



## Banks County 2023 Comprehensive Plan

December, 2023



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# INTRODUCTION

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of planning and community development is to provide guidance for everyday decision-making by local government officials and other community leaders. Within Georgia, comprehensive plans are seen as both a useful tool for long-term government efficiency and for ensuring sound land use development. Over time, such documents foster a wise use of fiscal and environmental resources, help coordinate community improvements across agencies, and enables citizen input in both fostering a vision for the future and outlining a practical means for achieving that vision. Further, as a measure designed to ensure State programs are being utilized wisely, State regulations require local governments to maintain their comprehensive plans to have access to various forms of State assistance.

This document, the *2023 Banks County Comprehensive Plan*, represents the culmination of the efforts to plan the well-being of the county. The residents and various stakeholders worked to identify the critical, consensus issues and goals for the community, and implementing the plan will help the government and its partners address those critical issues and opportunities while moving towards realization of the unique vision for its future. Thus, local planning recognizes that assets can be improved, liabilities can be mitigated, and opportunities can be cultivated.

## Scope

This document addresses the local planning requirements and community development of Banks County, Ga. The Cities of Homer and Maysville have developed their own independent comprehensive plans, however the County and the Cities have worked together to ensure the plans do not present any strong conflicts. In the development of this document some consideration has been given to neighboring areas and political entities that influence conditions within the county, but all the cited issues, objectives and opportunities discussed herein are solely focused on the unincorporated parts of the Banks County.



## Plan Elements

This comprehensive plan serves to meet the requirements and intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs's "*Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning*," as amended in 2013, and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. In accordance with those standards, this plan contains at a minimum the following elements:

- *Community Goals/ Vision*)
- *Statement of Needs and Opportunities*
- *Community Work Program*
- *Environmental Compliance Factors*
- *Assessment of Broadband Capacity and Needs*

## PLANNING PROCESS

Since the comprehensive plan is intended to represent a consensus vision for the community, Georgia's planning standards require opportunities for public participation, including public forums, a means for stakeholders to submit written comments, and an advisory committee involved throughout the process.

The planning process for the Banks County Comprehensive Plan began in late 2022 as community leaders considered the scope of work and identified nominees for the Advisory Committee. During this time, the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) worked with local government staff to evaluate needs and performance of local services, utilities, and programs. The GMRC also spoke with neighboring communities, the Georgia Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, and Education to identify any opportunities for collaboration or conflict and assess development forces that might affect Banks County and its municipalities.

In addition, surveys were made available to everyone around the turn of the year. Announcements were made in public meetings and in the media, with the link to the survey available off the Planning department's page of the Banks County web site. Surveys would remain available through July to ensure area residents and stakeholders have ample opportunity to provide their comments and voice their goals for the community. (*A summary of results and comments provided in the appendices.*) Over 300 respondents took the survey, with the results providing insight into the prevailing concerns and desires of area residents.

Several public forums were also held at the County Courthouse Annex, inviting the public to view draft material, participate in discussions about key issues, and ask questions about the process. Residents were also invited to submit their comments at any time via the GMRC staff contacts or to the County Planning Director.

The GMRC also coordinated the process with those for the municipalities of Homer and Maysville, working to ensure the respective documents would prove compatible in addressing common or shared issues.





# COMMUNITY VISION

The *Minimum Standards* defines a community vision as something “... intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.” Visioning helps communities consider the “big picture” while defining their ideal future and the best path to that future. As a process, this requires people to reflect on their current state and consider what elements of their community they wish to preserve, and which elements they wish to improve.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

Banks County was created in 1858 from portions of other Counties. The original county courthouse, completed in 1863, still stands with the giant oaks out front memorialized by the “*From the Acorn to the Oak*” depicted at the bottom of the County seal. A smaller community compared to some most peers, the early economy in Banks County was exclusively agricultural, but some manufacturing (textile production or animal processing) arrived by the 1960's. However, situated between the burgeoning metro areas of Gainesville, Athens and Greenville, SC, meant major industry and prominent service hubs were attracted elsewhere, with major medical facilities and educational institutions sited outside of Banks County.

Most development in the area has followed the arterial corridors of Interstate 85 to the southeast and GA 365 to the west. While the latter runs just outside the county, I-85 does feature two exits within Banks County and that area, fostering the commercial power center known as the Banks crossing area. Featuring an outlet mall and a variety of retail, dining, and service industries, banks Crossing is the employment and sales tax hub for Banks County. Which is critical given that between the two arterial corridors there is limited commercial or industrial development and very minimal public utilities to serve such.

There are several municipalities within Banks County, though the county seat of Homer, which lies near the center, is the only one wholly within Banks County. All the others straddle the line and feature significant portions of their community outside of Banks’ jurisdiction. Lula (west) and Baldwin (north) are the largest municipalities in the group, containing active commercial centers and utility options of their own. Maysville (south) is the only other city chartered as a Banks County municipality and is poised for growth in the near future given their proximity to the evolving I-85 corridor.

TOTAL POPULATION	2010	2020	2022	Change	
				#	%
<b><i>Banks County</i></b>	<b><u>18,395</u></b>	<b><u>18,082</u></b>	<b><u>19,328</u></b>	<b><u>933</u></b>	<b><u>5.1%</u></b>
Alto town (pt.)	516	352	372	-144	-27.9%
Baldwin city (pt.)	741	645	700	-41	-5.5%
Gillsville city (pt.)	28	91	94	66	235.7%
Homer town	1,141	1,273	1,526	385	33.7%
Lula city (pt.)	158	315	337	179	113.3%
Maysville town (pt.)	926	1,046	1,159	233	25.2%
Balance of Banks Co.	14,885	14,360	15,140	255	1.7%





## VISION AND GOALS

A vision for the community's future must be included in the comprehensive plan. The community vision is intended to provide a complete picture of what the community desires to become. The community vision must be based on public input, the assessment of current and future needs and be supported by the goals, policies and objectives in the comprehensive plan. In addition, there must be consistency between the community vision and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Quality Community Objectives as well as consistency with the community visions of other communities within the region.

The vision statement for Banks County originated from previous planning cycles, derived from the various comments and suggestions raised during public meetings and through the available survey processes. The updated statement reflects the slightly modified principles and values desired by existing stakeholders, with an emphasis on desires to remain rural as best as possible and maintain a level of affordability. Any amendments were derived from the words used by residents to illustrate values they feel describe the county as it is today *AND* that they desire to see embodied a generation from now.



### VISION STATEMENT: *Banks County, Georgia will...*

- ✓ *Be a rural community that celebrates small-town charm and a country lifestyle, where residents can enjoy our natural resources and the pastoral setting that defines our hometown. Banks County will continually invest in the quality of local schools, parks, public safety, and other elements that provide the social infrastructure to make our American hometown a great place to raise a family.*
- ✓ *Be a community that promotes our agricultural industry, sustains our natural resources, and celebrates the rural, native Appalachian foothill culture that defines our heritage. We will strive to deepen our rural roots by protecting our resources and community assets while embracing growth that complements our existing character.*
- ✓ *Encourage tourism as a significant part of our economy, welcoming guests and visitors to experience our community, culture, and rural character.*
- ✓ *A community built on the principles of open, honest, and fiscally sound governance. We will invest in education, technology, infrastructure, and leadership, working to provide all our citizens with quality services provided in a cost-efficient manner that clearly ties with community goals.*

# DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The land use management policies and capital improvement programs for local governments shape development patterns that affect growth and the management of sensitive social and environmental areas. Communities should assess their current and projected conditions to identify needs regarding the built environment and how to efficiently provide services to the community in the future.



## DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND INFLUENCES

*I-985/ GA 365 in Hall County, and I-85 in Jackson County, are rapidly becoming industrial growth corridors.* Hall County is projected to add another 100,000 residents within the next 25 years, and Jackson County another 50,000. To maximize their economies for such potential growth, both Hall and Jackson Counties and their partners are actively working to utilize the highways as harbors for goods production and related industrial activity. Already the combined home to large employers such as Kubota, SK Batteries, Amazon, this activity will increase once Gainesville welcomes the Georgia Port Authority’s next inland port – A rail port just used to expedite freight transport between northeast Georgia and the port of Savannah. The Georgia Dept. of Transportation, meanwhile, is actively planning for the eventual widening of I-85 and the possible inclusion of high-speed passenger rail within the same vicinity. Banks County has already been fielding inquiries about potential development at their two I-85 interchanges, and this pressure is likely to increase as more commercial and industrial interests seek to capitalize on the arterial highways. Should Banks County desire to remain rural, it must work to counter undue pressures and incompatible development.



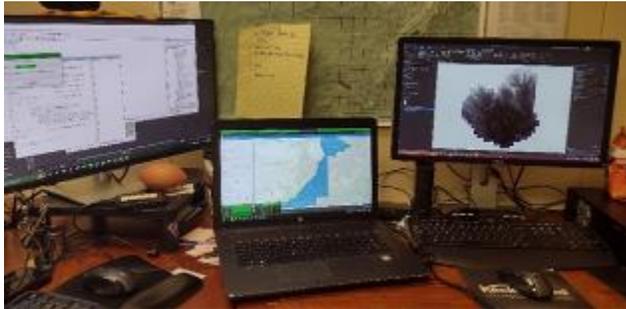
*Industrial development along I-85, and an inland port comparable to one proposed for Gainesville.*

One regional trend is *the growing importance of the shipping and warehousing industry.* As both households and businesses rely more heavily on the direct delivery of goods, the facilities needed to store and manage transport of these goods are becoming more common and more dispersed. Though the largest distribution centers remain clustered near key arterial intersections, smaller facilities are locating in more diverse suburban and rural locations. Such developments can impact traffic patterns, exacerbate flood issues in sensitive areas, and attract other comparable uses. They can also provide another non-residential source of property taxes, some employment, and equate to faster delivery of goods. Currently, many residents would prefer to see warehousing minimized within the County.



***US 441 in Banks County has potential for economic development, which should be managed strategically in accordance with the County's vision statement.*** While much less developed at the moment, and with Banks County actively searching for ways to preserve its rural character, US 441 may not see as much industrial activity introduced in the next generation, but it will grow increasingly vital as a corridor for freight, tourism, and local traffic, and is expected to absorb some development near the Baldwin/ Cornelia area and further south in Banks Crossing. That access to I-85 and the regional retail centers at Banks Crossing invites future growth, pending Banks County's plans to manage development.

Though Banks is served for communications access, ***there remains an ever-increasing demand for broadband capacity across all sectors of the community.*** Similar to how water and sewer lines were once the anchor draws for economic development, today most businesses and residents seek access to the highest speed and capacity of broadband service due to the increasing importance of the internet in all aspects of our lives. Schools, medical offices, retail outlets, governments, and even religious institutions rely on their online activities to facilitate operation. Residents use the internet for entertainment, to pay bills, to communicate with others, work from home, and for varieties of shopping. This means local governments are all the more dependent on supporting a service that not only provides high capacity but also can reach as much of their community as possible.

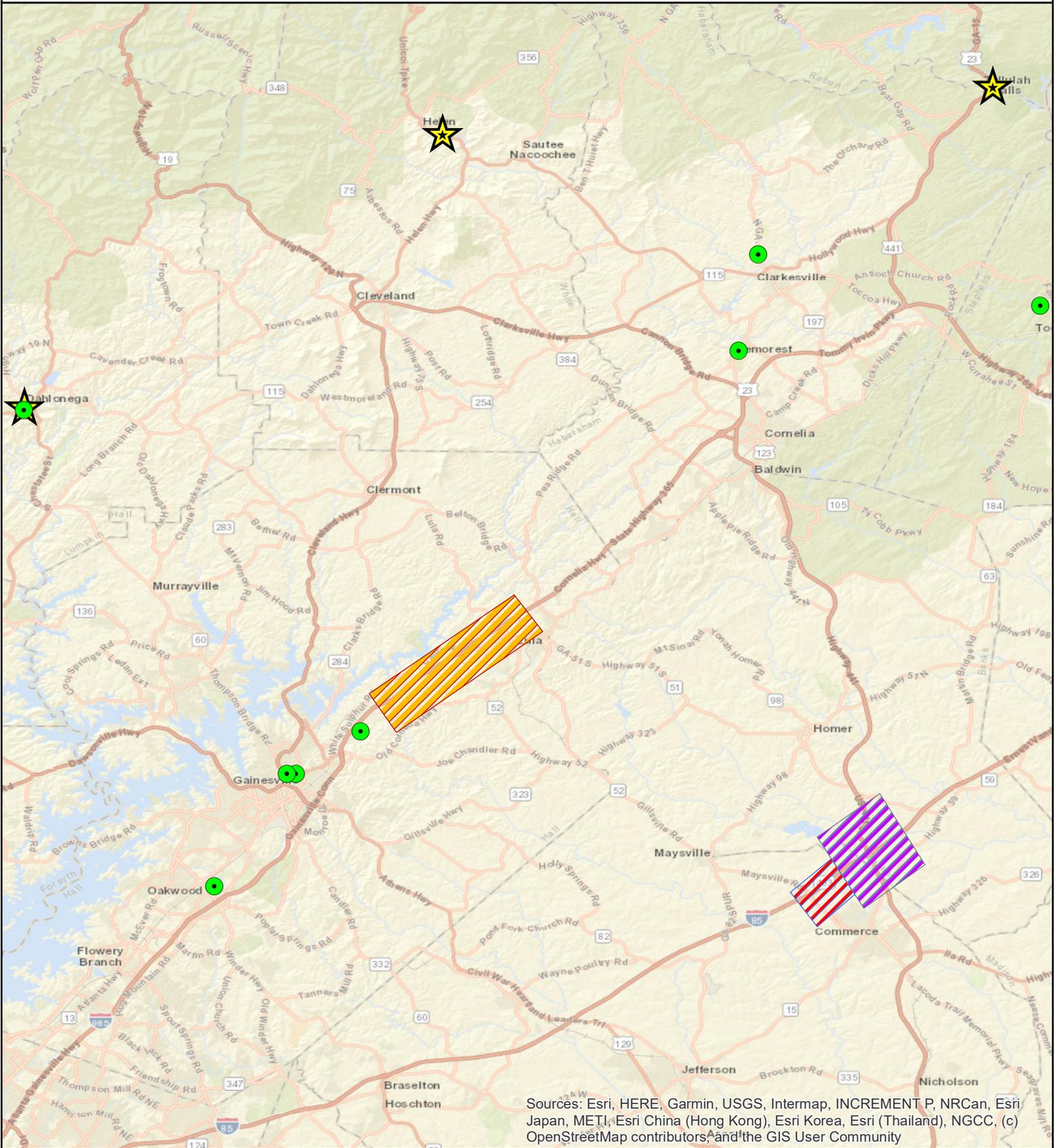


*Broadband capacity and elder care services will become increasingly important to Banks County.*

An ongoing social phenomenon that remains a factor for the region is ***the aging population and its impact on various markets.*** With residents living longer and most households featuring fewer children, the elderly will represent an increasing share of the area population, which affects the demands for medical services, specialized transport and recreation, and the dynamics of local labor pools. People delaying retirement can offset some labor shortages from youth departing a region, but older workers will also have different skillsets and demands of the workplace. Communities in areas expecting to see marked shifts in this demographic should plan accordingly for their particular needs.

An assessment of the region's economy finds ***tourism remains strong, but some agriculture markets are in flux.*** The presence of the mountains, waterfalls, and lakes within the area's many parks, National Forests, and wildlife management areas means there will always be visitors to the area. Several communities remain heavily tourist-oriented, including nearby Helen, while many others still count on visitors for a significant part of their economies. As a result, there are abundant opportunities for retail and hospitality services, including short-term rentals, in select areas. Unlike tourism, however, some livestock and row-crop agricultural operations have struggled over the past decade. Poultry farming remains healthy due to the volume of supporting industry, but some farmers in the region have not found successors to take over their operations or decide to sell off their property regardless, because of the land's value to developers. (Affecting development patterns and local economies.) Banks County is exploring options to support farmers in an effort to strengthen that industry and its rural character.

# Area Development Forces



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

## Legend

-  Banks Crossing/Commerce Industrial Corridor
-  Inland Port Industrial Corridor
-  Pendergrass Industrial Area
-  Medical Institutions/Colleges and Universities



Tourist Destination





## PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Public facilities and services are those elements vital to a population’s health, safety, and welfare that are most effectively provided by the public sector, such as sewerage, law enforcement and school services. This element examines the community’s ability to adequately serve the present and projected demands for such services, identifying concerns with the spatial distribution and conditions affecting service delivery. These assessments can then assist in projecting future demands and in planning future capital improvement projects.

The Department Heads for Banks County were surveyed for their thoughts on the existing levels of performance and needs for their department in order to sustain levels of service as the county grows and changes. Based on responses received, only a few departments across the five local governments currently have long-range plans and budgets for capital projects. This means that there are many facilities, vehicles, and pieces of equipment for which there is no strategy for eventual replacement. There are efforts underway to address this, but the local governments may wish to transition to an accounting program that improves asset management and allows department heads and elected officials to better monitor long-term capital improvement needs.

