maintaining them.
    - CFS Action 2.1(5): Seek to attract needed health services such as mental health care providers to the County.
    - CFS Action 2.1(6): Expand the services offered at the library.
    - CFS Action 2.1(7): Consider any County owned property as potential locations for more community facilities.
    - CFS Action 2.1(8): improve the availability and scheduling opportunities of public buildings and facilities.
    - CFS Action 2.1(9): Increase community centers to provide locations for youth to meet, socialize, and recreate.
    - CFS Action 2.1(10): Ensure the safety of the community by providing exceptional police and fire protection.
    - CFS Action 2.1(11): Diversify the programs offered at community facilities.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The County's goal of Intergovernmental Cooperation encourages the communication and collaboration of Newton County with the surrounding municipalities including all incorporated cities and other governing organizations to address shared needs through adequate funding, legislation and technical assistance. Intergovernmental Cooperation goals are identified using the abbreviation IC.

- IC Goal #1: Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues.
  - IC Objective 1.1: Improve county-wide communication.
    - IC Action 1.1(1): Promote maximum cooperation among all public safety, emergency response and law enforcement officials, across the County and other agencies to reduce duplication, speed interventions and maximize efficiencies.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

- IC Action 1.1(2): Work with incorporated cities to plan and implement extension of water service, and sanitary sewer service to areas that have failing septic tanks, where cost effective to do so or where redevelopment to higher densities is desirable.

- IC Action 1.1(3): Utilize the required service delivery strategy update to coordinate with incorporated cities on shared issues such as infrastructure management, transportation planning, economic development and blight remediation.

- IC Action 1.1(4): Incorporate the recent County Strategic Plan recommendations into the comprehensive plan.

- IC Action 1.1(5): Improve communication for intercounty planning initiatives.

- IC Action 1.1(6): Periodically assess existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as appropriate.

- IC Objective 1.2: Develop a strong regional and national network to help address local and regional issues.

  - IC Action 1.2(1): Coordinate with the cities and other regional partners to plan and prepare a strong emergency response effort for all hazards and natural disasters.

  - IC Action 1.2(2): Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.

- IC Action 1.2(3): Provide input to other public entities in the area when they are making decisions that are likely to affect Newton County.

- IC Action 1.2(4): Have joint coordination meetings for economic development pursuits.

- IC Action 1.2(5): Refine communication and notification process for annexation and water/sewer service areas, especially with the City of Social Circle.

- IC Action 1.2(6): Coordinate with GDOT, County and Cities on transportation improvements.

- IC Action 1.2(7): Share resources, data and information with all government entities.

- IC Action 1.2(8): Leverage relationships with elected officials to improve access to State and federal resources.

Natural, Cultural + Historic Resources

The County's goal for cultural and historic resources is to protect, revitalize and promote the local natural, cultural and historic sites and areas. Cultural and historic resources, such as the Brick Store and Salem Campground, are what make Newton County unique and give it a sense of place that should be enjoyed and remembered for generations to come. As for natural resources, the County commits to environmental preservation and resiliency by encouraging the protection of the natural wetlands, creeks, and rivers that decorate Newton County. Natural, Cultural + Historic Resources goals are identified using the abbreviation NCHR.

- NCHR Goal #1: Utilize the County's historic sites and structures to promote tourism.

  - NCHR Objective 1.1: Create a program/initiative for the County to preserve and market its historic sites and structures.

    - NCHR Action 1.1(1): Create a comprehensive inventory of natural and historic resources and market this list for tourism and educational purposes.

    - NCHR Action 1.1(2): Develop measures and standards for promoting existing resources.

    - NCHR Action 1.1(3): Conduct an audit of historic preservation regulations to determine if any changes are needed.

- NCHR Goal #2: Promote cultural sites and events.

  - NCHR Objective 2.1: Ensure Newton County's cultural identity is celebrated and promoted.

- NCHR Action 2.1(1): Support local business owners through marketing, promotion, social media and County events.

- NCHR Action 2.1(2): Utilize public, private and non-profit partners to fund and create more public events.

- NCHR Action 2.1(3): Create more public spaces for gatherings and events.

- NCHR Goal#3: Protect Newton County's Environment and Manage its Natural Resources.

  - NCHR Objective 3.1: Ensure existing codes/ordinances are protecting and preserving Newton County's environment and natural resources.

    - NCHR Action 3.1(1) Require new development to preserve open space either for use as a park or a protected green space.

    - NCHR Action 3.1(2): Consider establishing a conservation subdivision ordinance to promote environmentally-friendly development that also increases density.

    - NCHR Action 3.1(3): Require mitigation efforts (BMPs) with new commercial and industrial development.

    - NCHR Action 3.1(4): Consider impacts on infrastructure and environmentally sensitive areas and when making land use decisions regarding new development and redevelopment projects.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

- NCHR Action 3.1(5): Maximize access to and use of the County's Recreation and Parks services and facilities.

- NCHR Action 3.1(6): Educate Citizens on the essential role of floodplains and wetlands as a storm water collector, watershed filter, and sources of aquifer recharge and encourage community clean-up efforts, stewardship and educational programs.

- NCHR Action 3.1(7): Identify necessary percentage of greenspace and tree canopy to keep throughout the development process.

- NCHR Action 3.1(8): Identify suitable areas to develop that are not located in established watershed protection areas.

- NCHR Action 3.1(9): Research what other watershed communities have done successfully to effectively reduce the buffers on lakes and water ways without causing harm to the watershed.

- NCHR Action 3.1(10): Improve existing view sheds, scenic overlooks and recreation areas.

- NCHR Action 3.1(11): Encourage green infrastructure and low impact development when possible.

- NCHR Action 3.1(12): Identify and establish high priority open space areas and encourage owners to preserve areas as open space.

- NCHR Action 3.1(13): Utilize the environmentally sensitive areas which are not suitable for development as passive recreation areas.

Photo by GMC planning team

Broadband

The County's goal for Broadband involves increasing cost-effective access to Broadband internet where needed and ensuring service is reliable. Newton County believes access to broadband is a critical need for all of its residents and will make broadband deployment a high priority. Broadband goals are identified using the abbreviation B.

- B Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband internet service.

    - B Objective 1.1: Promote the deployment of Broadband Services into underserved areas of the County.

        - B Action 1.1(1): Retrieve the most up to date and accurate data on the County's broadband availability and affordability.

        - B Action 1.1(2): Leverage any opportunities to provide home access for K-12 students and for college students to enable online educational opportunities.

        - B Action 1.1(3): Encourage service providers to offer service to rural residents when installing or upgrading fiber or other broadband technology that utilizes public rights of way or easements.

        - B Action 1.1(4): Share federal and state grant information for deployment opportunities with providers and organizations. Encourage and support appropriate pilot projects and applications.

        - B Action 1.1(5): Identify and consider adopting policies that facilitate broadband deployment, such as appropriate streamlined project permitting, a County "dig-once" policy, or master lease agreements that allow the installation of broadband infrastructure on utility poles and light standards.

        - B Action 1.1(6): Create a "connectivity vision" as a telecommunication master plan in order to meet the needs of a changing industry while protecting property values and quality of life.

        - B Action 1.1(7): Develop a partnership with private providers to deploy broadband services into unserved areas within the County.

        - B Action 1.1(8): Coordinate with city and state governments to seek certification as a Broadband Ready Community.

        - B Action 1.1(9): Consider following the example of Spalding County in its strategy to increase Broadband access County wide with its "Rural/Remote Wireless Broadband Initiative".

- B Goal #2: Ensure essential telecommunication services for all residents, businesses, and local government agencies (especially Public Safety and Emergency Services) are reliable.

- B Objective 2.1: Determine reliability of telecommunication services and devise solutions to fix it.

  - B Action 2.1(1): Engage telecom providers in direct dialog to address telecom reliability and diversity/redundancy issues.

  - B Action 2.1(2): Document any major telecommunication outages, and use such documentation to engage providers, GPSC and policy-makers at the local, state, and national level for corrective action.

  - B Action 2.1(3): Work with willing providers, the GPSC, and other entities to develop method to document and correct on-going individual landline outages which lead to loss of 911 services for residents.

Parks and Recreation

The County's goal for Parks and Recreation involves maintaining and supporting a high level of parks and recreation services throughout the County. Newton County believes access to parks and recreation services is an important need for all of its residents and will devote resources to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to utilize safe and high-quality parks, trails, and recreation facility. Parks and Recreation goals are identified using the abbreviation PR.

- PR Goal #1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home.

  - PR Objective 1.1: Improve existing parks and/or establish new parks and recreation facilities in underserved areas of the County.

- PR Action 1.1(1): Implement the recommendations from the County's recent 2022 County Parks Master Plan.

- PR Action 1.1(2): Consider any County-owned property for potential parks and recreation facilities, where appropriate.

- PR Action 1.1(3): Consider the planning and construction of river trails, especially in the Porterdale River District.

- PR Action 1.1(4): Develop realistic strategies to increase recreation or leisure activities.

- PR Action 1.1(5): Look at innovative public private partnerships to help improve parks throughout the County.

- PR Action 1.1(6): Construct more trails and paths that are well-lit, and monitored.

- PR Action 1.1(8): Continue large scale planning for recreation parks, 50 acres or more, in the North West and South Eastern part of the County.

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

Key Elements

Three key elements of this plan have been specifically highlighted by the Newton County community and leadership. These key elements -- Housing, Economic Development, and Parks + Recreation -- all include important opportunities for Newton County as it continues to grow. The goal for these subsections is two-fold: 1) highlight areas where the community needs to focus attention and resources and 2) provide possible strategies to achieve meaningful wins for Newton County's future.

Housing

The purpose of this subsection is to provide more in-depth suggestions for meeting the housing needs of current and future residents, as the foundational data has already been shared in the previous housing section of the Existing Conditions chapter. Housing was identified by both the public and staff as a high priority to address in the Comprehensive Plan update, specifically in regards to density, type, location and properly managing residential growth.

Throughout the community engagement and data gathering process, many residents voiced their needs and issues with housing in Newton County. While there were some that wanted less housing, particularly in the more urbanized Western parts of the County, there were also equally as many who wanted more housing options in terms of type and affordability. At one of the five public workshops held to gather input on the plan, one resident notably said they wanted more "affordable single-family homes (I make $16/hr, I need a place to stay)". The general online survey reflected this as well, with 48%

indicating they would like more single-family residential homes. The steering committee also expressed the need for more housing options to include more multi-family, townhomes, mixed-use development and smaller lot single-family homes along with input on ideal locations for such type of development.

Figure 1: Uncontrolled housing sprawl

Photo courtesy of Promote-smartgrowth.blogspot.com

As a review of the previously mentioned housing data, Newton County's housing stock lacks in diversity of type, mix, distribution and cost, meaning there is much room for improvement. In terms of housing types, 87% of the housing stock is made up of single-family detached homes while 8.1% is

multi-family units. The western part of the County is the most dense in terms of dwelling units per acre, and the South, North and Eastern part is more rural and spaced out. There has been development pressure in the Eastern part of the County, particularly along highway 278 and 142, to build higher density housing developments. However, the 2 acre minimum lot size regulation in Watershed overlays and the 1,800 square feet minimum lot size requirement in most zones limits the ability for higher density development to occur. There are some areas where lower density residential development or the 2 acre minimum should remain, such as in agricultural or conservation zoned land, but that is not the majority of the County. If the large acre minimum is left unchanged, the market will develop the rural parts of the County into suburban sprawl which leads to wasted open space, longer commutes, higher costs for providing public utilities and ultimately a loss in a community's sense of place. Figure 1 on the previous page shows what uncontrolled sprawl looks like.

Figure 2: Conservation subdivision method

The Goals, Objectives and Actions and the updated Character Area Map speak to a number of recommendations for housing development going forward. To maintain the small town character associated with Newton County, while at the same time increasing density, a conservation subdivision style of development is recommended as it clusters housing to preserve open space. The low-density rural residential character areas would be an ideal location for conservation subdivisions.

Figure 2 above is an example of a lot subdivided in the conventional method for residential development (left), compared to the conservation subdivision method.

Another recommendation is to increase multi-family housing options to include more duplexes, townhomes or mixed-use residential developments where

Figure 3: Mixed density housing

it is reasonable. It is recommended that higher density development be strategically located near existing water and sewer infrastructure or where growth is expected in the near future. Figure 3 below is an example of a neighborhood containing a mix of different housing types developed in a way that seamlessly blends styles and density.

The public was very helpful in identifying ideal locations for higher density residential development. They identified the live/work corridors, established suburban core, and emerging suburban character areas as ideal for higher density development. See the Character Area map below for examples of these recommended developments in their respective suggested Character Areas.

Figure 4: Character Area Map with housing options

Economic Development

Creating and maintaining strategies that support Newton County's continued economic development is a high priority for all members of the community. This section identifies three areas of focus to facilitate economic development in alignment with this plan's Goals, Objectives and Actions: attracting film industry and tourism, bolstering service and hospitality companies, and innovative workforce development. For more details on how Newton County can implement these strategies, please see the Short Term Work Program in the following section.

Georgia is experiencing exponential growth in the film industry. It offers one of the most competitive tax incentive programs available for film and entertainment production, and boasts an expansive infrastructure of scenic set locals, state-of-the-art facilities, and highly skilled professionals. This statewide success provides an opportunity for municipalities across the state to connect with filming projects and foster associated businesses such as film-based tourism and entertainment support services.

