



**Baker County and the City of Newton
Ten Year Comprehensive Plan
Community Agenda**

Baker County Vision Statement

“Baker County will be a place where mutually respecting citizens communicate and work together for sustainable development, through a comprehensive program that addresses all facets of the community’s needs and responsibilities particularly inter-governmental and constituent cooperation to improve the facilities and programs of the entire community.”

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ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Housing

Issues

- increasing numbers of manufactured homes
- scattered housing in city
- lax building code enforcement

Opportunities

- vacant, buildable, parcels within city
- adopt building codes for city/county

Natural Resources

Issues

- no protection for water resources
- no city sewer system
- no protection of natural resources

Opportunities

- increase support /awareness of Georgia DNR Best Management Practices
- promotion of existing wildlife management areas and other natural areas

Historic/Archaeological Resources

Issues

- Few intact cultural resources remaining

Opportunities

- Highways 91 and 37 as scenic byways

Economic Development

Issues

- low educational attainment levels
- narrow economic base
- Lack of High Speed Internet Connections

Opportunities

- encourage entrepreneurs
- increase infrastructure planning
- heritage tourism
- 5 County Broadband Partnership

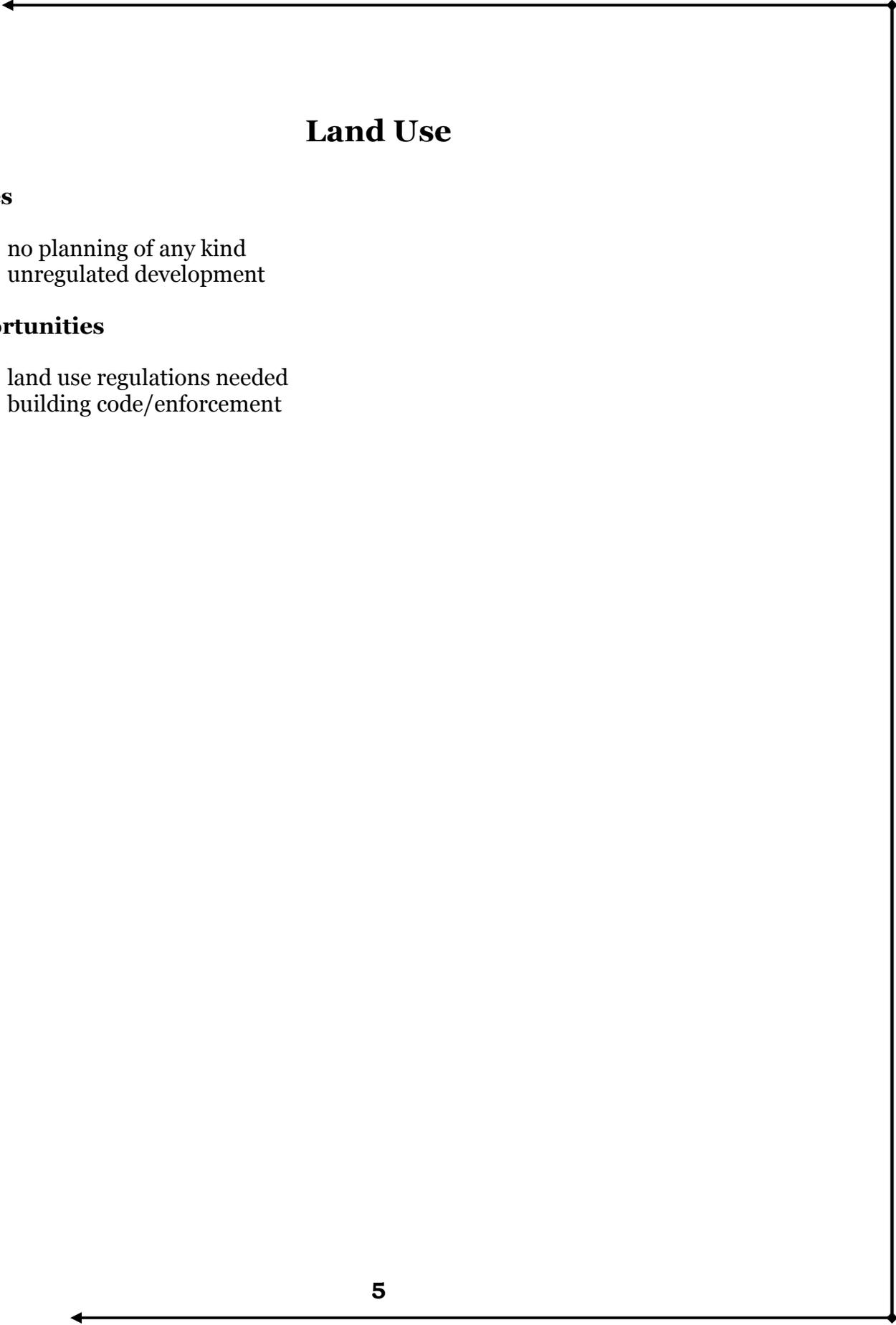
Community Facilities & Services

Issues

- inefficient/nonexistent public safety
- aging/failing city infrastructure
- limited recreation facilities
- insufficient recreational programs

Opportunities

- capital improvement plan
- adult education
- great setting for nature trails
- City-County consolidation of services or government



Land Use

Issues

- no planning of any kind
- unregulated development

Opportunities

- land use regulations needed
- building code/enforcement

DEFINING NARRATIVE OF THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

In conjunction with members of the public who attended the different open work sessions, the steering committee identified the following 9 distinct character areas in Baker County and The City of Newton:

- a. Plantation
- b. Agricultural
- c. Forested
- d. River Corridor
- e. Floodplain
- f. Downtown Newton
- g. Cross Roads Communities (Patmos, Milford, Elmodel, Hawkingstown, Hoggard's Mill)
- h. Residential
- i. Commercial Node

It should be remembered that the total population in Baker County is likely to shrink to 3,808 or lower within 10 years. Furthermore, there appears to be widespread opposition to the adoption of land use regulations within the unincorporated territory alongside a pervasive belief that the existing regulations are erratically used and enforced.

A. Plantation

Almost half (47% or 163 square miles) of Baker County lies within private plantations. Plantation land is, for the most part, entirely fenced, posted and access to the property is tightly regulated. Typically, Plantations have few residences and activities within them are not subject to public scrutiny. Given the sheer size of the Plantation character area, it necessarily encompasses different kinds of ecological niche, ranging from wetlands to forests to ploughed fields.

