

Marion County - Buena Vista



Comprehensive Plan
2016-2025

Marion County Board of Commissioners

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Cecil McMickle

Norman Royal

Larry Ogan

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Tim Sweezey, County Manager

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Assisted by:
River Valley Regional Commission
228 West Lamar Street 1428 Second Avenue
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SITE LOCATION MAP





Marion County

P.O. BOX 481
BUENA VISTA, GEORGIA 31803

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
GEORGE NEAL, JR.
STEVEN YOUNG
NORMAN ROYAL
LARRY OGAN
CECIL MCMICKLE
PHYLLIS E. GIBSON
Tax Commissioner

DERRELL NEAL
Sheriff
JOY C. SMITH
Clerk Superior Court
HEATHER STUART
Probate Judge
ROD AIDE
Coroner

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION MARION COUNTY | BUENA VISTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2016-2026

WHEREAS, the Georgia General Assembly did enact the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 to institute local comprehensive planning by city and county governments throughout the state, and

WHEREAS, said Act requires local governments to prepare, maintain and periodically update a state-approved, local comprehensive plan to maintain eligibility for certain state-issued grants, loans and permits, and

WHEREAS, Marion County has been notified by appropriate cognizant authority that the most recent effort updating the local comprehensive plan did adequately address the minimum standards and procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to facilitate compliance with said Act.

NOW, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, and it is hereby resolved by the Marion County Board of Commissioners that the Marion County | Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan 2016-2026 be adopted.

Duly considered and approved by the Marion County Board of Commissioners in session this 13th day of October, 2015.

MARION COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


Chairman

ATTEST


County Clerk

CITY OF BUENA VISTA
P.O. BOX 158
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RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION
MARION COUNTY | BUENA VISTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2016-2026

WHEREAS, the Georgia General Assembly did enact the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 to institute local comprehensive planning by city and county governments throughout the state, and

WHEREAS, said Act requires local governments to prepare, maintain and periodically update a state-approved, local comprehensive plan to maintain eligibility for certain state-issued grants, loans and permits, and

WHEREAS, the City of Buena Vista has been notified by appropriate cognizant authority that the most recent effort updating the local comprehensive plan did adequately address the minimum standards and procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to facilitate compliance with said Act.

NOW, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, and it is hereby resolved by the Mayor and City Council of Buena Vista that the Marion County | Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan 2016-2026 be adopted.

Duly considered and approved by the Mayor and City Council of Buena Vista in session this 6th day of October, 2015.

BUENA VISTA
MAYOR AND COUNCIL


Mayor

ATTEST



City Clerk

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Introduction

This is the third, full comprehensive planning document prepared jointly by Marion County and the City of Buena Vista in compliance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. One additional intervening document was classified as a Partial Update. The legislative intent and purpose of said law, codified at O.C.G.A. 36-7-1, is as follows:

The local governments of the State of Georgia are of vital importance to the state and its citizens. The state has an essential public interest in promoting, developing, sustaining, and assisting local governments. In addition, the natural resources, environment, and vital areas of the state are of vital importance to the state and its citizens. The state has an essential public interest in protecting and preserving the natural resources, the environment, and the vital areas of the state. The purpose of this article is to provide for local governments to serve these essential public interests of the state by authorizing and promoting the establishment, implementation, and performance of coordinated and comprehensive planning by municipal governments and county governments, and this article shall be construed liberally to achieve that end. This article is enacted pursuant to the authority granted the General Assembly in the Constitution of the State of Georgia, including, but not limited to, the authority provided in Article III, Section VI, Paragraphs I and II(a)(1) and Article IX, Section II, Paragraphs III and IV.

The law charged the Georgia Department of Community Affairs with providing a framework for development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans. The framework developed and published by the Department took the form of Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning. This plan was prepared in compliance with the standards and procedures which took effect January 1, 2013.

Required plan elements applicable to this document and the options selected, where applicable, are:

Community Goals

Of the four options available to address this element community leaders and stakeholders expanded upon the slogan on the chamber of commerce letterhead to write a general vision statement.

Needs and Opportunities

Reference to needs and opportunities identified in previous planning efforts helped participants recognize lingering needs and untapped opportunities. Consolidation of that information with issues of the day resulted in an updated list of needs and opportunities the community intends to address.

Community Work Program

This is a list of specific activities the community plans to undertake during the next five years to resolve needs and capitalize on opportunities.

Economic Development

Needs and opportunities specifically related to economic development were identified and a five-year work program was developed to address those issues.

Land Use

Of the two options available to address this planning element participants identified the unique characteristics which distinguish sixteen geographical areas of the community, determined which needed to be preserved/maintained or recreated and how to accomplish those ends.

Beyond satisfying these planning requirements; however, is the higher need for the community to determine, locally, the quality of life it desires and how to achieve it. Decisions concerning the level and quality of public services to develop and sustain, where these services are to be provided and by whom, which resources are to be developed and which to preserve head the list of decisions to be made locally. Such decisions are beyond the authority of other levels of government and, by default or design, are to be made locally. If not carefully planned and implemented the ultimate financial and quality of life costs to the community will be greater.

Plan Development

This document was developed as a joint plan. Marion is among the state's twenty-two counties with a sole municipality. Accounting for one-quarter of the community population Buena Vista is the seat of county government and the civic, geographic and economic heart of the community. This dynamic is stronger than in the majority of counties with multiple municipalities. Nevertheless, they are separate legal entities with distinct geographical authorities which are reflected in separate Community Work Programs. Even so, joint support of, and responsibilities for, certain community activities and efforts are evident in the separate work programs.

The steering committee consisted of the elected members of the board of commissioners and city council, county manager, city clerk, chamber of commerce president (volunteer) and long-time member of the local development authority (volunteer). The committee functioned as the core of stakeholders for plan development. Additions rounding out the stakeholders included the library manager, emergency management director and county clerk.

A public hearing was held at the initiation of plan development to solicit public input and participation in plan development. After a series of monthly input sessions a second hearing was held for public review and comment after the draft plan had been made available. Formal meeting announcements were made via block ads published in the local newspaper. Further solicitation of public participation was delivered through the library and chamber of commerce. Steering committee and stakeholder invitations/reminders were e-mailed prior to the monthly work sessions. Attendance at these meetings ranged from four to fifteen, averaging eight.

This public input was complemented with a separate track more narrowly focused on economic development. Twenty-five residents participated in a facilitated, community self-analysis. A ten-member team of state and regional economic developers worked with residents in developing a list of nine recommendations centered on tourism. These recommendations are identified via footnote for incorporation into the broader, economic development element developed specifically for an expanded Community Work Program.

Community Goals Element



General Vision Statement

Marion County is a great place to call home. We are committed to our citizens, economic development and improving our quality of life. Marion County is on the move.

Needs and Opportunities Element

Housing

1. substandard housing
2. impacts of mobile homes on the community:
 - condition/blight
 - storm sturdiness
 - tax base depletion
 - fire response issues
3. special housing needs:
 - addicts
 - homeless
 - battered women
 - released prisoners)
4. need for new housing

Community Facilities and Services

1. much of the adult population is not computer literate
2. Marion/Buena Vista is a microcosm of the larger (regional and state) community in that the condition of the family is contributing to societal ills
3. children and teens with too much unstructured time
4. need for increased civic involvement in community affairs
5. need a larger library so services can be expanded
6. there is not any public transportation for local (general transit) service
7. the senior citizens center needs to be in a better facility in a better location
8. public recreation opportunities/facilities are limited
9. poor physical condition of the county jail
10. Buena Vista needs a web page to facilitate communication, service delivery
11. Buena Vista needs a municipal public safety building (police/fire)
12. Buena Vista needs to replace the public works facility
13. the ability to generally maintain and enhance public services and utilities
14. there are not any medical care services available after business hours
15. the community needs greater accessibility to affordable, better quality internet service