The City of Covington has already capitalized on this potential, serving as homeset to numerous films and shows, and Newton County has potential to follow this model. With a wide range of natural resources including Lake Varner and Factory Shoals and historic locales such as the Brick Store, Newton County can integrate the film industry into its economic growth by registering these locations with and actively marketing to production studios as a set destination.

This focus on the film industry specifically relates to Economic Development Goal #2 which is to "attract high paying employers and more employment options to the county that will benefit County residents." This plan recommends collaborating with the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Film Office to ensure Newton County is taking advantage of available marketing services and capacity building programs. One important step toward this goal is to identify eligible Newton County cities and neighborhoods and register them as Camera Ready Communities. The Camera Ready Communities program is a directory maintained by the Georgia Department of Economic Development Film Office which streamlines set selection and filming setup by connecting production companies with county officials. This plan also recommends building working relationships with Explore Georgia and the Georgia Council for the Arts to identify further opportunities for supplemental funding and workforce development.

Figure 1: Camera Ready Communities in GA

Source: Georgia Dept of Economic Development

With the anticipated population growth coming to Newton County over the next 10 years, there is a great need for workforce expansion to provide opportunities for existing and future residents alike. There is specifically a gap in entertainment and leisure amenities in the county, which opens the potential for growth in the service and hospitality sector. This lack of entertainment and hospitality options was referenced by many residents in the community outreach for this comprehensive plan update.

Bringing hospitality amenities such as hotels and restaurants, entertainment options such as movie theaters and stage theaters, and leisure activities like mini-golf and game bars would provide engaging options to improve overall quality of life for existing residents. These additional businesses will also provide much needed job opportunities for both current and future residents. As such, a targeted approach to build service and hospitality industry options in Newton County will help the community reach its overall economic development goals.

In addition to attracting opportunities in the film and hospitality industries, Newton County can also develop programs to support existing businesses and strengthen workforce training. With three large industrial sites, or mega-sites, currently in the county, Newton has a powerful opportunity to connect its residents with new job prospects as well as position itself as a desired destination for large-scale employers. There is also a significant employment opportunity connected with the airport expansion project as well. Newton County leadership can capitalize on

this potential by working closely with prospective industrial partners to identify needs and serve as a liaison between these companies and the local workforce.

On a smaller scale, working with local businesses to identify their specific needs for funding and skills can help direct job building efforts. Hosting community-based job fairs and networking events can help residents connect with employment opportunities they otherwise might miss. One strategy for workforce development is to create and support partnerships between local schools and businesses, providing students an opportunity for hands-on learning and exploration of various career paths in the area. These partnerships between schools and local businesses, in collaboration with increasing the service and hospitality amenities described previously, can help retain life-long residents.

Photo courtesy of Curvearro.com

Parks + Recreation

Photo courtesy of Newton County public information department

Access to greenspace, parks, and trails is an integral part of community wellness. Multiple studies have shown the positive correlation between improving outdoor facilities and an increase in public physical and mental health as well as overall resident pride and community connection.

In 2022, Newton County commissioned Lose Design to create a comprehensive parks and recreation plan. This plan identified about $96M of investment in park and recreation projects, including the construction of six new park facilities. These facilities included: West Side Community Park and Youth Center, aquatics facility, Springhill Park, East Side Community Park, Henderson Mill Park, and Factory Shoals Park. The plan also emphasized the importance of

expanding, renovating, and maintaining existing parks. In addition to these facility recommendations, the Lose Parks and Recreation Master Plan also provided strategies for staffing and accompanying programming that would be needed to activate outdoor space and increase greenspace connectivity.

One powerful tool the Parks and Recreation Master Plan provided is an in-depth analysis on park service gaps throughout Newton County. The resulting maps identify areas that are currently underserved, allowing for more strategic prioritization of physical builds and program establishment. Figure 1 shows the Newton County Parks Proposed Service Areas that show this analysis. This Comprehensive Plan

Update strongly recommends for Newton County leadership to utilize this map and other tools in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to initiate park system renovation, expansion, and management that can reach countywide parks and recreation goals. In particular, this plan encourages Newton County to focus on renovation of existing parks as well as establishing new facilities in underserved areas.

There is also an opportunity to create pocket parks in public spaces where density may be too high to allow for larger park projects. These pocket parks are small but mighty additions to the community's urban fabric, allowing for passive leisure and aesthetic improvements that elevate formerly vacant corners and squares into accessible destinations that add value and appeal to street fronts. This smaller scale can also allow for enhanced community participation in the projects, providing opportunities for low-cost art projects and programming that can increase engagement and investment – both emotional and financial -- in these locations.

Implementing the suggestions included in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will also support numerous Economic Development goals, increasing Newton County's overall attractiveness as a place to live, a place to work and establish business, and a place to visit and explore.

Newton County Parks
Proposed Service Areas

NCRD Parks

MINI PARKS

- (8) Victoria Station Park
- (9) Dinah Pace Park
- (10) Mary Louise Fowler Park

NATURAL RESOURCE PARKS

- (11) Factory Shoals South
- (14) Springhill Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

- (17) Beaver Park
- (18) Denny Dobbs Park

REGIONAL PARKS

- (35) Lake Varner
- (36) Turner Lake Park

SPECIAL USE PARKS

- (27) Pavilion (Hwy 212)

FUTURE REGIONAL PARKS

- (37) Aquatic Facility + Park Eements

SPORTS PARKS

- (21) Stone Road Park
- (22) Wolverine Gym & Field
- (23) City Pond Park
- (24) Pactiv Field

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

- (31) Nelson Heights Community Center
- (32) Chimney Park
- (33) Fairview Community Center
- (34) Trailblazer Park

FUTURE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

- (38) Springhill Park Property
- (39) Henderson Mill

FUTURE COMMUNITY PARKS

- (40) Community Park - West
- (41) Community Park - East

FUTURE NATURAL RESOURCE PARKS

- (42) Factory Shoals Property

Parks Owned by Others

- (1) Yellow River Park - Porterdale
- (2) Pine Street Park - Porterdale
- (3) Walnut Street Park - Porterdale
- (4) Elm Street Park - Porterdale
- (5) George Street Park - Oxford
- (6) Newborn Park - Newborn
- (7) Square Park - Covington
- (12) Nonie Needham Nature Trail - Mansfield
- (13) Dried Indian Creek - Oxford
- (15) Central Park - Covington
- (16) Central Park South Expansion - Covington
- (19) Covington Family YMCA - YMCA
- (20) Baker Field - Covington
- (25) YMCA Youth Center - YMCA
- (26) Legion Field - Covington
- (28) B.C. Crowell Park - Porterdale
- (29) Asbury Street Park - Oxford
- (30) Academy Springs - Covington

Figure 1: from Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2022

2019 Population Density per Acre

	0 - 500
	501 - 1000
	1001 - 1500
	1501 - 2000
	2001 - 2500

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

NEWTON COUNTY REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS June 2023

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Library Collection Volumes II	County Wide	2017	2024	$50,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
Land Acquisition for District 1 & 3 for location of Community Parks	County Wide	2009	2024	$962,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
Multi-use sports complex (Walking Trail, Basketball complex, softball, football, soccer etc)	County Wide	2010	2024	$4,100,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed - Project pending available funds
South Side Park - District 1. District 1 is underserved by planned recreational areas. (Mt. Pleasant area, educational, community)	County Wide	2011	2025	$1,372,500	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
Community Park - District 3. District 3 serves a densely populated community with needs for more planned recreational areas. (Jack Neely & Kirkland Rd Civic use, Fairview Park)	County Wide	2012	2025	$500,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed - Project pending available funds
Community Park - District 4. (Ball Field, Nelson Heights Facility Expansion)	County Wide	2012	2025	$500,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Underway
Community Park - District 5. District 5 is underserved by planned recreational areas. (Trails & open/ passive recreation)	County Wide	2012	2024	$300,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Underway
Springhill Park Facility, District 5 (Ballfields, open recreation)	County Wide	2017	2024	$495,427	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Underway
Extension of Cricket-Frog trail by paving 10 miles from the city limits of Covington at the Covington By-Pass to city of Newborn. This trail follows along the former route for Central Georgia Railroad and will be approx. 14.9 miles in total.	County Wide	2018	2024	$380,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Underway, 95% complete

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Cricket Frog Bridge Rehab Alcovy River	County Wide	2023	2024	$700,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees/ Newton Trails	County	Underway
District 2- Denny Dobbs Park expansion- Splash Pad, walking trail, skate park	County Wide	2020	2023	$500,000	75% Eligible	Impact Fees, 2017 Splost	County	Completed
Community Water Park/Aquatic center.	County Wide	2023	2026	$30,000,000	0	SPLOST	County	Postponded - Project Pending available funds
Brown Bridge Road from Crowell Road to S.R. 162 - widen from 2 lanes to 3 lanes	County Wide	2022	2028	$20,000,000	100% Eligible	GDOT, 75% Impact Fees/SPLOST	GDOT, County	Postponded - Project Pending available funds
Crowell Rd from Brown Bridge Rd to I-20 - widen from 2 to 3 lanes	County Wide	2025	2032	$18,500,000	100% Eligible	GDOT, 80% Impact Fees	GDOT, County	Postponded - Project Pending available funds
Covington Bypass from SR 36 to S 81 - Widen from 2 to 4 lanes	County Wide	2030	2036	$20,000,000	100% Eligible	GDOT, 80% Impact Fees	GDOT, County	Postponed - Project Pending available funds
Resurfacing Flat Shoals Rd, Gum Creek Rd, and Lower River Rd	County Wide	2020	2023	$1,800,000	100%	Impact Fees	County	Completed
Implement a Capital Improvement Plan	County Wide	2009	2023	$50,000	0	Local	County	Underway
Develop a comprehensive long-term infrastructure plan and map that inventories existing systems, describes current projects, identifies current and future needs, projects costs and identifies potential funding sources.	County Wide	2009	2023	$150,000	0	Local	County, NCWSA	Underway
Yellow River Trails	County Wide	2007	2026	$2,150,000	100% Eligible	2017 SPLOST, Impact Fees	County	Underway
Turkey Creek/Yellow River Trail *Combined Turkey Creek/Yellow River Trail & Yellow River Bridge projects	County Wide	2007	2024	$2,150,000	0	Local, SPLOST	County	Postponed - Project Pending Preliminary Design phase
Westside Youth Outreach Center	County Wide	2017	2024	$495,427	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Postponed - Project Pending land location

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Develop zoning and regulations for senior living communities.	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Develop land use regulation that allow for development of attached or detached homes in the form of condominium ownership	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to determine the need for possible revisions to allow for the construction of a wider variety of housing types and lot sizes. If needed, draft amendments for consideration by the Board of Commissioners	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Evaluate Oak Hill Overlay District to regulate urban development, signage, open space and landscaping.	County Wide	2013	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Prepare & adopt a Scenic Corridor Overlay District along Hwy 11	County Wide	2014	2025	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Prepare & adopt a Quality Development Corridor Overlay district along the county's portion of the Covington By-Pass, & possibly other designated Quality Development Corridors on the Future development Map	County Wide	2013	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Evaluate the overlay (Almon, Salem, Brickstore) components of the zoning Ordinance and update them in accordance with current needs.	County Wide	2020	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Modify the Riparian and Impervious buffers particularly for Lake Jackson properties.	County Wide	2020	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Prepare an Interstate Gateway Overlay district to regulate the character of development near the I-20 corridor.	County Wide	2014	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Revise standards for commercial zoning to encourage mixed-use development within designated activity centers	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Study the offering of development incentives for the use of higher quality construction materials and traditional neighborhood design.	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Create by-right options for traditional neighborhood development within residential zoning districts.	County Wide	2010	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Modify the Conservation Subdivision provisions of Zoning Ordinance to better support the preservation of scenic corridors and in support of creating a countywide greenspace network.	County Wide	2008	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Underway
Nominate Mt. Pleasant Church to National Register	County Wide	2009	2023	5000	0	County, Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Underway
Nominate Gum Creek Community to National Register	County Wide	2009	2023	5000	0	County, Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Underway
Nominate Hayston Community to the National Register	County Wide	2012	2023	5000	0	County Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Underway
Update map of historic resources identified in 1989 Department of Natural Resources intensive survey	County Wide	2009	2023	5000	0	County, Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Underway
Adopt detailed architectural and design guidelines to apply within the historic areas	County Wide	2010	2023	50000	0	County, Historical Society	Local	Underway
Consider forming a joint Historic Preservation Commission between Newton County and some or all of the cities.	County Wide	2008	2023	N/A	N/A	County, Cities, Historical Society	Local	Underway
Support development of Greenway along Alcovy River	County Wide	2007	2023	$5-7,000,000	0	County	Local, Private	Underway
Support development of additional access/launches for Yellow River Water Trail	County Wide	2015	2023	$150,000	0	Grant, Local, Private	County	Underway, (pending bridge replacement)
Historic preservation, design, and renovation of Historic Jail	County Wide	2013	2024	$1,200,000	0	2011 SPLOST	County	Underway
Crowell Rd at I-20 Project	County Wide	2013	2025	$8,500,000	0	GDOT, 2017 SPLOST, ARC	County	Underway
Brown Bridge Rd bridge replacement at Yellow River	County Wide	2014	2025	$11,000,000	0	GDOT, 2017 SPLOST, ARC	County	Underway- Under Construction
Brown Bridge Rd bridge replacement at Snapping Shoals	County Wide	2014	2024	$5,500,000	0	GDOT, 2017 SPLOST, ARC	County	Underway- Under Construction