Due the biodiversity involved in the Plantation Character Area, a variety of land uses should be encouraged within these territories. Currently it appears that the majority of Plantation Land is taken up with agricultural and silvicultural activities and so should the County Commissioners and Residents decide to adopt some kind of Land Development Regulations during the planning period, they should protect these territories by severely curtailing Plantation land's desirability for residential development by only allowing large lot subdivisions.

By adopting appropriate land use regulations that help to maintain and protect the cohesive nature of the Plantation Character Area, the local government would be pursuing the Heritage Preservation, Environmental Protection, Appropriate Businesses and Regional Identity Quality Growth Objectives in so far as the county's heritage and economy is based on agriculture.

Should the Government decide to pursue some kind of development regulation in the unincorporated territory, the necessary implementation steps would be;

- i. A complete land use survey rather than a windshield survey,
- ii. The creation and maintenance of a Geographic Information System at the tax parcel level and the development of an official map,
- iii. The creation, adoption and equitable enforcement of appropriate land use regulations, (a process that would entail the identification of stakeholders, public input meetings, public notification, public hearings, adoption by resolution and the designation of an enforcement body).

B/C. Agricultural and Forested

The difference between the Agricultural and Forested Character Areas and the Plantation Character Area is the patchwork pattern of land ownership within the former. While the primary land uses within these character areas mirror those within the Plantations, they are marked by the slow spread of roadside residential developments and the lack of barbed wire fences.

Due the biodiversity involved in the Agricultural/Forested Character Areas, a variety of land uses should be encouraged within these territories. If the County Commissioners and Residents decide to adopt some kind of Land Development Regulations during the planning period, they should protect these territories by severely curtailing Agricultural and Forested Land’s desirability for residential development by only allowing large lot subdivisions.

By adopting appropriate land use regulations that help to maintain and protect the cohesive nature of the Plantation Character Area, the local government would be pursuing the Heritage Preservation, Environmental Protection, Appropriate Businesses and Regional Identity Quality Growth Objectives.

Should the Government decide to pursue some kind of development regulation in the unincorporated territory, the necessary implementation steps would be;

- i. A complete land use survey rather than a windshield survey,
- ii. The creation and maintenance of a Geographic Information System at the tax parcel level and the development of an official map,
- iii. The creation, adoption and equitable enforcement of appropriate land use regulations, (a process that would entail the identification of stakeholders, public input meetings, public notification, public hearings, adoption by resolution and the designation of an enforcement body).