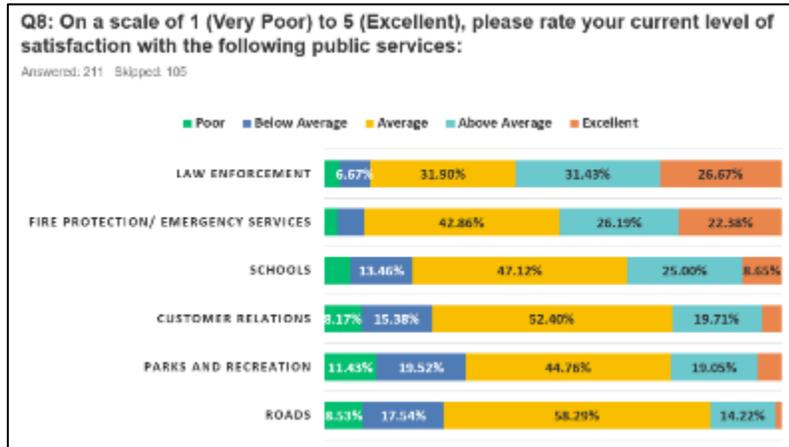
Department	Long-range plan and budget?	Levels of Service	
		Regard as currently sufficient?	How soon will capital improvements be needed?
Fire/ Emergency Services	Yes	No	1-5 years
Tax Assessors	No	Yes	1-5 years
Courts	No	Yes	1-5 years
Finance	No	Yes	1-5 years
Human Resources	No	Yes	1-5 years
Commissioners	No	Yes	1-5 years
Recreation	Yes	Yes	6-10 years
GIS	No	Unsure	1-5 years
Public Utilities	Yes	No	6-10 years
Board of Commissioners	Yes	Yes	6-10 years

Critically, only a few departments suggested they could provide comparable levels of service beyond five years without needing some form of capital investment. Some departments even felt their existing level of service needed improvement as soon as possible, let alone if Banks County’s population grows. Like many communities, Banks County would like to stay ahead of the curve financially as new development comes into the area. Regularly monitoring budget revenues and expenditures against the objectives within the Comprehensive Plan can assist in this manner.





Participants in the public survey scored most governmental services average or above average. Roads and Parks and Recreation drew the lowest overall scores, with the former being cited for both traffic congestion and safety at key points in the local network. Residents expressed concern the improvements planned along US 441 at Banks Crossing may prove ineffective at mitigating safety issues and truck traffic, while others worry that a general increase in through and freight traffic will create hazardous conditions across most State routes throughout Banks County. With regard to parks, residents suggested some improvements to existing facilities might be warranted, but also suggested new facilities outside of Homer should be explored in the future.



### ***Broadband Assessment***

The growing importance of access to reliable and high-speed, high-capacity internet connections cannot be overestimated. Unserved and underserved areas of Georgia will not remain economically competitive without sufficient internet infrastructure, as this technology becomes the default utility for all manners of communication. To address this issue the Georgia General Assembly amended the provisions of local planning in Georgia by passing the "Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act" to facilitate the enhancement and extension of internet access in communities. The ACE Act requires all local governments to incorporate the "promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services" into their local plan. Once these are in place the Georgia Departments of Community Affairs and Economic Development will work with Banks County identify and promote facilities and developments that offer broadband services at a rate of not less than 1 gigabit per second in the downstream to end users that can be accessed for business, education, health care, government.



One of the first products to come out of the Georgia Broadband Initiative was an inventory of general conditions across the State regarding access to high speed/ high-capacity broadband technology. Utilizing demographic data from the US Census Bureau and cross-referencing that information with knowledge of broadband infrastructure, the Department of Community Affairs produced maps depicting the state of broadband accessibility in rural areas.

Due to its sparse development patterns, Banks County exhibits some of the most deficiencies in broadband distribution. To address this, in 2020 Banks became the second Broadband Ready county in Georgia, participating in the State program to help support network expansion and upgrades. Banks received more than \$7mm dollars for network improvements in underserved areas.



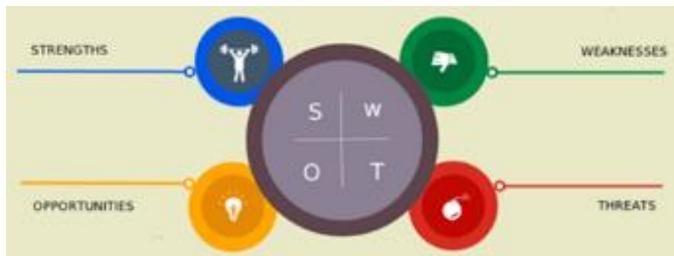
*Underserved areas in Banks County in light yellow.*

Based on survey results, public comments, and stakeholder input, there remains a strong need for improved internet access in rural Banks County. While improved service into the rural residential areas would be ideal, the priority would be to provide stronger capacity and additional options in the projected suburban areas near Homer and Banks Crossing, where the County wishes to pursue economic development.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

The Banks County online surveys yielded more than 300 unique responses, while the public meetings combined had more than 70 additional participants offering input. Combined, their comments and ideas provided insight into the prevailing interests and concerns of the general populace of Banks County and the overall area. This information was collected and presented to the Advisory Committee, contributing to the basis for selecting Plan priorities and objectives.

### SWOT Analysis



One facet of the public input process asks residents and stakeholders to assess their community's respective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In doing this analysis, communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions to better achieve the desired vision.

Via both the online surveys and during public forums, participants were asked to identify those things they considered key assets about their community as things they didn't want to change or were critical to achieving positive growth. On the whole, participants cited a preference for things that preserved the area's rural character and strengthened Banks County's capacity as a safe and affordable residential hometown. While there were preferences for some changes that might introduce new commercial or employment

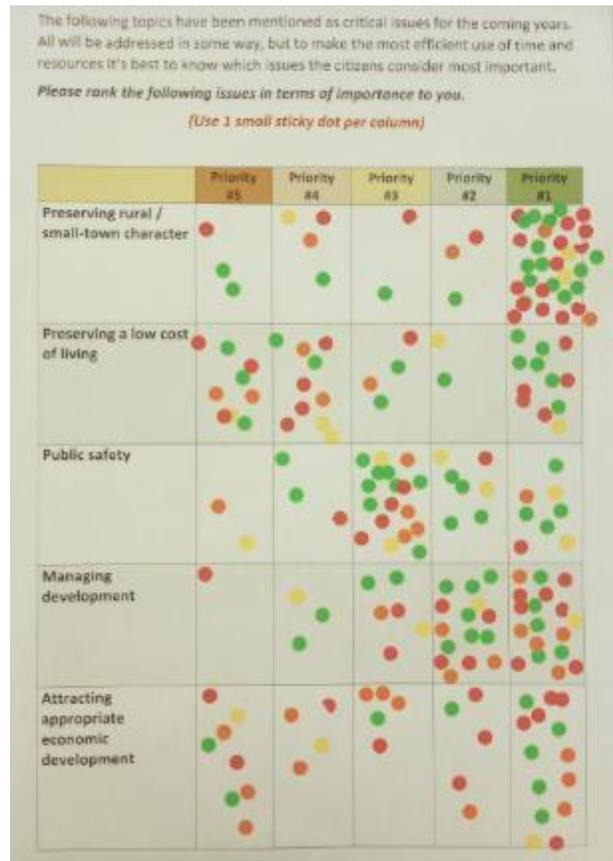


opportunities, participants were adamant about mitigating prospective growth so that it does not come at a substantial cost to local quality of life.

STRENGTHS/ KEY ASSETS	WEAKNESSES/ LIABILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural character</li> <li>Small-town charm</li> <li>Banks Crossing</li> <li>I-85</li> <li>Active agriculture</li> <li>School system</li> <li>Emergency services</li> <li>Affordability</li> <li>Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congestion at Banks Crossing</li> <li>Limited utilities</li> <li>Limited land use controls</li> <li>Limited funds</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES/ UNIQUE POSSIBILITIES	THREATS/ OUTSIDE RISKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available land</li> <li>I-85 access</li> <li>More parks and recreation facilities</li> <li>Economic development along I-85 corridor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crime/ Gangs</li> <li>Impacts of growth/ Uncontrolled growth</li> <li>Traffic</li> <li>Lack of affordable housing</li> </ul>

The bulk of public comments received were in consensus with their preference for maintaining safety and a rural lifestyle in the face of oncoming growth, and that while some change was desired, the form of that change and growth should be managed to sustain key job centers and commerce without disrupting the sense of community already in place. Many respondents expressed concern regarding the prospects for increased crime accompanying growth in the area, especially in the short-term if law enforcement departments were understaffed to meet growing need. There was also concern about the nature of criminal activity evolving as the community became more suburban.

Many folks expressed concern about the County remaining affordable, citing recent issues with tax increases for school funding (yet still seeing staff turnover) while also finding new construction to often be outside the price range regarded as affordable to many local employees. The County will need to find a way to maintain the balance of the property tax base so as not to overburden residential taxpayers, while also not enticing too much development that lures excessive amounts of residential development.





The following issues and opportunities were the most commonly raised themes during the public input process. As best as possible, and with acceptance of the limitations of local government finances and abilities, Banks County should strive to act on the priorities listed below.

- **Maintain Public Safety**
- **Maintain Rural Character**
- **Minimizing Impacts of Growth**
- **Target Low Property Taxes and Budget Efficiency**
- **Support Local Labor Force**
- **Update Land Use Policies**
- **Coordinate Land Use with Utilities**
- **Identify Acceptable Sites for Industry**
- **Support Agriculture**

*“The best course of action in the development of Banks Co, would be to concentrate development strictly along the highway, while maintaining a rural presence outside of banks crossing. Focus on Quality of life. Avoid becoming a second Gwinnett County with sprawl and no natural green space and agriculture. Keep any dense housing close to the highway.”*



## AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

Analysis of prevailing development trends assists in the identification of preferred patterns for future growth. More specifically such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention regarding management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development. As part of this process, stakeholders and local governments are encouraged to evaluate the presence of subsets of their communities subject to special circumstances such as:

- ✓ *Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur*
- ✓ *Areas where the pace of development has/ may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation*
- ✓ *Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness*
- ✓ *Large, abandoned structures or sites, including possible environmental contamination.*
- ✓ *Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites).*
- ✓ *Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole*

Upon consideration of development trends and land use issues in Banks County, the following priorities stand out for the 2023 planning period:

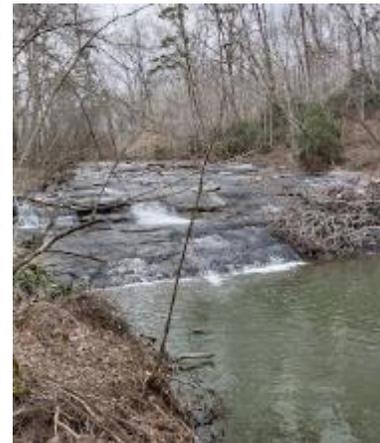
- The I-85 corridor that links Atlanta with Greenville is the critical nexus for Banks County. The two intersections along the interstate within Banks County provide different opportunities for economic growth as well as conflicting interests in balancing traffic and development with the desire to remain rural. The Banks Crossing interchange is an established commercial and light industrial hub, so most folks in Banks County are vested in seeing that remain an economic engine for sales and property taxes. This area has room for infill development and minor expansion without necessitating major investment. The Martin Bridge Road interchange, however, remains a mostly undeveloped node, allowing it to serve as a low-traffic access point for local users. While the interchange has the potential for varying industrial or commercial options, some residents and local stakeholders would prefer to minimize the infrastructure and utilities in this area until capacities are met at Banks Crossing. (See *Banks Crossing* and *Martin Bridge Road Interchange* areas)
- Banks County has limited service capacity for public sewer, with most clustered at the County lines where municipalities offer the utility. The upside of this distribution is that Banks County has cause to concentrate development in and around these areas as the foremost way to manage density and optimize utility investments. Policies should work to provide opportunities to develop within these areas in ways that will alleviate development pressures in more rural parts of the county. (See *Municipal Service* areas)
- Throughout Banks County the most notable areas of significant natural resources would be the rivers and tributaries and the various natural woodland and wildlife areas. This includes various wetlands and groundwater recharge areas, plus the perennial surface waters and reserved forests. These are critical not only for ecological reasons but also because the County has affirmed its desire to protect and promote its rural-ness! The areas currently exhibiting high degrees/volumes of natural land should be protected from development. (See *Environmentally Sensitive Areas*)



**Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

Local governments in Georgia must demonstrate compliance with applicable State and federal environmental resource protection measures, and local water withdrawal and discharge permit holders must illustrate any measures required to restore or maintain local water quality. There are several listed stream segments within Banks County, predominantly for fecal coliform (bacteria) and for sedimentation. As the area grows the county must work to ensure stream banks and buffer areas are protected, and that agricultural operations are employing best practices to keep livestock from getting into the waterways. The following summarizes the policy requirements applicable to Banks County, which is currently in compliance with their respective State water management plan (Savannah-Upper Ogeechee) and with the Department of Natural Resource Part V development criteria.

State Environmental Planning Criteria	Banks County	
	Applicable	Minimum regs. in place?
Water Supply Watersheds	Y	Y
Wetlands	Y	Y
Groundwater Recharge Areas	Y	Y
Protected River Corridors	Y	Y
Steep Slopes	N	NA
Protected Mountains	N	NA
Coastal Areas	N	NA
<b>Clean Water Act Compliance</b>		
303(d) listed waterbodies	Y	N
305(b) listed waterbodies	Y	N

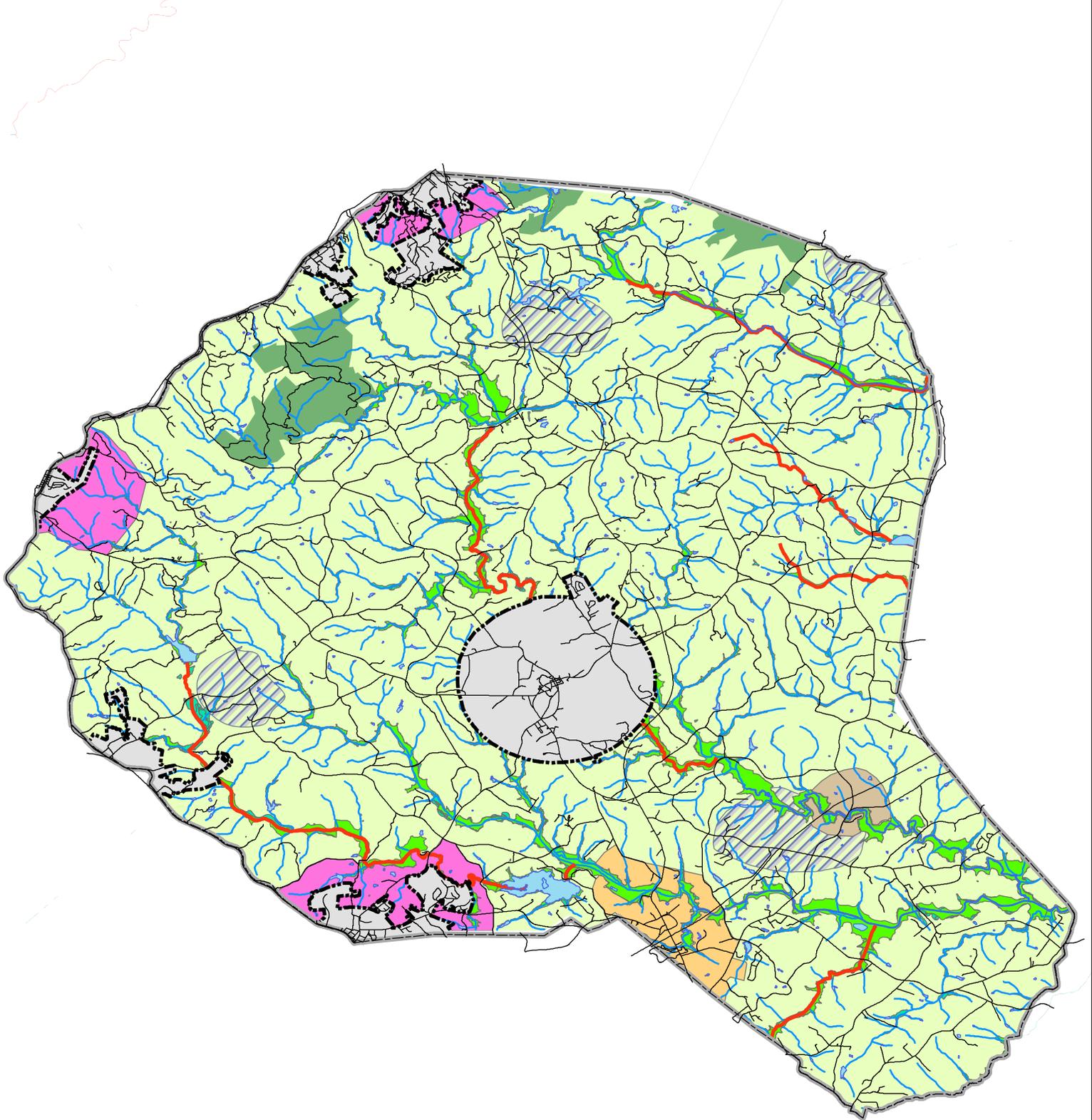


**State Listed Water Bodies in Banks County (2020)**

NAME	LOCATION	SIZE (miles)	CAUSE	SOURCE
<b>Supporting or Assessment Pending</b>				
Webb Creek	Holbrook Creek to the Hudson River	4.0		
Little Nails Creek	Headwaters to Mountain Creek	3.0		
Silver Creek	Headwaters to the Hudson River	5.0		
Tributary to the Hudson River	Tributary 0.9 miles upstream Grant Mill Road to the Hudson River	2.0		
Nails Creek	Headwaters to Ragsdale Creek	3.0		
Ragsdale Creek	Headwaters to Nails Creek	5.0		
Carlan Creek	Tributary 0.4 miles upstream SR 63 to Crockett Creek	6.0		
Grove Creek	Reservoir 59 to Reservoir 51	11.0		
<b>Non-Supporting</b>				
Hudson River	Mountain Creek to Webb Creek	13.0	FC	UR, M
Holbrook Creek	Headwaters to Garrison Creek	4.0	Bio F	NP
Grove Creek	Reservoir 51 to Hickory Level Creek	1.0	Bio F	NP
Middle Fork Broad River	Nancy town Creek to Hunters Creek	13.0	FC	NP
<b>Legend</b>				
*	Assessment Pending	FC	Fecal Coliform	
NS	Not Supporting	NP	Nonpoint source pollution	
Bio F	Biota – Fish Impairment			