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Harold Dobbs & Crowell Rd Intersection Improvement	County Wide	2020	2024	$1,500,000	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Underway
Intersection Improvements at Kirkland Rd. @ Jack Neely Rd.	County Wide	2020	2024	$3,500,000	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Underway- Under Construction
Transit Study	County Wide	2019	2022	$400,000	0	ARC/County	ARC/County	Completed
Bear Creek Reservoir	County Wide	2012	2025	TBD	0	Board of Commissioners	Board of Commissioners	Postponed- Project Pending Available Funds
Fairview Road Multi-Use Trail	County Wide	2022	2027	$1,500,00	100% Eligible	ARC, 2023 SPLOST, Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project Pending BOC Determination
Dial Mill Road @ Little Haynes Creek Bridge Replacement	County Wide	2023	2028	$5,000,000	0% Eligible	ARC, 2023 SPLOST	County	Underway
Mote Road @ SR 162 Intersection Improvement	County Wide	2023	2025	$1,500,000	0% Eligible	2023 SPLOST	County	Postponed- Project Pending Available Funds
Intersection Improvements Brown Bridge Road & Crowell Road	County Wide	2023	2026	$5,000,000	100% Eligible	2023 SPLOST, Impact Fees	County	Underway
Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update	County Wide	2023	2025	$400,000	0% Eligible	ARC,General Fund	County	Postponed- Project Pending Available Funding
Davis Ford Road Improvements	County Wide	2023	2024	$800,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees, 2017 SPLOST	County	Underway
Pickett Bridge Road Improvements	County Wide	2023	2024	$250,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees, 2017 SPLOST	County	Underway
Newton County 18 Bridge Repair & Maintenance Project	County Wide	2023	2025	$1,500,000	0% Eligible	2023 SPLOST	County	Underway

Items highlighted in green indicate completed since the Annual FY19CIE/STWP report. The items highlighted green will be removed and not shown on the next annual report.

NEWTON COUNTY SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM 2023 - 2027
(*entries in bold represent items carried over from the ROA)

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Library Collection Volumes II	County Wide	2017	2024	$50,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
Land Acquisition for District 1 & 3 for location of Community Parks	County Wide	2009	2024	$962,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
Multi-use sports complex (Walking Trail, Basketball complex, softball, football, soccer etc)	County Wide	2010	2024	$4,100,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
South Side Park - District 1. District 1 is underserved by planned recreational areas. (Mt. Pleasant area, educational, community)	County Wide	2011	2025	$1,372,500	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Postponed- Project pending available funds
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Community Park - District 4. (Ball Field, Nelson Heights Facility Expansion)	County Wide	2012	2025	$500,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Underway
Community Park - District 5. District 5 is underserved by planned recreational areas. (Trails & open/passive recreation)	County Wide	2012	2024	$300,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Underway
Springhill Park Facility, District 5 (Ballfields, open recreation)	County Wide	2017	2024	$495,427	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Underway
Extension of Cricket-Frog trail by paving 10 miles from the city limits of Covington at the Covington By-Pass to city of Newborn. This trail follows along the former route for Central Georgia Railroad and will be approx. 14.9 miles in total.	County Wide	2018	2024	$380,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Underway, 95% complete
Cricket Frog Bridge Rehab Alcovy River	County Wide	2023	2024	$700,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees/Newton Trails	County	Underway
Community Water Park/Aquatic center.	County Wide	2023	2026	$30,000,000	0	SPLOST	County	Postponed- Pending available funds

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Newton County 18 Bridge Repair & Maintenance Project	County Wide	2023	2025	$1,500,000	0% Eligible	2023 SPLOST	County	Underway

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
The items below indicate new short-term projects added as a result of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update.								
Implement the existing Rural Village Overlay Ordinance for a particular rural area the community would like to preserve.	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Seek to attract needed health services such as mental health care providers to the county	County Wide	2023	2027	$500,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Coordinate with the State of Georgia to seek certification as a Broadband Ready Community	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Leverage any opportunities to provide home access for K-12 students and for college students to enable online educational opportunities.	County Wide	2023	2027	$250,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Create a program/initiative for the County to preserve and market its historic sites and structures	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Conduct an audit of historic preservation regulations to determine if any changes are needed	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Utilize public, private and non-profit partners to fund and create more public events	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Public Private Partnership/Grants	County	New 2023
Require mitigation efforts (BMPs) with new commercial/industrial development	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Educate Citizens on the essential role of floodplains and wetlands as a storm water collector, watershed filter, and sources of aquifer recharge and encourage community clean-up efforts.	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Identify wildlife viewing areas in suitable areas along the Yellow and South River to protect and increase awareness of the State-certified endangered and threatened species living there.	County Wide	2023	2025	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Implement the recommendations from the County's recent 2022 County Parks Master Plan	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Expand the local airport and promote it as a local aviation hub for commercial activity	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners/GDOT	County	New 2023
Designate areas to attract the film industry and related businesses.	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Continue to support Piedmont Hospital in its recruitment/retention activities	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Encourage retail options targeted to youth and families	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A	N/A	Board of Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Revisit policies to support retail development/ restaurants in unincorporated portions of the County	County Wide	2023	2025	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Establish flex spaces for shared work spaces, incubators or start-up office space for local small businesses	County Wide	2023	2025	$500,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Create a TSPLOST program to fund transportation improvements	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Incorporate the 2022 Moving Newton Transit Master Plan recommendations	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Ensure commercial corridors are clean, well-maintained and free of blight	County Wide	2023	2027	$10,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Encourage shared access points/interparcel access to better manage traffic	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023
Promote Xpress bus service/Intercounty transit service	County Wide	2023	2027	$1,000,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Develop a circulator system for the dense activity areas	County Wide	2023	2027	$1,000,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Provide transportation assistance for low-income seniors for medical appointments	County Wide	2023	2027	$650,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Improve and maintain a transportation system that will implement a "Complete Streets" policy and minimize detrimental environmental impacts.	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023

(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Develop a strategy for increasing pedestrian safety along SR 278	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Conduct a walkability access study to determine where sidewalks and crosswalks are needed	County Wide	2023	2026	$5,000	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Pursue grants for rehabilitation of substandard owner or renter occupied houses	County Wide	2023	2027	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Apply for grants to construct new affordable housing units for sale in the County	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners/Grants	County	New 2023
Identify Areas suitable for lifecycle housing such as starter homes, multi-family apartments, and assisted living communities, etc.	County Wide	2023	2026	N/A (Staff Time)	N/A	Board of Commissioners	County	New 2023

LONG-TERM WORK PROGRAM

LONG-TERM WORK PROGRAM TABLE KEY

Responsible Parties and Partners	Estimated Cost Categories
NC - Newton County Commissioners & Admin **LD** - Legal Department **BD** - Building Department **DS** - Development Services/Community Dev **FI** - Finance Department **PR** - Parks and Recreation Department **PW**- Public Works Department **PD** - Police Department **FD** - Fire Department **PC** - Planning Commission **DA** - Development Authority **BOE** - Board of Education **WSA -** Water & Sewer Authority **GA** - State of Georgia **PS** - Private Sector **NP** - Nonprofits **MU** - Cities **OT** - Others	**High** (Over $1,000,000) **Medium** ($500,000-$1,000,000) **Low** (Under $500,000)
	Projected Timeline
	Short Term (1-3 years) **Intermediate Term** (3-5 years) **Long Term** (5+ Years)

HOUSING

● ●

Newton County Long-Term Work Program						
Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Provide a variety of safe and affordable housing types and densities for all income levels and lifestyles.						
Objective 1.1: Encourage development of quality lifecycle housing where reasonable.						
Increase senior housing options and consider providing incentives for developers of assisted living and age 55 and above housing options	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	DS, PC	PS	Low (Under $500,000)	HOME Investment Partnership Program; Georgia HUD 811 PRA program; CDBG Grant
Continue to encourage conservation subdivision style development and make changes to zoning code if needed.	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	DS, PC, ABR	PS	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Develop strategies to address the jobs-to-housing mismatch	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	LD, DS, PC	PS, GA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Apply for grants to construct new affordable housing units for sale in the County	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	DS, NC	PS, NP	Low (Under $500,000) (Staff Time)	General Fund/CHIP Grant/SPLOST
Conduct a Housing Study to assess housing inventory and needs; use the resulting data to guide a housing strategy for the County.	Intermediate Term (2024 - 2025)	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, NP, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Create a cottage zoning ordinance to allow for smaller single-family homes (600-1,000 square feet) to encourage more affordable housing options	Intermediate Term (2024 - 2025)	High	DS, PC, NC	PS	Low (Under $500,000) (Staff Time)	General Fund

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Create more housing for middle income/service and entry-level workers.	Intermediate Term (2023 - 2028)	Medium	DS, PC, LD	PS	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	HOME Investment Partnership Program; CDBG Grant; CHIP Grant
Objective 1.2 Maintain small-town character for new housing development						
Identify priority areas to maintain low density development, where it isn't already constrained by environmental restrictions (lake, wetlands..etc), in order to focus preservation efforts.	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	Medium	DS, PC	PS	Low (Under $500,000) (Staff Time)	General Fund
Examine the current zoning code to determine whether it sufficiently protects and encourages rural character in new development	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC	PS	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Require high quality design standards for rural residential development.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC	PS	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Objective 1.3 Maintain safe and healthy housing in the community						
Create and maintain a registry of blighted properties	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	Medium	DS, NP	PS	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund

HOUSING CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Amplify code enforcement efforts and continue to allocate funds for code enforcement staff, equipment and municipal court expenses	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC	PS	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Pursue grants for rehabilitation of substandard owner or renter occupied houses	Ongoing	Medium	DS, NP	PS	Low (Under $500,000) (Staff Time)	CDBG Grant/ HOME Investment Partnership Program Grant/ CHIP Grant
Goal 2: Ensure Infrastructure is sufficient to support future residential growth						
Objective 2.1 Develop an understanding of growth projections and how much new housing and infrastructure is needed for future planning						
Expand water/sewer to encourage higher density residential development.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, DA, NC	PS	High (Over $1,000,000)	Capital Projects Funds
Ensure sidewalks are included in new residential development and connect to existing sidewalks, trails and parks.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, DA, NC	PS	High (Over $1,000,000)	General Fund
Require new development to incorporate traffic calming measures, road and sidewalk connectivity into site plan	Ongoing	Medium	DS, DA, NC	PS	High (Over $1,000,000)	General Fund
Promote high-end homes as a strategy to attract quality economic development.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, DA, NC	PS	High (Over $1,000,000)	N/A

TRANSPORTATION

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Prepare for increase in traffic due to the Rivian Manufacturing Facility.						
Objective 1.1: Support transportation improvement projects for the Rivian Manufacturing Facility						
Actively participate in transportation improvement discussions and maintain a flow of communication	Ongoing	High	NC, DS	PS, GA, OT	High (Over $1,000,000)	General Fund
Consider, prioritize, and pursue transportation infrastructure projects that enforce Newton County's reputation as a regional hub	Ongoing	High	NC, DS	PS, GA, OT	High (Over $1,000,000)	Capital Projects Funds
Goal 2: Increase accessibility and connectivity for alternative modes of transportation.						
Objective 2.1: Identify areas in need of more sidewalks and accessibility options and ensure they connect to a larger network of multi-use paths						
During the development process of trails and greenways, retain as many trees as possible to maintain shade and greenery for walking.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC,	PS, GA, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Goal 3: Ensure there are efficient traffic circulation routes and well-maintained roads						
Objective 3.1: Maintain high level of service in all areas of transportation						

TRANSPORTATION CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Create better coordination of land use and transportation planning	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, PW	PS, GA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Increase connectivity of roads in neighbor-hoods and local streets	Ongoing	Medium	PW, DS	PS, OT	High (Over $1,000,000)	General Fund
Direct resources to address traffic congestion issues in a timely manner (policy)	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	NC-BD	PS, OT, GA	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund/ Capital Projects Funds
Consider the impact on traffic flow for all new development.	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, PW	OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund/ Capital Projects Funds
Pursue grant funding from state and federal programs to improve roads	Ongoing	Medium	PW, DS	PS, OT, GA	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund/ SPLOST/LMIG