D. River Corridor

The River Corridor Character Area consists of a narrow strip, no greater than 150 ft, on either side of the County's major rivers, the Flint and Ichawaynochaway Creek. This Character area is denoted in some places with thicker than otherwise brush or forest growth. It is also marked by the presence, in places, of significant wetland resources.

If the residents of the County move to adopt development regulations, they should impose environmental protection rules on the riverbanks to curtail residential or commercial development along the currently pristine waterfronts.

By adopting and enforcing the above mentioned land use regulations, the local governments would be pursuing the Environmental Protection, Heritage Preservation, Shared Solutions and Infill Development Quality Community Objectives. (In this case by adopting EPD standards the governments are participating in both Environmental Protection and Shared Solutions -water resource issues are always intra and inter regional-Heritage Protection and Infill Development by maintaining the rural and agricultural nature of the County, and infill development by further limiting the land available for residential development).

E. Floodplain

While the geographical floodplain stretches well beyond the current city limits of Newton, this character area is only within the urban area. 54% of the Newton's territory is within the 100 year floodplain and as such is not suitable for future residential development.

Newton passed a zoning ordinance in 1999 which contains a Flood Hazard Zone that is tied directly to the 100 year floodplain map developed for the city by the Corps of Engineers. The zoning ordinance allows for residential development along with passive recreational operations such as parks, fishing, boat ramps, nature trails etc. Although plans have been prepared for the creation of a park, as yet no land has been cleared nor has the City earmarked any finances to cover the cost.

The City's current regulations are sufficient and emphasize the most appropriate land uses in the district. The absence of all but the most superficial changes in the wake of the 1994 flood, the area is marked by overgrown lots, a few abandoned buildings and no clear access to the waterfront.

The lack of investment in the Floodplain Character Area can be viewed as the local governments' successful pursuit of the Open Space Preservation Quality Community Objective, however, in order to fully realize this objective, efforts must be made in the future to clear some of the brush from the publicly owned areas and to create a viable park. To pursue the Sense of Place QCO over the planning period, the City must develop this area for different kinds of recreational use.

In order to create an attractive recreational area within the floodplain character area, the City must develop a creative approach to garnering the necessary funds and leveraging existing skills within the community. The implementation steps would include;

- i. Creation of a Capital Improvements Budget and Plan,
- ii. Identification of possible private partners to exploit p3 options,
- iii. Pursuit of grant and other financial opportunities including bond issues and further Special Local Options Sales Taxes,
- iv. Identification of community desires and the ability to convince the community that this would be a benefit,
- v. Development of volunteer workforce for unskilled labor,
- vi. Identification and pursuit of suitable landscape architects and engineers.

F. Downtown Newton

The Downtown Newton Character Area refers to the six irregularly sized blocks that made up the center of the City, prior to the 1994 flood. At least two thirds of this area also falls within the Flood hazard zone, the remainder is split between public institutional and residential land uses. The area is marked by large overgrown abandoned lots and buildings along with the old County Courthouse.

The current zoning regulations allow for some commercial as well as residential development within the non-flood plain area. Both uses are suitable for this character area and should be encouraged in the future.

The flooding of 1994 has stripped the traditional heart from this city, in order to pursue the Sense of Place QCO the city must develop a recreational area in this space to replace the destroyed commercial center.

In order to create an attractive recreational area within the Downtown Newton character area, the City must develop a creative approach to garnering the necessary funds and leveraging existing skills within the community. The implementation steps would include;

- i. Creation of a Capital Improvements Budget and Plan,
- ii. Identification of possible private partners to exploit p3 options,
- iii. Pursuit of grant and other financial opportunities including bond issues and further Special Local Options Sales Taxes,
- iv. Identification of community desires and the ability to convince the community that this would be a benefit,
- v. Development of volunteer workforce for unskilled labor,
- vi. Identification and pursuit of suitable landscape architects and engineers.

G. Crossroads Communities

This character area can be found in 5 distinct places in the unincorporated county and are small clustered communities that may have, in the past, been large enough to support commercial activity, a few churches and have at least one or two residential streets that are distinct from the primary throughway. These areas are, essentially the residential residue of the past when the county had almost 3 times the population it now possesses.