Economic Development

1. concentrated ownership of downtown properties is hindering redevelopment
2. the community does not have an appropriately located, functional industrial park
3. the general skill level of the labor force hinders recruitment of higher-paying business/industries
4. lack of work opportunities/options contributes to self-worth/work ethic issues for the young
5. need a prioritized inventory and assessment of community resources to facilitate organized economic development/promotion
6. not capitalizing on tourism potential (cultural, historic and natural resources)
7. "brain drain" - too few of our high school graduates return home after college
8. need to continue recent improvements in communication/cooperation between local institutions
9. there is insufficient local capital to facilitate business startups
10. the community does not have economic promotional literature highlighting available services and incentives to court prospective developers/investors

Community and Economic Development Work Programs

Marion County Community Work Program FY 2016-2020								
Project/Activity	Fiscal Year					Funding		Responsible Party
	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Amount	Source	
pursue funding for housing rehabilitation activity		X			X	\$400K	USDA, CDBG CHIP	county manager
support continuation of homebuyer education workshops	X	X	X	X	X	\$6K	FVSC Flint Energies	Family Connections
implement joint city/county effort to address community's special and transitional housing needs		X	X			\$400K	HUD, USDA PHA	county manager
support Family Connections	X	X	X	X	X	staff time	staff time	county commission
review regional developments in transit service for consideration of local service	X					staff time	staff time	county manager
promote computer class offerings; request addition of evening classes	X	X	X	X	X	staff time	staff time	county manager
launch an anti-litter/clean community campaign	X					staff time	staff time	chamber of commerce
facilitate development of landscaped gateways in Oakland and Tazewell communities	X					staff time	staff time	county manager
Pursue facility to house Oakland FD, satellite EMS and library, community center, adult education		X	X			\$750K	SPLOST USDA GEMA-Fire Grant	board of commissioners
pursue new/larger library		X				\$600K \$60K	CVRLS local funds	library manager
identify options and pursue assistance for after-hours medical clinic	X	X				\$75K	health district hospitals med schools	board of commissioners
perform comprehensive review of zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations (cluster/buffering) and update as necessary	X					\$7K	local funds	zoning administrator

Marion County Project/Activity	Fiscal Year					Funding		Responsible Party
	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Amount	Source	
review character area design strategies when establishing LMIG/ TIA priorities	X	X	X	X	X	staff time	staff time	county manager
Maintain existing utility/ services and expand/extend to meet demand	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	USDA DCA Local	county manager
have periodic but regular meetings between local public boards, commissions and authorities	X	X	X	X	X	nominal	local funds	county commission
identify site and construct new county jail, or contract for jail services			X	X		±\$1M	local funds	sheriff
implement YouthBuild concept (GED/education, construction trade training, housing development, employment, leadership development)		X	X	X		\$150K/yr	CDBG, DOL	Family Connections
incorporate pre-disaster mitigation functions in planning, permitting and capital budgeting	X	X				staff time	staff time	zoning administrator

**Marion County
Economic Development Work Program
FY 2016-2020**

Project/Activity	Fiscal Year					Funding		Responsible Party
	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Amount	Source	
organize for economic development by creating and staffing the paid position of economic developer	X					TBD PT/FT	general fund	board of commissioners
supplement March, 2015, tourism recommendations ¹ with an inventory of human and natural resources, establish and prioritize goals, develop and implement a comprehensive economic development strategy to include an employment development initiative featuring: ¹ siting, sizing, designing and developing an industrial park ² targeted employer recruitment program ³ capitalizing a revolving loan fund ⁴ entrepreneur development /business incubator services/site ⁵ airport resurfacing	X					staff time \$1M \$5K/yr. \$100K+ Staff time \$600K	time OneGa Auth. local funds CDBG USDA local funds GDOT/Local	economic developer
develop brochure highlighting services and economic incentives available to developers	X					\$1K	local funds	economic developer
ensure members of the Marion County Development Authority receive mandated training	X					\$500/yr.	local funds	Marion County Development Authority
create leadership development programs (adult and youth)	X					\$1K	local funds	economic developer
re-establish rail freight service			X	X	X	staff time	staff time	economic developer

¹ 1. re-creation of Ft. Perry, 2. memorializing famous past residents, 3. preserve the old Marion County courthouse (Tazewell) 4. establish an annual poetry festival, 5. reclamation of historic cemeteries, 6. develop the community as a creative arts destination, 7. commercial promotion of historic and cultural resources, 8. downtown revitalization, 9. expand tourism potential by developing and promoting historic and cultural sites.

Buena Vista Community Work Program FY 2016-2020								
Project/Activity	Fiscal Year					Funding		Responsible Party
	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Amount	Source	
maintain aggressive code enforcement activity	X	X	X	X	X	P&Z budget	general fund	zoning administrator
pursue housing rehabilitation assistance	X		X		X	±\$500K/yr	CDBG CHIP USDA-RDA	city council
implement joint city/county effort to address community's special and transitional housing needs		X	X			\$400K	HUD, USDA PHA	city council
pursue funding assistance for housing development in Burgin character area (and redevelopment/rehabilitation elsewhere)	X	X	X	X	X	\$2M+	HUD USDA	city council
implement Youthbuild concept (GED/education, construction trade training, housing development, employment, leadership development)		X	X	X		\$150K/ yr	CDBG DOL	Family Connections
support continuation of homebuyer education workshops	X	X	X	X	X	\$6K	FVSC Flint Energies	Family Connections
use web site to promote housing/environmental/ nuisance code compliance (fire-hazard/pre-disaster mitigation), support mentoring program	X	X	X	X	X	staff time	staff time	P&Z
identify options and pursue assistance for after-hours medical clinic	X	X				\$75K	USDA Mercer Univ Med. School	city council Family Connections
identify/acquire appropriate site and construct public safety building (police and fire)		X	X			\$600K	general fund	city council
secure squad truck for fire department and replace one fire apparatus					X	\$150K	general fund FEMA Fire Grant	fire chief

Buena Vista Project/Activity	Fiscal Year					Funding		Responsible Party
	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Amount	Source	
general fire department improvements; acquire/replace equipment, tools	X	X	X	X	X	\$10K/yr	general fund FEMA Fire Grant	fire chief
sidewalk construction	X	X	X	X	X	\$10K/yr	LMIG/TIA	city clerk
replace well on Industrial Drive			X			\$150K		city clerk
water system improvement needs; well replacements, dead-end service lines, replacement of deteriorated and undersized lines		X		X		\$1M	GEFA USDA	city clerk
wholesale upgrade to wastewater treatment plant					X	\$1M	GEFA USDA	city clerk
renovate/upgrade lift stations/force mains		X		X		\$100K/ea.		city clerk
identify better location options and pursue a larger senior citizens center		X				\$500K	CDBG	city council
incorporate pre-disaster mitigation functions in planning, permitting and capital budgeting	X	X	X			staff time	staff time	zoning administrator
complete the comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance and update as necessary		X				\$7K	general fund	zoning administrator
develop incentives for infill development		X				staff time	staff time	zoning administrator
initiate periodic but regular meetings between local public boards, commissions and authorities	X					staff time	staff time	city council
prioritize improvements needed at Josh Gibson youth and family center, identify and pursue funding sources	long range project					unknown	USDA, CDBG	city council
wholesale renovation of municipal water plant	long range project					unknown	USDA, GEFA	city council

Buena Vista Economic Development Work Program FY 2016-2020								
Buena Vista Economic Development	Fiscal Year					Funding		Responsible Party
	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Amount	Source	
organize for economic development by creating and staffing the paid position of economic developer (C of C/DA)	X					TBD (PT/FT)	general fund	city council board of commissioners
supplement the March, 2015, tourism resource recommendations ² with an inventory of human and natural resources, establish and prioritize goals, develop and implement a comprehensive economic development strategy likely to include a downtown revitalization plan with: ¹ creation of Downtown Development Authority ² pursue MainStreet-type designation ³ create local historic commercial district ⁴ National Register designation ⁵ develop design guidelines ⁶ develop façade program	X					\$20K	general fund	economic developer
use municipal web page to support mentoring program	X	X	X	X	X	staff time	staff time	city clerk
develop dynamic web site	X					\$1,000	general fund	city clerk
create leadership development programs (adult and youth)	X	X				staff time	staff time	economic developer
design and implement a job development initiative (revolving loan fund, entrepreneur development/ business incubator services/site, employer recruitment program, site, size, design and develop an industrial park, airport enhancement)	X	X	X	X	X	\$10K	staff time	economic developer
plan the redevelopment of Geneva Road character area for economic development			X			staff time	staff time	economic developer