Source: Georgia EPD, 2020

# Banks County Areas Requiring Special Attention



## Legend

- |                   |                                 |                             |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Roads             | Banks Crossing                  | Ground Water Recharge Areas |
| County Boundary   | Municipal Service Areas         | Conservation Lands          |
| Municipalities    | Martin Bridge Road Intersection | Banks County Flood Plains   |
| 305b/303d Streams | National Wetlands Inventory     |                             |
| Protected Rivers  |                                 |                             |



## RECOMMENDED CHARACTER AREAS

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the development of a Character Area Map that reflects the communities' vision for future growth and development over the planning period. Character area planning is designed to focus on the physical appearance (aesthetics) and function of a particular area. Development strategies are tailored and applied to each individual area. The goal is to enhance the existing character/function or promote a new, more desirable character for the future. Character areas identify portions of the community that have a unique or special character that needs to be preserved or require special attention because of unique development issues.



This vision was developed through an extensive public visioning process and expresses the unique character of various portions of the county. The various character areas, when combined, form a single map that is intended to guide future development by organizing common themes of development patterns throughout the county. They promote the desired development patterns guiding the design of structures and physical development. They also provide a framework for changes to development regulation and policies. Finally, they help to guide future zoning decisions.

The descriptions and locations of the various character areas employed in Banks County are designed to accommodate the following factors:

- Maintain rural character, and minimize utility and infrastructure costs, by concentrating non-residential development to select corridors and established municipalities/ urbanized areas.
- Continue to optimize the Banks Crossing area as the preferred location for large commercial and low-impact industrial scale development.
- Given regional growth trends, prepare for a potential 500-1,000 new housing units in the next 5 years, plus the variety of other uses that support those residences and abide by applicable design standards. (Assume some to occur within municipal boundaries)
- Prioritize the protection of local waterways.
- Maintain/ Employ policies that support *active* agricultural uses and encourage Best Management Practices for environmental protection.

**Note:** *Some of this material incorporates that from the original character areas derived from the 2008 Banks County Comprehensive Plan, developed by consulting firm MACTEC. Any material retained from that document has been kept at the direction of the County to maintain continuity of character area definitions and application.*

## ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

This character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas such as undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, conservation areas, and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development of any kind. Banks County examples of this character area include Wilson Shoals Wildlife Management Area and floodplain areas adjacent to the Hudson and Grove rivers.



*Preserve includes the floodplain area of the Hudson River corridor*

### *Development Patterns and Land Uses*

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture (low impact only – see Banks County Watershed Protection Ordinance)
- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for low-impact recreation (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education

### *Implementation Strategies*

- Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights
- Incorporate map of state-required stream and river buffers into the County review process.
- Encourage use of agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality
- Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- Discourage expansion of the R&B Landfill
- Develop a Greenspace Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors and defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system.

## RURAL AGRICULTURAL



*Rural Agricultural character shown above is defined here by a horse barn and pastureland along SR 51 east of Homer*



*Wide-open spaces define the Rural Agricultural character shown above*



*Poultry farms dot the landscape throughout the Rural Agricultural character area*

The Rural Agricultural character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural and large-lot residential uses. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural; housing tends to be scattered across the landscape on very large lots and is typically not in proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or sewer infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's rural tradition and active farms, satisfy any established design standards, and maintain its rural, open spaces.

Residential uses are expected to take the form of larger lots.

The Rural Agricultural character area comprises much of the county.



## **Development Pattern and Land Uses**

- Agricultural
- Single family residential (minimum lot size of five acres)
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)
- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes (minimum lot size of five acres) and develop with significant amounts of protected open space and natural conservation areas
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic resources
- Preserve rural character, viewsheds, hillsides, other natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways
- Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into these areas
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Discourage excessive clearing and grading in order to protect trees, topography and water quality

## **Implementation Strategies**

- Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas that identify appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk.
- Limit extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Agricultural character areas
- Continue to follow BMPs for any land disturbance activities, including tree harvesting and utility construction
- Prepare and adopt a Rural Conservation District to provide for the long-term protection of large areas of property not suitable for development, including farmland, major recreation areas or historic sites, and environmentally sensitive natural resource systems
- Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- Have annual "State of Agriculture" report provided to County Commission

## EMERGING SUBURBAN

The Emerging Suburban character area addresses areas around the cities of Baldwin, Maysville and Lula, Alto and Baldwin that have experienced some residential development and are poised for additional growth.

Generally, the Emerging Suburban character area seeks to protect hillsides and natural resources while accommodating neighborhoods that should provide a range in housing sizes and types as the area builds out over the next 20 years, with sidewalk connections for residents and vehicular connectivity between neighborhoods and to the existing street network.

For the most part, non-residential uses (local goods and services) should be accommodated in downtown areas or at key arterial intersections. It is also appropriate, however, for small, neighborhood-scale, traditional neighborhood commercial and mixed use to occur in town centers created as part of an overall community master planned development. Wastewater collection and treatment services will be essential for ensuring long-range sustainability in this character area.



*Development should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees*



*The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.*



## **Development Patterns and Land Uses**

- Single-family residential
- Mixed Use (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Multi-family (when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Commercial/ Office (along arterial roads)
- Passive and active recreation
- Public/Institutional
- Encourage master-planned, traditional neighborhood development communities that blend walkable neighborhoods with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision
- Limit hillside development and protect natural and scenic resources
- Accommodate a variety of housing choices
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Require multiple stub-out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Provide connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions and street networks where possible
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way including sidewalks and street trees
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space with active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible
- Connect to existing neighborhoods, where possible, to provide alternate routes

## **Implementation Strategies**

- Adopt a Landscape and Buffer Ordinance
- Development of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Plan
- Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County
- Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments located outside of rural areas

## **BANKS CROSSING**



The Banks Crossing character area is the retail center of Banks County. Located on both sides of U.S. 441 near the U.S. 441/I-85 interchange, the area includes a portion of the Tanger Outlet Center and other commercial uses that benefit from close proximity to I-85. It also includes adjacent industrial and residential uses. Served by sewer, Banks Crossing has the potential to experience additional growth and development. Existing development along the largely built-out portion of U.S. 441 in the area is automobile-oriented strip commercial development characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk by parking lots with few shade trees.

New development is intended to not only preserve but enhance the area’s role as the commercial hub for the County. A top priority for this area is development that generates sales tax revenues or provides abundant employment. Development patterns that reflect more urban traits, such as buildings placed closer to the sidewalk, the use of pocket parks and other shared public spaces, and a mix of uses is desired for this area, including for sites suitable for redevelopment. Developments that offer a variety of quality housing choices are also appropriate for this existing employment and activity center. “Big box” retail should be limited to this area and should be designed to fit into mixed-use planned development that shares parking with surrounding uses and is linked with sidewalks.

The County is working with GDOT to coordinate some improvements that will create an upgraded intersection and new road orientation for access to the Outlet Mall and other properties. However, it is noted that some concerns remain regarding the overall congestion and safety in the area. The County anticipates needing to review and reassess conditions in the near future. In the interim, new development should be required to coordinate projected traffic flow and loading with the County and GDOT.



### ***Development Pattern***

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Higher density residential uses (when part of an approved master plan)
- Educational institutions
- Encourage attractive and high-quality building and site design, including lighting materials, building height and signage
- Reflect a unique identity for the area
- Accommodate both residents and tourists
- Include a relatively high-density mix of commercial and retail centers, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Encourage redevelopment that reflects a mix of pedestrian-friendly uses and ample landscaped common areas
- Provide strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Provide wide curb lanes or bike lanes to permit bicycling
- Connect to nearby networks of greenspace or multi-use trails, where available
- Establish a connected street network for new development that links to existing streets
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding rural and low-density areas
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Discourage strip development
- Reflect a campus or unified development where a horizontal mix of uses is desired
- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Clearly define road edges by locating buildings at roadside with parking to the side or rear
- Prohibit billboards and limit business sign height/size to minimize “visual clutter”
- Compliance with any established design standards
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements

### ***Implementation Strategies***

- Adopt a gateway and signage master plan for the Banks Crossing area
- Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas
- Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require inter-parcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use development

## MARTIN BRIDGE ROAD INTERCHANGE

This area represents the Martin Bridge Road interchange with I-85. Currently rural and sparsely developed, the County is in the process of extending utilities to the Martin Bridge Road area, which would enable commercial or industrial growth.

The area's current state provides connectivity for local users seeking an alternative to US 441, and active farming in the area embodies the rural character craved by many residents.

As the County continues to weigh optimal management of the area, initial development should be constrained to  $\frac{1}{2}$  air mile from the outer edge of the right-of-way of the interchange, with an emphasis on traffic patterns that do not intrude deeper into the county but are almost exclusively dedicated to the interstate. Businesses that support agriculture or high tech technology would also be viewed favorably.

Any future utility investment should be calculated based on cost-efficiency, with development concentrated and focused on job creation with minimal traffic.





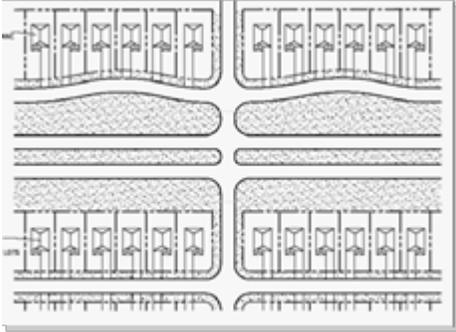
### ***Development Pattern***

- Industrial Development constrained to ½ air mile from the outer edge of the right-of-way of the interchange
- Accommodate diverse employment opportunities for County residents that include low intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade and distribution activities balanced with campus-style office development
- Accommodate limited supporting commercial uses to serve employees
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding rural and low-density areas
- Reflect a unified development
- Provide access management measures to maintain low traffic flow (e.g. shared driveways and inter-parcel access for similar uses on adjacent properties)
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site design
- Incorporate parking lot landscaping
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character
- Limit grading and clearing during site development
- Protect air and water quality and prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding population
- Provide adequate buffers and limit visibility of industrial operations/loading docks/parking from the public right of way
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter”

### ***Implementation Strategies***

- Coordinate with adjoining property owners in creating a master plan for developing the Martin Bridge Road Interchange area.
- Update Banks County Economic Development Blueprint for Martin Bridge area for compliance with the comprehensive plan and with any County-adopted master plan for the interchange.
- Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor

## EAST HOMER / US 441



***Access management is necessary along U.S. 441 Bypass to allow for development***



***U.S. 441 Corridor is currently relatively undeveloped and offers opportunities for a mix of residential uses and commercial nodal development***

This character area is a largely undeveloped four-lane corridor east of Homer but focuses specifically on the U.S. 441 corridor. Some development has occurred, but the area is predominantly rural in nature with large tracts of agricultural property.

The character area is intended to support commercial uses constrained to ¼ air mile from the outer edge of the right-of-way of US 441 at major intersections, in particular US 441 North and Old US 441, US 441 and McCoy Bridge Rd, US 441 and GA 51, US 441 South and Historic Homer Highway to serve local residents. This nodal development of commercial uses versus linear, “strip center” development common along US highways is desired for this corridor in order to maintain US 441’s functionality as a bypass.

Controls on site design, including signage, building placement and size, and landscaping will help the area develop in a manner that is attractive, compatible with the surrounding rural character, and continues the theme of U.S. 441 being an important gateway to Banks County and its municipalities.

Additionally, 441 functions as a corridor to the Mountains. Developed strategically, the Banks County 441 Corridor will contribute significant sales tax revenues supporting tourism by celebrating the rural, Native and Appalachian foothill culture that defines our heritage.



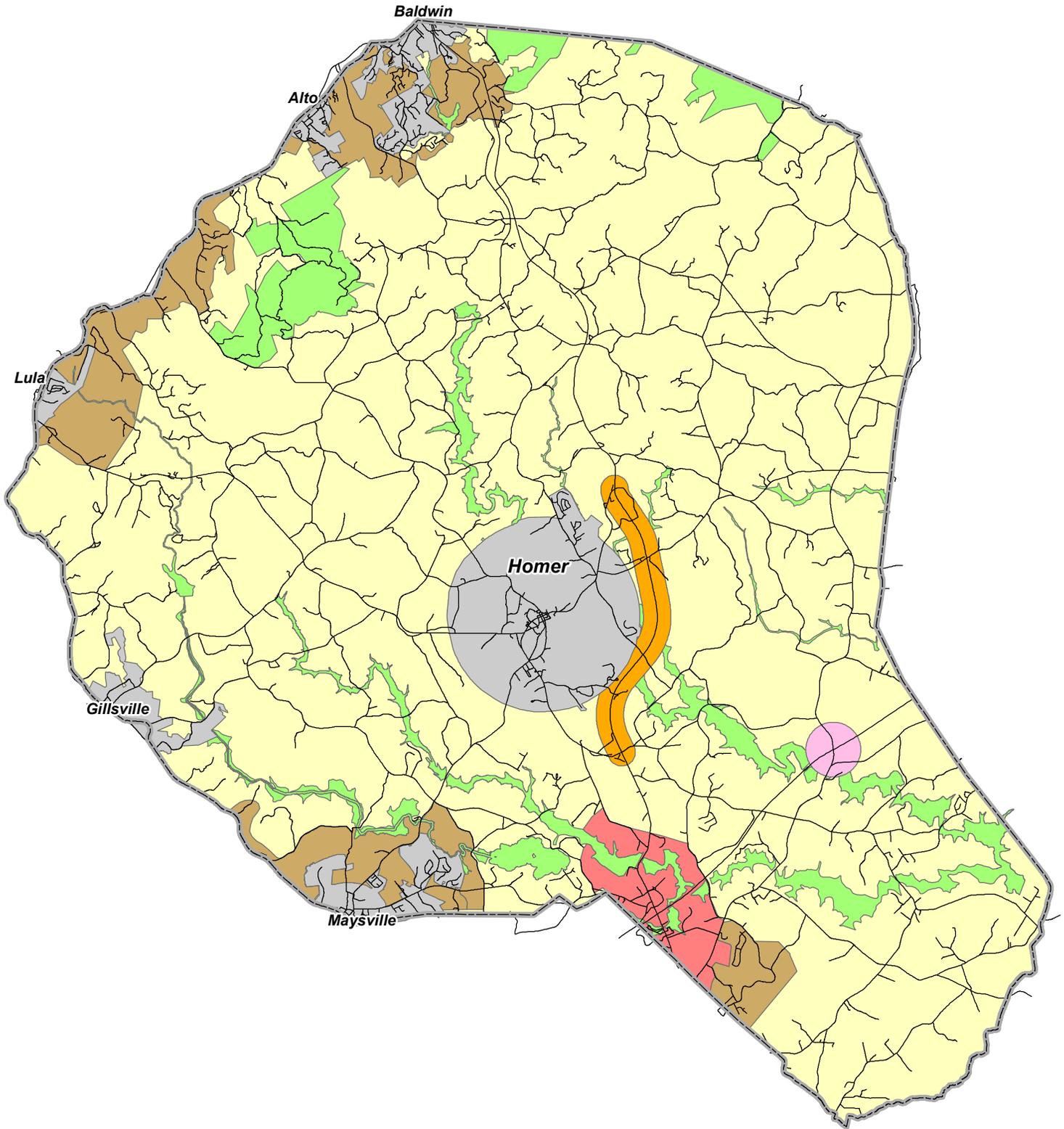
### ***Development Patterns and Land Uses***

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space, when part of a master plan or outlined by a subarea master plan)
- Maintain traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor and by use of shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Limit signs and billboards
- Cluster commercial and mixed-use development at major nodes along the corridor
- Prohibit linear, “strip center” development along the corridor
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural and low-density residential uses
- Provide sidewalk connections to adjacent residential areas
- Maintain or increase landscaping along the corridor with new development, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage commercial and mixed-use development that permits minimal building setbacks, parking to the rear of a building, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage) as well as interior sidewalk connections
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

### ***Implementation Strategies***

- Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas
- Implement an overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and inter-parcel access
- Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require inter-parcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development

# Banks County Character Areas - 2023



## Legend

- |                 |                    |                                 |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| County Boundary | Character Areas    | Martin Bridge Rd Intersection   |
| Roads           | Rural/Agricultural | Banks Crossing                  |
| Municipalities  | Emerging Suburban  | Environmentally Sensitive Areas |
|                 | East Homer/US 41   |                                 |





# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

4

While the Future Development Map illustrates the physical conditions expressed within the Vision, the Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision and for addressing each of the Community Needs and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals.