Elmodel, Patmos, Hoggard's Mill and Milford developed during the 19th Century around specific natural resources and grew through accretion rather than regulation. Hawkingstown developed as an ad hoc Manufactured housing park.

Although these small communities currently lack the population to effectively incorporate, should the County Government decide to adopt geographically based land use regulations, a mixture of residential and small scale commercial/retail uses should be encouraged in these locales.

By adopting appropriate land use regulations that help to maintain and protect the Crossroad Communities, the local government would be pursuing the Heritage Preservation, Environmental Protection, Appropriate Businesses and Regional Identity Quality Growth Objectives.

Should the Government decide to pursue some kind of development regulation in the unincorporated territory, the necessary implementation steps would be;

- i. A complete land use survey rather than a windshield survey,
- ii. The creation and maintenance of a Geographic Information System at the tax parcel level and the development of an official map,
- iii. The creation, adoption and equitable enforcement of appropriate land use regulations, (a process that would entail the identification of stakeholders, public input meetings, public notification, public hearings, adoption by resolution and the designation of an enforcement body).

H. Residential

The Residential Character Area is limited to the predominantly residential areas in the City of Newton. Outside of the Crossroads Communities, residential development in the County is scattered, piecemeal and largely confined to neighborless individual lots bordering county roads.

The City's zoning regulations have designated the majority of the non flood plain city territory as residential and this broad use is ideal for the city, however, despite the fact that the city is located on land that is rated as highly susceptible to pollution, the City has no waste water management/treatment system. The lack of a waste water treatment facilities and a city wide sewer system means that the city residents must use septic tanks which then requires a 1.5 acre lot size accommodate the drainfield.

To pursue the Sense of Place, Environmental Protection, Housing Opportunities, Infill Development and Traditional Neighborhoods Quality Community Objective's, the city government must put in a sewer and waste water treatment plant. The creation of a sanitary sewer system would obviate the need for 1.5 acre lots and therefore would free up much of the residential territory tied up in single unit lots. The increase in available land would widen the housing opportunities, promote infill development and allow for the creation of denser neighborhoods. Furthermore, the elimination of over 200 aging septic systems in a high susceptibility to pollution area would significantly enhance existing Environmental Protection programs.

In order to create a sewer system and waste water treatment plant within the Residential character area, the City must develop a creative approach to garnering the necessary funds and leveraging existing skills within the community. The implementation steps would include;

- i. Creation of a Capital Improvements Budget and Plan,
- ii. Identification of possible grant or low interest loan funds
- iii. Pursuit of other financial opportunities including bond issues and further Special Local Options Sales Taxes,
- iv. Identification of community desires and the ability to convince the community that this would be a benefit worth paying for,
- v. Development of volunteer workforce for unskilled labor,
- vi. Identification and contracting with appropriate engineers.

I. Commercial Node

The Commercial Node Character Area is limited to the territory immediately adjacent to the crossing of Hwy's 37 and 91. While this not the sole site of commercial activity within the county and city the commercial activities are largely confined to isolated single businesses focused on highway traffic.

The City's zoning code designates this area for commercial use and should continue to do so over the planning horizon. Currently this area is home to two gas stations, a liquor store, a phone store, an auto parts dealership, a hardware store, a discount store, a bank, a grocery store, an insurance office and a restaurant. The County's low population density and low incomes means that many of these businesses are operated within very tight margins which may dissuade other entrepreneurs from locating in this district. The businesses are housed in a car friendly form of strip malls with large parking lots in front.

In order to pursue the Appropriate Businesses Quality Community Objective the City and County must develop a means by which they can garner input from the business owners and develop policies which will not only help to keep existing businesses within the area but encourage the creation of new ones. Create a Business Retention and Expansion Program, a micro-business incubator and other business development resources including an incentive package.

Explore and study the potential for recreational and agricultural tourism businesses, paying particular attention to specific seasons, existing waterways and creating an identifiable brand.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES

Population

1. Baker County and Newton should join forces with the County Extension Service to provide parenting classes and the prevention of teenage pregnancy.
2. Adult education should be supported through such programs as the Georgia Peach Program and the JTPA Program.
3. Baker County and Newton should address the lack of employment opportunities and limited transportation access to outside employment.
4. It is apparent by the low per capita income figures, poverty levels, and the high usage of transfer payments that supporting employment programs are necessary.
5. Emphasis on education is important to Newton and Baker County. Programs which address continuing education, skills assessment, higher scores achievement, and various other educational attainments are warranted.

