

# COMMUNITY GOALS



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The Community Goals Element is described in the State Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive planning as the most important part of the comprehensive plan. It is a concise summary of future community desires and wishes, and is an easily referenced roadmap for community leaders and all concerned with growth and development of the community and its future.

The Dodge County Joint Comprehensive Plan includes three of the four possible components detailed in the Minimum Standards for the required element. These include: a general Community Vision, separate municipal descriptions/visions, listing of Community Goals, and a description of Long Term Community Policies. These components seek to paint a picture of the desired future community, and answer the planning question, **“Where does the community wish to go?”** To some degree, the Long Term Community Policies also outline guidance strategy of, **“How are we going to get where we desire to go, and also, what do we desire for other development parties to pursue?”**





## Community Vision

The Dodge County community is committed to the pursuit of progress and growth within the next 20 years. At the forefront of Dodge County's vision is becoming a regional hub for commerce and industry, efficient in drawing a young, skilled, workforce and patrons from surrounding counties. Dodge County sees its future self as a unique growth center of Southern charm and diverse economic growth centered around outstanding community, educational, and industrial resources, but offered in a dramatic backdrop of interesting, tangible history, and inviting natural resources and outdoor landscape. Practical utilization and promotion of the community's existing resources, assets, features, history, as well as the strategic improvement and expansion the community's infrastructural capabilities and educational programs will serve to further enhance the quality of life for current residents and future generations.



## Economic Development

Industry and entrepreneurship will be innovative, well-served, and supported. Dodge County intends to capitalize on its central location for logistics strategy, to invest in various types of infrastructure to prepare industrial areas for growth and occupancy, to incorporate creative methods for attracting diverse types of industry (not limited to industry related to aviation), and to expand promotion and growth outlook in existing industries. Negotiations with industries offering well-paying jobs with benefits will be pursued aggressively by local economic developers.

Workforce support programs in leadership, apprenticeship, career-development, and worker support programs will be established to train and empower members of the current workforce and to recruit and encourage younger generations to become and remain members of the Dodge County workforce. A business incubator model will be established to grow and develop local businesses. The community will be a national leader in avionics education and industry because of the Middle Georgia State University Aviation Campus, and the Heart of Georgia Regional Airport. Dodge County institutions and agencies will continue to collaborate with representatives of the Middle Georgia State University Aviation Campus and the Heart of Georgia Regional Airport to grow airport capacity and capability. The community will expand on this opportunity by establishing pilot career/cooperative programs at local schools and seeking related industry and entrepreneurs. Dodge County High School will prioritize and expand educational offerings in technical and vocational fields as well as in State-of-the-Practice Educational System (STEM, FRC). Local options for technical and vocational training and certification at the post-secondary level will be sought and made available. Middle Georgia State University will forge stronger cooperative relationships with residents of Dodge County.



**L** Music On Main **R** Terry Coleman Center for Aviation and Technology

Eastman will remain the principal center of commercial, governmental, social, educational, and civic life in the county, although the small towns will be vital centers and nodes of activity and services for rural Dodge County, and desired destinations. Intense commercial, indus-



trial, and other high-density uses will concentrate in or near Eastman in the Greater Eastman Growth Area, primarily because of infrastructure availability and the existing concentration of growth and its support structure. Additional retail, hospitality, entertainment, and other public and private services facilities and infrastructure will be supported, incentivized, and added to appropriately serve the population, tourist sector, and the resulting economic growth. This will further improve the levels of service and the overall quality of life. The City of Eastman will promote of downtown events, offer incentives to downtown businesses and building owners, create policy to encourage façade improvement, historic preservation, and discourage blight, seek funding to install and repair infrastructure, and nurture downtown activity and business development overall.



**L** Rural Scene, Dodge County   **M** Historic Residence, Eastman   **B** Dodge County Court House   **R** Downtown Eastman

Dodge County will ensure agriculture/agribusiness and forestry will remain mainstays within the community. Through local support, cooperation, collaboration, and promotion of this industry to younger generations through educational institutions and community, this industry will continue to thrive and contribute heavily to the local economy. The robust natural environment in Dodge County will be marketed, emphasizing ideal locations and accommodations for outdoor sports and recreation. Promotion and support of forestry and agriculture, both through viable agricultural, agribusiness, and forestry enterprises and active agritourism, as well as protection of the county’s rural character and outdoor landscape will be fostered. There will be greater access to the Ocmulgee River, Dodge County Public Fishing Area, and other natural resources of the county.



## Community/Recreation

Local community facilities will be first-rate, including outstanding schools, an innovative hospital known for quality and services far beyond a rural level, top-notch fire and law enforcement departments and other services in the rural parts of the county, unique and accomplished recreational facilities, biking and hiking trails, public parks and green space, and other access to outdoor adventure and local natural resources. The community will have enhanced and more developed retail and entertainment sectors and facilities with greater variety. Improved aesthetics will be a focus and part of the community culture, resulting in the appearance of a well kempt and respected town with quaint, rehabilitated historic properties, gleaming new ones, and a litter-free environment. The unique history of the county will be told through well-preserved landmarks, revitalized downtowns, active tourism promotion, resident and retiree attraction, hospitality development, and interpreted sites.