The Implementation Program features four main components.

## **NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

These reflect an assessment of the conditions and factors influencing the area and people, stakeholder knowledge of the community and comments received throughout the planning process. To effectively realize their vision for the future a community must develop a well-defined implementation plan. By identifying the core issues and priorities of the community, the government and its partners can develop specific strategies that must be accomplished to fulfill the desired goals and objectives of the vision. It is critical that these issues and opportunities be clearly defined and understood by the stakeholders because they form the basis for the development of the community's long and short-term action plans.

## **POLICIES AND LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES**

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may complement single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

## **REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

This is a review of the Community Work Program (CWP) from the previous five years. As a new CWP is produced every five years, the items within the previous CWP must be identified for their status as complete, in progress, either postponed or cancelled. Those items that have been postponed or are in progress must be shown in the next CWP where appropriate, while those items that have been postponed or cancelled must also include a reason for their status.

## **COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMS**

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the CWP. This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.



## NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

To achieve its stated vision a community must understand those obstacles and issues that must be addressed in order to reach the goals implied. The comprehensive planning process asks communities to assess the information outlined in an effort to identify issues and opportunities that should be considered when trying to plan for the future. In doing so the communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions so as to better achieve the desired vision.

The following represents a refined listing of Issues and Opportunities for Banks County. Some were carried over from the previous plan, but the list has been confirmed and/or refined based on the discussions and analyses throughout the current planning process. *(Also shows year proposed or listed as policy)*

<b>NEEDS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>MITIGATION STRATEGIES</b>
<b>Maintain Public Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain regular police incident reports to Council and public; Maintain coordination with Sheriff, other agencies</li> <li>• Review/ Update citizen engagement policies</li> <li>• Develop/ Maintain long-term plan &amp; budget for growth (w/ performance metrics) in each department</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain Rural Character</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission report exploring design standards for new development</li> <li>• Annual report on state of agricultural industry</li> <li>• Amend land use regulations to permit conservation design methods</li> </ul>
<b>Minimizing Impacts of Growth</b>  <b>Coordinate Land Use with Utilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop freight mgmt. study</li> <li>• Develop/ Maintain long-term plan &amp; budget (w/ performance metrics) for all departments</li> <li>• Commission study on long-term utility capacity for the area</li> <li>• Annually review/ update intergovernmental agreements and Service Delivery Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Target Low Property Taxes* and Budget Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission study on long-term utility capacity for the area</li> <li>• Develop/ Maintain long-term plan &amp; budget for growth (w/ performance metrics) in each department</li> <li>• Maintain performance goals for overall County budget (accounting for impacts on property taxes)</li> <li>• Commission housing cost study</li> </ul>



<b>NEEDS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>MITIGATION STRATEGIES</b>
<b>Update Land Use Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend regulations to permit conservation design methods</li> <li>• Commission report exploring design standards for new development</li> <li>• Conduct complete review and update of development regulations</li> </ul>
<b>Identify Acceptable Sites for Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission study on long-term utility capacity for the area</li> <li>• Conduct forum to discuss the future of industry (with developers, realtors, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Support Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual report on state of agricultural industry</li> <li>• Commission report on performance of conservation easements</li> <li>• Support local organizations promoting agricultural careers and events</li> </ul>
<b>Support Local Labor Force</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain partnerships with School Board, area Technical Colleges, and other agencies</li> <li>• Maintain economic development resource information available for employers</li> <li>• Annually review economic development efforts (w/ municipalities, Chamber, and others)</li> <li>• Annual report on state of agricultural industry</li> </ul>



## **POLICIES & LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES**

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may compliment single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

In addition to establishing policy, communities may also establish long-term or ongoing programs and activities that support identified objectives. These measures compliment policies or may simply be action items that must be employed more than once. These are recognized here so as to distinguish their need and conditions apart from the single-action items and to identify any required special terms or context.

In addition, several items have been identified as policies, general objections and directions for the communities in regards to different areas of concern. These policies will be used as guidelines for general, long-term practices for each government.

- Maintain regular police incident reports to Commission and public; Maintain coordination with Sheriff, other agencies
- Annual report on state of agricultural industry
- Annually review/ update intergovernmental agreements and Service Delivery Strategy
- Maintain performance goals for overall County budget (accounting for impacts on property taxes)
- Support local organizations promoting agricultural careers and events
- Maintain partnerships with School Board, area Technical Colleges, and other agencies
- Maintain economic development resource information available for employers
- Annually review economic development efforts (w/ municipalities, Chamber, and others)



## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Action	Status	Comment
Inventory broadband infrastructure and service areas in county	Complete	
Develop telecom improvement plan with broadband providers, North Ga. Network and GDEcD	Complete	
Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity	Postponed	Deferred until after '23 comp plan update
Performance review of code enforcement procedures and policies	Postponed	Deferred until after '23 comp plan update
Adopt/Promote conservation design policies	Cancelled	Not favored at this time
Develop bicycle and sidewalk/ pedestrian master plan (w/ Cities)	Postponed	Deferred until GDOT funding available
Review and update development regulations & ordinances	In Progress	Deferred until after '23 comp plan update
Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan	Postponed	Deferred until after '23 comp plan update
Develop and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan	Complete	
Develop Workforce/ Starter housing strategic plan	Postponed	
Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity	Postponed	Deferred until after '23 comp plan update
Opportunity Zone Designation	Complete	
Wayfinding signage system	Cancelled	No longer a priority
Establish a Community Improvement District	Complete	
Develop a road improvement plan	Complete	
Pedestrian upgrades major thoroughfares	Postponed	Deferred until GDOT funding available
Intersection Development at Walmart and Faulker	Complete	
Prepare to adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County	Postponed	Deferred until after '23 comp plan update
Develop report assessing all State listed waters in need of resource protection	Complete	
Pottery Intersection Improvement	Complete	
Complete a Countywide Water Plan and implement recommendations of the plan	In Progress	
Expand sewer service to include Martin Bridge currently underserved	In Progress	
Adopt a collector street plan	Cancelled	No longer a priority
Update Comprehensive plan	Complete	



## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the Community Work Program (CWP). This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.

### *Banks County*

Year	Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility
2024	Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity	NA	NA	County
2024	Performance review of code enforcement procedures and policies	NA	NA	County
2024	Develop bicycle and sidewalk/ pedestrian master plan (w/ Cities)	\$5,000	County, GDOT	County, Cities, GMRC
2024	Review and update development regulations & ordinances	NA	NA	County
2024	Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity	NA	NA	County
2024	Prepare to adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Banks County	\$20,000	TBD	Planning
2024	Establish long-term plan & budget in each department	\$1,000	County	County
2024	Conduct forum to discuss the future of industry	NA	NA	County, Cities, GMRC
2024	Review/ Update citizen engagement policies	NA	NA	Sheriff
2024	Complete a Countywide Water Plan	TBD	General Funds	Public Works
2024	Sewer expansion to Martin Bridge area	TBD	Grants, Loans	Public Works
2024	Sewage treatment plant	\$3,100,00	Grants	Public Works
2025	Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan	\$5,000	DNR	County, GMRC
2025	Develop housing strategic plan	\$10,000	DCA	County, GMRC
2025	Commission report exploring design standards for new development	\$1,000	DCA	County, GMRC
2025	Develop freight mgmt. study	\$5,000	County, GDOT	County, Cities, GMRC



<b>2025</b>	Secure water connection with Toccoa	TBD	SPLOST	Public Works
<b>2026</b>	Commission study on long-term utility capacity	\$1,000	DCA	County, GMRC
<b>2026</b>	Commission report on performance of conservation easements	\$1,000	DCA	County, GMRC
<b>2027</b>	Pedestrian upgrades major thoroughfares	\$100,000	Local/State/Fed	BOC/Roads
<b>2028</b>	Update Comprehensive plan	\$30,000	DCA	County, GMRC



# APPENDICES

5

**COUNTY FACT SHEET**

**AREA LABOR PROFILE**

**SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS**

**PUBLIC MEETING SIGN-IN SHEETS**

**QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES**



# COUNTY FACT SHEET





# Demographic and Income Profile

Banks County, GA 2  
 Banks County, GA (13011)  
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Summary	Census 2010	Census 2020	2023	2028
Population	18,401	18,035	18,848	19,454
Households	6,702	6,652	6,944	7,157
Families	5,102	-	5,143	5,284
Average Household Size	2.75	2.71	2.71	2.72
Owner Occupied Housing Units	5,141	-	5,206	5,429
Renter Occupied Housing Units	1,561	-	1,738	1,728
Median Age	38.3	-	41.4	43.1

Trends: 2023-2028 Annual Rate	Area	State	National
Population	0.63%	0.51%	0.30%
Households	0.61%	0.65%	0.49%
Families	0.54%	0.59%	0.44%
Owner HHs	0.84%	0.82%	0.66%
Median Household Income	1.87%	3.01%	2.57%

Households by Income	2023		2028	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<\$15,000	770	11.1%	694	9.7%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	625	9.0%	569	8.0%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	411	5.9%	386	5.4%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	744	10.7%	697	9.7%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	1,440	20.7%	1,455	20.3%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,106	15.9%	1,196	16.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,261	18.2%	1,446	20.2%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	325	4.7%	421	5.9%
\$200,000+	262	3.8%	293	4.1%

Median Household Income	\$63,593	\$69,771
Average Household Income	\$81,710	\$90,267
Per Capita Income	\$30,104	\$33,209

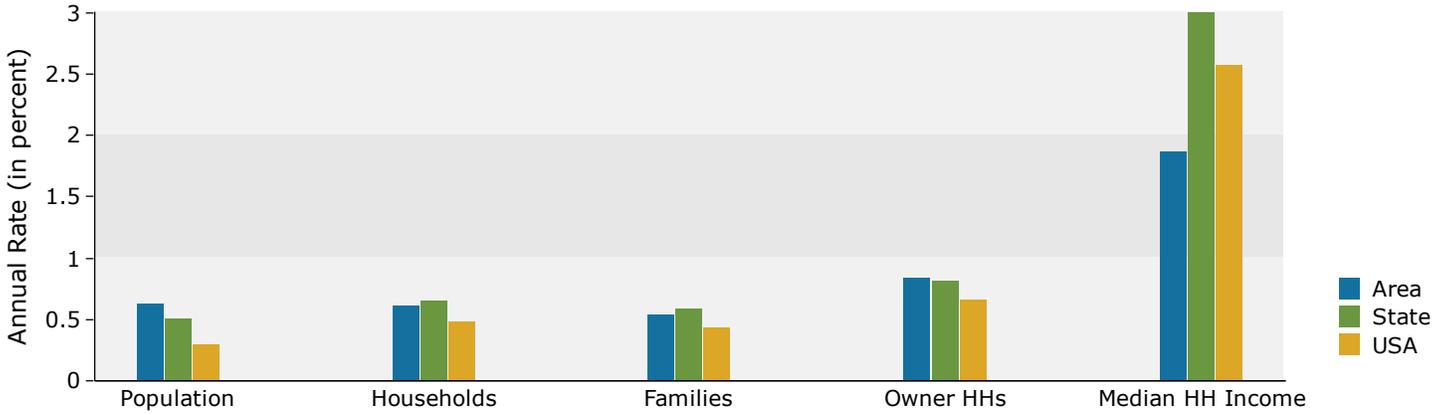
Population by Age	Census 2010		2023		2028	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 - 4	1,133	6.2%	990	5.3%	987	5.1%
5 - 9	1,315	7.1%	1,126	6.0%	1,096	5.6%
10 - 14	1,372	7.5%	1,154	6.1%	1,251	6.4%
15 - 19	1,345	7.3%	1,110	5.9%	1,134	5.8%
20 - 24	1,049	5.7%	967	5.1%	927	4.8%
25 - 34	2,101	11.4%	2,562	13.6%	2,163	11.1%
35 - 44	2,668	14.5%	2,421	12.8%	2,634	13.5%
45 - 54	2,819	15.3%	2,551	13.5%	2,671	13.7%
55 - 64	2,298	12.5%	2,631	14.0%	2,676	13.8%
65 - 74	1,490	8.1%	2,165	11.5%	2,283	11.7%
75 - 84	618	3.4%	983	5.2%	1,370	7.0%
85+	193	1.0%	188	1.0%	262	1.3%

Race and Ethnicity	Census 2010		Census 2020		2023		2028	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Alone	16,879	91.7%	15,838	87.8%	16,396	87.0%	16,691	85.8%
Black Alone	431	2.3%	395	2.2%	434	2.3%	475	2.4%
American Indian Alone	57	0.3%	103	0.6%	114	0.6%	129	0.7%
Asian Alone	165	0.9%	190	1.1%	194	1.0%	198	1.0%
Pacific Islander Alone	3	0.0%	14	0.1%	16	0.1%	20	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	606	3.3%	513	2.8%	583	3.1%	655	3.4%
Two or More Races	260	1.4%	982	5.4%	1,111	5.9%	1,286	6.6%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	1,041	5.7%	1,164	6.5%	1,324	7.0%	1,505	7.7%

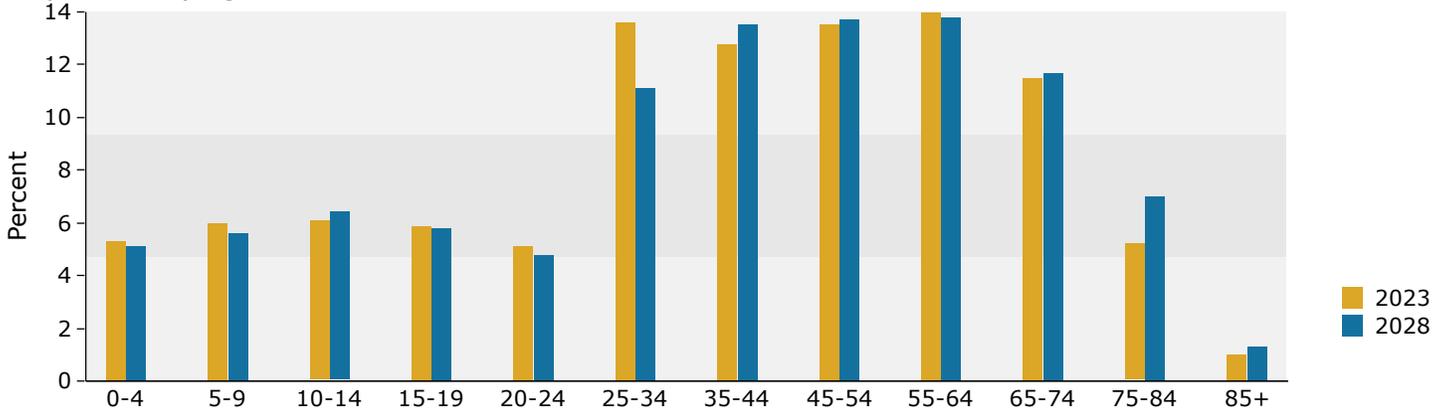
**Data Note:** Income is expressed in current dollars.