Economic Development

Overall Goal:

To promote economic development in Baker County and the City of Newton by enhancing the diversification of economic sectors. Business sector expansion, the support and retention of existing business and the attraction new businesses will be the focus of future economic development endeavors. To this effort, more interest in the exploration of a wide range of economic development resources and tools will be promoted to improve community infrastructure, marketing potential, local labor force skills, employment access and the creation of new jobs.

Objective 1: We will develop a countywide organization to promote economic development goals and to explore the potential for utilization of economic development tools in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Policy A: Review and promote economic development tools appropriate to the needs of Baker County and Newton.

Policy B: We will develop an active relationship with area technical schools, skills training centers as well as regional and State economic development agencies to broaden the range of economic opportunities in the City of Newton and Baker County.

Policy C: We will become active in the five County broadband partnership to bring high speed internet to Baker County and the City of Newton.

Objective 2: We will promote and secure the strength of Baker County's agricultural community.

Policy A: We will support the agricultural agencies which monitor the needs of the Baker County Agricultural sector.

Policy B: We will promote youth activities in the agricultural sector.

Policy C: We will lobby EPD to relax pivot well licensing requirements.

Objective 3: We will develop a shared County and City Website to promote the development of Heritage Tourism, publicize existing businesses and amenities of the region and to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas for citizenry.

Policy A: We will work with regional, state and federal development agencies to find and utilize grant and loan programs to update hardware and software that will expand the bandwidth available.

Policy B: We will complete the necessary applications for Telemedicine, Long distance learning and increased broadband grant and loan programs.

Policy C: We will work with regional and state development agencies to promote industrial development programs by effectively utilizing of tax credit programs, revolving loan funds, job training programs and other incentives targeted at attracting new industries.

Policy D: We will encourage the development of secondary agricultural processing practices and agricultural marketing strategies.

Policy E: Work to improve the skills and training of the labor force.

Objective 4: We will support economic development programs aimed at improving the retail services and tourism sector throughout Baker County and Newton.

Policy A: We will facilitate the physical improvements in the design and entrances to County and City.

Policy B: We will encourage the development of crossroads commercial development in Baker County.

Policy C: We will encourage the promotion of Baker County hunting preserves and farm lodging.

Policy D: We will facilitate the development of special events and a festival in the park. Implement proposed park plan for the Courthouse Square area to boost visitor retail spending, as well as entertainment options in the county.

Policy E: We will promote the use of the Baker County Courthouse as a regional meeting facility.

Policy F: We will encourage the development of a Newton - Baker County beautification program targeting roadside cleanup and clearance of dilapidated commercial structures and out of use signs and develop County Wide sign ordinance.

Objective 5: To encourage diversity in local economic sectors.

Policy A: We will focus efforts on promoting agri-tourist attractions with the assistance of Historical Society, East Baker Historical Society, the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, the Agricultural extension office.

Policy B: To strengthen the county's tourism potential through preservation of historic resources, the development of an historic interpretive center in the proposed courthouse square park, and heritage education programs.

Policy C: We will encourage music, art, theater, other cultural activities at the Baker County Courthouse and park utilizing these events as drawing cards for regional visits.

Policy D: Promote the development of health care facilities and services in the city and county.

Policy E: Encourage the development of private transportation services and encourage programs which allow for flexibility of use of medical transit vans for other uses such as employment access.

Policy F: We will utilize the Southwest Georgia Chamber newsletter and other media publications to advertise commercial, service, industrial or other vacancies or opportunities.

Objective 6: To promote educational excellence, training programs and educational incentive programs throughout the county.

Policy A: Facilitate annual evaluations of the adequacy of local educational programs, career preparation programs, teen mentor programs, vocational and job skill training programs, education incentive programs by a focused committee.

Policy B: Encourage the development of better access to regional vocational schools and colleges or the development of mobile training units.

Policy C: Develop a resource center where residents can review training materials, literature on skills training and review employment opportunities listed by the Georgia Department of Labor and sources of assistance for small business development.

Objective 7: We will ensure that infrastructure and community facilities are enhanced to promote the economic development potential in the city and county.

Policy A: Encourage developmental highways in the Southwest Georgia region.

Policy B: Continue to work with the Southwest Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority to establish economical solid waste services in the area.