² 1. re-creation of Ft. Perry, 2. memorializing famous past residents, 3. preserve the old Marion County courthouse (Tazewell) 4. establish an annual poetry festival, 5. reclamation of historic cemeteries, 6. develop the community as a creative arts destination, 7. commercial promotion of historic and cultural resources, 8. downtown revitalization, 9. expand tourism potential by developing and promoting historic and cultural sites.

develop brochure highlighting services and economic incentives available to developers	X					\$1K	C of C	economic developer
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**Marion County
Community Work Program Report of Accomplishments
FY 2011-2015**

Project/Activity	Status
Housing	
Enhanced code enforcement activity (substandard housing, blighting influences)	Completed activities for the period
Use web page to promote housing/environmental code compliance (fire-hazard/pre-disaster mitigation)	Underway, web page being upgraded by end of 2015 to enable dynamic applications
Pursue housing rehabilitation assistance	Completed, but FY '11 CDBG application for housing rehabilitation was not successful - rollover
Support homebuyer workshops	Completed activities for the period - rollover
Implement joint city/county effort to address community's special and assisted housing needs	Not Completed due to staffing and funding limitations - rollover
Implement YouthBuild concept (GED/education, construction trades training, housing development, employment, leadership development)	Not Completed due to staffing and funding limitations - rollover
Community Facilities and Services	
Negotiate interconnection with adjoining county water system for back-up/emergency	Completed, substituted enhancements to county system for interconnected systems
Road paving/resurfacing	Completed activities for the period
Resurface GA 41 (7 miles)	Completed activities for the period
Pursue facility to house Oakland FD/satellite EMS and library, community center, adult education	Ongoing - rollover
Investigate options for animal shelter	Completed through contract for services
Pursue funding with which to develop health/emergency clinic	Not Completed, a private service proved to be temporary - public initiative rollover
Identify options for expanding Senior Citizens Center	Deleted (this is a city project)
Encourage service providers to extend internet coverage in community	Completed (new ISP has entered the local market)
Develop a broader, more community-oriented recreation program (fields, equipment, personnel)	Completed for the period with facility improvements and employment of full-time Director
General fire department improvements; acquire/replace equipment, tools, facility maintenance	Completed for the period with full implementation of 1033 Program
Replace five fire apparatus	Not Completed, replaced one (Oakland) of five due to funding limitations - rollover
Construct fire station in Brantley Community	Not Completed due to funding limitations - rollover
Replace fire stations in Oakland and Fort Perry	Not Completed due to funding limitations - rollover
Enhance web page	Underway - rollover
Develop an adaptive reuse and marketing plan for vacated school buildings	Completed for the period
Construct new county jail	Not Completed due to funding limitations - rollover
Clear current jail site and county public works site after new jail constructed	Not Completed due to funding limitations - rollover

Preserve integrity of water system (water pressure deficiencies, leakage problems, etc.)	Completed activities for the period
Replace sheriff's patrol vehicles	Completed activities for the period
SO equipment needs; radios, video cameras and radar units	Completed activities for the period
Investigate feasibility/options for providing public transit service	Not Completed - rollover
Replace EMS vehicles	Not Completed, funding available to "refit" one unit
Economic Development	
Activate leadership development programs (adult and youth)	Completed (Leadership Marion)
Develop hunter appreciation day	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Design and implement a job development initiative (RLF, entrepreneur development/business incubator, employer recruitment program, industrial park site selection, airport enhancement)	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative rollover
Develop a community initiative to reduce "brain drain", e.g. Junior Achievement concept	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Publicize natural, cultural and historic resources; via web page, post on state Film, Music and Digital Entertainment database	Completed (Camera Ready)
Support I-14 proposal	Not Completed, no federal or state movement
Use enhanced web page to market airport, vacant industrial buildings	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Get positioned to promptly develop industrial spec building when needed	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Natural and Cultural Resources	
Support development of Kinchafoonee Lake (and public fishing area)	Not Completed, lack of surrounding area/state level support
Request DNR to locate protected plant/animal species for reference in land use decisions	Not Completed, lack of development in affected area resulted in loss of priority
Land Use	
Perform comprehensive review of zoning ordinance and revise as necessary	Underway, anticipate completion 2016
Develop gateways at county entrances, Oakland and Tazewell	Not Completed due to funding limitations - rollover
Intergovernmental	
Investigate and pursue best options to improve communications with residents; flyers, internet, etc	Completed, facebook, WINS
Initiate regular meetings between local public boards, commissions and authorities	Not Completed - rollover
Implement periodic town hall meetings	Completed - by some commissioners in their districts - rollover

**Buena Vista Community Work Program
FY 2011-2015
Report of Accomplishments**

Project/Activity	Status
Housing	
Enhanced code enforcement activity (substandard housing, blight)	Completed (for the period - program ongoing)
Pursue housing rehabilitation assistance	Not accomplished; substituted essential water & sanitary sewer needs - CDBG FY 10, 12, 14 - rollover
Implement joint city/county effort to address community's special and transitional housing needs	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Pursue funding for housing development in Burgin Character Area, and redevelopment/rehabilitation elsewhere	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Implement YouthBuild concept (GED/education, construction trade training, housing development, employment, leadership development)	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Support homebuyer workshops	Completed for the period
Community Facilities and Services	
Use web page to promote housing/environmental code compliance (fire-hazard/pre-disaster mitigation)	Not accomplished - encountered delay with web page set up - rollover
Pursue funding with which to develop health/emergency clinic	Completed but temporary success - rollover
Enhance recreation program (facilities, equipment)	Completed activity for the period
Secure ladder truck for fire department	Deleted - not needed by the city
Replace one fire apparatus	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
General fire department improvements; acquire/replace equipment, tools	Completed for the period
Resurface parking area of Josh Gibson Youth and Family Center	Completed
Complete renovation of Josh Gibson Youth and Family Center	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Investigate development of a Boys and Girls Club	Not accomplished - Family Connections offers alternative programming
Sidewalk construction	Not accomplished - insufficient funding to date - rollover
Wholesale renovation of municipal water plant	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Replace well on Industrial Drive	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Construct a dedicated water main serving Tyson Foods	Completed
Other water system improvement needs; well replacements, dead-end service lines, replacement of deteriorated and undersized lines	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Renovation/upgrade of lift stations/force mains	Completed (for the period, some replaced) - rollover
Wholesale upgrade to wastewater treatment plant	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover
Construct public safety building for police and fire depts.. (current space insufficient for both depts.)	Postponed due to funding limitations - rollover

Economic Development	
Design and implement a job development initiative (RLF, entrepreneur development/business incubator, employer recruitment program, industrial park site selection, airport enhancement)	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Pursue better hometown designation	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Create downtown development authority	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Use web page to support mentoring program	Not accomplished - encountered delay with web page set up - rollover
Develop dynamic web page	Not accomplished - encountered delay with web page set up - rollover
Activate leadership development programs (adult and youth)	Completed (Leadership Marion)
Work with poultry processor and solid waste hauler to eliminate spillage of renderings/waste in city during transit	Completed
Natural and Cultural Resources	
Pursue district nomination to National Register of Historic Places	Not Completed, component of economic development initiative - rollover
Land Use	
Perform comprehensive review of zoning ordinance for appropriate update	Underway, to be completed in 2016
Intergovernmental	
Initiate regular meetings between local public boards, commissions and authorities	Rollover
Implement periodic town hall meetings	Not accomplished, deleted for lack of public support

Land Use Element

Character Areas

Communities are made up of distinct areas, each with characteristics that make it unique from the rest of the community. Character areas are defined as specific geographic areas that:

- Have unique or special characteristics,
- May evolve into a unique area under specific and intentional guidance,
- Require special attention due to unique development issues.