*Dodge County Public Fishing Area*

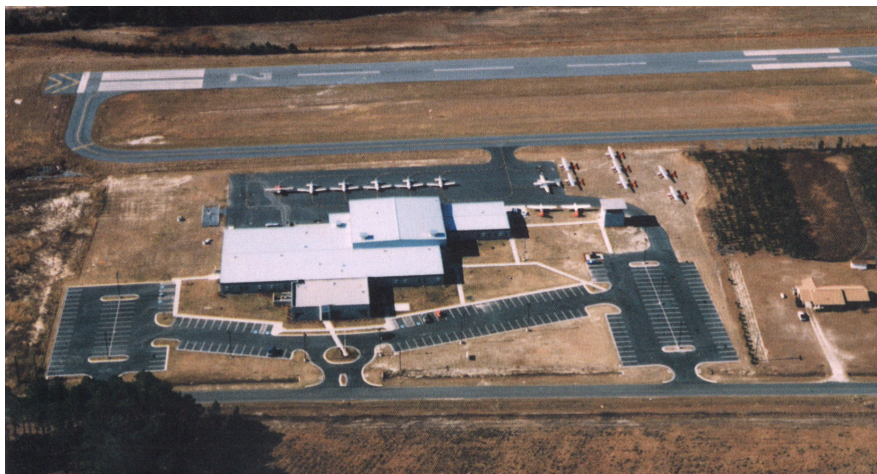
The small towns of the county will be thriving, growing villages with expanded community facilities as necessary to attract further growth and support the populace. Representatives in the public and private sector will strive to decrease litter and provide a range of recreational infrastructure, outlets, public spaces, and activities for families. Diverse, community-wide events will be curated and promoted through the participation of public institutions, faith-based organizations, businesses, civic clubs, and educational organizations. The small towns will be further examples of preserved history in a modern, functional setting, adding additional dimension and character to the outstanding quality of life in Dodge County.



## Public Service

Given both great strengths and challenges, Dodge County fully comprehends that only with sufficient and high-quality public services as a solid foundation for supporting various community endeavors will the visions and goals stand an opportunity to be realized.

Dodge County is committed to improve existing infrastructure with quality, sustainable materials that will not only help improve travel experience, upgrade community image but is also necessary to attract further growth and potential investment. Starting with developing maintenance schedule and standards to help change persistent litter habit, keep the roads and streets clean and stay at a good quality level, Dodge County seeks to create a better-developed system in general to support a mix of travel modes including sidewalks, bike lanes, as well as more roadside trees and public green space for all age groups to enjoy. Also, the abundant natural resources present in Dodge County provide excellent opportunities for the making of high-quality public space as soon as the accesses to the lake and river are put in place as the county envisioned. The county will also establish and enforce animal ordinances to ensure better animal control. To further create a strong sense of active community, blighted properties, outdated hotels will be improved or removed, historic buildings will be properly rehabilitated, landscaping elements in downtown will be added to make the community attractive to residents and businesses.



**L** Heart of Georgia Regional Airport **B** Rural Scene, Dodge County **R** Williamson Mausoleum, Orphans Cemetery



Exodus of younger generation due to minimal job opportunities, difficulties to bring in quality people to work in the area is a major challenge facing the county now. In addition to assistance to help local entrepreneurship grow by supporting incubators, matching grants, helping with advertisement, etc., the county is also willing to provide a diverse range of opportunities for citizens to influence decision making processes in government and economic development. The county will encourage leadership development and community empowerment, enhance trust between citizens and public employees/officials, thus, improving collaborative community efforts, offer a variety of ways to involve different sectors of the community. Along with the loss of younger generations, serious crimes such as drug-use and gang activities pose another serious challenge to the community. As a reply, Dodge County shows a strong resolution in pursuing more effective actions to reduce and deter drug-use, addiction, gang activities, and other crimes in the community.



**U** Dodge County Public Fishing Area **BL** Milan Municipal Building **BR** Milan Fire Department

To guarantee good and efficient service to the public, the county will refresh its technology in administrative, public safety departments and other communication and operation systems on a regular basis to keep up with modern technology programs and practices.

Dodge County will be a unique example of a rural growth center utilizing its history, character, charm, and natural resources to support a 21st century economy of innovative industry and special educational opportunities with outstanding community facilities and an unparalleled quality of life. The community will be a nationally known center of aviation, avionics, and aerospace training, research, and manufacturing. In a return to its roots in some manner, Dodge County will again be known for its commerce and industry, location, transportation



resources, natural resources, and tourism. There will be new chapters of innovation, history, and uniqueness written to join and further highlight the fascinating and visible facets of unique past endeavors, and the vivid natural tapestry of the county's rural landscape. The community will truly continue to take flight together and further enhance its reputation as an exceptional center of progress and quality of life, truly unsurpassed and unexpected in a beautiful rural setting. Dodge County will maintain its uniqueness in level of services, economic development, education, and other facets of an outstanding quality of life. The community will be a thriving, growing, truly special rural place which will be very attractive for living, working, doing business, visiting, or recreating.



**L** Historic Residence **R** Community Decoration

## Healthcare

To better meet the needs of everyone in the community, Dodge County will expand access to specialty healthcare to address mental health issues that is very much needed in the community. The community voiced inconvenience and lack of access to hospital/critical care due to the strict working hours of doctors who mostly work from 8 to 5. To address the issue, the county will suggest and encourage the hospital and doctors' offices to stay open for more accommodating hours and provide longer time services to the community.

## Housing

Dodge county also needs more affordable housing for its seniors and students. The county will seek to create more retirement community housing for its elderly people and encourage a diverse housing mix to accommodate people with different needs.