**Source:** Esri forecasts for 2023 and 2028. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

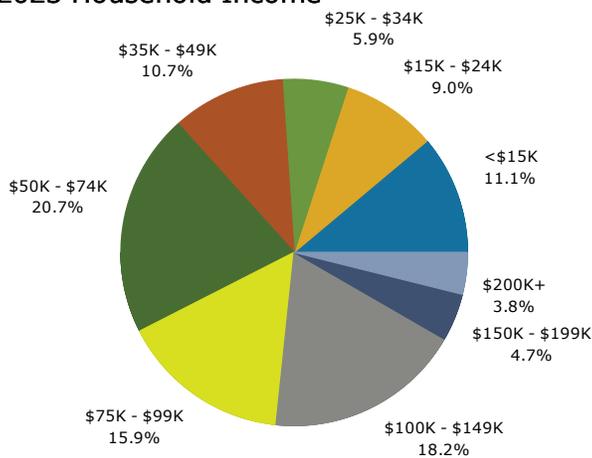
## Trends 2023-2028



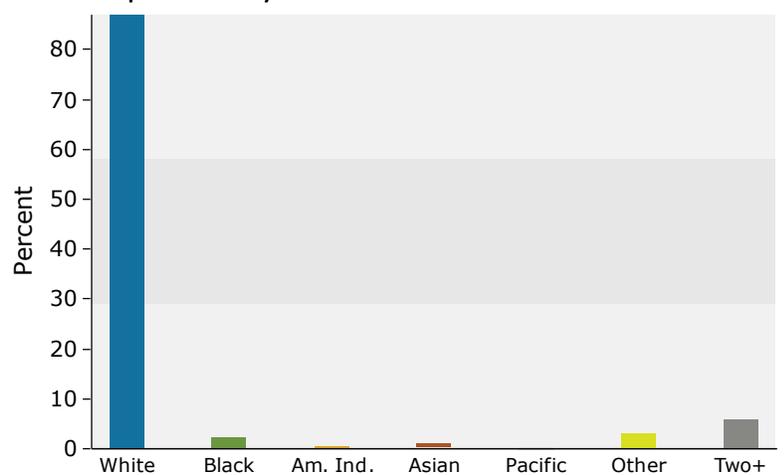
## Population by Age



## 2023 Household Income



## 2023 Population by Race

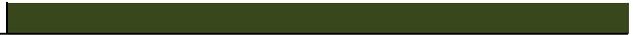


2023 Percent Hispanic Origin: 7.0%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2023 and 2028. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.



## AREA LABOR PROFILE





Georgia

## Area Labor Profile

# Banks

# County



Updated: Aug 2023

## Labor Force Activity

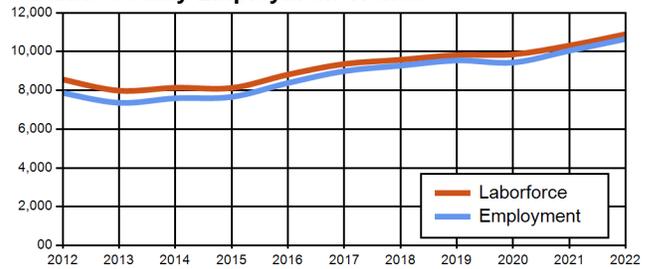
July 2023

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Banks	10,883	10,635	248	2.3%
Franklin	9,729	9,413	316	3.2%
Habersham	18,968	18,375	593	3.1%
Hall	108,616	105,894	2,722	2.5%
Jackson	45,949	44,936	1,013	2.2%
Madison	13,491	13,109	382	2.8%
Stephens	10,575	10,219	356	3.4%
<b>Banks Area</b>	<b>218,211</b>	<b>212,581</b>	<b>5,630</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
Georgia	5,318,955	5,145,351	173,604	3.3%
United States	168,354,000	161,982,000	6,372,000	3.8%

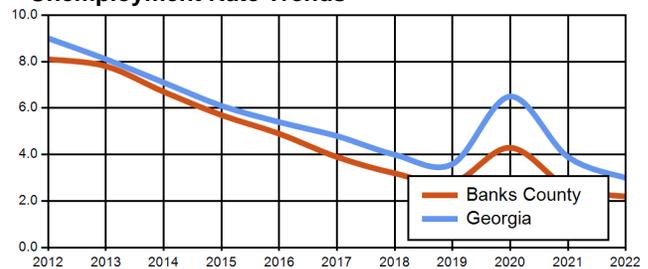
Note: This series reflects the latest information available. Labor Force includes residents of the county who are employed or actively seeking employment.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Banks County Employment Trends



### Unemployment Rate Trends

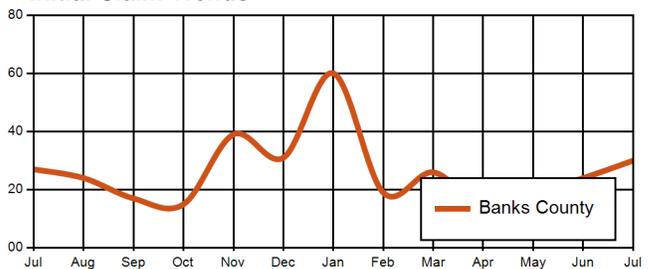


## Initial Claims Activity

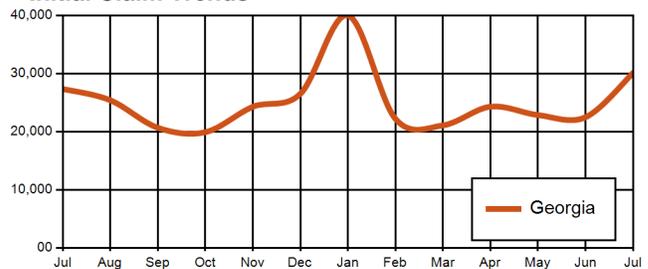
	July 2023	June 2023	May 2023	Total
Banks	30	24	19	73
Franklin	33	25	25	83
Habersham	64	46	82	192
Hall	379	268	264	911
Jackson	142	101	100	343
Madison	41	28	50	119
Stephens	33	28	44	105
<b>Banks Area</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>1,826</b>

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Initial Claim Trends



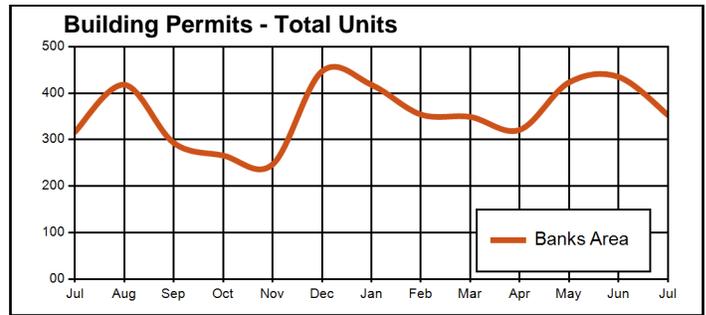
### Initial Claim Trends



# Building Permit Construction Activity

	Banks Area			
	July 2023	June 2023	May 2023	Total
Totals	353	435	423	1,211
Family residential	267	397	355	1,019
Multi family resident	86	38	68	192

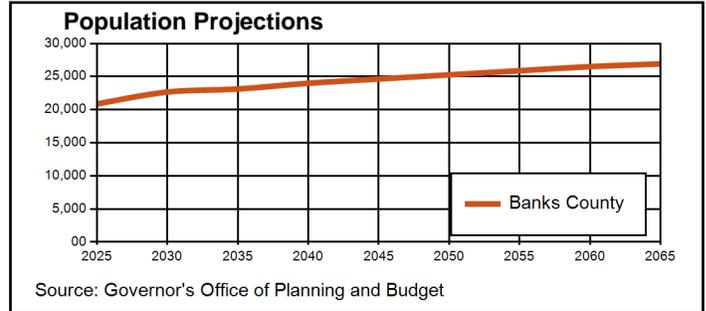
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



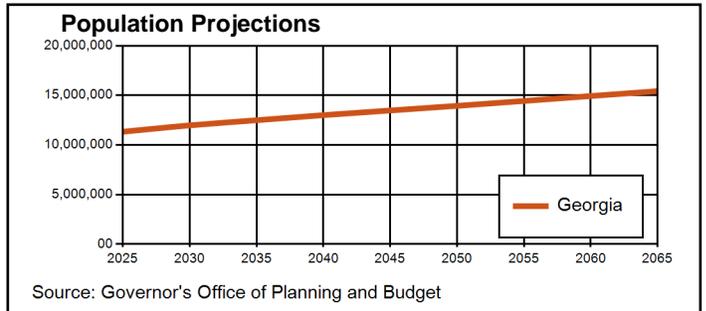
# Population Activity

	Annual 2022	Annual 2021	Difference
Banks	19,328	18,562	766
Franklin	24,128	23,785	343
Habersham	47,475	46,774	701
Hall	212,692	207,369	5,323
Jackson	83,936	80,286	3,650
Madison	31,473	30,885	588
Stephens	26,767	26,865	-98
<b>Banks Area</b>	<b>445,799</b>	<b>434,526</b>	<b>11,273</b>
Georgia	10,912,876	10,799,566	113,310
United States	333,287,557	331,893,745	1,393,812

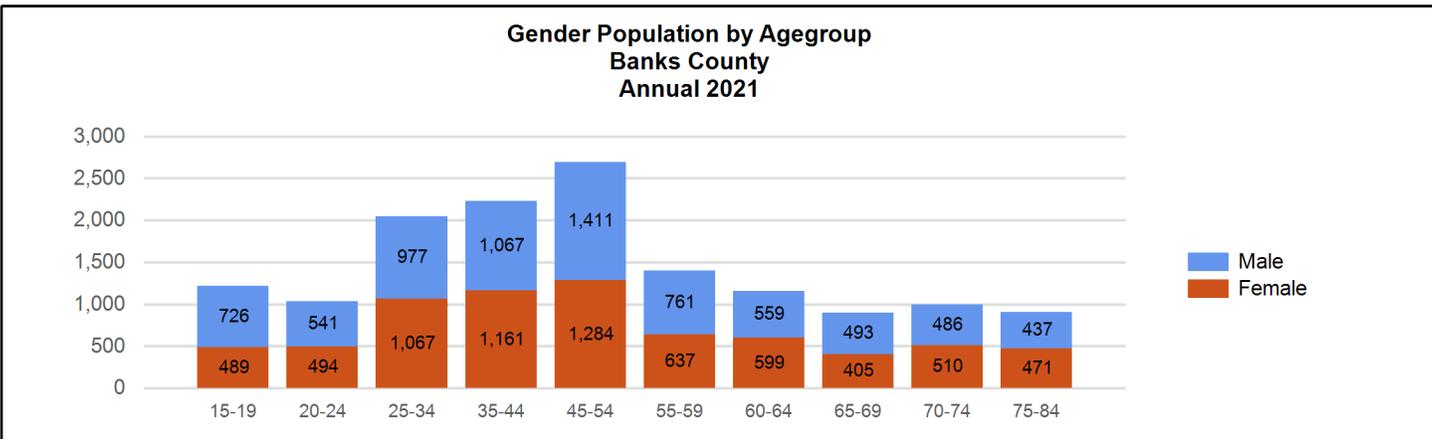
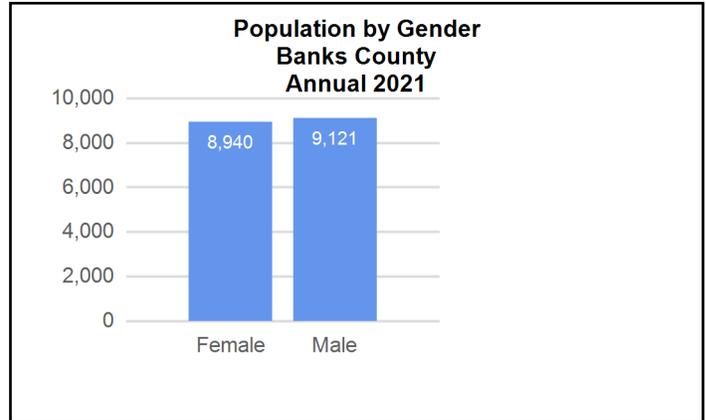
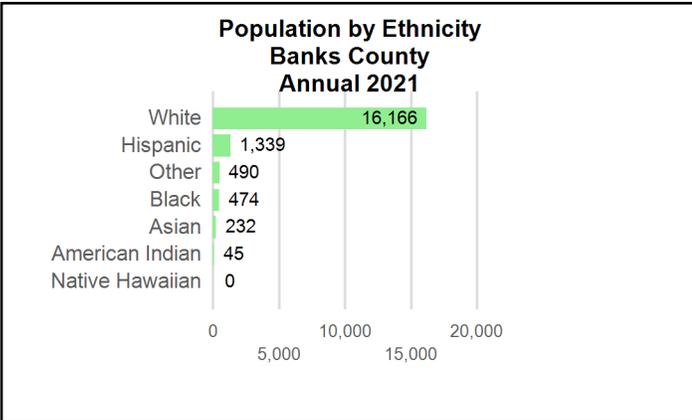
Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Census Bureau.



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget



# Industry Mix - 1st Quarter of 2023

INDUSTRY	Banks				Banks Area			
	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT NUMBER	PERCENT	WEEKLY WAGE	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT NUMBER	PERCENT	WEEKLY WAGE
<b>Goods-Producing</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>1,809</b>	<b>49,663</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>1,191</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	14	183	3.7	1,136	113	1,144	0.6	1,010
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	*	*	*	9	120	0.1	1,522
Construction	46	232	4.7	982	1,108	7,734	4.2	1,259
Manufacturing	14	412	8.4	1,196	579	40,665	22.1	1,183
Food	3	129	2.6	1,320	76	14,334	7.8	1,050
Textile Mills	1	*	*	*	16	1,042	0.6	1,102
Wood Product	3	18	0.4	910	41	745	0.4	1,561
Plastics and Rubber Products	1	*	*	*	26	1,913	1.0	1,137
Fabricated Metal Product	5	66	1.3	1,023	108	2,604	1.4	1,303
Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component	1	*	*	*	15	*	*	*
Petroleum and Coal Products	0	0	0.0	0	2	*	*	*
Paper	0	0	0.0	0	4	*	*	*
Apparel	0	0	0.0	0	4	19	0.0	709
Textile Product Mills	0	0	0.0	0	6	45	0.0	561
Primary Metal	0	0	0.0	0	6	594	0.3	1,361
Computer and Electronic Product	0	0	0.0	0	12	*	*	*
Beverage and Tobacco Product	0	0	0.0	0	13	483	0.3	1,181
Transportation Equipment	0	0	0.0	0	26	4,941	2.7	1,029
Printing and Related Support Activities	0	0	0.0	0	27	461	0.3	1,404
Nonmetallic Mineral Product	0	0	0.0	0	30	522	0.3	1,084
Furniture and Related Product	0	0	0.0	0	32	883	0.5	1,130
Chemical	0	0	0.0	0	39	1,534	0.8	1,340
Miscellaneous	0	0	0.0	0	46	1,414	0.8	1,550
Machinery	0	0	0.0	0	50	5,152	2.8	1,348
<b>Service-Providing</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>3,152</b>	<b>63.9</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>7,359</b>	<b>111,799</b>	<b>60.7</b>	<b>1,024</b>
Utilities	0	0	0.0	0	17	670	0.4	1,981
Wholesale Trade	19	188	3.8	1,435	543	9,010	4.9	1,324
Retail Trade	55	870	17.7	596	1,401	20,675	11.2	749
Transportation and Warehousing	15	85	1.7	878	316	19,618	10.6	803
Information	2	*	*	*	104	1,353	0.7	1,929
Finance and Insurance	7	20	0.4	1,675	528	3,188	1.7	1,580
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	7	5	0.1	902	402	2,737	1.5	965
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	16	*	*	*	782	4,408	2.4	1,227
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	*	*	*	35	2,209	1.2	1,833
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	22	299	6.1	853	641	9,554	5.2	756
Educational Services	3	3	0.1	592	78	2,430	1.3	697
Health Care and Social Assistance	15	119	2.4	1,171	985	18,288	9.9	1,382
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6	72	1.5	517	120	1,401	0.8	5,539
Accommodation and Food Services	44	937	19.0	457	773	13,089	7.1	441
Other Services (except Public Administration)	18	83	1.7	1,038	634	3,168	1.7	794
<b>Unclassified - industry not assigned</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1,105</b>
<b>Total - Private Sector</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>4,021</b>	<b>81.6</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>10,604</b>	<b>162,328</b>	<b>88.1</b>	<b>1,076</b>
<b>Total - Government</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>21,885</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>924</b>
Federal Government	2	20	0.4	1,206	64	932	0.5	1,549
State Government	6	22	0.4	684	102	3,357	1.8	893
Local Government	15	866	17.6	762	187	17,596	9.6	896
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>10,957</b>	<b>184,212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,057</b>
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES - Georgia</b>					<b>376,446</b>	<b>4,757,073</b>		<b>1,363</b>