The character of developed areas can be characterized by:

- Site and configuration of lots,
- Features such as landscaping, parking, driveways, accessory structures,
- Street design,
- Intensity of development,
- Building location, dimensions, and orientation,
- Types and quantities of natural features,
- Location, extent, and type of civic buildings and public spaces.

Many such characteristics exist regardless of the activity which occurs in the area. Thus, the characteristics are based on how buildings, lots, site features and streets are physically arranged, not individual use. Downtowns and historic districts are often identified because of their form, pattern, or character, rather than the array of individual land uses. These same ideas can be used to identify and express desirable development patterns as a vision for any area. The vision may identify the need to create a new character.

Environmental characteristics can also be used to identify an area's character. The character of environmental areas is based primarily on natural resources such as:

- Greenways or green corridors,
- Bodies of water, such as lakes, rivers and streams,
- Wetlands, floodplains and floodways,
- Habitats,
- Mountains or areas with steep slopes

Open spaces are a third type of character area. These may be areas that are vacant or sparsely settled, neither environmental areas nor developed. Some vacant land will be needed to accommodate future growth. Open space areas will most likely fall into any of three categories:

- Agricultural production,
- Open space, and
- Future development areas.

Future development areas should be identified based on development potential, and future development characteristics should guide development decisions.

Each individual character area is most often identified by prevailing characteristics, not uniformity of form or pattern. The character areas identified on the following pages have varying degrees of internal homogeneity and diversity of form and pattern. Variations occur most noticeably near the outer limits of each area where they often begin transforming into prevailing characteristics of adjoining character areas. While proposed land uses are identified for each character area, they are intended to be the primary, not exclusive, uses.

Marion County Character Areas



KINCHAFOONEE LAKE

Description

This sliver in the southwest corner of the county consists of a heavily wooded buffer on both sides of portions of Lanahassee Creek and Kinchafoonee Creek. Because of the potential for flooding, development is nominal. The area consists of acreage depicted in a series of 1970s-era studies as backwater from Kinchafoonee Lake proposed for Webster County.

Vision

This area is envisioned as the northern-most reach of Kinchafoonee Lake at high pool enhancing recreational and housing opportunities, and generally stimulating economic activity in the community.

Primary Land Uses

Residential development along the water's edge and in immediate vicinity
Commercial catering to lake activity/development
Recreation

Development Strategy

Maintaining current land use(s) to minimize future lake development cost



OAKLAND

Description

Oakland is an established crossroads community located at the juncture of state routes 41 and 127 in north-central Marion County. Limited commercial services are available and a fire department is housed here. Otherwise, the area is a small residential development.

Vision

The community envisions Oakland with a slightly expanded role as a crossroads community in the midst of a large rural area. Limited, mixed commercial and public services are to be based here serving the more immediate needs of north Marion residents and highway traffic.

Primary Land Uses

Residential

Commercial

Public

Development Strategy

Landscaped entranceway signage identifying services

Lighting at highway juncture

Allow the minimum lot size permissible under Health Department regulations

Target area for public roadway enhancements (additional road paving activity)

Revise zoning ordinance as necessary



PRIME FARMLAND

Description

Soils in this area are generally well-suited to urban development, field crops, hay, pasture and woodland. The community's largest expanses and concentrations of "level" terrain and open, cultivated farmland are found in this area. Prime farmland is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as lands that produce the highest agricultural yields with minimal inputs of energy and money, and farming such lands results in the least damage to the environment. Although there is some acreage meeting this definition located along Ga. Highway 41 extending a few miles north of Buena Vista, the community's largest concentration of prime farmland is in the southeast quadrant of the county. Local interior roads have peak traffic counts of approximately 250 vehicles per day.

Vision

The vision for the southeast quadrant is limited development and maintenance of the county's most intensive agricultural activity.

Primary Land Uses

Agriculture
Horticulture
Forestry
Wildlife management

Development Strategy

Limit and manage new development
Community's largest minimum lot size
Encourage deep building setbacks
Minimal local roadway enhancements (widening, paving)
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary



RESIDENTIAL

Description

Soils surrounding Buena Vista are well-suited to urban development, field crops, hay, pasture and woodland. The gently rolling terrain is heavily wooded. There are small pockets of residential development widely distributed around the city's perimeter and just beyond. Traffic volume is significant locally because of proximity to the city and service by/access to state routes.

Vision

The vision is for higher density residential development proximate to the City of Buena Vista to help sustain the economic core of the community, and to better manage costs associated with providing public services.

Primary Land Uses

Residential
Recreation

Development Strategy

Minimum lot size allowed by Health Department; even smaller where sanitary sewer available
Target area for local roadway enhancements (additional road paving activity)
Encourage sanitary sewer service extension into the current city perimeter
Encourage subdivision development with conservation/cluster design
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary



RURAL

Description

The northeast sector has a combination of soils generally well-suited to urban development and moderately-suited to hay, pasture and woodland. Development has been limited to single-family housing distributed almost exclusively along roadways. Residential density is approximately 1 residence per 90 acres. Development is heaviest in the northeast corner where the ratio is approximately 1:70. This portion of the character area attracted an influx of residents between 1990 and 2000 and as a result became among the county's two most developed unincorporated areas. Mobile homes/manufactured housing comprise much of the housing stock. This same portion of the area is home to a significant number of protected plant and animal species in Georgia, and an even larger number are of Special Concern. The gentle rolling terrain has numerous attractive vistas. Highest traffic volume is approximately 600 vehicles per day along the state routes in the interior, increasing to 1,250 on 41 N and 2,100 on 26 E.

The southwest corner of the county has soils well-suited for urban development and moderately- suited for hay and woodland. With the exception of an elementary school campus near the Buena Vista city limits, development has been limited to single-family housing. Residential density is even lower than in the northeast sector, and again generally dotting the roadside. The major interior roadway (Pineville Road) has a traffic count of approximately 550 vehicles per day. Larger daily traffic volumes are 2,800 on 26 W and 2,500 on 41S. The predominant land use/ground cover throughout the Rural character area is forest.

Vision

The community envisions preserving this sparsely developed, heavily forested, rural character as an important quality-of-life resource.

Primary Land Uses

Agriculture, horticulture, forestry and accessory uses and buildings
Single-family
Seasonal produce stand selling locally grown products
Wildlife management area

Development Strategy-Implementation Measures

Limit and manage new development
Minimal local roadway enhancements (widening, paving)
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary
Maintain "large" minimum lot sizes with "deep" front set-back requirements
Subdivisions with conservation/cluster design visually buffered from roadway
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary

Separate aerial images of this area appear on the following page.



TAZEWELL

Description

Tazewell is an established (once incorporated) crossroads community located at the intersection of state routes 137 and 240. Very limited commercial services are available and a fire department is housed here. Otherwise, the area is a small residential concentration.

Vision

The community envisions Tazewell with a slightly expanded role as a crossroads community in the midst of a large rural area. Limited, mixed commercial and public services are to be based here serving the more immediate needs of east Marion residents and highway traffic.

Primary Land Uses

Residential
Commercial
Public

Development Strategy

Landscaped entranceway signage identifying services
Allow the minimum lot size permissible under Health Department regulations
Target area for public roadway enhancements (additional road paving activity)
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary



WEST MARION

Description

West Marion exhibits the greatest contrast among the community's unincorporated character areas. The northern third attracted a large percentage of the population surge of the 1990s, resulting in the highest density level in the county's unincorporated area; currently averaging approximately one residence/40 acres. This same portion of the area is home to a significant number of the state's protected plant and animal species, and an even larger number of species of Special Concern. The balance of the area (lower two-thirds) is the least developed in the county; currently averaging approximately one residence/180 acres. The gently rolling terrain is very heavily forested with several large acreage tracts. Available traffic count data ranges from 150 vehicles per day in the south to 2,000 vehicles per day at the north county line (state route 365). Daily traffic volume on 41 N is 1,250 and 2,800 on 26 W.