# City of Chauncey

## Description

The City of Chauncey is a small community of about 325 persons located in southeastern Dodge County along U.S. 341 and Georgia Highway 165. The picturesque hometown is the location of a still thriving Langdale Forest Products pole plant. Chauncey was established as Station Number 12 on the Macon and Brunswick Railroad in the late 1860s. Its early history was very much associated with the burgeoning timber and turpentine industries. It is said to have been named in honor of a timberman from New Hampshire who promised to erect a town church but died before that was accomplished. The first resident of the town was Methodist Minister William K. Bussey, a Civil war veteran, who was appointed as the first railroad agent. Timbermen did come through for the town as Summer, Mullin, and Hill built a large shingle mill in Chauncey in 1873, named the Mullinger Mill. Summer and Mullin did build the town a church for all denominations in 1874, which also became the first town school a year later. The Town of Chauncey was formally incorporated in September 1883. The first mayor was Owen W. Bush. L.M. Curry built the first two-story brick building in 1883, with the bottom floor serving as a store and the upper one with rooming apartments and a public hall. A separate Methodist Church was built in 1882, followed by the Missionary Baptist in 1884, and the Primitive Baptist in 1885.

The heyday of Chauncey occurred in the town's first decades as its population zenith was 683 in 1890. Local history notes that many families and businesses moved away from 1895-1905 as many timbermen and turpentiners left as nearby timber supplies were exhausted. The town did not give up and looked to schools and merchandising to rejuvenate itself. Many of the current brick buildings on Main Street were constructed around 1910. James Mullin is said to have established Georgia's first telephone in 1880-1885. The local telephone exchange was created in 1912. Chauncey has long been associated with schools. A town resident and minister James D. Miller, who organized the Baptist Church in the 1880s, was one of the principal proponents and planners of Ebenezer Baptist College, which was established in Cochran, Georgia and was the forerunner of Middle Georgia College. The Town of Chauncey had itself rechartered in 1912 to allow it to issue bonds for a public school. As a result, Chauncey became the first municipality in Georgia to construct and equip a modern school building. The Chauncey School was completed in 1914 for \$10,000 and featured six classrooms, a state-of-the art science laboratory, and an upper story auditorium. A Valedictorian of Chauncey High School, a Mrs. Harrell, is said to have become one of the first women air traffic controllers in World War II. The City of Chauncey acquired the school in 1990 and the school now serves as The City of Chauncey's City Hall/Municipal Complex. The Town of Chauncey was reincorporated as the City of Chauncey in 1937.



## Vision

The City of Chauncey wants to be a thriving small town which retains its warm, caring home-town feel and values, and which maintains its proud history and character. Continual upgrades and installments will support and enrich the quality of life for residents of Chauncy. Remaining committed to providing a high standard of public service in the community, Chauncy will acquire funding to improve infrastructure, construct a new fire station facility, and install a walking track and parking at the City ballfield. The Chauncey School will be restored to its early splendor and will be the center of the town’s governmental and social life.

Needs	Opportunities
Municipal Complex (Chauncey School) Renovation	Chauncey School
City Gym improvements	U.S. 341
Water system improvements	Historic building stock
Sewage system	City ballfield
Street improvements	City gym
New businesses/Dollar Store	
Recreation improvements	
New fire station	



**L** Chauncey Municipal Center **R** Chauncey United Methodist Church



# Town of Chester

## Description

The Town of Chester is located in the northeastern corner of Dodge County with Georgia Highway 126 passing east/west through town as Main Street. The nearby towns of Cochran in Bleckley County is located about 13 miles west on GA 126 and Cadwell in Laurens County, about 8 miles southeast on GA 126. Georgia Highway 257 passes northeast/southwest through town. Dexter, also in Laurens County, is about 7 miles northeast of Chester. Chester is the only current municipality in Dodge County retaining a “town” designation. The town is the location of Dodge State Prison which results in a total Census population of nearly 1,600 persons. Town population outside of prisoners has remained mainly between 300-400 persons throughout its history. Chester was created as a result of the Empire Lumber Company of Chattanooga, Tennessee constructing the Empire and Dublin Railroad in 1889 to transport timber to its Empire sawmill. The railroad was reconstructed as the Oconee and Western in 1892 and acquired by the Wrightsville and Tennille Railroad in 1897. The community was said to be located in one of the most fertile sections of the county, and was founded by June Williams, a turpentine man and H.M. Hancock, a merchant. One of the first businesses was the J.P. Williams Company, peach growers. This legacy continues today with Tom Sawyer Farms, Dodge County’s sole remaining peach farm, located along Georgia 257 south of town between Chester and Empire.

Another interesting fact of history for Chester is that its first postmaster was John Hall, an African American. The town was formally incorporated in December 1902 as a one-half mile circle from the depot of the Wrightsville and Tennille Railroad. The town received a new charter in 1916. The railroad was abandoned in 1941. Chester has remained a flourishing community despite many setbacks primarily because of its school and banks. The first public school was organized in 1901, and later the town was the location of the Chester Consolidated School which remained one of five high schools in the county until the creation of Dodge County High School in 1957. It remained in use as an elementary school until 1990. The school is now owned by the town and is the center of community recreation. The Chester Banking company was first organized in 1909 and was attributed as much help to the economy of the surrounding county section. A branch of the Colony Bank remains active within the town at present. A Dollar General store opened within the community in 2016, improving access to food and common home goods.



# Vsion

The Town of Chester wishes to remain a small town attractive for rural residential living which is peaceful and quiet with local amenities and necessities, but with convenient location near other larger communities with more urban opportunities. The community desires to provide amply upgraded streets and infrastructure for public use while exuding a more aesthetically pleasing clean, green, and well-maintained appearance.