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Attract more retail and restaurants						
Objective 1.1: Develop strategies to attract more retail and restaurants.						
Reduce the economic leakage for certain goods/services not offered in Newton County	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, DA,	PS, OT	High (Over $1,000,000)	General Fund/Grants
Create local incentives to attract new businesses	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, DA	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/Grants/ Tax Credit Programs
Work with the Newton County Chamber of Commerce and the Development Authority to market Newton County	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, DA,	PS, OT	High (Over $1,000,000)	General Fund
Create a Small Business Startup/Incubator Program in Newton County	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, DA,	PS, OT, NP	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Goal 2: Attract high paying employers and employment options						
Objective 2.1 Provide economic incentives to attract new businesses and industry						
Provide a clear and streamlined development review process with reliable customer service	Ongoing	Medium	DS, NC	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Increase quality of life amenities to attract businesses.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC, NC	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Concentrate industrial development in the three major industrial sites in the County	Ongoing	Medium	DA, DS, PC, NC	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Extend public water and sewer infrastructure to areas that are suitable for commercial growth	Ongoing	Medium	DA, WSA, DS, NC	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	Capital Projects Funds/Grants
Encourage commercial development in appropriate locations at the appropriate scale	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Designate areas for future commercial development and light industrial uses to support to major industries.	Intermediate Term (2023 - 2028)	Medium	DS, PC, WSA	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Goal 3: Retain and support existing businesses						
Objective 3.1: Provide a strong support system for existing businesses.						
Coordinate with the Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and other business partners in recruitment and retention activities	Ongoing	High	DA, NC, DS,	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Provide economic incentives that support the expansion of existing business and industry	Ongoing	High	DA, NC, DS,	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/Tax Credit Programs

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 4: Increase workforce development efforts to better prepare and connect people to jobs						
Objective 4.1: Support business networking activities within the local community for workforce development						
Work with community partners to develop and/or expand existing economic development resources	Ongoing	High	DA, NC, DS,	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund/Joint Development Authority
Utilize the technical and intellectual resources of volunteers.	Ongoing	High	DA, NC, DS,	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund/Grants

PARKS + RECREATION

Goals, Objectives, Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to a County park or recreation facility near their home						
Objective 1.1: Improve existing parks and/or establish new parks and recreation facilities in underserved areas of the County.						
Look at innovative public private partnerships to help improve parks throughout the county	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, PR	PS, NP, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Continue large scale planning for recreation parks, 50 acres or more, in the North West and South Eastern part of the county	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, PR	PS, NP, OT, GA	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/SPLOST/ DNR Recreational Trails Program Grant/DNR GA Outdoor Stewardship Program Grant

NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESEARCH

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Utilize the County's historic sites and structures to promote tourism						
Objective 1.1: Develop measures and standards for promoting existing historic resources						
Goal 2: Promote cultural sites and events						
Objective 2.1: Ensure Newton County's cultural identity is celebrated and promoted.						
Create more public spaces for gatherings and events	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PR, DA	PS, NP, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/ SPLOST/Grants
Goal 3: Protect Newton County's environment and manage its natural resources						
Objective 3.1 Ensure existing codes/ordinances are protecting and preserving Newton County's environment and natural resources						

NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESEARCH CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Require new development to preserve open space or protected green space	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PR, DA	PS, NP, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund//DNR GA Conservation Tax Credit Program
Research what other watershed communities have done successfully to effectively reduce the buffers on lakes and water ways without causing harm to the watershed.	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS	PS, NP, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Improve existing view sheds and scenic overlooks	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PR, DS	PS, NP, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/SPLOST/ Grants
Utilize the environmentally sensitive areas which are not suitable for development as passive recreation areas	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PR, DS	PS, NP, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/SPLOST/ GA Recreational Trails Program Grant/ GA Outdoor Stewardship Program Grant
Continue to support the preservation of floodplains, wetlands and watersheds for future development projects	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Preserve and protect the Yellow River, South River, and Alcovy River from development in adjacent Character Areas (Established Suburban Core and Emerging Suburban)	Ongoing	High	NC, DS	PS, NP, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions to develop solutions for shared regional issues						
Objective 1.1: Improve county-wide communication						
Promote maximum cooperation among all public safety, emergency response and law enforcement officials, across the county and other agencies to reduce duplication, speed interventions and maximize efficiencies.	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, PD, FD	PS, GA, OT, BOE	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Work with incorporated cities to plan and implement extension of water service, and sanitary sewer service to areas that have failing septic tanks, where cost effective to do so or where redevelopment to higher densities is desirable.	Intermediate Term (2023 - 2030)	Medium	NC, DS, WSA	PS, GA, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Utilize the required service delivery strategy update to coordinate with incorporated cities on shared issues	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS, WSA	PS, GA, OT, BOE	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Incorporate the County Strategic Plan recommendations into the comprehensive plan	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	Medium	NC, DS, WSA	PS, GA, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 1.2: Develop a strong regional and state network to help address local and regional issues						
Provide input to other public entities in the area when they are making decisions that are likely to affect Newton County	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS	PS, GA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Coordinate with the cities and other regional partners to plan and prepare a strong emergency response effort for all hazards and natural disasters.	Ongoing	High	NC, DS	PS, GA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Have joint coordination meetings for economic development pursuits	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS	PS, GA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Leverage relationships with elected officials to improve access to State and federal resources.	Ongoing	Medium	NC, DS	PS, GA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund

BROADBAND

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Ensure all of Newton County has access to affordable broadband Internet service.						
Objective 1.1: Promote the deployment of broadband services into underserved areas of the County.						
Encourage broadband service providers to offer service to rural residents in underserved areas when installing or upgrading fiber or other broadband technology that utilizes public rights of way.	Ongoing	Medium	NC	PS	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/USDA ReConnect Loan and Grant Program/ FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund
Adopt policies that facilitate broadband deployment, such as streamlined project permitting for the installation of broadband infrastructure on utility poles and light standards.	Ongoing	Medium	NC	PS	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Goal 2: Ensure essential telecommunication services for all residents, businesses, and local government agencies (especially Public Safety and Emergency Services) are reliable						

BROADBAND CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 2.1: Determine reliability of telecommunication services and devise solutions to address issues						
Engage telecommunications providers to address telecommunications reliability, diversity and redundancy issues.	Ongoing	Medium	NC	PS	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Document any major telecommunication outages to engage providers, GPSC and policy-makers for corrective actions.	Ongoing	Medium	NC	PS	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund

COMMUNITY FACILITIES + SERVICES

Goals, Objectives & Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Ensure the county's utilities and infrastructure are sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents						
Objective 1.1: Improve the existing infrastructure and prepare for future growth						
Increase current water and sewer capacity and expand infrastructure to better serve current residents and prepare for future growth	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	Capital Projects Funds/Grants
Goal 2: Maintain and support a variety of community facilities and services						
Objective 2.1: Provide public facilities, services and programming for all ages, especially youth						
Identify vacant County owned property to serve as potential locations for more community facilities	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA, DS	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Direct more staffing and funding towards maintaining and upgrading existing public facilities	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA, DS	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund/ SPLOST
Improve the availability and scheduling opportunities of public buildings and facilities	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA, DS	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Diversify the programs offered at community facilities for all users	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA, DS	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Ensure the safety of the community by providing exceptional public safety services	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA, DS	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund
Develop a strategy to effectively manage and prevent future illegal dumping throughout the county.	Ongoing	Medium	NC, PW, WSA, DS	PS, OT	Medium ($500,000-$1,000,000)	General Fund

LAND USE

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Goal 1: Foster development patterns that protect Newton County's small-town character						
Objective 1.1: Ensure small-town character is maintained in new development						
Identify key sites and features (scenic roads, historic sites, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc) to serve as community assets that shape the identity and character of development.	Ongoing	Medium	DS, PC	PS	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Goal 2: Support smart growth policies in all future development						
Objective 2.1: Implement smart growth land use principles to best manage growth						

LAND USE CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Promote development patterns that encourage connectivity between various land use types	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Encourage infill development and division of existing lots where appropriate	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Guide growth to areas with infrastructure in place and/or planned	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Avoid "spot zoning" to maintain a cohesive Land Use Plan	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Encourage nodal development in appropriate locations and discourage "strip" development patterns	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Goal 3: Promote a balanced mix of land uses within the County.						

LAND USE CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 3.1: Ensure land uses allow for beneficial and compatible development patterns						
Encourage land uses that prevent sprawl	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Establish a maximum allowed square footage of warehouses and industrial development within the County.	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Establish a buffers between conflicting land uses, especially with surrounding jurisdictions	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Encourage compact mixed-use development within the live/work character areas that is pedestrian friendly	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Goal 4: Resolve any issues with GIS land use data and use it to make informed land use decisions						

LAND USE CON'T.

Goals, Objectives and Actions	Projected Timeline	Priority	Primary Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 4.1: Direct resources to resolve inconsistencies in GIS data						
Invest in the latest GIS technology and software, when feasible	Ongoing	High	DS, NC	PS, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Objective 3.2: Use GIS data to make informed land use decisions						
Make GIS data readily available to potential developers and Development Services	Ongoing	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund
Goal 5: Update zoning and land use codes to better serve the needs of the County						
Objective 5.1: Direct Resources to review and update the zoning and land use code						
Revisit and update the existing UDO/Land Regulations to ensure sustainable growth patterns	Short Term (2023 - 2026)	High	DS, PC, NC	PS, DA, OT	Low (Under $500,000)	General Fund

APPENDIX

Population Projections Report

Comprehensive Plan Update

Newton County Population Projections 2020-2040

Analysis of Growth Trends

Beginning with a review of the existing local growth and development plans, the actual population data over time along with the expected growth trends, will establish a reasonable baseline for population projections.

The Newton County 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update includes a Population Projection Element which provides historical population changes and a population projection for year 2022. An analysis of the historical population changes for the county between 1970 and 2020, along with comparisons of the State of Georgia, is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Population Change by Decade, 1970 to 2020

Year	Newton County		Georgia	
	Total	% Change*	Total	% Change*
1970	26,282	--	4,589,575	--
1980	34,489	31.2%	5,463,105	19.03%
1990	41,808	21.2%	6,478,149	18.6%
2000	62,001	48.3%	8,186,453	26.4%
2010	99,958	61.2%	9,687,653	18.3%
2020	112,483	12.5%	10,711,908	10.6%
Change 1970-2020	**86,201**	**328%**	**6,122,333**	**133.4%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 1970-2020

Newton County saw consistent growth at an average of 35% per decade over the past five decades. The highest growth occurred between 2000 and 2010 when it reached 61.2% and its lowest between 2010 to 2020 at 12.5%. This data reveals that the County's growth rate is slowing down, however, this has been the trend for the majority of the Country. When compared to the state's historical growth rate in the last five decades, the County grew at a much faster rate than the State.

In regards to previous existing projections for Newton County, there are five main sources: the Newton County 2018 Moving Newton Comprehensive Transportation Plan, which utilizes projections for year 2040 from the Atlanta Regional Commission; the 2020 Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Economic Recovery + Resilience (ERR) Plan, which utilizes 2015 GA OPB population estimates for 2050; then the 2020 Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget County Residential Projections for years 2020 to 2050; and 2021 Georgia Water Planning Municipal Water Demand and Wastewater Flow Forecasting Methods Report, which utilizes 2019 UGA Carl Vincent Institute Statewide population projections; and 2022 Woods & Poole Economic, Inc. Projections for years 2020 to 2050. Table 2 contains a summary of the county's existing projections.

Table 2: Summary of Existing Population Projections

Plan/Data Source	2020 Projection	2030 Projection	% Change	2040 Projection	% Change	2050 Projection	% Change
2018 Moving Newton CTP				162,345			
2020 NEGRC ERR Plan	116,855	140,095	19.9%	165,913	18.4%	195,320	17.7%
2020 GA OPB	113,295	132,511	17%	152,061	14.7%	171,036	12.5%
2021 GA Municipal Water Plan	112,354	128,770	14.6%	148,303	15.2%	170,860	15.2%
2022 Woods & Poole	112,780	134,631	19.4%	157,211	16.8%	181,591	15.5%

Source: 2018 Moving Newton Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), 2020 Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Economic Recovery + Resilience (ERR) Plan (2015 GA OPB Estimates), 2020 Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) County Residential Projections, 2021 Georgia Water Planning Municipal Water Demand and Wastewater Flow Forecasting Methods Report (2019 UGA Carl Vincent Institute), 2022 Woods & Poole Economic, Inc. Projections

While all of the existing population projections differ on the amount, they all predict that the County population will grow by at least 14% between 2020 and 2040.

Methodology

The first step to determine future population growth projections for Newton County is to estimate the percentage growth under the baseline conditions before the Rivian plant was announced and before considering the influx of new jobs that new facility will bring.

To calculate this baseline growth projection, the growth rates for 2020 to 2030 and 2030 to 2040 are calculated from the five existing projection sources mentioned above. In consideration of the available projections and reviewing their historic accuracy, the baseline growth rates for the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan shall be 17.5% for period between 2020 to 2030 and 16.5% for the decade between 2030 and 2040. Table 3 presents these baseline growth projections.

Table 3: Baseline Growth Projections

	2020 Census	2030 Projection	Change	2040 Projection	Change
Newton County	112,483	132,168	17.5%	153,975	16.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; GMC

The next step to determine the future population projections is to add the population as a result of the influx of new job growth from Rivian to the baseline growth.

The Rivian plant is expected to create 7,100 jobs by 2030. However, in planning for future growth, and because of the wide-ranging regional impact of such a major employer, not all of the new hires will necessarily move to the Newton County. Instead, given the limits on the availability of public water and sewer service and amount of developable land for housing, GMC estimates that 20% of new hires will move to Newton County. Therefore, 20% of the 7,100 total jobs expected by 2030 results in 1,420 employees expected to move to the County. As for 2040, we do not expect new employees to move to Newton County as a result of the Rivian plant and its suppliers with the same baseline population growth of 16.5%.

