

Mitchell County Consolidated Comprehensive Plan





Assessment of Quality Community Objectives for Mitchell County and the Cities of Baconton, Camilla, Pelham, and Sale City

The Local Planning Requirements call for each community to evaluate current policies, activities, and development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives, which are smart growth principles officially adopted by the DCA Board. This analysis is used to identify additional issues and opportunities to be addressed in the plan, hopefully for adapting local activities, development patterns and implementation practices to reflect smart growth principles.

Traditional Neighborhoods

“Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.”

Mitchell County and the cities therein have ordinances in place that separate different uses, none of which allow neo-traditional development “by-right” and none of them have requirements for sidewalks or tree plantings in new development. Pedestrians generally get the short end of the stick in Mitchell County developments with virtually no place to walk except for the side of the road. Camilla, Pelham, and Baconton have sidewalks but they are not required for new development in their ordinances and are only located along the older avenues. Schools are generally located near neighborhoods; however the Mitchell County High School is located outside the periphery of Camilla along Highway 37 and is not connected with any sidewalks.

Infill Development

“Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.”

Mitchell County Development Authority keeps an inventory of vacant land available for commercial and industrial uses and actively promotes these properties for both brownfield and greyfield redevelopment. The county has experienced some nodal development; however it doesn’t appear that it was necessarily planned. Because of the lack of water and sewer in the county small lot development is not allowed because it does not meet the requirements set forth by the Health Department for the permitting of septic systems. Camilla and Pelham are active in infill development particularly in their downtowns. Small lot development is not allowed in the ordinance for any city in Mitchell County.



Sense of Place

“Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”

Mitchell County and the cities therein are all very distinct. If someone were to drop from the sky into one of these communities, and lived to tell about it, they would have no problem figuring out their approximate location given the unique nature of Mitchell County’s urbanized areas. Baconton and Pelham have designated historic downtown districts while Camilla has locally designated buildings instead of districts. Sale City has a strong interest in getting on the historic preservation band wagon to preserve their downtown and historic neighborhoods. Ordinances regarding aesthetics do not exist in any of these cities; however signage restrictions are present in Baconton, Camilla and Pelham’s ordinances.

Guidebooks regarding the desired type of development do not exist for Mitchell County nor does the community provide any restrictions for the protection to farmland.

Transportation Alternatives

“Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.”

Very few options exist for alternative transportation in Mitchell County. The only form of alternative transportation is the Mitchell County Transit Bus System, which serves the county and all the cities. There are no requirements in the ordinances for the county or the cities therein for sidewalks in any form or fashion. Shared or joint parking is allowed provided the number of off-street parking spaces is not less than the sum of the individual requirements. Official bicycle routes have not been adopted for Mitchell County but the topic is beginning to gain interest among many citizens.

Regional Identity

“Each region should promote and preserve a regional “identity,” or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

All of Mitchell County shares the same architectural styles and interlaced heritage. As mentioned



earlier the economy has traditionally been based on agriculture and developing a section of the economy based on agri-business and the products associated with that. Mitchell County is capitalizing on its agricultural heritage by embracing eco-tourism.

Heritage Preservation

“The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”

The Cities of Baconton, Camilla, and Pelham have National Register listed historic districts; however no ordinances are in place to ensure new development complements historic development. Camilla does not have a local historic district but nominates properties individually and has an active historic preservation commission. Pelham also has a newly formed preservation commission.

Open Space Preservation

“New development should be designated to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.”

No ordinances are in place in any communities in Mitchell County to preserve open space.

Environmental Protection

“Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”

Few, if any, actual plans exist for the protection of natural resources in the county. Despite the absence of actual plans, the county is very active with preserving their farmland and using best management practices for their prime agricultural land.



Growth Preparedness

“Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.”

Mitchell County and the cities therein are not actively planning for growth. It is very apparent that any kind of development is encouraged within Mitchell County. The County is undergoing a road paving campaign particularly in areas of newer development in the northern parts of the county. Regulations for new development are not very strict and will not help the county or cities adequately achieve their Quality Community Objective goals.

Appropriate Businesses

“The business and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”

The numerous development organizations in Mitchell County have been particularly progressive in term of attracting appropriate businesses and industries. There is a strong push for value added agribusiness which due to the agricultural nature of the area would definitely be considered sustainable. The different development organizations realize that the job base needs to be diversified and are actively working to recruit the appropriate businesses and industries to accomplish this.

Employment Options

“A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

Mitchell County as a whole has provided a decent range of jobs for both skilled and unskilled workers. The problem lies in the lack of skilled and managerial labor available. The Mitchell County Development Authority is currently working on becoming designated entrepreneur friendly community.



Housing Choices

“A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.”

Affordable housing is an issue in many areas but not in Mitchell County. The biggest need for housing is for moderate income residents. Unavailable land and a weak housing market have left Mitchell County with few moderate income developments.

Educational Opportunities

“Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”

Mitchell County is uniquely situated between seven technical colleges within 45 minutes. The Mitchell County Workforce Development Center offers skills training for residents that can further themselves and their financial situation by opening many employment doors. The county has many available jobs for college graduates, however, it is difficult to attract these people to Mitchell County because of generally low wages and the lack of amenities that many educated individuals have become accustomed to while in college.

Regional Solutions

“Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to local separate approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

Mitchell County is involved with many regional organizations including the Joint Development Authority and regional environmental organizations and initiatives. Mitchell County works with all of its cities to provide or share appropriate services including public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency services, and E-911.



Regional Cooperation

“Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.”

Cooperation has been good within the County and with its neighbors as well. Camilla and Pelham’s rivalry may never entirely go away but shouldn’t provide much of a barrier towards development in either city anymore. One project that has shown good cooperation is the designation of Highway 37 as a scenic byway from the Flint River to the City of Moultrie bringing together Moultrie, Colquitt County, Mitchell County, and Camilla.