Needs	Opportunities
Downtown revitalization	Location
Blight removal	Dodge State Prison
Housing improvements	Chester School
Street improvements	
Economic development	
Recreation improvements	
Drainage improvements	
Sewage system improvements	
Water system improvements	



**L** *Chester Gymnasium*   **R** *Sweet Home Primitive Baptist Church*



# City of Eastman

## Description

The City of Eastman is located in the center of Dodge County, is the county seat, has a population of about 5,500 persons, and is by far the largest municipality of Dodge County. Eastman is clearly the governmental, educational, commercial, industrial, and civic center of the county, and is a progressive community boasting amenities, facilities, and quality-of-life quite unique and unexpected for a rural community its size. Contributing to its exceptional history and unique persona, the community was established, initially developed, and named for Northern Capitalists, William E. Dodge and William Pitt Eastman. Dodge was the president of both the Macon and Brunswick Railroad and the Georgia Land and Lumber Company. The Macon and Brunswick Railroad came through the area in the late 1860s, and Dodge County was established in 1870. W.P. Eastman, an associate of W.E. Dodge, provided the land for the town which had been known as Station No. 13 on the railroad, and it was incorporated in October 1870. Eastman quickly became the center of Georgia's early timber industry supported by rail. Eastman and Dodge were also prominent in providing public facilities, including the town's first school, and promoting local culture. They were also behind promotions of Eastman for the loveliness of its scenery, its beautiful undulating topography, its perfectly drained firm soils, and the salubriousness of its climate highlighted by abundant pure water and the healing balm of soothing, soft pine air. Dodge built the 150 bed upscale Uplands Hotel and promoted Eastman as the optimum winter resort for both tourists and invalids. As a consequence of the town's development, promotion, and resulting culture, Eastman in its early days was known as "The Paris of the South." Eastman was reincorporated as a city in 1905. It's population consistently increased Census to Census all the way to 1970's 5,416 despite Dodge County reaching a population zenith in 1920. Eastman received additional fame when W.S. Stuckey established a local pecan business in the 1930s, constructing the first Stuckey's store in 1937, and building a 1940s candy plant in town, all of which grew into a nationwide chain, Stuckey's. This led many to label Eastman as the "Candy Capital of the South." W.S. Stuckey also led the effort to establish the local airport in 1966, which has transitioned into the community's signature Heart of Georgia Regional Airport. Forestry and farming remain important components of a well diversified local economy.

Today, the City of Eastman is located in the heart of Dodge County which itself is in the heart of central South Georgia and remains a progressive and innovative small town with impressive community amenities and facilities, and an exceptional quality of life. The city is traversed by the major U.S. highways central to intrastate Georgia travel, U.S. 23, and U.S. 341, and is also intersected by Georgia highways 46, 87, and 117. The community heralds a thriving 94 bed hospital with state-of-the-art equipment, many advanced services, and a critical care unit, all uncommon in a rural community. The Dodge County Hospital has been appropria-



tely recognized as one of the top ten rural hospitals in the State of Georgia. The local school system has technically up-to-date, modern schools and facilities, and has similarly been recognized as a medal winning “top Georgia high school.” The community also boasts of top public safety facilities, ample water/sewer systems, and well developed industrial parks and sites served by an active Class 1 railroad on the Norfolk Southern System (the successor to the Macon and Brunswick Railroad). A number of impressive industrial concerns, including Alcoa, have plants in Eastman. Perhaps the most important and impressive local community facilities include the Heart of Georgia Regional Airport with a nearly 6,600 foot runway, a 12,000 square foot terminal, and technical facilities rivaling those offered by much larger metro areas. Adjacent to the Regional Airport, is a 22-acre campus of Middle Georgia State University. This Eastman Aviation campus is Georgia’s only public university campus offering primarily aviation and aerospace offerings, and these offerings are on a world-class level. The Eastman campus has an Institute for Aerospace Research which already has an established international reputation and accomplished groundbreaking work in designing and creating components for NASA. Georgia Military College operates a postsecondary campus in Eastman. The community continues to herald extraordinary cultural opportunities, inclu-



**L** Heart of Georgia Regional Airport **R** Downtown Eastman

ding many active civic clubs, churches of all denominations, an involved Arts Guild, and an acclaimed Music On Main which regularly has performances in a renovated downtown 1942 Magnolia Theater which are simulcast on the radio. The community is also supported by a very active Eastman-Dodge Chamber of Commerce with a state-of-the-art conference center with 10,000 square feet of event space and catering capabilities. All of Eastman’s exceptionalism and outstanding municipal offerings are provided in the still stunning surrounding pastoral beauty of the rolling countryside of farms and verdant pine forests and the nearby outdoor adventure and fun afforded by the mystic and historic Ocmulgee River. Eastman truly is an unexpected and unequalled rural center of extraordinary offerings, quality of life, and unique potential.



## Vision

Eastman will continue to be the governmental, educational, commercial, industrial, and civic center of Dodge County, while remaining a progressive and innovative rural leader with unexpected, unequaled, and unsurpassed amenities, community facilities, and overall quality of life. Eastman will remain a charming and involved small town with a supportive and family-friendly atmosphere conducive to expanding residents and businesses alike. The community will continue to be a leader in agriculture, education, healthcare, and human and aviation technology. Leadership programs will be implemented to engage and empower citizens. Downtown Eastman will be a revitalized center of expanded retail and service offerings, events, gathering areas, and only one of many sources of expanded jobs and business and industry concerns within the community. Downtown structures will be attractive, bustling with activity, sidewalks complete with landscaping elements and installments for public use, and the downtown area will offer pleasant public spaces, parks and events for locals and visitors to enjoy. Infrastructure upgrades and additions will be prioritized for optimized efficiency and service. The Eastman Aviation Campus of Middle Georgia State University will remain an expanding bastion of world class aviation and aerospace offerings with an enhanced world-wide reputation.