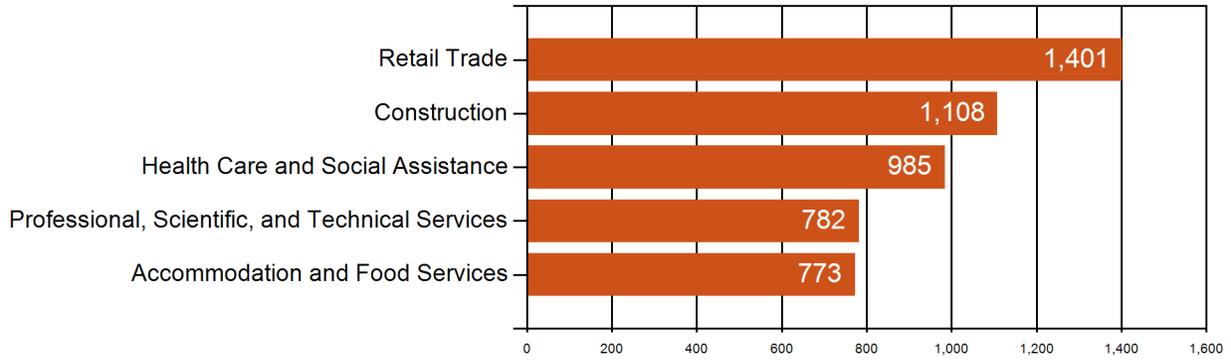
Note: \*Denotes confidential data relating to individual employers and cannot be released. These data use the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categories. Average weekly wage is derived by dividing gross payroll dollars paid to all employees - both hourly and salaried - by the average number of employees who had earnings; average earnings are then divided by the number of weeks in a reporting period to obtain weekly figures. Figures in other columns may not sum accurately due to rounding. All figures are 1st Quarter of 2023.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

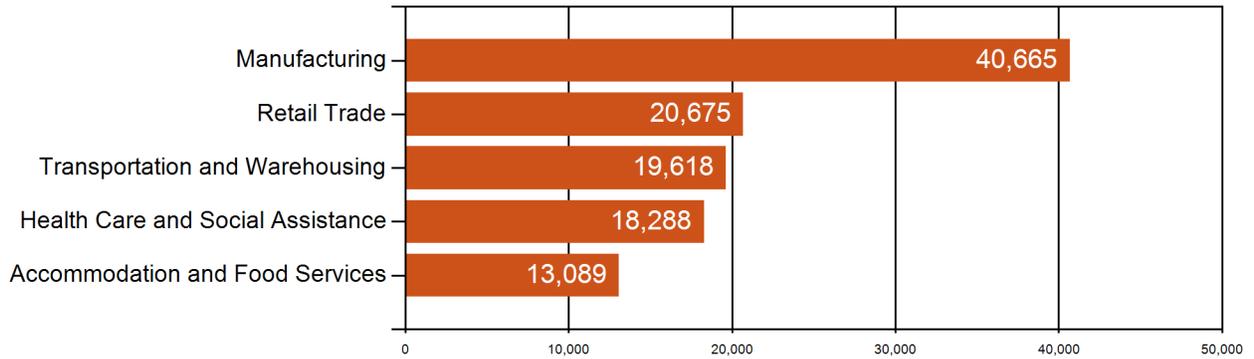
# Top Industries - 1st Quarter of 2023

## Banks Area

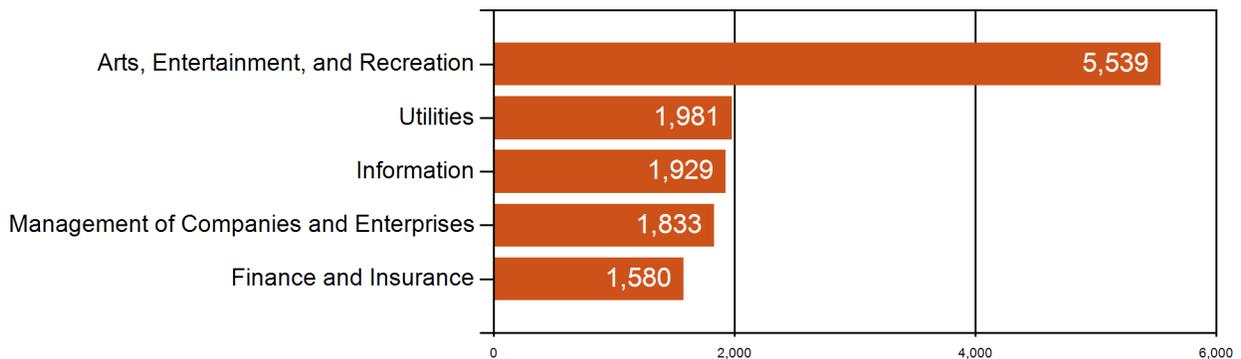
### Top Industries by Firms



### Top Industries by Employment



### Top Industries by Weekly Wages



Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

## Technical College Certificate Graduates - 2022

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Child Care Provider/Assistant	134	209	170	56.0	-18.7
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	218	129	161	-40.8	24.8
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	165	146	160	-11.5	9.6
Welding Technology/Welder	229	317	155	38.4	-51.1
Business Administration and Management, General	109	155	145	42.2	-6.5
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	155	109	124	-29.7	13.8
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	82	110	107	34.1	-2.7
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/	79	81	88	2.5	8.6
Lineworker	61	81	76	32.8	-6.2
Electrician	47	58	69	23.4	19.0

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

## Technical College Diploma Graduates - 2022

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	102	57	72	-44.1	26.3
Medical/Clinical Assistant	90	61	67	-32.2	9.8
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	66	63	63	-4.5	0.0
Welding Technology/Welder	60	55	43	-8.3	-21.8
Business Administration and Management, General	26	41	39	57.7	-4.9
Electrician	25	34	29	36.0	-14.7
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/	39	23	28	-41.0	21.7
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	32	21	25	-34.4	19.0
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)	49	21	24	-57.1	14.3
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	58	59	23	1.7	-61.0

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

## Technical College Degree Graduates - 2022

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Business Administration and Management, General	42	52	47	23.8	-9.6
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	34	28	36	-17.6	28.6
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	45	56	35	24.4	-37.5
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	37	35	26	-5.4	-25.7
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	29	21	18	-27.6	-14.3
Network and System Administration/Administrator	20	17	17	-15.0	0.0
Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer	17	19	17	11.8	-10.5
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	14	28	15	100.0	-46.4
Interior Design	9	13	14	44.4	7.7
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	15	10	13	-33.3	30.0

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

# Top Ten Largest Employers - 2022\*

## Banks

Axiom Staffing Group, Inc.  
 Chick-Fil-A  
 Country Charm Egg Distributors, Inc.  
 Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc.  
 Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbins  
 Fieldale Farms Corporation  
 Kerry, Inc.  
 Lumite, Inc.  
 The Home Depot  
 Walmart

\*Note: Represents employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Data shown for the First Quarter of 2022. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

## Banks Area

	<u>COUNTY</u>
Amazon.Com Services, Inc.	Jackson
Fieldale Farms Corporation	Hall
Fieldale Farms Corporation	Habersham
Fox Racing Shox	Hall
Gold Creek Processing, LLC	Hall
HG Georgia Merchants, Inc.	Jackson
Kubota Manufacturing of America Corporation	Hall
Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Inc.	Hall
Pilgrim's Pride Corporation	Hall
Sk Battery America, Inc.	Jackson

# Education of the Labor Force

## Banks Area

### PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE

	PERCENT					
	OF TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	8.0%	3.5%	5.8%	11.7%	8.7%	8.1%
Some High School	10.1%	14.2%	9.4%	10.6%	8.4%	10.9%
High School Grad/GED	32.2%	39.4%	32.0%	28.0%	32.3%	31.5%
Some College	21.4%	31.0%	22.4%	17.8%	20.7%	19.1%
College Grad 2 Yr	7.1%	5.3%	9.9%	7.9%	7.3%	5.2%
College Grad 4 Yr	13.3%	5.6%	15.4%	15.1%	13.4%	14.3%
Post Graduate Studies	7.9%	1.0%	5.1%	9.0%	9.2%	10.9%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. Some College category represents workers with some

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates.

# Georgia Department of Labor Location(s)

## Career Center(s)

37 Foreacre Street

Toccoa, GA 30577-3582

Phone: (706) 282 - 4514

Fax: (706) 282 - 4513

For copies of Area Labor Profiles, please visit our website at: <http://dol.georgia.gov> or contact Workforce Statistics Division, Georgia Department of Labor, 148 Andrew Young International Blvd N.E. Atlanta, GA. 30303-1751. Phone: 404-232-3875; Fax: 404-232-3888 or Email us at [workforce\\_info@gdol.ga.gov](mailto:workforce_info@gdol.ga.gov)

**BRUCE THOMPSON - COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**  
**Equal Opportunity Employer/Program**  
**Auxillary Aids and Services Available upon Request to Individuals with Disabilities**

**Workforce Statistics Division; E-mail: [Workforce\\_Info@gdol.ga.gov](mailto:Workforce_Info@gdol.ga.gov) Phone: (404) 232-3875**