Vision

The community envisions preserving the sparsely developed, heavily forested, rural character to protect sensitive habitat and limit diminution of quality of life as a result of proximity the increasing military activity on Fort Benning.

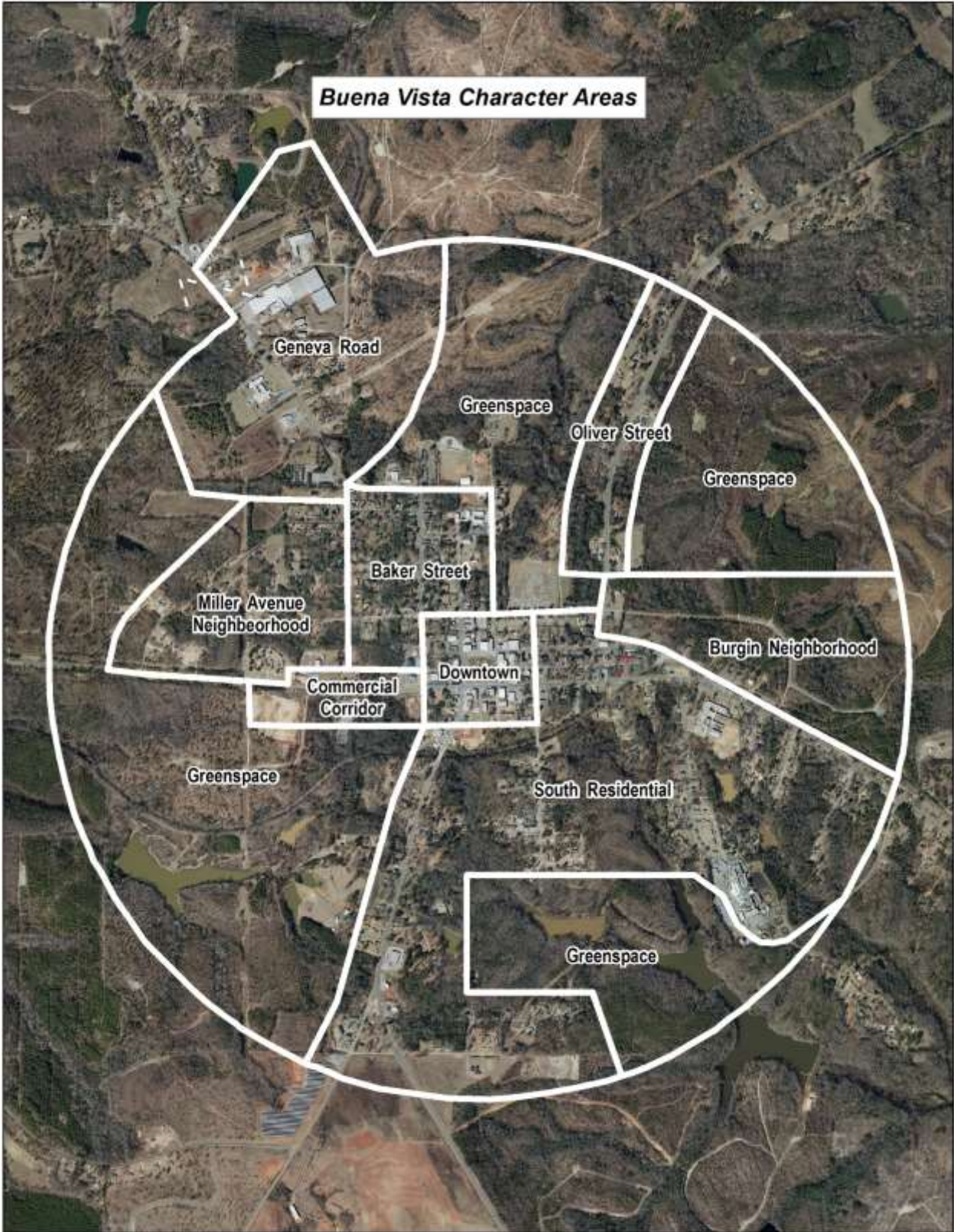
Primary Land Uses

Agriculture, forestry and accessory uses and buildings
Wildlife management area
Outdoor recreation activities Single-family residential (limited)

Development Strategy

Disclosure ordinance (real estate agents to inform prospective buyers of proximity to Fort Benning)
Limited development
Minimal local roadway enhancements (widening, paving)
Maintain "large" minimum lot sizes with "deep" front set-back requirements
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary





BAKER STREET

Description

Baker Street is a stable neighborhood characterized by well-maintained houses with shallow setbacks, ranging from late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century on small, tree-shaded lots. Streets are laid in a grid pattern complemented with sidewalk. The architectural character of the area is such that it is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register as a residential historic district.

Vision

The vision is to preserve the well-maintained residential character of the neighborhood.

Primary Land Use

Single family residential

Development Strategy

Encourage architecturally compatible infill development

Enforcement of an R-1 zoning district



BURGIN NEIGHBORHOOD

Description

Intended in the 1980s to serve as an industrial park, trees were removed and the area was developed with water, sanitary sewer and paved streets. The site was never attractive for such use; however, and sits vacant.

Vision

The Burgin Neighborhood is envisioned as a new residential development with onsite/stick-built, owner-occupied housing (possible mixed-occupancy, multi-family).

Primary Land Uses

Single (multi-) family residential
Neighborhood park

Development Strategy

Secure funding for housing construction
Use this opportunity to develop a construction trades training program
Provide homebuyer education program
Secure down payment assistance
Revise zoning ordinance as necessary



COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Description

The commercial corridor is currently home to some commercial activity; dry goods, bank, home heating gas sales, but remains mostly undeveloped. Because of the topography site development requires significant fill and grade, but location on the major east-west thoroughfare and proximity to downtown makes it attractive for commercial development.

Vision

The commercial corridor is intended to supplement economic activity of the adjoining Downtown character area by providing larger commercial acreage/parking needs not available on the courthouse square.

Primary Land Use

Commercial

Development Strategy

Develop design guidelines to limit view of parking lots

Streetscape enhancements linking to downtown

Development plan



DOWNTOWN

Description

The Downtown character area is one city block deep on all four sides of the courthouse square. The courthouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, sits in the middle of the square on the highest elevation in the city and serves not only as the focal point of the area but a community landmark. The square is graced with late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century storefronts. Many of these buildings have awnings, share party walls and are separated from the street edge by sidewalk. Although the downtown commercial core has been preserved, there are vacant storefronts around the courthouse square. The area is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a commercial district, or with the Baker Street character area as part of a larger mixed district. There are some vacant lots on the back sides of this district.

Vision

The vision for this area is increased economic activity, preservation as the community's historic commercial core and preservation/maintenance of its historic commercial architecture.

Primary Land Use

Commercial

Development Strategy

Placement of historic or period street lighting and coordinated storefront awnings

Promotion of tax credits for historic preservation Secure funding for facade grants

Nominate as a commercial district to the National Register of Historic Places

Develop innovative financial assistance program to attract new businesses to vacant store fronts

MainStreet-type program



GENEVA ROAD

Description

The area straddling state route 41 N. is a mixed-use neighborhood; residential, industrial, commercial (retail, service and office) medical, public works and the county jail. Some properties exhibit blight. Most housing is substandard; houses on Industrial Road have varying orientations to the street. Although this area is already mostly developed, its geographical size and topography make it the most attractive for development/redevelopment. This character area extends into the immediately surrounding unincorporated area.

Vision

Mixed-use redevelopment is proposed for the city's northwest gateway.