Policy C: Promote excellence at the elementary school and the development of safe, neat and attractive neighborhoods.

Policy D: Increase recreational and cultural activities and facilities.

Housing

Overall Goal:

To promote the orderly development of safe, affordable residential neighborhoods and the preservation/enhancement of existing residential neighborhoods in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Objective 1: We will promote efforts to improve the condition of Newton's housing stock through new construction of replacement housing units, renovation, rehabilitation and demolition programs.

Policy A: We will continue to support Building Inspection activities and to enforce the State's Minimum Building and Construction Codes as well as locally adopted codes.

Policy B: We will increase the use of demolition programs as warranted in Baker County and Newton to remove dilapidated and substandard housing as needed.

Policy C: We will provide additional housing improvements through designation of CDBG target projects for housing improvement grants and loans in the City of Newton.

Policy D: We will promote the development of housing units in each Baker County community through the concentrated efforts of the public, private and non-profit sectors and the acquisition of housing assistance, grants and low interest loan programs.

Policy E: We will encourage housing assessment/infrastructure needs throughout the planning period.

GOAL 2: To encourage the provision of housing of all types, densities and price ranges for current and future residents of Newton and Baker County.

Objective 1: To expand and diversify the housing opportunities available in Baker County and Newton by the year 2015.

Policy A: We will encourage the development of personal care group homes, nursing homes and home companion matching programs for senior citizens throughout Baker County.

Policy B: To promote infill development in residential neighborhoods outside of the flood plain and the re-development of blighted buyout areas of Newton that surround residential areas.

Policy C: We will provide sufficient zoning of a flexible nature which will accommodate all housing types and a range of densities in the City of Newton

Policy D: To encourage residential development in areas where supporting infrastructure is available, particularly in existing communities in the unincorporated areas.

GOAL 3: We will provide adequate infrastructure in residential areas to enable neighborhoods to prosper and become more appealing in Baker County and Newton.

Objective 3: To promote the stability and viability of neighborhoods throughout the County.

Policy A: Periodically survey Baker County communities and Newton for housing condition to assess the need for further demolition, nuisance ordinances or rehabilitative housing measures.

Policy B: Locate public infrastructure improvements, including parks, paved roads and water, and drainage improvements in neighborhoods or communities so as to attract, maintain and encourage home ownership in Baker County and Newton.

Policy C: We will encourage the protection and restoration of historically valued residential properties and neighborhoods throughout the County.

Policy D: We will assist with the rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of historically significant housing by promoting technical assistance and economic assistance programs in Newton and Baker County.

Policy E: We will continue infrastructure improvement plans by identifying low income-minority "target" neighborhoods in the City of Newton.

Policy F: To encourage the development of neighborhood clean-up and beautification programs in the City of Newton.

GOAL 4: To encourage the development of public-private partnerships between local developers, lenders, non-profits and the public sector which aim to promote quality residential development and improvement in Baker County.

Objective 4: We will support the State and Federal policies prohibiting discrimination in the acquisition and rental of housing in all Baker County communities.

Policy A: Educate the public and staffs of the local jurisdictions on the Fair Housing Act.

Policy B: Provide adequate allowances for group homes in the development of zoning ordinances.

Policy C: We will promote fair lending practices in Baker County.

GOAL 5: To provide regulatory guidance where necessary throughout Baker County to provide for well planned developments.

Objective 5: We will periodically review the amount, type and impact of development occurring in the County and Newton to determine if additional regulations are needed to insure that compatible and well developed subdivisions and residential areas are created.

Policy A: To develop subdivision regulations or other ordinances as needed in Baker County and Newton to insure quality development.

Community Facilities

Overall Goal:

To provide excellent community facilities and services through planning in Baker County and the City of Newton so as to enhance the quality of life and to enhance the potential for future growth and economic development opportunities.

Goal: To coordinate the efforts of the City of Newton and Baker County to provide for a more efficient means of delivery of services.

Objective: On an annual basis discuss the possible consolidation of city/county government.

Policy A: Continue to entertain the discussion of consolidating city/county governments at annual joint meetings.

Law Enforcement

GOAL 1: To provide efficient and effective public safety services in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Objective 1: To improve the effectiveness of law enforcement activities through staff development and expansion, upgrading of communications and other equipment and the progressive use of special programs.

Policy A: Continue upgrading and coordinating the dispatching system and radio systems.