To translate these new employees into a population growth estimate, a factor was calculated using the average household size according to the most recent 2021 ACS 1-year Estimates census data, which is 2.75 persons per household. Using this formula, the estimated population as a result of the 1,420 jobs created and filled by 2030 will be 3,905 people added to the population of Newton County.

To get the 2020 to 2030 population we will add the 3,905 people expected as a result of the growth from Rivian to the 132,168 people expected as a result of the baseline growth. This leads to a total population of 136,073 by 2030 and a 21% growth rate between 2020 and 2030, as a result of both baseline growth and Rivian job growth.

To get the 2030 to 2040 population, the 16.5% baseline growth rate projected for this decade is applied to the 2030 projected population calculated above of 136,073. This leads to an increase of 22,451 residents, which we will add back to the new 2030 baseline population projection (136,073) to get a final population of 158,524 for 2040.

Table 4: Calculation of Population Projections 2020-2040

	2020 Census	2030 GMC Projection	Change	2040 Projection	Change
Baseline Growth	112,483	132,168	17.5%	153,975	16.5%
Rivian Impact	--	3,905	21%	--	--
Newton County	--	136,073	21%	158,524	16.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; GMC

In conclusion, historical population growth, previous existing population projections, and the expected baseline growth and job growth from the influx brought by the Rivian facility, all indicate that Newton County will experience strong growth in the next 20 years. Between 2030 and 2040, we expect the County to increase by 23,590 people, which is a total population of 136,073 people by 2030 and a 21% increase. Between 2030 and 2040, we expect the County to increase by another 22,451 people, which is a total population of 158,524 residents by 2040 and a 16.5% increase.

General Public Survey Report

Comprehensive Plan Update

ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

The online community survey featured twenty one (21) questions total. The majority of the questions, one through nineteen, addressed a range of key comprehensive planning topics from economic development, land development practices, parks and recreation to housing and transportation. The last two questions were open-ended, which allowed respondents space to provide written feedback. This comprehensive and user-friendly design encouraged responses from all residents of Newton County in one survey and collected feedback Countywide.

The data received helped to identify what residents like or do not like about the County and what topics should be considered for change going forward. The results were then applied, alongside input collected from public open house meetings, to shape the goals of the comprehensive plan to reflect the collective voice of the community.

The online survey was open between October 19th and December 6th, 2022. Newton County staff advertised and promoted the survey via outreach on social media platforms, an announcement on the County website, and the placement of flyers and signage throughout the County. These efforts were successful as evidenced by the fact that during the one-month survey window, 296 unique respondents completed the survey.

The results of survey questions are presented in the following summary statements and accompanying charts.

Newton County

Online Community Survey

2022 Comprehensive Plan Update

RESULTS

Question #1:   Most survey respondents lived in Newton County Unincorporated (69.93%) and in the City of Covington (18.92%), while the next largest group of respondents lived in the City of Oxford (3.04%).

Q1: Where do you live?

- Newton County (unincorporated)
- City of Mansfield
- City of Oxford
- City of Social Circle
- I do not live in Newton County
- City of Covington
- Town of Newborn
- City of Porterdale
- I do not know

Question #2:   Most respondents lived in District 1, whose Commissioner is Stan Edwards (28.42%). The next largest group of respondents did not know which commission district they lived in (20.89%). The next district most respondents lived in was District 5, whose commissioner is Ronnie Cowan (16.44%), then District 2, whose Commissioner is Demond Mason (12.33%). Less than 1% of respondents did not live in Newton County.

Q2: Which Commission District do you live in?

Question #3:   When asked "where do you work?", most respondents were retired or not employed (25.08%). The next largest group of respondents worked in the City of Covington (17.97%), followed closely by those who work from home (17.63%). Up to 14.58% of respondents worked in Newton County unincorporated and only 6.10% of respondents reported that they worked outside of Newton County.

Question #4: Most respondents were age 36 or older. A little less than half of respondents (43.92%) were between the ages of 35-55 years old, while 33.11% were between the ages of 55-70 years old.

Q4: How old are you?

Question #5: When asked to choose their current status is in Newton County from a list of options, the vast majority (91.55%) of respondents reported that they owned their own home. The second largest group of respondents (14.86%) reported that they are employed in Newton County and the same number of respondents (6.42%) reported that they rent their home or apartment or own undeveloped property. Only one respondent reported they are active military.

Q5: Which of the following best describes your current status?

Question #6: When asked to indicate their top reasons for why they chose to live or work in Newton County, respondents chose "Small Town Character" as their number one reason, followed by "Affordability of property and homes" and "Access to the natural environment".

Ranking lowest, or the least important reason identified for living or working in Newton County, was "Variety of retirement amenities".

The responses are represented by a scale of one to seven, indicating the average of all the rankings, with one being the lowest priority and seven being the highest.

According to these results, Newton County residents chose to live or work in the County mainly for the small-town character, affordable housing, and access to nature. In contrast, residents indicated they did not choose to live or work in the County for its retirement amenities, quality of schools, job opportunities or proximity to Atlanta.

Q6: Please rank the following characteristics based on importance for why you choose to live, work, or own property in Newton County.

Question #7:   To gauge which issues were of highest priority to Newton County residents, the survey provided a list of the top issues identified through the planning process up to this point. Respondents were asked to assign either high, low or no priority to each issue.

The issue that received the highest priority was "Traffic congestion/circulation," with a total of 89.86% of respondents choosing this as a high priority. The second highest priority with a score of 79.93% was "Greenspace and open space preservation" followed by "Beautification of public spaces" with a score of 69.62%.

The issue receiving the lowest priority was "Walking and bicycling trails" with 37.24% of respondents choosing this as not a priority.

This reveals Newton County residents would like the County to prioritize traffic management and greenspace preservation.

In the optional comments section for this question, there were some trends in the answers respondents provided regarding what should be a high priority. Many respondents said crime, particularly in schools, should be a high priority for the County to address, followed by preserving the small town feel and slowing down growth.

Q7: How much of a priority should the following issues be for Newton County?

Question #8:   When it came to the level of satisfaction regarding public services or facilities, respondents were most satisfied with "Water and sewer services" and "Parks and Recreation," followed by "Sidewalks and trails".

In keeping with the results from the previous question, respondents were most dissatisfied with "Traffic management" followed by "Street and road conditions."

Q8: Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following public services or facilities.

Question #9:   When asked to indicate level of agreement with certain development strategies, almost 90% of respondents agreed there should be regulations that require green space preservation in new development. The strategy second statement respondents most agreed with was "There should be more focus on reducing traffic congestion" at 84.07%. There was not a single strategy that respondents overwhelmingly disagreed with, as every strategy received more agreement than disagreement votes. However, respondents almost equally disagreed and agreed with the strategy statement, "There should be incentives that attract more commercial and retail businesses".

Overall, the majority of respondents support that Newton County should consider these development strategies.

Q9: Please indicate whether you agree, disagree, or have no opinion with the following statements.

Question #10:   When asked to rank a series of five public recreational facilities in order of their priority, with one being the highest priority and five being the lowest, "Trails and multi-use paths" were ranked the highest most often by respondents followed closely by "Playgrounds".

"Playgrounds" were most often selected as the second highest priority.

The "Senior Center" was most often ranked the lowest of all the facilities.

The chart below presents the results based on the respondents' priority order, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest priority.

Q10: Please rank the following recreational public facilities in accordance with the level of priority you feel they are for the County in the future.

Question #11:   When asked how close the nearest park is to their home, 74.06% of respondents answered that they must drive to the nearest park, while a total of 22.53% of respondents said it was close enough to reach by walking or biking.

Q11: How close is the nearest park to your home?

Question #12:   Respondents were asked to rank a series of transit options in order of high, low or no priority. It is important to note that every transit option was overwhelmingly ranked as low priority more than high priority.

However, there were still some options that were ranked a higher priority than the other, though marginally. For example, the "Extend Xpress bus route to Covington with service to Atlanta" option received the highest priority, with 29.01% of respondents choosing this as a high priority. The second highest priority, with 28.82% of respondents choosing this as a high priority, is the option "Rideshare parking lots for carpools along I-20".

The lowest priority, with 66.44% or respondents choosing this as the lowest, was the option "Public Transit providing a circulator bus or vans within Newton County".

Q12: Please rank the following transit options in accordance with the level of priority you feel they are for the County in the future.

Question #13:   Respondents were asked to rank a series of five environmental topics in order of their priority, with one being the highest priority and five being the lowest.

"Water quality and conservation" was ranked most often as both the highest and "Natural habitat preservation" was ranked as the second highest priority by respondents, followed closely by "Greenspace and open space preservation".

"Tree canopy preservation" was selected most often as the lowest priority among the six environmental topics.

The chart below presents the results based on the respondents' priority order, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest priority.

Q13: Please rank the following environmental topics based on how important you feel they are for the County in the future.

Question #14:   Regarding economic development strategies, Newton County residents considered attracting more retail and restaurants the highest priority followed by offering incentives for small businesses, start-ups and incubator spaces.

As for the lowest priority, 73.38% of respondents considered offering incentives for industrial companies to locate in Newton County least important.

Q14: Please rank the following economic development topics based on the level of priority you feel they are for the County in the future.

Question #15:   When asked whether Newton County needed more, less or the same amount of various housing types, respondents indicated their preference for more single-family residential homes and retirement communities for those aged 55 and above and less mobile homes and apartments. Respondents also indicated they wanted the same amount of assisted living facilities.

As for alternatives to single-family homes, among respondents who indicated a preference, Starter homes and Residential as a part of mixed-use developments ranked above townhomes, apartments and mobile homes.

Q15: Do you think Newton County needs more, less, or the same amount of the following types of housing?

Question #16: Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with select statements on the future residential development in Newton County over the next 20 years. "The County should require new development to preserve open space particularly in sensitive environmental areas" ranked highest overall (89.19%) in terms of the number of respondents who agreed with this statement, followed by "Residential growth should be limited" at 69.62%. Respondents generally agreed that it is important to "Encourage development of vacant and under-utilized property".

More than 70% of respondents disagreed with the statement "Increase the density of homes that are permitted in residential areas."

Q16: Please state whether you agree, disagree, or have no opinion with the following statements on future residential development in Newton County over the next 20 years.

Question #17: Regarding commercial development, 76.61%% of respondents indicated they wanted more "family entertainment", followed by "small businesses" (72.51%), "restaurants" (72.11%) and "Retail and shopping" (63.05%).

The type of commercial development respondents wanted less of in Newton County is "hotels".

In the optional comments section for this question, there were some trends such as less gas stations, dollar stores, self-storage and fast food businesses and more local restaurants and healthy grocery store options like Whole Foods or Sprouts.

Q17: Do you think Newton County needs more, less, or the same amount of the following commercial businesses?

Question #18: When asked to indicate their opinion on the existing sidewalk and trail system in Newton County, most respondents (42.91%) indicated they were satisfied with the existing network of sidewalks and trails, while 33.56% think it needs to be expanded.

Only 7.61% of respondents indicated they were not aware of any existing sidewalk and trail system.

Q18: Which statement best describes your opinion about the existing sidewalk and trail system in Newton County?

Question #19: When asked whether they had broadband internet services, the majority of respondents (77.21%) answered "yes" to having broadband internet services, while 13.27% answered "no". Only 1.7% of respondents indicated they were not aware of any existing broadband services near them and 4.08% indicated they were not interested in getting broadband internet service.

Q19: Do you have broadband internet service?

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to leave comments in response to two questions.

The first question asked what they think the greatest challenge facing Newton County will be in the next 20 years. There was a total of 249 responses to this question, with a few answers repeated by many respondents. Common responses fell into a few different categories:

Greatest Challenge	Mentions
Growth	41
Development	33
Traffic	32
Housing	22
Infrastructure	22
Crime	21

The last question asked if respondents had anything else to add and a trend emerged in the answers. Providing public transit options such as Marta expansion to the County or a local public transit bus system and eliminating school taxes for seniors was some recurring, specific topics. Common responses fell into a few different categories below:

Anything to Add	Mentions
Newton County	20
Community	12
Businesses	10
Schools	10
Parks	9
Community Centers	3

Youth Survey Report

Comprehensive Plan Update

ONLINE YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

The online youth survey featured seven (7) questions total which were tailored to the youth and student population. After seeing limited results from the previous online survey to the general public, County leadership expressed a desire to get more inclusive public input, specifically from the youth and student population. This public opinion survey was designed with more open-ended questions than ranking or multiple-choice questions in order to provide youth and students an opportunity to let leadership know what they think about a variety of topics that the Comprehensive Plan will address.

The first question asked respondents where they lived, with options ranging between cities and towns in and nearby Newton County and unincorporated County. Questions two and three asked respondents to answer what they think is the best and worst things about Newton County, with options to choose from a various list of reasons or write in their own answer. The remaining questions, four through seven, addressed a range of thought-provoking questions ultimately seeking feedback on how the county could improve. This feedback-driven and user-friendly design encouraged responses from all youth and students in Newton County in one survey and collected feedback Countywide.

The data received helped to identify what youth and students like or do not like about the County and what topics should be considered for change going forward. The results were then applied, alongside input collected from public open house meetings, to shape the goals of the comprehensive plan to reflect the collective voice of the community.