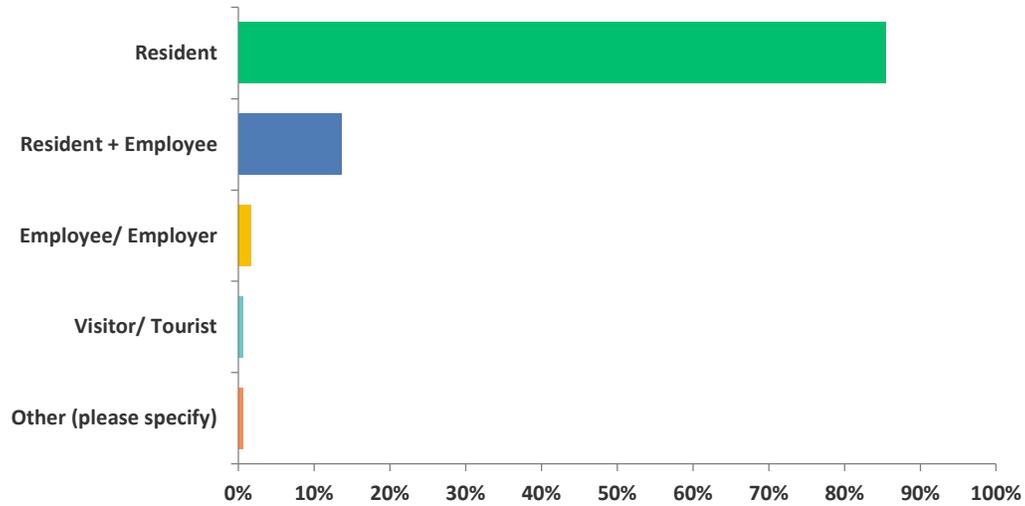


## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS



**Q1: I am submitting comments primarily as a:**

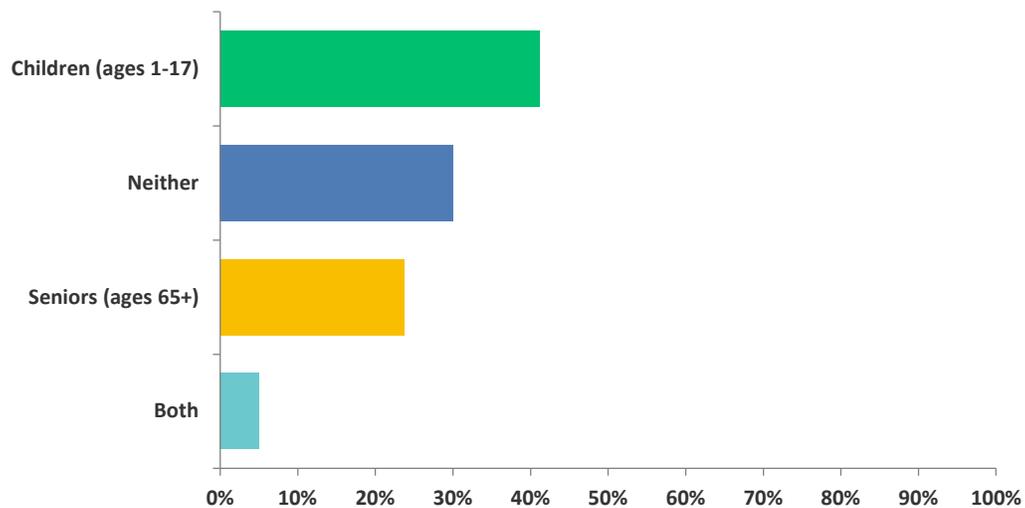
Answered: 316 Skipped: 0

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1

**Q2: Do you have any seniors or children in your household?**

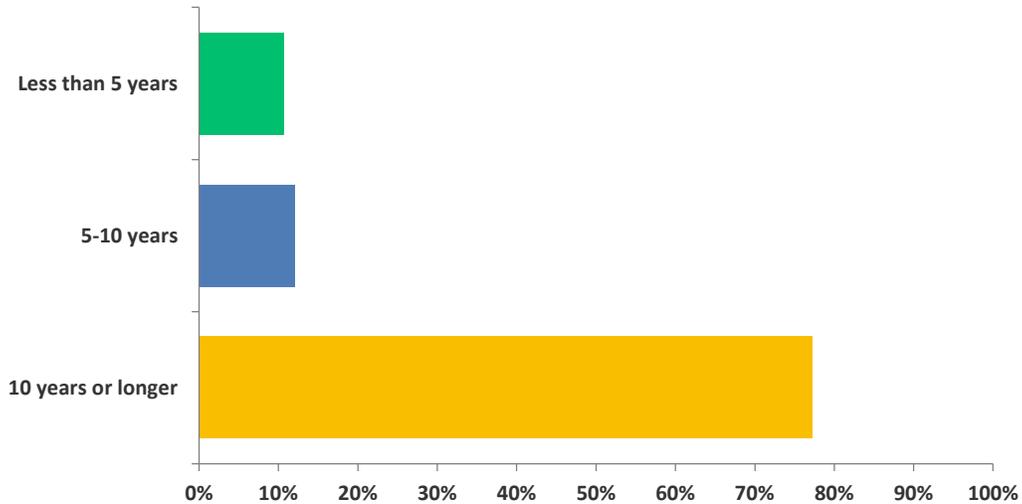
Answered: 316 Skipped: 0

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2

### Q3: How long have you been living/ working in the area?

Answered: 316 Skipped: 0

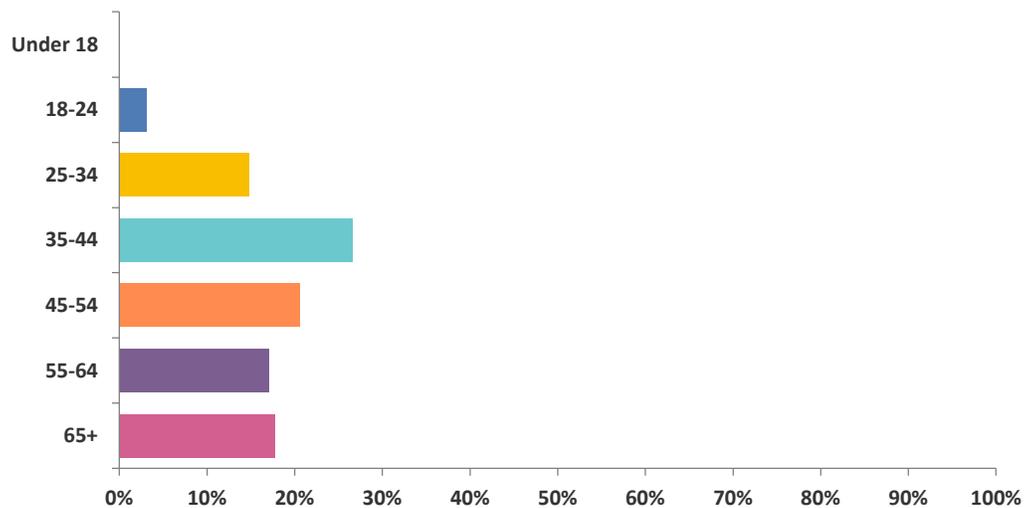


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3

### Q4: What is your age range?

Answered: 316 Skipped: 0

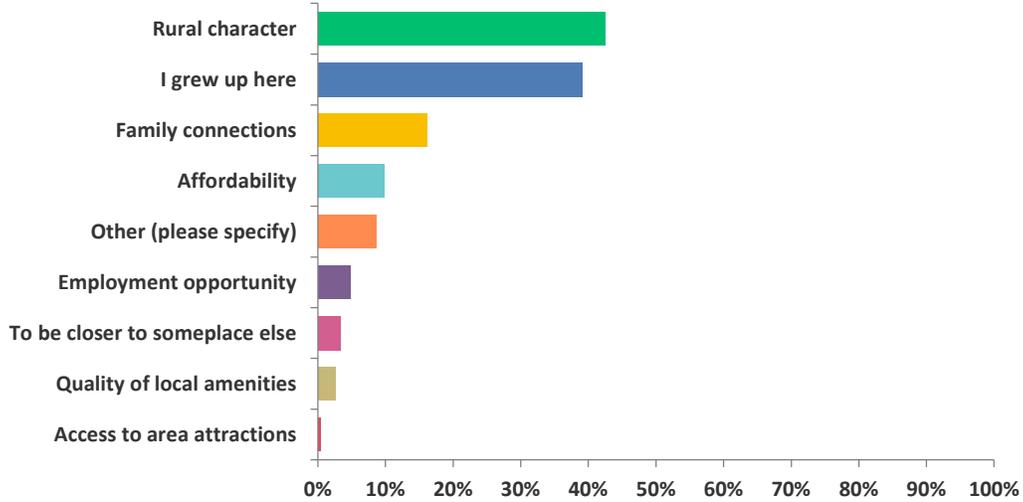


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4

**Q5: If you moved to Banks County from somewhere outside the area, what was the main reason for your move?**

Answered: 266 Skipped: 50

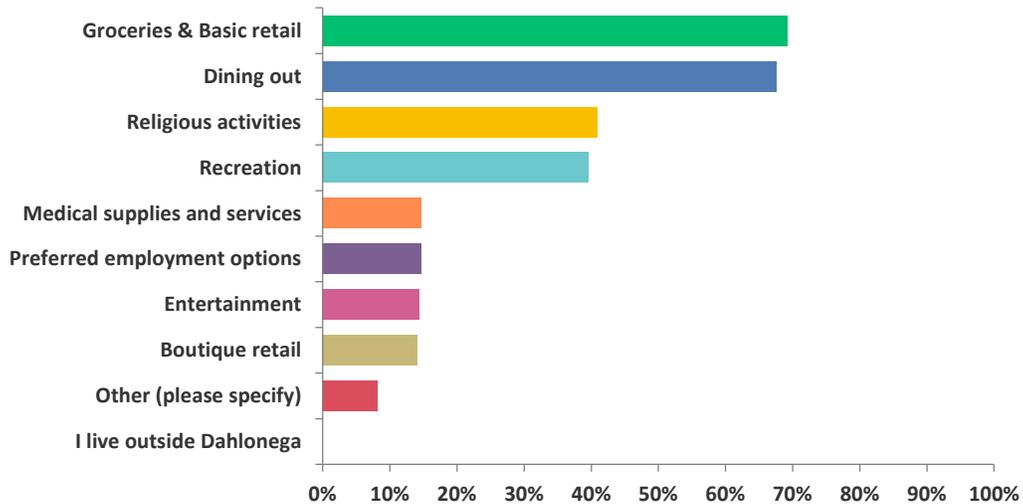


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5

**Q6: If you live within Banks County, please indicate which of the following activities you do mostly in the county. (Choose all that apply)**

Answered: 305 Skipped: 11

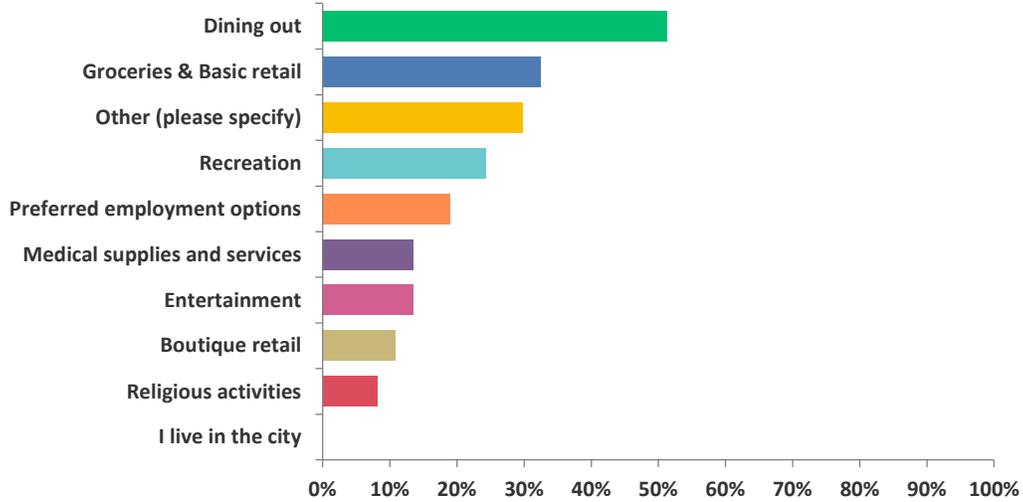


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6

**Q7: If you live outside of Banks County, please indicate which of the following activities you do mostly in the county. (Choose all that apply)**

Answered: 37 Skipped: 279

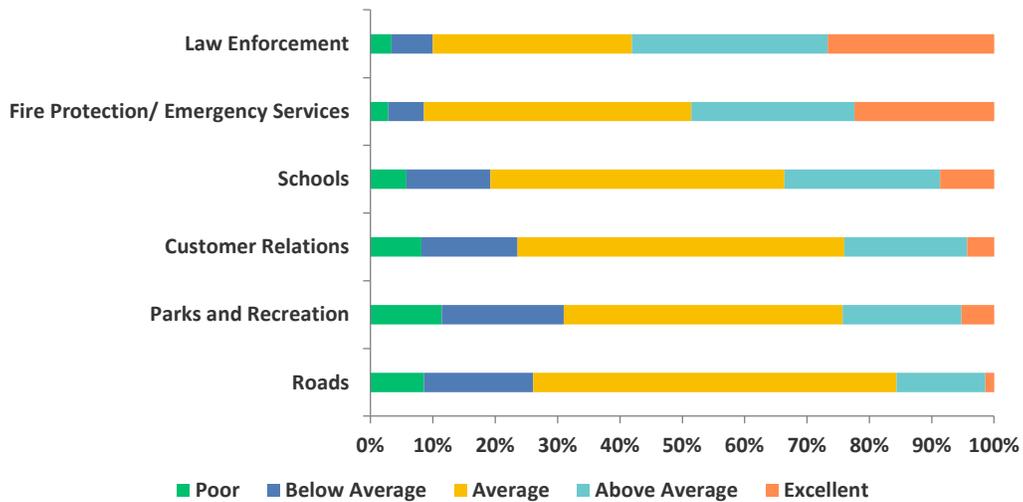


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7

**Q8: On a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent), please rate your current level of satisfaction with the following public services:**

Answered: 211 Skipped: 105

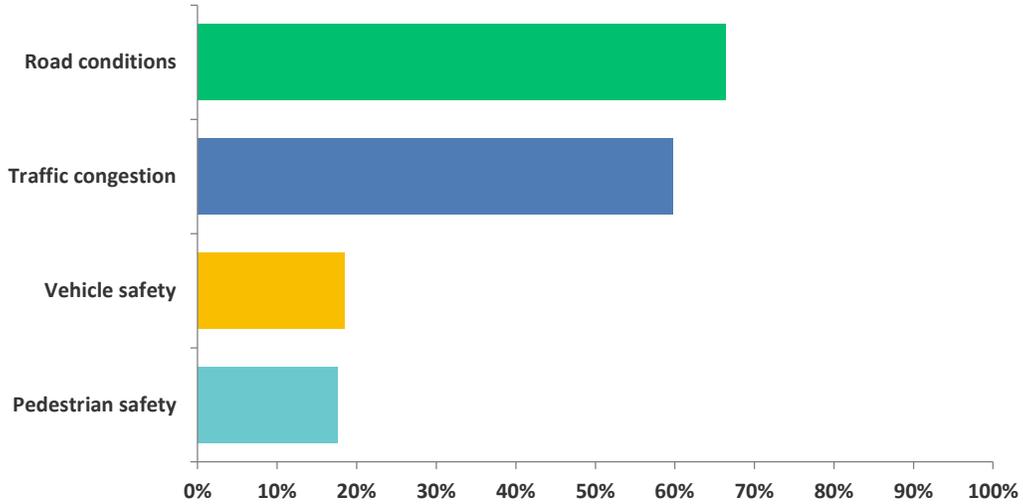


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8

**Q9: What do you consider the foremost problem for roadways in Banks County? Please check all that apply.**

Answered: 211 Skipped: 105

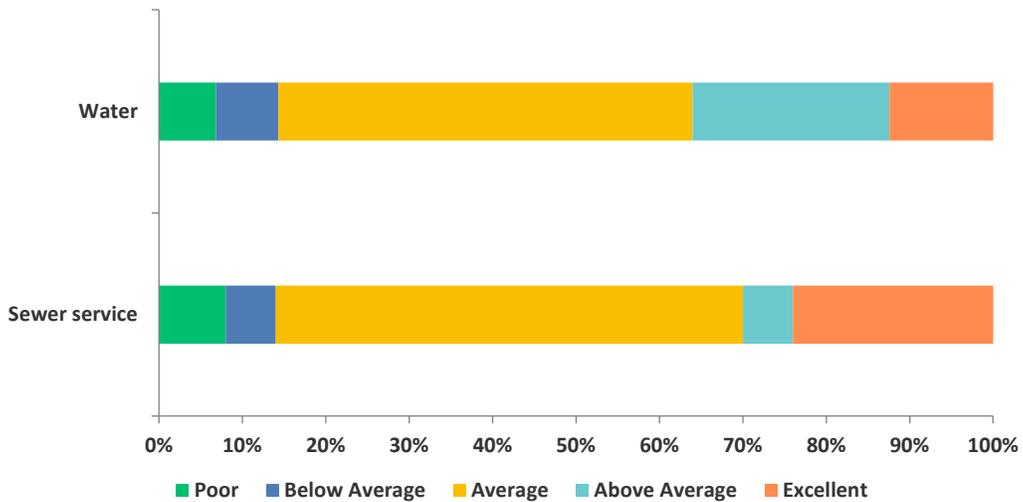


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9

**Q11: If you have public water and/or sewer service, please rate your current level of satisfaction with the service:**

Answered: 162 Skipped: 154

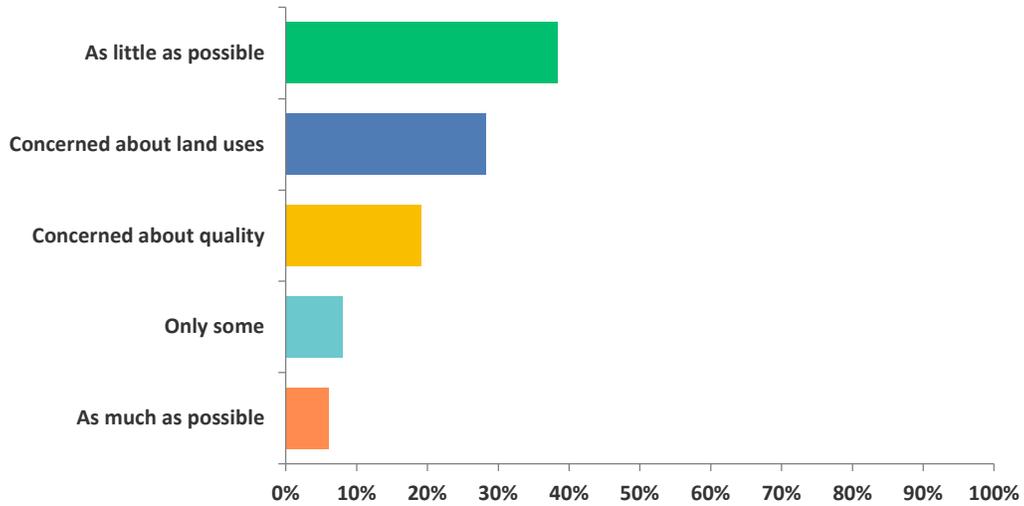


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10

**Q17: Given your preference, how much new growth should the County encourage? (Choose one)**

Answered: 198 Skipped: 118

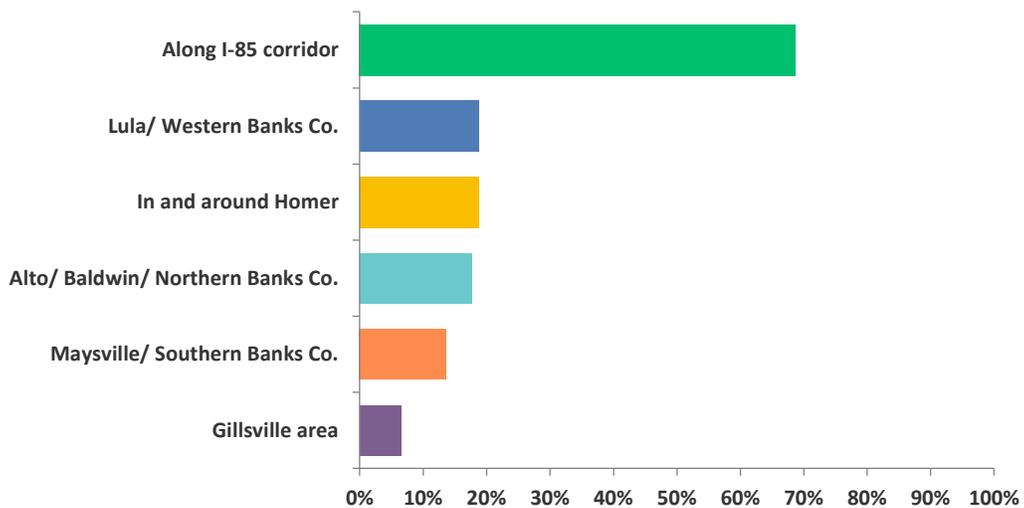


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11

**Q18: Given your preference, where should any new growth be primarily concentrated? (Choose all that apply)**

Answered: 198 Skipped: 118

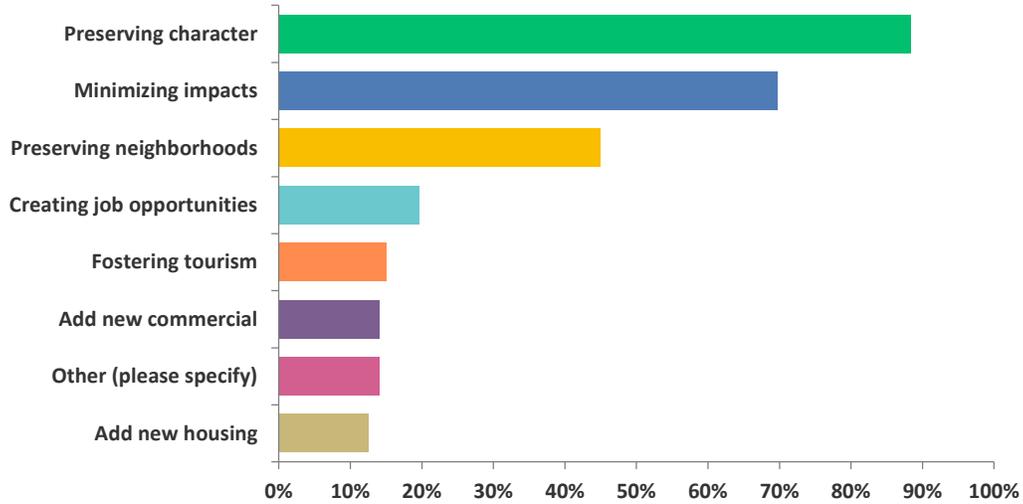


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12

**Q19: My priorities regarding any growth and development would be \_\_\_\_\_.** (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 198 Skipped: 118

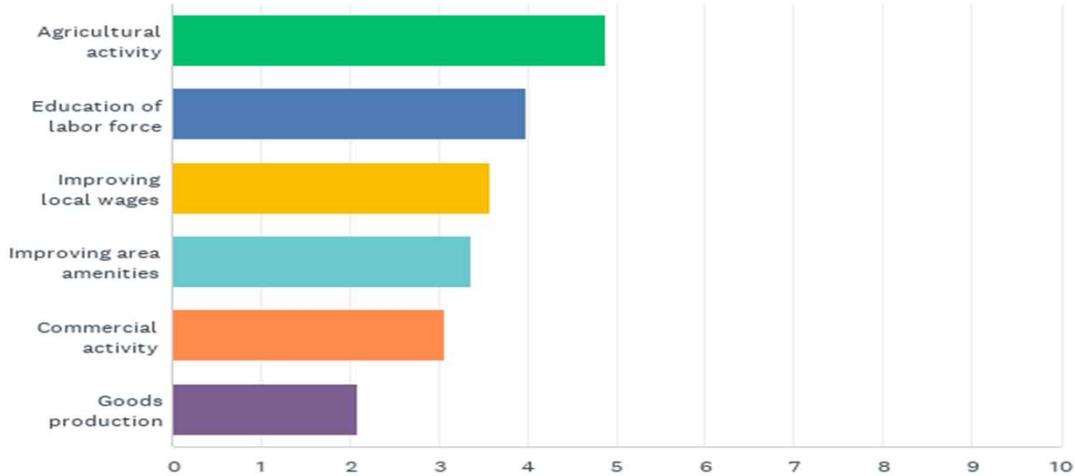


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**Q20: Please rank the following economic development priorities for Banks County, with #1 being the most important.**