Policy B: We will enhance law enforcement capabilities at the local level by acquiring crime enforcement computer systems.

Policy C: We will promote innovative law enforcement programs targeting decreases in domestic violence, drug traffic and thefts.

Policy D: We will continually upgrade the in-house training program for law personnel and to promote cross-training where sensible between public safety or other staff personnel.

Policy E: We will study innovative methods of staff expansion including cross training of public safety personnel, use of auxiliary forces and the investigation of supplemental force grant funding.

Fire Protection

GOAL 1: To enhance fire protection services and equipment in Baker County and the City of Newton for the purpose of reducing service response time and decreasing the ISO rating of each fire station in order to lower community insurance rates.

Objective 1: To provide adequate water supplies and hydrants network necessary to lower ISO ratings.

Policy 1: We will promote the installation of dry hydrants throughout unincorporated Baker County.

Policy 2: To upgrade the Newton water systems and availability of water hydrants to provide excellent water supplies.

Policy 3: We will work with the State Fire Academy to determine the potential for the use of alternative methods of fire suppression or deceleration to reduce the water needs in rural areas.

Objective 2: We will provide adequate facilities necessary to provide shelter for fire department operations.

Policy 1: To improve the Newton-Baker VFD fire station facility to adequately house fire trucks.

Policy 2: We will reduce response time by establishing a substation in the north-east portion of the county and to establish a permanent structure or agreement for the Patmos VFD.

Objective 3: To upgrade fire fighting equipment in each station so as to effectively contribute to lower ISO ratings.

Policy 1: We will fully equip the each station to provide effective and efficient service and communications.

Policy 2: We will replaces equipment on a priority basis as needed insuring increased water carrying and pumping capacity.

Policy 3: We will upgrade hoses on each vehicle.

Objective 4: To improve communications systems during emergencies.

Policy 1: To continually upgrade the communications system and equipment including radios, pagers and beepers as needed.

Objective 5: To encourage professional training and development of a sufficient number of fire fighters in each community.

Policy 1: We will continually recruit and train new volunteers.

Policy 2: We will coordinate training on a countywide basis whenever feasible.

Emergency Management Services

GOAL 1: To provide excellent emergency service response and care throughout Baker County with emphasis on personnel training, expansion of medical equipment and the upkeep of vehicles and facilities.

Objective 1: To develop facilities as needed to insure timely responses to the residents of Baker County.

Policy 1: We will plan for the development of satellite stations as dictated by service needs.

Policy 2: We will upgrade equipment and training to provide the best possible care.

Water System

GOAL: To ensure that the public water supply systems in Newton is adequately maintained and upgraded to meet the needs of the communities for potable water, economic development activities, fire protection and other community needs.

Objective 1: To develop a maintenance plan for proposed new water system improvements.

Policy 1: We will routinely budget for cleaning, painting and other maintenance of water tanks, wells, and the water distribution system.

Objective 2: We will protect ground water supplies around well sites.

Policy 1: We will develop well head protection ordinances in Baker County and Newton.

School Facilities and Services

GOAL: To enhance educational facilities, programs, and services in Baker County and Mitchell County so as to provide the opportunities needed to improve education and skills levels necessary to obtain a successful labor force.

Objective 1: We will support plans to modernize the Baker County Elementary School.

Policy 1 : We will promote the rehabilitation of existing structures and facilities.

Objective 2: To enhance the development and use of vocational training programs, GED programs and literacy programs.

Policy 1: We will promote literacy training and the acquisition of GED by supporting local programs.

Policy 2: We will promote reading skills through the development of a local library.

Policy 3: We will encourage activities which would increase the availability of transportation to two and four year colleges in the region.

Policy 4: We will support local awareness campaigns focusing on scholarships, student loan programs and HOPE grants through local events and media.



Libraries and Cultural Facilities

GOAL: To support the development of libraries, and cultural or arts organizations throughout Baker County in an effort to expand cultural arts opportunities for local residents and to attract audiences from other counties.

Objective 1: To support the development of a public library in the City of Newton.

Policy 1: Encourage the implementation of a development plan in coordination with the Desoto Trail Regional Library System.

Policy 2: We will promote local events to raise donations for the local library and to encourage the development of volunteer organizations and solicitation of grants to fund personnel for the facility.

Recreational /Cultural Facilities

GOAL: to develop additional recreational facilities in the City of Newton and Baker County throughout the planning period.

Policy 1: We will meet the recreational needs of a diverse population.