L Eastman Farmers Market  
R Georgia Military College, Eastman Campus



Needs	Opportunities
Downtown revitalization and development	Eastman Aviation Campus at Middle Georgia State University
New industry	Heart of Georgia Regional Airport
Housing improvements	Existing industry
Technology advancements	Dodge County Hospital
Water system improvements/upgrades	Dodge County School System
Sewer system improvements	Ocmulgee River
Street/streetscape improvements	Farmer’s Market/Agriculture
Aesthetic improvements	Magnolia Theater/Arts Guild
Upgrades to Government facilities	Music On Main
Upgraded public facilities	Historic building stock



**L** Dodge County Hospital  
**R** Eastman Veterans Memorial Park  
**B** Middle Georgia State University, Eastman Aviation Campus





# City of Milan

## Description

The City of Milan is located at the southern boundary of Dodge County which passes through the center of town, which means the municipality is also a Telfair County municipality. Milan is located along U.S. 280 about eight miles west of Helena (now McRae-Helena). The community has an interesting history, first arising as a train stop on the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery (SAM) Railway in the 1880s. It was named, like many SAM Railway towns, after the European city in Italy. Milan is often incorrectly listed as the location of a “Civil War Bull Pen,” but this is a confused spelling of the Confederate prisoner of War Camp Lawton in Millen, Georgia. The Town of Milan was first incorporated in October 1891 as a one-half circle from the SAM Railway depot. For some reason, Milan’s town charter was repealed by the Georgia General Assembly in 1893, only to be reinstated in 1906. Early on Milan was described as a serene and peaceful village surrounded by rich farmlands with a train depot. A 1906 Georgia gazetteer noted Milan had “a money order post office, express and telegraph offices, some merchantile interests, schools, churches, etc. and a 1900 population of 112.” Reflecting the incorporation changes, the official Census numbers of Milan do not start until 1910, when it had a reported population of 287. The Town of Milan’s incorporation was officially changed to The City of Milan in August 1916 after a July 1916 referendum. The city limits were described by that charter as “one-half mile from the northwest corner of the Seaboard Air Line Railway passenger station.” The City continued to flourish and its population grew to 630 in 1930. A 1932 Dodge County history described Milan as one of the best small business towns in this section. It was depicted as having several brick business houses, an up-to-date bank, a modern school building, and a splendid brick hotel, two cotton gins, and three cotton warehouses.

Unlike many of the small towns in Dodge County, Milan has shown more adaptability to changing times and events and continued to exhibit steady population growth until 1980 (1,115). Even today the 2010 Census population of 700 for Milan, makes it the second largest Dodge municipality behind Eastman. The community was able to have Milan State Prison locate in the community in 1989, although it was shuttered by the state in December 2008. After the state prison closure, City officials worked with the private Youth Services International company to open a contracted Youth Development Center at the old state prison site. This facility was closed in 2015. More recently the community has worked hard to open a transition center for veterans at the facility in conjunction with a nonprofit, named the Milan Sanctuary Project. The original SAL Railway depot remains and is being renovated for community use. The railroad itself is now owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation, operated by the Heart of Georgia Shortline Railroad, and has growing use because of connections with the Port of Savannah and the inland port at Cordele. Likewise, the Old



Milan School is utilized for community purposes. Milan also has its own Milan Development Authority, a site marketed for industrial purposes, and holds an annual Milan Harvest Fest in the fall. The community has also supported the development of a local farmers market and countywide aquaponics farming operation. The community continues to have a functioning bank with a branch location of Wilcox County State Bank operating in the city. In 2016, Milan made some interesting new history and national news when Georgia's last original WWII Merrill's Marauder, Vincent Melillo, was buried at Midway United Methodist Church in Milan beside his wife, the former Frankie Doris Thompson of Milan.



**L** Millan Aquaponics **R** Historic Milan Depot **B** Historic Caboose



## Vision

The City of Milan desires to remain a serene and peaceful small town which exhibits a progressive leadership and ethic, while nurturing a caring, family-friendly atmosphere, and while developing a supportive hometown with expanding facilities, amenities, and opportunities. The community will encourage and support additional housing and business opportunities for its citizens, and will seek the jobs, industry, and downtown investment which will provide greater economic stability. City infrastructure improvements will expand capacity for local service provision and public use and additional recreational development will offer community a variety of opportunities for outdoor activity. Local structural treasures will be restored to preserve local history and to impart younger generations with the knowledge of Milan’s rich cultural and historical heritage. Milan wishes to be a great American small town with a big heart and expanding opportunities.