Answered: 198 Skipped: 118

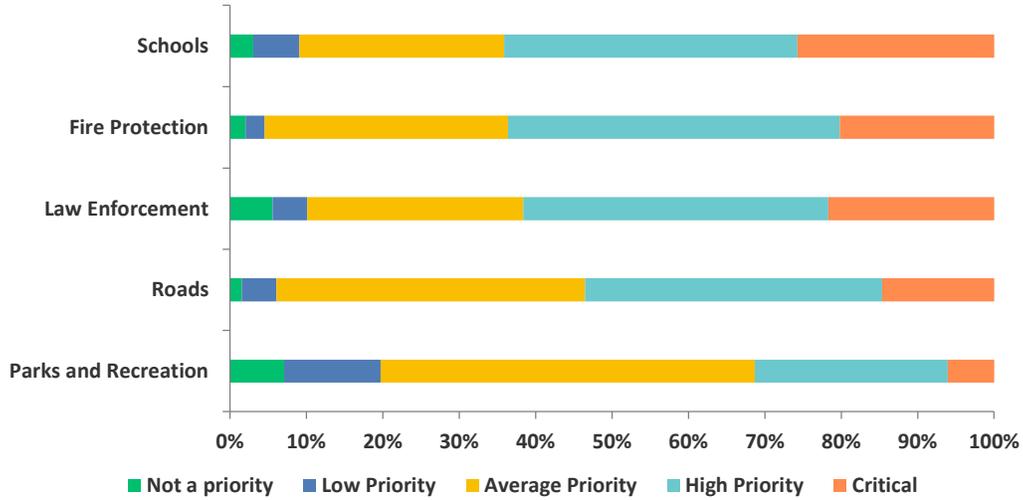


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**Q22: How would you rank the following services in terms of priority of need for such capital investment?**

Answered: 198 Skipped: 118

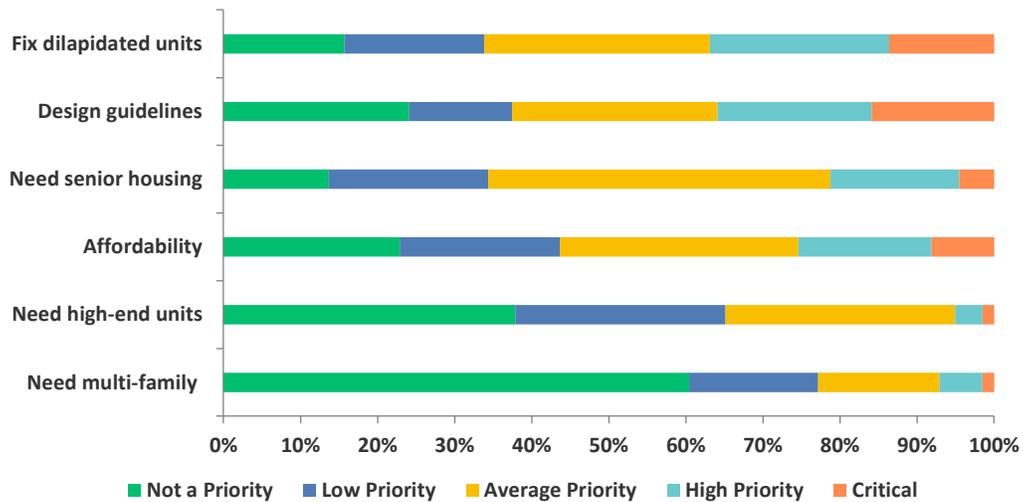


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15

**Q23: Please indicate how strongly you feel any of the following housing issues is a priority for Banks County.**

Answered: 198 Skipped: 118



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16



## **PUBLIC MEETING SIGN-IN SHEETS**



BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – ADVISORY CMTE. MTG.

Courthouse Annex ~ 6:00 PM – 1/30/23

*Please Sign In*

Name

Jody Parks  
BARBARA LINDORME  
Brad McCook  
Ashley Foubt  
Kerri Fincannon  
Vidai Boling  
Alicia Andrews  
James Otis Rylee  
Kris Wheelers  
TERRY MICK  
Adam Siebert  
Jan F. Weller

Name

Jenni Gately

BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – ADVISORY CMTE. MTG.

Courthouse Annex ~ 6:00 PM – 3/27/23

*Please Sign In*

Name

Name

*sdana@cb.banks.ga.us*

*Sharon David*

*Adam Swinehart*

*Kerri Fincannon*

*Brook McCook*

*Ashley Fountain*

*Vicki Boling*

*Simon Fox*

*BARBARA LINDORME*

BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – ADVISORY CMTE. MTG.

Courthouse Annex ~ 6:30 PM – 4/24/23

Please Sign In

Name

Name

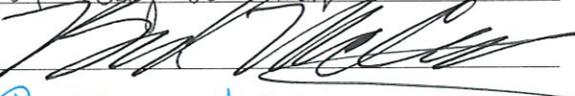
Sdavid@co.banks.ga.us

Stacey David

Kris Wheelless wheellesskris@a

Aliya Andrews

Ashley Fountain



BARBARA LINDORME

Jody Pans

BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – PUBLIC FORUM

Courthouse Annex ~ 6:00 PM – 6/5/23

Please Sign In

Name

Janet Jones  
Lorissa Campbell  
Mary Ellen Myers  
Sue Moore  
Lynda Garrison  
[Signature]  
Gary Clark  
Tina Simmons  
Ann Moon  
Gail Sheppard  
Vicki Best  
Adam Swchart  
Barbara Lindorme  
Scott Whaley  
Dora Michelle Zanone  
Bryan + Karen Overton  
Taylor Griffith  
Tim Boyer

Name

Kellie Jones  
Ashley Fountain  
William Keene  
Dicker Bohning  
Jenni Gail  
Godly Parks

BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – PUBLIC FORUM.

Courthouse Annex ~ 7:00 PM – 7/24/23

*Please Sign In*

Name

Name

JIM BRYSAN

Jody Parks

Adam Senehat

April Mitchell

Ryker Mitchell

JW Mitchell

Cheryl Frederick

Brad McCook

Simon Fox

Robb Cooper

TERRY MICK

B. Lindorme

BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – OPEN HOUSE

Courthouse Annex ~ 8/21/23

Please Sign In

Name

O O Kelly  
Ashley Fountain  
Angie Wheatley  
Karen Sales  
Henry Akers  
Seth Sperry  
Lee Clendenning  
Matt + Allison Cochran  
Terry Mick  
Kellie Jones  
Andrea Harrison  
Drew  
Jody Tots  
1  
Drew  
Haley Davis  
Leeson McWhisk  
Bill McWhisk

Name

Carolyn Ross  
Mindy Jones  
Robert Erdman  
Cheryl Erdman  
Tyler Manning  
Amber Spack  
Jana Spack  
Lana Cannon  
Adam Swinchart  
Brad Hill  
TAMMY Harcell

BANKS COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – OPEN HOUSE

Courthouse Annex ~ 8/21/23

Please Sign In

Name

Rick Billingsley

Winnie A. Allen

James Allen

Gloria Rylee

Phyllis Miranda

Blake Lickitz

JEFF JONES

Taylor Griffith

Otis Rylee

Jason Hensley

Sallie Hensley

Jenni Gailey

Sherri Poole

Lynn Suggs

JIM BRYSON

Chase Rylee

Sandra Swinney

Kane Bandy

Name

Teresa Mason

# Public meetings ahead for updates of Comprehensive Plans in county, Maysville

Banks Co News 5/31

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Banks County, the Town of Homer and the City of Maysville with the updates of their Comprehensive Plans, the state-required documents that helps shape and coordinate local work programs for the communities.

These planning processes are designed to ensure that major projects and policies for the community are developed with public input, ensuring a level of coordi-

nation between local and State level interests.

As part of this process there will be multiple opportunities for public input, beginning with the public planned.

Initial meetings will walk through the basics of the document, the planning process, and how the comprehensive plan is used to help guide community policies and programs.

Subsequent meetings will review the needs and goals for each community and

what the local governments can do in preparation for the future.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in as many events as possible.

In addition, there are also brief online surveys asking people to give their thoughts on select issues and priorities for each community.

These surveys will be accessible through June 30, 2023, and are open to anyone with a vested interest in the area.

Links to the surveys will

be posted on each government's web site and will be posted around the area.

### MEETING DATES

The Banks County Plan Meeting will be held from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, June 5, at the Annex Building, located at 150 Hudson Valley Drive, Homer.

The Maysville Plan Meeting will be held from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, June 20, at Maysville City Hall, located at 4 Homer Street, Maysville.

# Growth, sewer, water service topics at joint BOC, Homer council meeting

ANNAN CAUDELL

Banks County Board of Commissioners and the City Council met for a joint session on Monday to discuss future plans for community development.

During the meeting, the commissioners and the council focused on community growth, a potential sewer system and the water

population of Homer has grown by 22.5 percent in the last about 286 residents have moved to the area in the last two years.

Banks County Planning Commission member Jody and Comprehensive Planning Committee member Barbara Lindorme intro-

duced these statistics to the board and council, as well as the concerns that this growth warrants, including strategic development, water supply, sewer system, school capacity, and taxes.

The commissioners and the council spent time discussing the potential for a sewer system in Homer.

Mayor Doug Cheek explained that in order for Homer to see any commercial or industrial growth, the addition of a sewer system would be crucial for further development.

Much debate was centered around a proper sewerage system being implemented at Banks County High School.

The high school is situated on the city-county line, making the process of delegating responsibility for parts of a sewage line more difficult.

Determining the potential cost of implementing a system that includes a lift station was also an area of discussion.

Currently, the county is considering using their recovery fund monies and asking the school to contribute funds for a project in the future.

BOC Chairman Charles Turk also explained that the county would have to prioritize the Waste Management landfill in the sewage project because its wastewater

pump is reversible down Georgia Highway 59, which will allow easier access to the wastewater plant.

City Council member James Dumas also suggested that the city could consider using the septic tank drain line from the old jail adjacent to the Voter Registration Center to provide sewage for a few properties in downtown Homer.

The sewer line is already in use, and has the potential for domestic and commercial uses for the existing buildings in downtown.

Cheek then began the discussion on water for the city. Currently, the city of Homer is still awaiting approval from the Environmental

Protection Division Municipal Permitting Unit to backwash water into an unpopulated property owned by the city that would reach into a tributary of the Hudson River.

Cheek also said that even with the new well development, the city cannot be self-sufficient with its water supply.

Commissioner Chris Ausburn also said that the county is not completely self-sufficient, either.

Right now, the county is buying water from Franklin and Stephens (Toccoa) counties, as well as a double-valve with Alto and potential sources from Baldwin and Commerce.

# Input sought on county comp plan

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Banks County with the updates of its Comprehensive Plan, the state-required documents that help shape and coordinate local work programs for the communities across the state.

The next meeting will be held from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 11, at the Banks County Courthouse Annex, 150 Hudson Valley Drive, Homer.

"These planning processes are designed to ensure that major projects and policies for the community are developed with public input, ensuring a level of coordination between local and state level interests," states Adam Hazell of the GMRC.

Hazell adds, "We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the future of Banks County and hope to see you at our public events."

For any questions about the document or the process, contact Hazell at 738-538-2617 or [ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov).

The county comprehensive plan is updated every 10 years after seeking input from interested citizens and county officials.

Banks Co 9/16

# Help Plan the Future of Banks County!

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Banks County, the Town of Homer, and the City of Maysville with the updates of their respective Comprehensive Plans, the State required document that helps shape and coordinate local work programs. This planning process is designed to ensure that major projects and policies for the community are developed with public input, ensuring a level of coordination between local and State level interests.

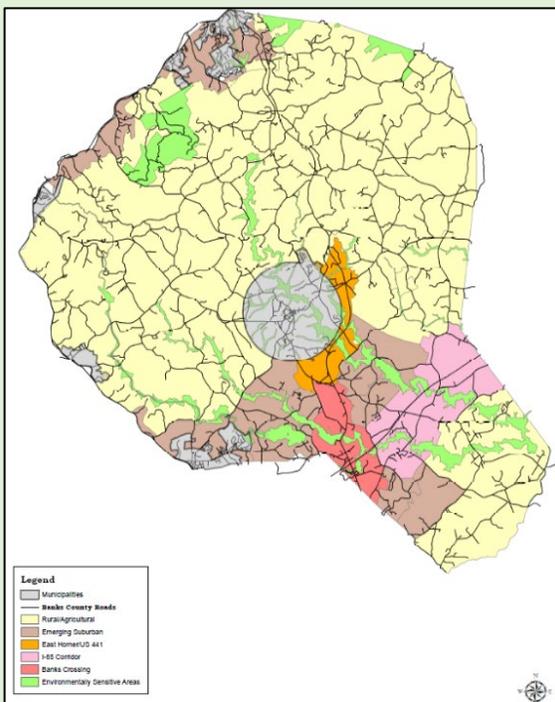
As part of these processes there are brief online surveys available asking people to give their thoughts on select issues and priorities for each community. These surveys will be accessible through June 30 and are open to anyone with a vested interest in the area. All responses will be anonymous.

There will also be public meetings held in each community throughout the spring and summer of 2023. Check each government's web site for meeting dates and locations, as well as for copies of draft material as the process nears an end.

For any questions or comments, please contact:

**Adam Hazell, Planning Director**

**738.538.2617** | [ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov)



## Banks County

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MPYLMP5>



## Town of Homer

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9M6JXKG>



## City of Maysville

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9TZP9VT>





## QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. This assessment should be used a tool by a community to compare how it is progressing toward the sustainable and livable objectives, but no community will be judged on its progress. The questions focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles. A majority of positive responses for a particular objective may indicate that the community has in place many of the governmental options for managing development patterns. Negative responses may provide guidance as to how to focus planning and implementation efforts for those governments seeking to achieve these Quality Community Objectives. Should a community decide to pursue a particular objective it may consider this assessment a means of monitoring progress towards achievement.

### 1. Economic Prosperity

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

*While committed to retaining a rural atmosphere, the County and Cities, together with their partners, are equally committed to securing the economic viability of the region going forward. Economic prosperity enables individuals, households and communities to be stronger, and provide better for each other. The governments support the local Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Development Authority as part of ongoing efforts to foster economic development for the community. The governments also maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the State for pursuit of assistance and outside funding opportunities in support of economic development opportunities.*

### 2. Resource Management

Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

*The County and the Cities recognize the value of their location as part of a vital tourist and freight route and the impact of their agrarian heritage. The governments maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the area. The governments also employ policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.*

### 3. Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land



consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

*Through this planning process, ongoing efforts to update area mapping, and regular communication with each other, the County and Cities work to ensure local development policies support sustainable development that enables economic growth while managing local resources, utilities and infrastructure.*

#### **4. Local Preparedness**

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

*Through this planning process and ongoing coordination among emergency responders, and through regular communication with other stakeholders, the Cities and Banks County work together to ensure the community is properly poised to prevent, manage and respond to growth pressures and natural and man-made hazards.*

#### **5. Sense of Place**

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

*Banks County recognizes the value of its location as part of Appalachian foothills and the impact of their agrarian heritage. The governments maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the area. The governments also employ policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.*

#### **6. Regional Cooperation**

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

*The County and Cities actively coordinate with each other in maintaining their local Service Delivery Strategy and SPLOST program, and participate with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and other appropriate regional organizations. The governments also maintain regular contact with various State Departments to ensure knowledge of, and access to, their programs and resources. The Cities and County are considered active partners in regional activities and do not feel threatened or adversely impacted by any regional partners.*

#### **7. Housing Options**

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities



in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

*Banks County policies currently has limited options for higher density units or rental housing, but will redress those rules after adoption of this plan update. At the moment the County lacks the utility capacity to stoke major density, and few builders in the area are proactively chasing smaller, cheaper units.*

## **8. Transportation Options**

Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.

*Banks County does support sponsored public transit service through State sponsored rural transit vans and shuttle programs. This is done with Legacy Link and is reevaluated yearly.*

## **9. Educational Opportunities**

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions.

This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

*The County and Cities work with the Banks County School Board to ensure access for quality primary and secondary educational facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to ensure access to viable post-secondary resources such as Lanier technical College and North Georgia Technical College and other area educational institutions.*

## **10. Community Health**

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.

*Without a facility of their own, Banks County works with regional hospitals in Gainesville, Athens, Demorest, Toccoa, and Lavonia, as well as the Banks County Health Department to ensure access for quality health care facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to monitor residents' needs and requests in providing access to these services as the area grows.*