Primary Land Use

Mixed use

Development Strategy

Master plan for redevelopment

Enhanced code enforcement (building, housing, environmental)

Promote infill development with conventional/site-built housing

Pursue housing assistance program(s)

Possible urban redevelopment plan

After resolution of the jail issue clear jail and public works sites and sell property for redevelopment

Update zoning ordinance



GREENSPACE

Description

The community is located along the southern boundary of the Fall Line, the transition between two distinct geologic areas; the rolling terrain of the Piedmont and flat terrain of the Coastal Plains. Development in the city has occurred along linear ridges where the limited flat/level acreage is concentrated. Areas between these ridges are generally not as conducive to development because significant variations in topography require higher site preparation costs. This topography impedes interconnectivity, contributing to dead-end residential streets. In absence of development these areas retain natural vegetative cover.

Vision

Maintenance of the natural, undeveloped condition, with possible limited recreation development

Primary Land Use

Natural state

Limited recreation

Development Strategy

Preservation of natural state

This is a split character area distributed around the city along the outer limits of the corporate boundary. Refer to the city character area map.

MILLER AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD

Description

Neighborhood and housing conditions are generally in disrepair and declining in the west-central area of the city. The tree- shaded neighborhood has a moderate degree of building separation with variations in housing type and front yard setback.

Vision

Redevelopment as an attractive low-moderate income residential neighborhood

Primary Land Uses

Single-family residential

Development Strategy

Enhanced code enforcement activity (building, housing, environmental)

Promote infill development with conventional/site-built housing

Pursue housing assistance program

Provide homebuyer education program



OLIVER STREET

Description

Located along the northeast entrance, state route 137, this residential area consists of contemporary, mid--twentieth century housing with deep front yard setbacks and shaded lots.

Vision

The vision for this area is preservation of the contemporary residential character

Primary Land Uses

Single-family residential

Development Strategy

Enhanced housing and environmental code enforcement

Update zoning ordinance as necessary



SOUTH RESIDENTIAL

Description

Housing in the southeast quadrant of Buena Vista is a mix of various conditions; new and old, conventional construction and mobile homes, various orientations, varying front yard setbacks, standard, substandard and dilapidated housing interspersed with other blighting influences. Because of terrain there is very little street interconnectivity; most streets are dead end. The area is heavily shaded, sidewalk is limited to the two state routes which essentially constitute the east and west boundaries of the area.

Vision

Redevelopment is proposed for this large area.

Primary Land Uses

Residential

Development Strategy

Enhanced code enforcement (building, housing, environmental)
Promote infill development with conventional/site-built housing
Pursue housing assistance program
Provide homebuyer education program
Develop construction trades training program



Data Tables



Between 1900 and 1970 Marion County lost population with each successive census, resulting in the net loss of half of all residents. Primary causes of the decline were devastation the cotton boll weevil wrought on the agriculture-based economy, and the Great Depression which forced residents to relocate in search of employment. The 1970 Census documented the population low-point for the century as each subsequent census documented an increase; similar increases averaging $\pm 5\%$ during the seventies and eighties, and similar increases averaging $\pm 25\%$ during the nineties and the first decade of the new century. The 2010 Census documented the population at 87% of the level recorded in 1900.³ Reversal of the population trend was fueled primarily by acquisition of a local poultry producer by successive international companies, increasing local employment several-fold. The population growth was strong enough to increase the county's share of the shrinking area total from 6% in 1970 to 10.6% in 2010.

Buena Vista's population trend has been more positive as it experienced consistent population growth 1930-1960. Its position as the only incorporated area and the seat of county government served to protect the city from the population loss experienced at the county level through mid-century. Small decreases in municipal population during the sixties and again during the eighties were followed by increases during the nineties and the first decade of the century, with the latter decade experiencing the largest percentage and numeric increase since 1930. Between 1930 and 2010 the municipal population increased 98%. However, the city's share of the county total gradually decreased from 29% in 1960 to 25% in 2010, averaging 26.5% during the half-century period (1960-2010).

Population Marion, Buena Vista and Adjoining Counties							
Jurisdiction	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2014 ¹
Marion	5,477	5,099	5,297	5,590	7,144	8,742	8,797
Buena Vista	1,574	1,486	1,544	1,472	1,664	2,173	2,216
Chattahoochee	13,011	25,813	21,732	16,934	14,882	11,267	11,837
Schley	3,256	3,097	3,433	3,590	3,766	5,010	5,163
Stewart	7,371	6,511	5,896	5,654	5,252	6,058	5,744
Sumter	24,652	26,931	29,360	30,232	33,200	32,819	31,232
Talbot	7,127	6,625	6,536	6,524	6,498	6,865	6,390
Taylor	8,311	7,865	7,902	7,642	8,815	8,906	8,442
Webster	3,247	2,362	2,341	2,263	2,390	2,799	2,649
eight-county total	72,452	84,303	82,497	78,429	81,947	82,466	80,254
Marion's proportion	7.6%	6.0%	6.4%	7.1%	8.7%	10.6%	11%
Georgia	3.9M	4.6M	5.5M	6.5M	8.2M	9.7M	10.1M

¹ US Census estimate as of 7-1-14
source: US Census

Projections of future county populations (2035) prepared by the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget (OPB)⁴ are presented in the following table. The projections indicate strongly divergent trends among area counties. Six counties are projected to lose population, ranging as high as -32%; while the higher rate of the two projected growth counties is +34%. Marion is projected to experience a net loss of -1%/127 residents. This loss rate is so much lower than the eight county aggregated total that Marion's share of the area population is projected to increase, however marginally. Since OPB does not generate projections below the county level, Buena Vista's recent proportion of the county total is used in a

³ Boundary changes between 1900 and 1920 could have affected the county's population, but such changes, if any, were related to boundary shifts, nothing as drastic as the division/creation of new counties which did occur around the turn of the century.

⁴ supplier of official demographic and statistical data about the state

projection methodology. Credited most recently with 26%, 23% and 25% of the county total, a flat 25% share of the county projections is included in the following table.

Population Projections Marion, Buena Vista and Adjoining Counties						
Jurisdiction	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Marion	8,742	8,680	8,759	8,778	8,726	8,615
Buena Vista ¹	2,173	2,170	2,190	2,195	2,182	2,154
Chattahoochee	11,267	12,983	13,276	13,473	13,655	13,813
Schley	5,010	5,231	5,600	5,988	6,358	6,697
Stewart	6,058	5,782	5,571	5,372	5,191	5,039
Sumter	32,819	31,110	30,389	29,463	28,345	27,057
Talbot	6,865	6,349	6,060	5,715	5,308	4,851
Taylor	8,906	8,371	8,129	7,848	7,509	7,128
Webster	2,799	2,648	2,470	2,293	2,112	1,912
eight-counties	82,466	81,154	80,255	78,931	77,205	75,111
Marion's proportion	10.6%	10.7%	10.9%	11.1%	11.3%	11.5%
Georgia	9.7M	10.2M	10.9M	11.5M	12.2M	12.8M

¹ flat 25% of county projection; River Valley Regional Commission
sources: 2010 US Census; Georgia Office of Planning and Budget 2015-2035, Resident Population (2015)

The 4,103 housing units credited to the community in 2013 was the first decrease since the 1960 Census. Even during the population loss of the 1960s housing managed to maintain at least a low level increase. The population surges of the 1990s and 2000s is reflected in housing increases of one thousand units each decade. Within these increases has been a significant shift in tenure. The 1960 Census documented an owner-occupancy rate of 49%. By 1970 the rate had jumped to 62%, 1980-72% and in 1990/2000-79%. The census reported a 74% rate in 2010, 73% in 2013. In recent history the owner-occupancy rate for the state has been around 66%. The rate for rural communities in the River Valley region is typically equal to or higher than the state. For the surrounding area the most recent (2013) aggregate owner-occupancy rate is 60%, a rate influenced greatly by the presence of Fort Benning in Chattahoochee County and the high number of rental units/apartment complexes in the area's most populated county, Sumter. Exclusion of these two counties from the surrounding area total results in an aggregated owner-occupancy rate of 70%.