The online youth survey was open between January 30th and February 17th, 2022. Newton County staff advertised and promoted the survey via outreach on social media platforms and collaborated with local schools and colleges throughout the county to promote it. These efforts were successful as evidenced by the fact that during the one-month survey window, 791 unique respondents completed the survey.

The results of survey questions are presented in the following summary statements and accompanying charts.

Newton County

Online Youth Survey

2022 Comprehensive Plan Update

RESULTS

Question #1:   Most survey respondents lived in the City of Covington (46.70%) and in Newton County Unincorporated (38.71%), while the next largest group of respondents lived in the City of Oxford (4.70%) and the City of Mansfield (3.81%).

Question #2:   When asked what they liked best about Newton County, 52.3% of respondents chose "Places to hang out" followed by "shopping" at 44.12%, then "Parks/Open Space/Nature" at 40.15%. "Opportunities to get involved in the community" was the least chosen option at 11.25%, with "small town character" slightly preceding it at 21.36% and "Proximity to Atlanta" at 26.34%.

Among the 129 optional comments for this question (those who selected "other"), the top three most common answers were "nothing" mentioned by 31 respondents, "friends" mentioned by 7 and "food and restaurants" mentioned by 6 respondents.

Question #3:   When asked to identify the worst things about Newton County, the overwhelming majority of respondents chose "traffic" at 64.14%, followed by "places to hang out" at 22.62% and "shopping" at 20.6%. Something of note is that both "Parks/Open Space/Nature" and "Opportunities to get involved in the community" were the least chosen among the options for the worst things about Newton County, possibly meaning they are not seen as big of a problem as other things such as traffic.

Among the 153 optional comments for this question (those who selected "other"), the top three most common answers were, "School" with 30 mentions, "People" with 20 mentions, and "Everything" with 15 mentions.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

#4 - 7

The next four questions on the survey were open-ended and therefore led to more qualitative than quantitative results. Instead of using a chart as the visual representation of the data, we are using a word cloud, which displays the words most commonly used in the answers in varying sizes based on how often they were mentioned. In this particular word cloud, the more often a word is mentioned the larger it is, with the largest having at least 95 mentions, and the least often a word is mentioned, the smaller the text, with the smallest having at least 3 mentions. The word cloud does not always represent the exact totality of the answers, due to there being so many different ways of saying the same thing, but it gives a general summary of the answers. Most questions required an additional level of analysis to interpret the results in a more qualitative manner.

Question #4: Respondents were asked to answer whether they would want to live in Newton County when they are older, explain their answer and offer any feedback as to what would change their mind. There was a total of 775 responses to this question, with a few answers repeated by many respondents.

Among the 775 answers to this open-ended question, the most common answer was either explicitly "No" or essentially expressed the answer no ("I would not like to", "I don't want to", etc.), with 543 (70%) answering this way. Most said no because they thought Newton County lacked things to do and future career and college opportunities, as well as a desire to explore other places to live or move near family and friends who live elsewhere. Of the remaining answers, 141 (18%) said "Yes" they would like to live in the County when they are older, 76 (10%) said "I do not know" or "Maybe", or "depends, and 15 (1.9%) answers were unclear. Those that said yes often listed family and friends as well as their love of nature and small-town feel as the main reasons for their choice. As for what could change their minds to stay, most said family.

Q4: Do you want to live in Newton County when you are older?

Question #5: Regarding suggestions for improvement, respondents were asked share what they think would make Newton County better.

In total, 771 respondents answered this question, with a varying number responses. However, there were a few trends that stood out. Many of the responses contained references to similar suggestions, with the topic of "Schools" being the most common answer with at least 70 mentions alongside comments such as "better schools", "better security and safety measures at school", and "better food at school." Following close behind schools was the topic of "food or restaurants" with at least 68 mentions alongside comments such as "better food or restaurant options" and "more restaurants". Respondents also expressed a desire for more parks, with 35 mentions of "parks" in regards to adding more parks to serve as additional recreation options.

There was a lot of good feedback, however, a few comments were noteworthy.

- "I'm an Oxford College student who likes walking so I would really appreciate more sidewalks. Especially on Soule Street/Williams Road."
- "Reducing gun violence"
- "To make Newton County better is by making the schools cleaner and have better protection in the schools."
- "More places to hang out (food places, malls, shopping places)"," movie theater", "arcades, pool halls, thrift stores"
- "Something that would make Newton County better are more places next to neighborhoods. For example, a small food place At least 10 minutes away from most neighborhoods instead of driving 20 minutes to Walmart and Publix. Extend how people can deliver from store / food places to homes and neighborhoods."

Question #6: Respondents were asked what they want to see less of in Newton County in the future? A
total of 750 respondents answered this question and like question five, there were
numerous different answers, however, a few common themes emerged.

Among the 750 responses, at least 65 respondents mentioned "people" as something they
would like to see less of in Newton County's future, mostly in reference to crime,
population growth, and tourists. "Houses" was another common answer, with 30 mentions
often in reference to the desire to see less housing development, followed by "traffic,"
which received 29 mentions.

Question #7: The last question asked respondents to share suggestions on the best way to include them and their peers in future County planning processes like the survey.

Among the 696 responses, "Survey" was the most common answer with a little more than 100 mentions, followed by "meeting in person" with 75 mentions.

Many ideas for including more youth and students were shared, the following are direct quotes from this survey question.

- "I think having a town meeting would be great because it give everyone a chance to know each other"
- "Surveys like this that actually get taken into action instead of collecting dust"
- "I believe a group of students going to the city hall and voicing a list of their concerns and/or solutions to issues that they have with Newton County as a whole."
- "Town-hall-like meeting with actual government officials that can make change."
- "I feel the best way to include our peers is by having survey Friday or even talk of the week where we talk about things we like or what the teachers/students can do better to be geared to greatness!"

Open House Sign-in Sheets

DISTRICT #1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House
Newton County – District #1
November 9, 2022

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Jason McCanTay	3701 Dixie Rd	MCCANTYCPA@GMAIL.Com
Kevin & Patty Goff	16603 Hwy 36	NEWTON PLAN 2022 @ KEVINGOFF.COM
Leslie Edwards	280 5th Ave	edwardsleslie0520@gmail.com
Karla Daniels/Harper	45 Carmody CR	lspdaniels18@gmail.com
Barry Bowen	484 Miller	bowenbarry28@88
Avery Bean	461 Miller Rd	beamscapes@yahoo.com
Denise Williams		barnes9878@attnet
Susan Griffin	35 Pembroke Pl	susangriffin350@gmail.
Clifford Pilars / Betty DePars		cliffordde@ass @hotmail. com
	gtwy9130c@aol.com	
JARVIS R. Sims		JSims@co.newton.ga.us
Brian Frix	130 Cornish Trace Dr	befrix@bellsouth.net
Shea Applewhate		
STAN EDWARDS	280 5th Ave. Mansfield, GA	
TREY BAILEY	626 Hwy 229 Social Circle, GA 30025	TREYBAILEY333@GMAIL.COM
Tim Lawrence	GIS Dept.	

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House
Newton County – District #2
November 17, 2022

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Judy Skillern	1160 Adrians Lane Covington 30016	saba160@att.net
J. Walker	165 Adrians Lane Cov. 30016	walknauthority@gmail.com
Ann Neuhier	60 Ivans Cir 30014	neuhierla@gmail.com
DeTRA Reid	160 BRADLEY ST 30016	REIDDET@BELISOUTH.NEW
Kimani Heath	35 Cranbrook Wa, 30016	Kh2278@aol.com
Nadja Heath		
Bryan Ferris	6131 Cashmere Dr Covington 30014	
Helen Weitkamp	5737 Hwy 212	Helen_Weitkamp@yahoo.com
Scott Pepperman	" " "	scott_pepperman@yahoo.com
Demond Mason	35 Freeman Way 30016	dmason@co.newton.ga.us
JOHN HEAD	110 WILD ROSE Ct 30016	john.head@nafeco.com
	1113 Usher St.	
Tim Lawrence	Newton Co. GIS Dept	

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House
Newton County – District #3
November 16, 2022

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Herrion ERVIN	20 Windsong Drive, Cov 30016	herrion.ervin@gmail.com
Kim & Chip Young	297 Crowell Rd N 3004	KimJYoung@cs.com
Jennelle West	120 Camerons Way	jennellewest@att.net
Alana Sanders	~~xxxxx~~	alanaSanders@gmail.con
LEE Mason	108 Parish Rd	
Angela Mason	108 Parish Rd	vbarmason@aol.com
JAMES Johnson	120 Providence pkwy	JAYARMY22@yahoo.com
HEIDI STEWART		hem484@yahoo.com
Karla Daniels	45 Carmody CR	kpdaniels18@gmail.com
Tim Lawrence	Newton County GIS Dept	
Sheria Applewhite	Newton County. Dev-Serv.	

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House
Newton County – District #4
November 14, 2022

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
John Henderson	7134 Puckett St	heri7l03@gmail.com
Shantel B M	85 Moores lane	Shantbranc@gmail.com
JAMES LINDSAY		
Tim Lawrence	Newton Co. GIS Dept	
Sandy Henderson	7134 Pucatt	
Mandie King	7134 Puckett	
Frank? Grier		
Sanchez Davis		
Jordan moris		
Elideh Taylor		
J. J. Hayden	45 Cory Ct	jjhaydeniiii@earthlink.net
Lois N. Upham	" " "	
Egeniece (Nece) Martin-Lackey	Mote Rd.	necelackey@hotmail.com
Matthe Goggin	Nelson Hight	
Larry Stokes	30 Flowers Drive	larrystokes312@yaho.com
Brenda Stokes	" "	" "
Thelma I. Nolley	3163 Stom Mtn St	

Comprehensive Plan Update

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Public Open House
Newton County – District #5
November 10, 2022

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Bishop Dianne Jennings	585 Henderson Mill	dianne@diannejennings.com
Jim Lawrence	Newton County GIS	
Roy Frix	1320 Cornish rd.	Frixrj@bellsouth.Net
Janet Frix	1320 Cornish Mtn Rd.	frixrj@bellsouth.net
Holly Whitlow	110 S. WATERS EDGE DR	holly@watercolorspols.
Ben Whitlow	1105 Waters Edge Dr 30014	nebulse@bellsouth
Kim Carter	3117 Floyd St., 30014	kim@kimcarter.us
Maurice Carter	" " " "	maurice@mauricecarter.net
Darryl Hooper	70 Rock Rose Dr 30014	darrylhooper@mac.com
Chris Sewell	70 S Waters Edge Dr 30014	chris.sewell@westrock.com
Stephen Henderson	15 S. Waters Edge Dr. 30014	shender@emory.edu
Kathryn Henderson	15 S. Waters Edge Dr. 30014	hendersonkl@bellsouth.net
Ed Hutter	155 Cornish Mt. Cir, Cov. 30014	edhutter@hutterbuilding.com
Jay Lanners	745 Cornish Mountain Rd Oxford 30054	JLanners@LannersDev.com
Matt & Debbie Cruce	843 Cornish Mtn Rd Oxford	eastatlantainvestments@hotmail.com

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House
Draft Comprehensive Plan
April 24, 2023

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Jim Lawrence	Newton Co. GIS	GIS@co.newton.ga.us
Jay Bailey	4104 Legion Dr.	JayBailey@steelco Buildings.net
Beth Bailey	"	BethBailey@kw.com
Sandy Murchume	110 Jeff Cudr R	burgeagmen22.Lov
Karla Daniels Hooper	45 Carmedy CR	kpdaniels18@gmail.com
Dubbe Herper	100 Bear Creek Wk	dharper@newtonchamber.com
Nenise Williams	Newton Gc	barnes9878@att.net
Jeff + Kim Payne	Newton Co.	divakds@yahoo.com
Alysin & Frank Foster		alysinfoster@comcast.net
Bryan Fazio	6131 Crestview Dr	BFazio@co.newton.ga.us
Ivory Coburn	15 Blanket Pass	coburn.ivory@newton.k12.ga.us
H. Cooper		
Commissioner Stan Edwards (District 1)		
Glenn Cayne		
Kalonos Johnson	GMC (consultant)	
Ellie Swenson		
Jaleesa Myers	30 Peejay	MYERS.JALEESA@GMAIL.COM
Davis Richardson	" "	"

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House
Draft Comprehensive Plan
April 24, 2023

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Jill Morehouse Lum	110 Jeff Cook Rd	jill@lum.net
Thercia T. Hodge	140 Silver Pt Dr, Mansfield	therciah@outlook.com
Commissioner Alana Sanders (District 3)		

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Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Open House Meetings Summary
November 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 2022

With the help of the Newton County Planning and GIS Department, GMC held five (5) public workshops, one in each County district to garner public opinion and feedback during the comprehensive plan. The workshops were held on November 9th, 10th, 14th, 16th and 17th at various locations in each district. A total of 88 residents, businessowners, and other related actors attended.

After visitors signed-in, they could visit the four stations we prepared and complete different activities. The activity at each station is detailed below:

> **Station 1: Online Survey.** Visitors used one of the tablets or scanned the QR code to take the online community survey.

> **Station 2: Setting Priorities for Goals.** Visitors used dot stickers to indicate their priorities for 10 goals related to Newton County's development.

> **Station 3: Map Exercise.** Visitors placed numbered stickers to indicate their favorite places and places they feel need improvement or attention.