*Downtown Milan*



Needs	Opportunities
Downtown revitalization	Railroad depot
Industrial development	Old Milan School
Housing improvements	Milan Development Authority
Milan Theater renovation	Industrial site
Railroad depot renovation	Heart of Georgia Railroad
Recreation/park improvements	Milan Sanctuary Project/Old Milan State Prison
Blight removal/aesthetic improvements	Aquaponics project
Street/streetscape improvements	Milan Harvest Fest
Water system improvements	Farmer’s market
Drainage improvements	ISO 4 rating
Sewage system improvements	Milan Theater



# City of Rhine

## Description

The City of Rhine is a historic small town located in the southwest corner of Dodge County near Wilcox and Telfair counties. The community of about 400 persons is located along U.S. 280 and is also intersected by Georgia Highway 117 in its center. Abbeville, the county seat of Wilcox County, is only six miles west along U.S. 280, while the City of Milan, split by Dodge and Telfair counties, is eight miles east along U.S. 280. Eastman is located 15 miles north on U.S. 117. Georgia Highway 165 branches off Georgia 117 in the northern edge of town leading to Chauncey 11 miles northeast. Rhine was established as a railroad town in 1886 in a rich agricultural and timber section of Dodge County when the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery (SAM) Railway was completed through Dodge County. Like many towns along the SAM Railway, the town was named for a European place, the Rhine River of Germany, by the Railway's president. Early in its history the community was described as a thriving and enterprising little town and good trade center.

Rhine was established on lands owned by J.M. Swymer, G.W. and D.M. Ryals opened the first general store, and three brothers named Robitzch established a large turpentine still. The town quickly flourished and was formally incorporated as the Town of Rhine in September 1891 as a one-half mile circle in every direction from J.M. Swymer's store. The community was not initially allowed to regulate the sale of liquors, but the charter was quickly amended in 1893 to allow town regulation of liquor sales. The town received a new charter in 1917 (effective January 1, 1918) which more particularly described town limits as "one-half mile from the east corner of a certain brick building owned by Mrs. Mamie Maloy, now occupied by King and Brown, bankers." Banking and schools have been important in keeping Rhine viable as a municipality until present. The Rhine Banking Company was chartered in 1918 and was described as one of the strongest banks in that section of the state. Even today the citizens Bank and Trust Company operates a Rhine branch location. Rhine was the location of one of five consolidated schools in early Dodge County school history. While Rhine High School closed in 1957 with the opening of Dodge County High School, the school continued to be operated as an elementary school until 1990. The community has celebrated a "Pon-town Festival" since 1976 when Mayor J.T. Williams first wanted the town to participate in a fun way with the nation's 200th birthday. The festival has continued due to community interest and love of its citizens. The town's railroad, while enduring a number of ebbs and flows, is still present and is now enjoying a growing comeback. It became part of the Seaboard Air Line Railway in 1900, and later was picked up as part of the Georgia Southwestern Shortline Railroad in 1989. When the Rhine to Rochelle section was formally abandoned in 1994, the Georgia Department of Transportation purchased the railroad. It is now operated as the Heart of Georgia Short line Railroad and has been given new life as part of the rail con-



nection between the Port of Savannah and the inland port at Cordele. The Town of Rhine became one of Georgia’s newest cities in 2009 when Rep. Jim Pruettt authored H.B. 265 which rechartered Rhine as the City of Rhine as “a one-mile circle from the 1917 charter center point, later known as the Williams Banking Company.” Rhine’s population was 191 persons at 1900 in its first Census and quickly grew to 321 in 1910, and had more than doubled to 396 by 1920. After that time slow, modest growth continued to 1950 when town population reached 514 persons. This was followed by slow decline until 1970 when the population dipped to 471. There was a resurgence in population from 1970 to 1980 when the town reached a historic population zenith of 590 persons. Since that time, the community has slowly declined in population each Census reaching 394 in 2010. The 2019 American Community Survey population estimate shows a population growth by slightly 100 to 315 people.



**L** Downtown Rhine **R** Historic Methodist Church

## Vision

The City of Rhine desires to remain a quaint but thriving small hometown which is family-friendly and where community spirit and caring is strong. Community amenities, facilities, infrastructure, and services would continue to be improved and expanded, and more supportive businesses opened. The old Rhine School and the Pondtown Festival would continue to be sources of community pride and spirit.

Needs	Opportunities
Water system improvements	Old Rhine School/Gym
Old Rhine School improvements	Heart of Georgia Railroad
Recreational Park improvements	Pondtown Festival
Sewage system establishment	Welcome Center/Museum
Fire protection upgrades	
Downtown revitalization/street banners	
Street improvements	
Farmers Market	



# Community Goals

## Economic Development



1. Nurture existing businesses/industries/entrepreneurs
2. Develop/implement economic development incentives/marketing strategy
3. Utilize/support the Eastman-Dodge Chamber of Commerce, the Dodge County Eastman Development Authority, the Ocmulgee Regional Joint Development Authority, and other local/regional/state agencies
4. Develop/extend/maintain infrastructure to facilitate/guide development
5. Seek county-wide broadband/fiber availability/capacity upgrades and maintain state-of-the-art communications technology
6. Seek diversified economic development
7. Recruit compatible new businesses/industry/jobs
8. Support entrepreneurial/small business development
9. Address continuing education/job skills improvements
10. Improve adult literacy rate
11. Continue support for Middle Georgia State University and its local Aviation Campus and Georgia Military College's Eastman campus
12. Improve transportation access/quality
13. Develop U.S. 341 Eastside Bypass/truck route around Eastman
14. Continue to develop/maintain existing and new industrial parks through technological, infrastructure, and other enhancements
15. Enhance/grow tourism
16. Support continued downtown revitalization of Eastman and county's smaller municipalities
17. Continue support for state/private correction facilities in Dodge County
18. Maintain economic viability/support/enhance agriculture/forestry land uses
19. Seek additional traditional and alternative enterprises/venues/markets supportive of agriculture/forestry
20. Retain local graduates
21. Guide/direct appropriate development/landscaping along U.S. 341 Bypass/Terry Coleman Parkway and new U.S. 23 Spur
22. Support local leadership programs