Housing - 2013							
Tenure and Age of Housing	Marion	Buena Vista	Area	Value	Marion	Buena Vista	Area
Total Housing Units	4,103	1,031	31,111	Owner-occupied			
Occupied	73%	78%	81%	<\$100K	54%	59%	61%
Owner	72%	40%	60%	\$100K-199,999	32%	30%	25%
Renter	28%	60%	40%	≥\$200,000	14%	11%	14%
No Vehicle	12%	22%	11%	Median	\$87,000	\$77,300	-
Vacant	27%	22%	19%	Gross Rent			
Year Structure Built				<\$300	12%	19%	9%
≥2000	19%	5%	9%	\$300-\$499	39%	51%	20%
1980-1999	45%	46%	38%	\$500-\$749	21%	23%	39%
1960-1979	21%	28%	30%	≥\$750	28%	7%	32%
<1960	15%	20%	23%	Median	\$495	\$400	-

Source: data from US Census 2009-2013 American Community Survey, conversions to percentages by River Valley Regional Commission

Tenure in cities and towns in rural areas is often heavily influenced by the presence of multi-family housing complexes. Such housing developments in rural areas are typically renter-occupied and attracted to the municipalities because utility systems and other public services/benefits are most often concentrated there. In 1980, Buena Vista’s renter-occupancy rate was reportedly 24%. The rate increased an average of eleven points every decade since, most recently (2013) estimated at 60%.

2013 Census estimates indicate there is not a vehicle available for the sole use of occupants of 12% of the community’s housing units. The rate within Buena Vista is almost double at 22%. Among the surrounding counties the aggregated average is 11%.

The housing stock in the city is reportedly older than the supply countywide. The median date of construction for housing in Buena Vista is 1980; countywide, 1985. Across the surrounding area half of the housing supply was constructed prior to 1977.

The most recent census information places the community on opposite extremes of housing values in comparison with the area. Three counties were credited with higher median values of owner-occupied housing, the highest at \$97,000. Marion County’s median value is equivalent to 90% of the area high. Buena Vista’s median, although \$10,000 lower than the county, ranks next highest, higher than the other four counties. The county’s median gross rent is only 4% above the area’s lowest county. Buena Vista is reportedly \$76 below the lowest county median.

Median family income (MFI) in Marion County reportedly increased 54% between 2000 and 2013; twenty points higher than the nation’s rate of inflation; outpacing inflation by \$6,600. During this period Marion’s MFI improved from being \$2,000 lower to \$6,000 higher than the surrounding area. Growth in neither median household income (MHI) nor per capita income (PCI) at the county level kept pace with inflation, however. To maintain buying power the county’s MHI in 2013 needed to be \$5,600 higher and PCI \$1,300 higher.

Changes in Income Marion, Buena Vista and Surrounding Counties						
Income Measure		2000 ¹	2010 ²	2013 ³	% Change 2000-2013	% Inflation 2000-2013 ⁴
Median Family	Marion	\$31,928	\$51,000	\$49,229	54%	34%
	Buena Vista	\$21,738	\$26,827	\$28,750	32%	
	Area	\$33,884	\$43,711	\$43,339	28%	
Median Household	Marion	\$29,145	\$31,581	\$33,301	14%	
	Buena Vista	\$17,672	\$18,795	\$22,906	30%	
	Area	\$29,226	\$33,484	\$34,290	17%	
Per Capita	Marion	\$14,044	\$17,729	\$17,479	24%	
	Buena Vista	\$11,406	\$10,879	\$13,037	14%	
	Area	\$14,704	\$17,195	\$17,621	20%	

¹ US Census

² US Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

³ US Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

⁴ The Inflation Calculator <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/> using Consumer Price Index statistics published annually in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

Recent growth in median family income at the county level was significantly higher than in the city, in both rate and actual dollars. Despite recording a higher growth rate than the area, the city’s MFI vis-a-vis the area actually deteriorated. Buena Vista’s growth rate in median household income was approximately double the county and area rates, but at the end of the period the city’s MHI vis-à-vis the county and the

area had not experienced significant improvement. Between 2000 and 2013 the gap between the city-county MHI levels decreased almost \$1,100, the city-area income gap decreased by almost \$700. Income among city residents continues to lag well behind the county total and area values in all three measures. Changes in income at the state level during this period were MFI +19% (below the county growth rate), MHI +16% and PCI +19% (also below the county growth rate).

The community has been credited with recent improvements in poverty conditions (2000-2013), however minor. The proportion of families in poverty decreased by three percentage points; individuals by one point. The city trend was inconsistent, but at the end of the period city rates were four and six points lower, respectively. Among neighboring counties Marion improved during the period from having among the highest rates to one of the lowest. Local improvement is even more significant when compared to statewide statistics where poverty rates are reported to have increased. Although the incidence of poverty at the state level remains lower than Marion's, the divergent trends means the gap between local and state rates have narrowed. Poverty rates among families statewide increased over these three time periods; 10%, 12%, 14%, respectively. Poverty rates among individuals across the state were reportedly 13%, 16%, 18%, respectively.

Percent in Poverty				
Category		2000 ¹	2010 ²	2013 ³
Families	Marion	18%	15%	15%
	Buena Vista	29%	35%	25%
Individuals	Marion	22%	22%	21%
	Buena Vista	35%	41%	29%

¹ US Census

² US Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

³ US Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

Recent census/survey data reveals a significant difference in educational attainment levels of adults within the community, at least at the lower attainment levels. Among Buena Vista residents twenty-five years of age and older surveyed during the five-year survey period (2006-2010), inclusive, 37% had not received their high school diploma or GED. This rate is almost twice the rate countywide (20%). Simple deduction of the city statistics from countywide data suggests the city rate is more than double the unincorporated area (16%). Among residents whose highest level of attainment is high school graduation/GED, separation of city and countywide data indicates the city rate (35%) is twenty points below the unincorporated area (55%). The attainment levels above high school graduation are similar among city and non-city residents.

Educational Attainment 2010 Marion, Buena Vista and Adjoining Counties									
Highest Level of Attainment	Marion	Buena Vista	Chatt.	Schley	Stewart	Sumter	Talbot	Taylor	Webster
Less than HS diploma	20%	37%	7%	27%	30%	25%	21%	37%	22%
HS diploma	51%	35%	21%	36%	38%	34%	47%	36%	47%
Some college and Associate's Degree	23%	20%	41%	27%	21%	23%	21%	20%	23%
Bachelor's degree or higher	7%	7%	31%	9%	11%	19%	11%	7%	8%

Resident population 25 years of age and older

Source: US Census 2006-2010 American Community Survey, 5-year survey

The community fares better than surrounding counties in the proportion of adults lacking a high school diploma/GED. Aggregation of individual (seven) county data (table below) reveals 24% of the surrounding area’s adult population lacks a high school diploma/GED, compared to Marion’s 20%. The community does not compare well to the area in educational attainment after high school, however. The influence of Fort Benning on Chattahoochee and presence of a university, college and hospital in Sumter push higher attainment levels in those two counties. Nevertheless, when the two higher attainment levels (some college and college degree(s)) are aggregated for the other five counties, Marion out-performs only one.

Educational Attainment 2010			
Attainment*	Marion	Buena Vista	Surrounding Counties
Less than HS diploma	20%	37%	24%
HS diploma/equivalent	51%	35%	36%
Some college and Associate’s degree	23%	20%	25%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	7%	7%	15%

Resident population 25 years of age and older
 Highest level of attainment achieved
 Source: US Census 2006-2010 American Community Survey, 5-year survey

Over the course of the three most recent years for which data is available, the local high school graduation rate has been in the middle of the performance levels of the surrounding counties, ranking 4th, 5th and 3rd, successively. When these rates are totaled by jurisdiction across the three time periods, Marion ranks a distant third.

Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates Marion and Surrounding Counties			
Jurisdiction	2012	2013	2014
Marion	72.6 ^{4th}	68.4 ^{5th}	80.2 ^{3rd}
Chattahoochee	66.7	69.2	74.3
Schley	84.4	77.8	84.7
Stewart	89.7	83.3	70.4
Sumter	67.2	65.9	83.7
Talbot	45.5	53.2	46.2
Taylor	68.9	68.5	74.8
Webster	74.3	54.8	70

Source: Georgia Department of Education

The community has maintained an attractive unemployment level relative to adjoining counties, despite the gradual reduction-in-force of the largest local employer. During the fifteen-year period 2000-2014, inclusive, Marion was always among that half of area counties with the better rates; six times recording the lowest and two other years second lowest. Across the decade-and-a-half the local rate averaged only .3 point above the state rate. For presentation purposes only even years are shown in the following table.

Annual Unemployment Rates								
Jurisdiction	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Marion	3.9%	4.6%	5.4%	4.5%	6.2%	10.7%	9.9%	7.7%
Area	4.8%	6.0%	6.5%	6.4%	7.8%	12.5%	11.4%	9.2%
Georgia	3.5%	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%	6.3%	10.5%	9.2%	7.2%

source: Georgia Department of Labor;
 individual county unemployment was aggregated for conversion to area rates; computations by River Valley Regional Commission

The proportion of residents who work out of the county has been virtually unchanged in recent years (2000-2013), averaging 54%. Half of these out-commuters worked in Columbus/Muscogee County. The proportion of workers statewide employed outside their county of residence was also virtually unchanged, averaging 41% during the same period. The proportion of local working-age residents not in the labor force has been increasing gradually; 41%-42%-44%. This is attributable, in part, to the difficulty local resident workers have securing employment in the wake of the poultry processor scaling down local operations. Statewide data reflects the same gradual upward trend, but at a significantly lower level of non-participation; 34%-35%-36%.

Place of Work - Marion Residents				
	2000 ¹	2010 ²	2013 ³	
Workers 16 Years Of Age and Older ⁴	2,972	3,239	3,145	
Lived in Marion Co...	and worked in Marion	46%	44%	46%
	but worked elsewhere ⁵	54%	56%	54%
Working Age Population Not In Labor Force	41%	42%	44%	

¹ U. S. Census

² U.S. Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

³ U.S. Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

⁴ includes military

⁵ anywhere beyond Marion County

The recent (2000-2014) decrease in the number of jobs in the community is reflected in the accompanying table. The gradual reduction in employment by the largest employer, a poultry processor, was mitigated slightly by an increase in furniture/wood product manufacturing. Nevertheless, the Georgia Department of Labor reported a 45% reduction in local jobs 2000-2014, inclusive. The good news, at least for residents who maintained their jobs throughout the period, was that average weekly wages reportedly increased 54%, while the national inflation rate increased 36% 2000-2014. Wage growth outpaced inflation by \$64.

Jobs in Marion County		
Year	Average Monthly Employment	Average Weekly Wages
2000	2,613	\$348
2005	1,697	\$451
2010	1,491	\$503
2013	1,454	\$529
2014	1,436	\$537

Jobs covered by unemployment insurance laws, or approximately 96% of wage and salary civilian jobs.

source: Georgia Department of Labor, Employment and Wages

In 2010, the county's two largest industrial sectors, Educational Services.... and Manufacturing accounted for equal distributions (21%) of total employment. Only three other sectors had double-digit employment distributions; Agriculture...., Construction and Retail Trade. Collectively, these five sectors accounted for 75% of the community's jobs in 2010. In 2013 Educational Services.... and Manufacturing repeated as the largest sectors, but employment in the latter decreased by six points. Most of this decrease can be explained by the loss of poultry processing jobs. Only one other sector repeated with a double-digit share, one new sector joined the double-digit club and the four largest sectors accounted for 57% of local jobs. No explanation for the sharp decrease in the Agriculture, Forestry.... sector and sharp increase in Public Administration could be determined.

Employment by Industry						
Industrial Category	Marion County		Buena Vista		Area	
	2010	2013	2010	2013	2010	2013
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining	10%	3%	1%	1%	5%	4%
Construction	12%	11%	10%	3%	8%	6%
Manufacturing	21%	15%	34%	30%	13%	13%
Wholesale Trade	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%
Retail Trade	11%	9%	8%	2%	10%	11%
Transportation and Warehousing, And Utilities	3%	7%	0%	5%	5%	4%
Information	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Finance and Insurance, Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	3%	3%	3%	8%	4%	3%
Professional, Scientific, Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	7%	8%	8%	16%	6%	6%
Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	21%	21%	22%	23%	24%	26%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	6%	6%	1%	2%	6%	8%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	1%	4%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Public Administration	3%	10%	5%	4%	9%	9%
Civilian Employment	3,357	3,240	608	855	26,124	24,973

source: U.S. Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

Data for the city reveal the same two largest sector as the county's in both periods. Manufacturing's much larger share in Buena Vista bears testament to the city's heavy reliance on the poultry processor. With Manufacturing accounting for one-third of jobs in the city, its large presence limited only one other sector to a double-digit proportion of employment, in 2010 and 2013. The same two large sectors were the major employers in the surrounding area, where there was only one other sector with a double-digit share.

The 2010 Census reported Marion County workers were concentrated in the generally mid- to lower-paying occupational categories; Production, Transportation.... and Services. 2013 data revealed a significant shift from 2010 in occupational employment, the most notable being, (1) a six point increase in employment in Management...., making the generally highest-paying sector also the largest in the county, (2) a five point reduction in one of the lower-paying sectors, Production, Transportation...., and (3) a four point employment increase in Natural Resources, Construction...., the generally second highest-paying sector. In 2013, employment was much more evenly distributed with only six points separating the largest and smallest occupational sectors, compared to an eleven point differential in 2010.

Employment by Occupation						
Occupational Category	Marion County		Buena Vista		Area	
	2010	2013	2010	2013	2010	2013
Management, Business, Science, and Arts	18%	24%	10%	13%	28%	29%
Service	22%	19%	26%	29%	18%	20%
Sales and Office	18%	18%	21%	19%	21%	21%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	15%	19%	13%	12%	12%	12%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	26%	21%	31%	28%	21%	18%
Civilian Employment	3,357	3,240	608	855	26,124	24,973

source: U.S. Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

During the brief period studied Buena Vista recorded similar, but more moderate, trends with proportional employment increasing in the generally higher-paying occupations and decreasing in the generally lower-paying sectors. The city exhibits much greater variation in employment levels; with seventeen points separating the largest and smallest categories in 2013. The generally highest-paying sector is the largest employer in the surrounding area, and at significantly higher distributions.

Commuting to work across county lines is common throughout the state, and beyond. So, there is no surprise it is happening locally. Because Muscogee County has such a heavy influence on the local economy it is included with the seven surrounding counties in the following statistics. The primary stimulus for increasing numbers of non-residents commuting to Marion (1980-2000) was acquisition and subsequent expansion of a local poultry processor by an international company which became one of the region’s major employers. Conversely, as that employer began scaling-back production in-commuting started declining (2000-2010). Even as the poultry processor was expanding and creating more local jobs there were residents in search of employment and income options not available locally, resulting in increasing numbers of residents commuting to job opportunities out of county. This latter trend has been the stronger of the two, as the proportion of employed residents out-commuting increased between 1980 and 2010 from one-third to one-half. The strongest county trends during this period have been the most consistent increases in out-commuting to Chattahoochee, Muscogee Talbot and Taylor Counties, and the most consistent increases in in-commuting from Muscogee and Schley.



Worker Cross-county Commuting Trend ¹				
Commute	1980	1990	2000	2010
In-commuters	259	548	635	491
Out-commuters (% of employed)	591 (32%)	803 (39%)	1364 (45%)	1715 (51%)

¹ seven surrounding counties and Muscogee

Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; 2010-American Community Survey 2006-2010, 5-year survey