> **Station 4: Financing Bucket Exercise.** Visitors "spent" money on the discretionary projects they felt are most important for the future of Newton County.

Newton County and GMC staff were stationed at each table to answer any questions and listen to comments and concerns from residents, and an input form was provided for longer comments.

Summaries of all the stations are provided below and simply labeled by the station number.

1. **Survey**
    A. Three (3) tablets for attendees to take online survey
    B. Poster with QR Code for attendees to scan and take survey on their own device

Survey responses are incorporated into the overall Community Survey Results Report, under separate cover.

2. **Setting priorities for Goals**
    A. One board featuring goals
    B. Attendees indicate priority ranking; green, yellow and red stickers
    C. Space provided for comments; post-it notes

Goals Results District 1 (Highlights)

*   Highest priorities are: Improve Transportation efficiency and provide public transit options as well as Alternative Modes of Transportation options: bike lanes, walking paths & trails (Transportation) and Develop a plan to promote the deployment of broadband services by broadband service providers into unserved areas within the County (Broadband)

- Lowest priority (by far): Provide a full suite of Lifecycle Housing to meet the needs of current and future County residents (Housing) (Explanation: too much housing development already, risk of damaging quality of life)

Goals Results District 2 (Highlights)

- Highest priorities are: Continue to support existing businesses and create an environment that attracts new businesses to locate in the County (Economic Development) and Develop a plan to promote the deployment of broadband services by broadband service providers into unserved areas within the County (Broadband)

- Lowest priority is (a tie between 2 goals): Provide a full suite of Lifecycle Housing to meet the needs of current and future County residents (Housing) and Participate in Inter-governmental Cooperation on regional issues and management of shared resources (Intergovernmental Cooperation) (Explanation: too much housing development already and intergovernmental cooperation is not as important as other goals)

Goals Results District 3 (Highlights)

- Highest priorities are: Continue to support existing businesses and create an environment that attracts new businesses to locate in the County (Economic Development) and Support a high level of service for parks and recreation (Parks and Recreation)

- Lowest priority (by far) is: Provide a full suite of Lifecycle Housing to meet the needs of current and future County residents (Housing) (Explanation: too much housing development already, risk of damaging quality of life)

Goals Results District 4 (Highlights)

- Highest priorities are: Support a high level of service for parks and recreation (Parks and Recreation) and Provide a full suite of Lifecycle Housing to meet the needs of current and future County residents (Housing)

- Lowest priority (by far) is: Develop a plan to promote the deployment of broadband services by broadband service providers into unserved areas within the County (Broadband) (Explanation: Broadband service is seen as sufficient and therefore not permitting high priority)

Goals Results District 5 (Highlights)

- Highest priorities are: Protect, provide access to, and ensure sustainability of our natural and cultural resources (Natural and Cultural Resources) and Develop a plan to promote the deployment of broadband services by broadband service providers into unserved areas within the County (Broadband)

- Lowest priority (by far) is: Maintain and support a variety of Community Facilities and Services such as community centers and senior services (Community Facilities and Services) (Explanation: The current level of community services and facilities are seen as sufficient and therefore not permitting high priority)

3. **Map Exercise**

   A. Base map for North and South Bryan County

   B. Numbered stickers to indicate favorite places & places that need attention

   C. Log sheet to capture comments associated with numbered stickers

Map Results Summary All District Meetings

- A total of 197 stickers were placed on the exercise maps

- The top five favorite places, or those with the most reoccurring stickers, were:
    - Turner Lake Park/Senior Services
    - Covington Square
    - Charlie Elliot-Wildlife Center
    - Cricket Frog Trail
    - Lake Varner/Cornish Creek Reservoir

- The top five places needing improvement, for traffic issues in particular, were:
    - Hwy 278 Traffic
    - Brown Bridge Rd/Crowell Rd
    - Salem Rd/Brown Bridge Rd
    - Hwy 142/Flat Rock Rd
    - Salem Rd

4. **"Financing Bucket" Exercise**

   A. Recreational Services & Programs

   B. Economic Development

   C. Transportation Alternatives

   D. Roadway Improvements & Beautification

   E. Zoning Code Update

Results District 1 (11/09/22)

Summary of Finance Box Exercise for District 1 – November 11, 2022

Discretionary Project	Funding Earned
Transportation Alternatives	$500
Recreational Services & Programs	$1,300
Roadway Improvements & Beautification	$1,800
Economic Development	$800
Zoning Code Update	$900

Budget Exercise Comments (District 1)

- Zoning Code Update – "We need updated ordinances and overlay requirements that consider the surrounding area, we need limits"

- Transportation Alternatives – "Xpress Bus route to Rockdale and Lithonia needs to extend to Covington"

- Roadway Improvements & Beautification – "Change traffic lights at 36 and Henderson Mill area to Traffic circles", "Turn-lane at 36 and 213", "Speed bumps at Long Creek Subdivision South/62 Area"

Results District 2 (11/17/22)

Summary of Finance Box Exercise for District 2 – November 17, 2022

Discretionary Project	Funding Earned
Transportation Alternatives	$600
Recreational Services & Programs	$500
Roadway Improvements & Beautification	$900
Economic Development	$900
Zoning Code Update	$800

Financing Bucket Exercise Comments (District 2)

- Zoning Code Update – "mixed-use, well planned"

- General – "Public safety budget-Five"

Results District 3 (11/16/22)

Summary of Finance Box Exercise for District 3 – November 16, 2022

Discretionary Project	Funding Earned
Transportation Alternatives	$100
Recreational Services & Programs	$600
Roadway Improvements & Beautification	$1,200
Economic Development	$800
Zoning Code Update	$900

Financing Bucket Exercise Comments (District 3)

- No comments were made

Results District 4 (11/14/22)

Summary of Finance Box Exercise for District 4 – November 14, 2022

Discretionary Project	Funding Earned
Transportation Alternatives	$2,100
Recreational Services & Programs	$1,500
Roadway Improvements & Beautification	$800
Economic Development	$700
Zoning Code Update	$400

Financing Bucket Exercise Comments (District 4)

- General – "Affordable single-family homes (I make $16/hr. I need a place to stay", "Senior Housing"

Results District 5 (11/10/22)

Summary of Finance Box Exercise for District 5 – November 10, 2022

Discretionary Project	Funding Earned
Transportation Alternatives	$1,500
Recreational Services & Programs	$2,700
Roadway Improvements & Beautification	$1,800
Economic Development	$800
Zoning Code Update	$3,600

Financing Bucket Exercise Comments (District 5)

- Recreational Services & Programs – "Improve the parks we currently have, see more parks and rec", "Park District 3, small business incubator"
- Roadway Improvements & Beautification - "Improve current roads"

Highlights from all Districts (Financing Bucket Exercise)

- Districts 1, 2 and 3 all prioritized "Roadway Improvements & Beautification" with District 2 having a tie with "Economic Development"
- District 4 prioritized "Transportation Alternatives" with "Recreational Services & Programs" following close behind it
- District 5 prioritized "Zoning Code Update" followed by "Recreational Services & Programs"

Public Hearing Sign-in Sheets

Comprehensive Plan Update

Newton County Public Hearing
September 13, 2022

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Scott Sirotkin	6145 Cherry Valley Dr. Covington	SSirotkin@co.newbugs.u
Tim Lawrence	Newton Co. GIS	GIS@co.newton.ga.us
Kathy Morgan	NCIDA-DED	Cid@selectnewton.com, Kmorgan@selectnewton.com.
Kim Carter	3117 Floyd St., Cov	kim@kimcarter.us
Bryan Fazio	6131 Crestview Dr., Cov.	BFazio@co.newton.ga.us
LaTonja Hamp	1124 Clark St. Cov	Lhamp@co.newton.ga.us
Alysin Frank Foster		alysenfoster@comcast.net
Debbie Harper	2101 Clark St. Cov.	dharper@newton.chamber.com
Crystal Dooley	Newton Day Services	cdooley@co.newton.ga.us
Sheva Applewhite	1113 usher St.	Sapplewhite@co.newton.ga.us
Chairman Banes	1124 Clark St	
Comm. Cowan	1124 Clark St.	
Comm. Sanders	1124 Clark St	
Comm. Edwards	1124 Clark St	
Cty Mayor Janis Sims	1124 Clark St.	
Patrick Jaugstetter	1124 Clark St.	

Public Hearing
Draft Comprehensive Plan
April 25, 2023

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Address	E-mail
Ted Cummines	900 Loop Creek	
Erika Henson	12100 Town Ctr.	
David Jenkins	110 Bentley place way	
Debbie Harper	100 Bear Creek Wk	dharper@newton chamber.
Bruno Alves	PO Box 482 Conyers, GA 30012 com	
Maria Alves	PO Box 482 Conyers, GA 30012	
Greg Yates	2104 Hwy 81 south Covington	
Cathy Jones	121 Heaton Rd. Covington GA 30016	

Steering Committee Meeting Agendas

Comprehensive Plan Update

Steering Committee Meeting #1
Administrative Building, 2nd Floor
1113 Usher Street, Covington GA 30014

October 19, 2022

1. **Introductions**
   A. Steering Committee Members
   B. Newton County Staff
   C. GMC Consultant Staff

2. **Purpose**

   The purpose of the Steering Committee is to work with County staff and the GMC Project Team throughout the planning process to guide the public involvement process and provide input on the various planning elements. The Steering Committee:
   A. Are representatives of the community;
   B. Share expertise and on-the-ground knowledge;
   C. Are advocates for the plan and its implementation;
   D. View in-depth documents before public meetings; and
   E. Help to garner support for the Comprehensive Plan process by reaching out to the community.

3. **Background on Comprehensive Plan**
   A. Why plan?
   B. Contents and Elements of a Comprehensive Plan
   C. Previous Comprehensive Plan Update in 2018, found at this link:

   https://www.co.newton.ga.us/DocumentCenter/View/596/Newton-County-Comprehensive-Plan-PDF

   I.   What is still applicable?
   II. What are the most significant changes since last plan?
   III. What needs improvement?
   D. Outline Comprehensive Plan Project Schedule and Benchmarks

4. **Exercise #1: Name one (1) issue that you think is the most important to be addressed for the future of Newton County. Think about these Comprehensive Plan Topics:**
   A. Housing
   B. Commercial/Office/Industrial
   C. Economic Development
   D. Parks and Recreation
   E. Environmental
   F. Transportation
   G. Community Facilities and Services, including Broadband
   H. Cultural & Historic Resources
   I. Sense of Community

5. **Exercise #2: Newton County Map**
   A. Facilitators will lead a tabletop discussion to identify key areas in Newton County to identify Favorite Places and those Areas that Need Improvement

6. **Exercise #3: Setting Priorities for Preliminary Goals**

   A. Tabletop chart featuring Preliminary Goals; as a group, indicate priority ranking with color dots 3 green, 3 yellow and 3 red

7. **Discussion of Next Steps in the Planning Process**

8. **Adjourn**

**Steering Committee Meeting #2
Administrative Building, 2nd Floor
1113 Usher Street, Covington GA 30014**

January 11, 2023

1. **Updates since Last Meeting**

   A. Steering Committee Meeting Recap

   B. Public Open House Results

   C. Online Community Survey Results

   D. Stakeholder Interview Results

2. **Exercise #1: Setting Priorities for Goals & Proposed Action Items**

   A. Tabletop charts featuring Goals and Proposed Action Items; Indicate Priority Ranking

3. **Exercise #2: Newton County Preliminary Character Areas Mapping**

   A. Facilitators will lead a tabletop discussion to review Preliminary Areas of Interest in Newton County as precursor for Character Areas

4. **Discussion of Next Steps in the Planning Process**

5. **Adjourn**

Comprehensive Plan Update

Steering Committee Meeting #3
Administrative Building, 2nd Floor
1113 Usher Street, Covington GA 30014

March 15, 2023

1. **Updates since Last Meeting**
   A. Population Projections
   B. Youth Online Community Survey Results
   C. Updates to Board of Commissioners & Planning Commission

2. **Exercise #1: Review Draft Character Areas Map**

   A. Facilitators will lead a tabletop discussion to review the Draft Newton County Character Areas Map

3. **Exercise #2: Short-Term Work Program**

   A. Tabletop charts featuring Goals and Objectives; Indicate Projected Timelines, Potential Partners and Estimated Costs

4. **Discussion of Next Steps in the Planning Process**

5. **Adjourn**

RESOLUTION

R20230606

WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Improvements Element Update (CIE) for Newton County Board of Commissioners, Georgia, was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures; and

WHEREAS, the Short Term Work Program Update (STWP) for Newton County Board of Commissioners, Georgia, was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Newton County Board of Commissioners that the CIE /STWP Update to the Comprehensive Plan for Newton County Board of Commissioners Georgia dated June 6th 2023 as approved by the Georgia Department Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this ____6th____ day of June, 2023.