## Natural & Cultural Resources

1. Protect significant natural resources of Dodge County
2. Conserve/protect Ocmulgee River and its corridor
3. Support expansion of Ocmulgee Mounds National Park to include preserve status
4. Conserve existing agricultural/forestry land uses
5. Seek compatible utilization/recreational development supportive of existing rural character/quality of life
6. Utilize existing and new public infrastructure to guide desired growth and development
7. Identify/encourage protection of important plant/animal habitats and natural areas of Dodge County
8. Conserve/protect/promote Dodge County Public Fishing Area
9. Increase public access to Ocmulgee River through park/natural development initiatives
10. Maintain/utilize/preserve/promote/adaptively use historic resources/heritage of Dodge County
11. Support existing/encourage development of new nature-based, heritage, recreation, and agri-tourism opportunities
12. Seek increased public education/awareness of county's important natural/cultural resources
13. Improve community's appearance/aesthetics





*Historic Residence, Chauncey*

## Housing



1. Encourage use of state/federal programs
2. Improve housing quality/appearance
3. Seek to encourage more diverse housing mix
4. Encourage/support neighborhood revitalization/conservation
5. Conserve historic residential properties
6. Support/utilize Eastman Housing Authority

## Land Use



1. Plan/manage/guide future growth and development
2. Encourage compatible development/utilization
3. Preserve rural, small town character/quality of life
4. Develop/implement/enforce county-wide land use planning/subdivision/manufactured housing/growth management/housing and building code regulations
5. Continue downtown central business district revitalization in Eastman and county's smaller municipalities
6. Explore feasibility of annexation into Eastman
7. Conserve/protect significant natural/cultural resources through compatible development/utilization
8. Maintain agriculture/forestry as viable economic land uses through traditional and alternative means
9. Improve community's appearance/aesthetics







## Community Facilities and Services



1. Maintain/improve Eastman-Dodge regional recreation facility and other existing recreation facilities countywide and develop new parks/recreation facilities/activities as needed
2. Support further development of Dodge Connection's facilities/programs
3. Improve public access to Ocmulgee River
4. Continue to support Eastman-Dodge County Chamber of Commerce/welcome center and Terry Coleman Conference Center
5. Develop U.S. 341 Eastside Bypass/truck route around Eastman
6. Guide/direct appropriate development/landscaping along U.S. 341 Bypass/Terry Coleman Parkway and new U.S. 23 Spur
7. Improve/promote transportation access/quality for all modes of travel
8. Develop overall transportation improvement plan
9. Continue to improve fire/public safety/emergency medical facilities/services countywide
10. Continue to support/improve Dodge County Hospital and local medical services
11. Provide/maintain adequate governmental facilities/services
12. Develop animal control/rescue facilities/services countywide
13. Maintain/upgrade/expand water/sewer and other infrastructure facilities and service, as needed
14. Utilize existing and planned infrastructure location to guide compatible growth/development
15. Improve countywide communications technology, such as broadband technology/fiber access availability
16. Upgrade countywide solid waste management
17. Maintain/utilize/promote/preserve/adaptively use historic resources/heritage of Dodge County
18. Promote/utilize mass emergency alert program for severe weather threats/other disasters
19. Continue support for Dodge County Library/Ocmulgee Regional Library System Headquarters
20. Maintain/upgrade quality local educational facilities/programs/technology
21. Continue support for local post-secondary education opportunities, including Middle Georgia State University and Georgia Military College





## Intergovernmental Coordination

1. Continue to maintain/upgrade joint E-911 program/facility/equipment with Wilcox County
2. Maintain/enhance local, regional, state cooperation
3. Continue to seek sharing/cooperation/consolidation in service delivery
4. Cooperate in coordinated land use planning/regulation/code enforcement
5. Support local leadership programs, such as Leadership Dodge and those targeting its alumni and youth



**U** Olive Orchard **R** Pine Trees and Rainbow, Dodge County



# Long Term Community Policies



## Economic Development

1. The community will support and promote programs for the retention of existing local industries and entrepreneurs in its support and quest of business/industry retention and additional job opportunities
2. The community will work to develop and implement economic development incentives/marketing strategy to attract business/industry
3. The community will utilize the Eastman-Dodge County Chamber of Commerce, the Dodge County Eastman Development Authority, and other existing development organizations to assist small cities of Dodge County in enlarging their economic base
4. The community will work to develop, extend, and maintain the necessary infrastructure to facilitate, guide, and accommodate future development
5. The community will pursue capacity improvements to Internet access/service and facilities supportive of state-of-the-art communications, fiber-optics, and broadband technology
6. The community will seek diversified economic development with jobs and wages of all levels
7. The community will continue to actively recruit new industry and commercial/retail development compatible with, and supportive of, the resources, infrastructure, existing economy, and the natural environments of the county
8. The community will work to support entrepreneurial/small business development to promote job diversification
9. The community will work together to improve educational and skills levels to ensure a better qualified workforce for existing and future employers, including development of a local workforce development/training center near the airport
10. The community will collaboratively support efforts to improve the county's adult literacy rate through cooperative efforts with the school system and educational outreach programs
11. The community will continue to support local post-secondary education opportunities and their expansion, including Middle Georgia State University and Georgia Military College, as needed, through infrastructure upgrades, increased program offerings, and other means
12. The community will continue to support Middle Georgia State University's Aviation Campus and its future expansion, as needed, including infrastructure (technology and otherwise) upgrades and/or additions
13. The community will support Dodge Connection: A Communities in Schools Approach collaborative
14. The community will continue to seek transportation improvements (highway, airport, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian) to enhance and support economic development efforts



15. The community will continue to advocate development of a U.S. 341 Eastside Bypass/truck route around Eastman
16. The community will work to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure and other improvements at the Eastman-Dodge County Industrial Park and new Airport Industrial Park to facilitate and accommodate desired economic growth
17. The community will work cooperatively to increase promotion and marketing of tourist facilities/services and attractions located in the community, and otherwise grow tourism as an important component of the local economy
18. The community will continue downtown revitalization efforts in Eastman and the county's smaller municipalities through the use of the Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and other local, state, and federal incentives, and means, as appropriate
19. The community will continue to support existing state and private detention centers/prisons (Dodge State Prison, YDC, RYDC) and their expansion, as needed, as well as construction of additional such facilities
20. The community will support technological advancements to facilitate and promote agricultural production
21. The community will support and facilitate the maintenance of agriculture and forestry as viable, functioning economic land uses
22. The community will support and facilitate the ongoing viability of a local farmer's market, and the development of a local aquaponics industry
23. The community will maintain agriculture/forestry as viable economic uses through traditional and alternative enterprises, such as agri-tourism, nature-based tourism, hunting/fishing, and related venues
24. The community will pursue development of an officially designated Georgia Grown Trail highlighting local agricultural products, such as peanuts, peaches, berries, olives, and others
25. The community will work together to develop, support, and promote programs that will enhance opportunities for local graduates to both live and work in the community upon graduation from high school, advanced technical training/technical college, and/or college
26. The community will work to guide and direct appropriate development and landscaping along the U.S. 341 Bypass/Terry Coleman Parkway and the new U.S. 23 Spur
27. The community will continue to advocate for widening of U.S. 23 to Macon and other desired highway/road improvements
28. The community will continue to advocate completion of U.S. 280 widening and promote the route's use as an east-west route across Georgia
29. The community will increase promotion of U.S. 341/Golden Isles Parkway for its direct access to coast/port at Brunswick
30. The community will continue to participate in and support efforts to enhance the annual Peaches to Beaches yard sale along U.S. 341 and support development of a similar multi-county yard sale along U.S. 280
31. The community will utilize and support the Eastman-Dodge County Chamber of Commerce, Dodge County Eastman Development Authority, and other agency programs/resources to further develop/grow the county's economy





## Natural and Cultural Resources

1. The community will seek to conserve and protect the Ocmulgee River Corridor, the county's significant groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, floodplains, other important natural and cultural resources (such as Devil's Den and Stuckey's Mill Pond), and the open spaces and landscapes of the county while promoting compatible utilization and recreational development
2. The community will work to conserve its existing prime farmland and forest areas while seeking development compatible with its existing rural character and quality of life
3. The community will support technological advancements to facilitate and promote agricultural production
4. The community will maintain agriculture/forestry as viable economic land uses through traditional and alternative enterprises
5. The community will manage its growth and development through public infrastructure location/community investment and county-wide land use planning and appropriate regulations
6. The community will work to identify and encourage protection of important, unique plant/animal habitats and natural areas
7. The community will seek to conserve and protect the Dodge County Public Fishing Area and promote its use
8. The community will work to increase access to the Ocmulgee River through local and/or state park/Ocmulgee Mounds National Park expansion/natural development initiatives
9. The community will maintain, utilize, promote, and preserve its heritage, and will seek to encourage public and private adaptive use/reuse of its historic buildings, historic districts, and landmark structures and pursue listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as appropriate
10. The community will work to utilize and promote the county's historic, natural, and agricultural sites and venues for compatible, appropriate heritage, nature-based, and agri-tourism development
11. The community will seek to increase public education/awareness of the county's important natural/cultural resources and their conservation
12. The community will work to improve its appearance and aesthetics, including elimination of green boxes county-wide and otherwise upgrade solid waste management, including increased recycling





## Housing

1. The community will encourage the use of state and federal programs to improve availability of quality housing for all residents
2. The community will address substandard housing and concentrations of blight, including manufactured housing developments, and will cooperatively upgrade their quality and appearance through rehabilitation, removal, code enforcement and regulation
3. The community will seek to encourage a diverse mix of safe, quality housing, including affordable, rental, elderly, starter homes, and compatible workforce housing
4. The community will encourage and support neighborhood revitalization/conservation efforts to stabilize and upgrade declining residential areas
5. The community will work to conserve historic residential properties, whenever possible
6. The community will utilize the Eastman Housing Authority to provide and maintain affordable housing options and meet special needs



## Land Use

1. The community will plan, manage, and guide its future growth and development, and encourage growth compatible with its existing rural, small town character
2. The community will cooperate to develop, implement, and enforce county-wide land use regulations, subdivision/manufactured housing regulations, growth management, and housing and building codes
3. The community will continue downtown/central business district revitalization efforts in Eastman and the county's smaller municipalities through use of the Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and local, state, and federal incentives, as appropriate
4. The community will work together to explore the feasibility of annexation into Eastman where appropriate and desired
5. The community will seek to conserve and protect the county's significant natural and cultural resources through their compatible development/utilization
6. The community will work to protect/conservate its existing rural character/landscape and quality of life, and will promote appropriately compatible development
7. The community will seek to improve its appearance and aesthetics through litter prevention/education and control, landscaping/beautification, and other means