Newton County Board of Commissioners

_____
Marcello Banes, Chairman

_____
Jackie Smith, Clerk

Newton County

Capital Improvement Element
2022 Annual Update

FY22 Financial Report
Short Term Work Program Update

PG 1 (1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Library Collection Volumes II	County Wide	2017	2024	$50,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Pending available funds
Land Acquisition for District 1 & 3 for location of Community Parks	County Wide	2009	2024	$962,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Project suspended pending available funds
Multi-use sports complex (Walking Trail, Basketball complex, softball, football, soccer etc)	County Wide	2010	2024	$4,100,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Project suspended pending available funds
South Side Park - District 1. District 1 is underserved by planned recreational areas. (Mt. Pleasant area, educational, community)	County Wide	2011	2025	$1,372,500	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Project suspended pending available funds
Community Park - District 3. District 3 serves a densely populated community with needs for more planned recreational areas. (Jack Neely & Kirkland Rd Civic use, Fairview Park)	County Wide	2012	2025	$500,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	In Process
Community Park - District 4. (Ball Field, Nelson Heights Facility Expansion)	County Wide	2012	2025	$500,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Ongoing
Community Park - District 5. District 5 is underserved by planned recreational areas. (Trails & open/passive recreation)	County Wide	2012	2024	$300,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	Pending available funds
Springhill Park Facility, District 5 (Ballfields, open recreation)	County Wide	2017	2024	$495,427	0	2017 SPLOST	County	lower River Road & Mote Rd
Extension of Cricket-Frog trail by paving 10 miles from the city limits of Covington at the Covington By-Pass to the city of Newborn. This trail follows along the former route for Central Georgia Railroad and will be approx. 14.9 miles in total.	County Wide	2018	2024	$380,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees	County	95% complete
Cricket Frog Bridge Rehab Alcovy River	County Wide	2023	2024	$700,000	100% Eligible	Impaact Fees/Newton Trails	County	In Process
District 2- Denny Dobbs Park expansion- Splash Pad, walking trail, skate park	County Wide	2020	2023	$500,000	75% Eligible	Impact Fees, 2017 Splost	County	Completed
Community Water Park/Aquatic center.	County Wide	2023	2026	$30,000,000	0	SPLOST	County	Pending available funds
Brown Bridge Road from Crowell Road to S.R. 162 - widen from 2 lanes to 3 lanes	County Wide	2022	2028	$20,000,000	100% Eligible	GDOT, Impact Fees/SPLOST	GDOT, County	In Progress

PG 2	(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
	Crowell Rd from Brown Bridge Rd to I-20 - widen from 2 to 3 lanes	County Wide	2025	2032	$18,500,000	100% Eligible	GDOT, 80% Impact Fees	GDOT, County	Pending available funds
	Covington Bypass from SR 36 to S 81 - Widen from 2 to 4 lanes	County Wide	2030	2036	$20,000,000	100% Eligible	GDOT, 80% Impact Fees	GDOT, County	Pending available funds
	Resurfacing Flat Shoals Rd, Gum Creek Rd, and Lower River Rd	County Wide	2020	2023	$1,800,000	100%	Impact Fees	County	Started
	Implement a Capital Improvement Plan	County Wide	2009	2023	$50,000	0	Local	County	Ongoing
	Develop a comprehensive long-term infrastructure plan and map that inventories existing systems, describes current projects, identifies current and future needs, projects costs and identifies potential funding sources.	County Wide	2009	2023	$150,000	0	Local	County, NCWSA	Ongoing
	Yellow River Trails	County Wide	2007	2026	$2,150,000	100% Eligible	2017 SPLOST, Impact Fees	County	Started
	Turkey Creek/Yellow River Trail *Combined Turkey Creek/Yellow River Trail & Yellow River Bridge projects	County Wide	2007	2024	$2,150,000	0	Local, SPLOST	County	Pending Preliminary Design phase
	Westside Youth Outreach Center	County Wide	2017	2024	$495,427	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Pending land location
	Develop zoning and regulations for senior living communities.	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Develop land use regulation that allow for development of attached or detached homes in the form of condominium ownership	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to determine the need for possible revisions to allow for the construction of a wider variety of housing types and lot sizes. If needed, draft amendments for consideration by the Board of Commissioners	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Evaluate Oak Hill Overlay District to regulate urban development, signage, open space and landscaping.	County Wide	2013	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Ongoing
	Prepare & adopt a Scenic Corridor Overlay District along Hwy 11	County Wide	2014	2025	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Prepare & adopt a Quality Development Corridor Overlay district along the county's portion of the Covington By-Pass, & possibly other designated Quality Development Corridors on the Future development Map	County Wide	2013	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started

PG 3	(1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
	Evaluate the overlay (Almon, Salem, Brickstore) components of the zoning Ordinance and update them in accordance with current needs.	County Wide	2020	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Modify the Riparian and Impervious buffers particularly for Lake Jackson properties.	County Wide	2020	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Ongoing
	Prepare an Interstate Gateway Overlay district to regulate the character of development near the I-20 corridor.	County Wide	2014	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Revise standards for commercial zoning to encourage mixed-use development within designated activity centers	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	Started
	Study the offering of development incentives for the use of higher quality construction materials and traditional neighborhood design.	County Wide	2009	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	In Process
	Create by-right options for traditional neighborhood development within residential zoning districts.	County Wide	2010	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	In Process
	Modify the Conservation Subdivision provisions of Zoning Ordinance to better support the preservation of scenic corridors and in support of creating a countywide greenspace network.	County Wide	2008	2024	N/A	N/A	Board of Commissioners	Local	In Process
	Nominate Mt. Pleasant Church to National Register	County Wide	2009	2023	5000	0	County, Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Started
	Nominate Gum Creek Community to National Register	County Wide	2009	2023	5000	0	County, Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Ongoing
	Nominate Hayston Community to the National Register	County Wide	2012	2023	5000	0	County Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Ongoing
	Update map of historic resources identified in 1989 Department of Natural Resources intensive survey	County Wide	2009	2023	5000	0	County, Historical Society	Local, GA, DNR, Other	Ongoing
	Adopt detailed architectural and design guidelines to apply within the historic areas	County Wide	2010	2023	50000	0	County, Historical Society	Local	Ongoing
	Consider forming a joint Historic Preservation Commission between Newton County and some or all of the cities.	County Wide	2008	2023	N/A	N/A	County, Cities, Historical Society	Local	Ongoing
	Support development of Greenway along Alcovy River	County Wide	2007	2023	$5-7,000,000	0	County	Local, Private	Ongoing
	Support development of additional access/launches for Yellow River Water Trail	County Wide	2015	2023	$150,000	0	Grant, Local, Private	County	Ongoing pending bridge replacement

PG 4 (1) Project Description	(2) Service Area	(3) Project Start Date	(4) Project Completion Date	(5) Estimated Project Cost	(6) Portion Chargeable to Impact Fees	(7) Sources of Funds (& Share)	(8) Responsible Party	(9) Status
Historic preservation, design, and renovation of Historic Jail	County Wide	2013	2024	$1,200,000	0	2011 SPLOST	County	Ongoing
Crowell Rd at I-20 Project	County Wide	2013	2025	$8,500,000	0	GDOT, 2017 SPLOST, ARC	County	In Process
Brown Bridge Rd bridge replacement at Yellow River	County Wide	2014	2025	$11,000,000	0	GDOT, 2017 SPLOST, ARC	County	Under Construction
Brown Bridge Rd bridge replacement at Snapping Shoals	County Wide	2014	2024	$5,500,000	0	GDOT, 2017 SPLOST, ARC	County	Under Construction
Harold Dobbs & Crowell Rd Intersection Improvement	County Wide	2020	2024	$1,500,000	0	2017 SPLOST	County	In Process
Intersection Improvements at Kirkland Rd. @ Jack Neely Rd.	County Wide	2020	2024	$3,500,000	0	2017 SPLOST	County	Under Construction
Transit Study	County Wide	2019	2022	$400,000	0	ARC/County	ARC/County	Completed
Bear Creek Reservoir	County Wide	2012	2025	TBD	0	TBD	Board of Commissioners	Suspended
Fairview Road Multi-Use Trail	County Wide	2022	2027	$1,500,00	100% Eligible	ARC, 2023 SPLOST, Impact Fees	County	In Process
Dial Mill Road @ Little Haynes Creek Bridge Replacement	County Wide	2023	2028	$5,000,000	0% Eligible	ARC, 2023 SPLOST	County	In Process
Mote Road @ SR 162 Intersection Improvement	County Wide	2023	2025	$1,500,000	0% Eligible	2023 SPLOST	County	Pending Available Funds
Intersection Improvements Brown Bridge Road & Crowell Road	County Wide	2023	2026	$5,000,000	100% Eligible	2023 SPLOST, Impact Fees	County	In Process
Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update	County Wide	2023	2025	$400,000	0% Eligible	ARC, General Fund	County	Pending Available Funding
Davis Ford Road Improvements	County Wide	2023	2024	$800,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees, 2017 SPLOST	County	In Process
Pickett Bridge Road Improvements	County Wide	2023	2024	$250,000	100% Eligible	Impact Fees, 2017 SPLOST	County	In Process
Newton County 18 Bridge Repair & Maintenance Project	County Wide	2023	2025	$1,500,000	0% Eligible	2023 SPLOST	County	In Process

Items highlighted in green indicate completed since the Annual FY19CIE/STWP report. The items highlighted green will be removed and not shown on the next annual report.

Newton County

Capital Improvements Project Update 2020-2024

Public facility: LIBRARY
Service Area: County-Wide

Project Description	Project Start Date	Project End Date	Estimated Cost of Project	Funding Sources	Status/Remarks
Library Collection Volumes II	2017	2024	50,000	100% Impact Fees	Pending Available Funds
Total Costs			50,000		

Project Description	Project Start Date	Project End Date	Estimated Cost of Project	Funding Sources	Status/Remarks
Oak Hill Branch Library	2008	2011	5,000,000	General Fund, State of Georgia, 60% Impact Fees	Completed
Library Collection Volumes	2010	2015	50,000	General Fund, State of Georgia,55% Impact Fees	Completed
Total Costs Expended			5,050,000		

Newton County

Capital Improvements Project Update 2020-2024

Public facility:	PARKS/RECREATION				
Service Area:	County-Wide				
Project Description	**Project Start Date**	**Project End Date**	**Estimated Cost of Project**	**Funding Sources**	**Status/Remarks**
Land Acquisition for District 1 & 3	2009	2024	962,000	100% Eligible Impact Fees	Pending available funds
Multi-use sports complex	2010	2026	4,100,000	100% Eligible Impact Fees	Pending available funds
South Side Park - District 1	2011	2025	1,372,500	100% Eligible Impact Fees	Pending available funds
Community Park - District 3	2012	2024	500,000	100% Eligible Impact Fees	Pending available funds
Community Park - District 4	2012	2024	300,000	100% Eligible Impact Fees	Ongoing
Community Park - District 5	2012	2024	300,000	100% Eligible Impact Fees	In Process
Extension of Cricket-Frog trail	2018	2024	380,000	100% Eligible Impact Fees	Started
Denny Dobbs Park expansion- District 2	2020	2023	500,000	75% Eligible Impact Fees	Completed
Total Costs			8,414,500		

Project Description	**Project Start Date**	**Project End Date**	**Estimated Cost of Project**	**Funding Sources**	**Status/Remarks**
Misc Architect fees & contengencies	2009	2013	182,000	60% Impact Fees ($109,200), SPLOST	Completed
Total Costs Expended			182,000		

Newton County

Capital Improvements Project Update 2020-2024

Public facility:	ROADS				
Service Area:	County-Wide				

Project Description	Project Start Date	Project End Date	Estimated Cost of Project	Funding Sources	Status/Remarks
Brown Bridge Road from Crowell Road to S.R. 162 - widen from 2 lanes to 3 lanes	2022	2028	$ 20,000,000	GDOT, 75% Impact Fees/ SPLOST	Pending available funds
Crowell Rd from Brown Bridge Rd to I-20 - widen from 2 to 3 lanes	2026	2032	$ 18,500,000	GDOT, 80% Impact Fees	Pending available funds
Covington Bypass from SR 36 to S 81 - Widen from 2 to 4 lanes	2032	2036	$ 20,000,000	GDOT, 80% Impact Fees	Pending available funds
Resurfacing Flat Shoals Rd, Gum Creek Rd, and Lower River Rd	2020	2022	$ 1,800,000	SPLOST	Completed
Totals Costs			60,300,000		

Project Description	Project Start Date	Project End Date	Estimated Cost of Project	Funding Sources	Status/Remarks
S.R. 81 & Crowell Road (Porterdale) - turn lanes and signalization	2009	2016	$1,947,898	Impact Fees >1% ($19,000), SPLOST, City of Porterdale	Completed
Total Costs Completed			$1,947,898		

Newton County, Georgia						
Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2022						
Public Facility Type	Library	Parks & Recreation	Roads	Admin	CIE	Total
Service Area	County-wide	County-wide	County-wide			
Impact Fee Fund Balance July 1, 2021	(92,984.27)	830,157.80	2,450,565.07	194,424.35	12,009.49	3,394,172.44
Impact Fees Collected - FY2022	218,904.84	394,049.04	786,996.42	41,999.67	1,173.35	1,443,123.32
Accrued Interest	106.17	1,032.18	2,729.73	199.34	11.12	4,078.54
(Impact Fee Refunds)	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Expenditures) - FY2022	(41,303.86)	(285,972.42)	-	(1,103.32)	-	(328,379.60)
Impact Fee Fund Balance	84,722.88	939,266.60	3,240,291.22	235,520.04	13,193.96	4,512,994.70
Impact Fees Encumbered	-	-	-	-	-	-