Policy 2: We will develop family and community oriented park facilities that are simple to maintain.

Policy 3: We will promote park development of the land acquired in the property buyout in Newton to meet the needs of all ages of residents.

Policy 4: To promote the enhancement and restoration of existing indoor recreational facilities owned by the School Board.

Policy 5: To promote the development of cultural facilities, exhibits and other interpretive features designed to promote the history and culture of Baker County and Newton.

Health Services

GOAL: To provide an adequately staffed Health Department and Mental Health to meet the needs of Baker County residents.

Objective 1: To manage health care service delivery in an effective manner, meeting all state standards for waiting periods.

Policy 1: We will develop and upgrade adequate staff personnel.

Policy 2: We will maximize the efficiency of clerical assistance.

Policy 3: We will revisit fees for environmental sanitation services, passing costs to users of service in order to adequately staff the office.

Transportation

GOAL: To provide for quality road and street networks which are designed to meet the needs of Newton and Baker County.

Objective: To promote improvements in the road and bridges network in the City and County.

Policy 1: We will improve the paving to unpaved ratio in the City of Newton and Baker County.

Utilities

GOAL: To promote the use of modern technology in Baker County.

Objective: To promote the upgrading of substation and transformers.

Policy 1: We will work with Georgia Power and Mitchell County EMC to increase utility effectiveness and compatibility with current systems.

Natural Resources

GOAL: To maximize the long-term usefulness of Baker County's and the City of Newton's natural resources for agricultural, economic development, aesthetic, recreational, wildlife habitat and other functional environmental reasons.

Objective 1: To maintain the quality of the natural systems in Baker County and the City of Newton throughout the planning period.

Policy 1: We will utilize development regulations as warranted by development or natural constraints to direct land uses to the most suitable environments.

Policy 2: To protect sensitive environmental areas and habitats.

Objective 2: To promote the conservation of natural habitats of endangered and protected species in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Policy 1: We will encourage landowners in each community to identify natural habitats of endangered species on private lands.

Policy 2: We will increase countywide education on laws protecting local endangered species and habitats through school programs, media reports and local governmental staff training.

Policy 3: We will encourage local residents and organizations to participate in the Freshwater Wildlife and Heritage Inventory.

Policy 4: We will promote the use of conservation easements throughout the County and City to protect sensitive natural environments and plant and animal habitats.

Objective 3: To encourage the protection of prime farmland and other agriculturally important soils throughout Baker County.

Policy 1: We will support the Best Management Practices of the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Policy 2: To actively provide education on and advocate the enforcement of the Georgia Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act.

Objective 4: To protect wetlands as important natural resources in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Policy 1: We will promote county-wide awareness of the Federal 404 permitting process and the legal ramifications of non-compliance.

Policy 2: We will provide for a wetland identification check in any land development regulations developed during the planning period in Baker County or Newton.

Policy 3: We will promote protection of significant wetland areas as identified in the Swamp of Toa ADID project in Baker County.

Objective 5: To encourage the protection of the City and County surface water and ground water resources.

Policy 1: To ensure the protection of wellhead areas in Newton and Baker County to protect potable ground water supplies.

Policy 2: To promote county-wide awareness on the Georgia Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Act.

Policy 3: We will promote the protection of quality ground water resources by promoting the enforcement of existing agricultural regulations in the County.

Policy 4: We will continue to monitor the Tri-State ACT/ACF Water Study and River Basin Management Plan and any other regional water studies throughout the planning period at the County level.

Policy 5: To promote river corridor protection measures and the use of conservation easements to maintain necessary buffers along significant river and creek corridors in the City and County.

Objective 6: We will promote the preservation of scenic vistas and landscapes throughout the City and County.

Policy 1: We will continually locate and define scenic vistas of importance in the County which are subject to the impacts of development pressures.

Policy 2: We will promote effective land use measures and conservation measure necessary to maintain important landscape features which provide a sense of place Baker County and the City of Newton.

LAND USE GOALS, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To promote land development patterns which will protect sensitive natural resources in Newton and Baker County.

Objective 1: To facilitate the promotion of good land management practices designed to protect the County's traditional agricultural and forestry industries.

Policy 1: We will support the use of land and soil conservation programs sponsored by the ASCS and SCS.

Policy 2: To promote countywide education and public awareness of EPA's 404 permitting process and the State's Soil and Sedimentation Act requirements and review for compliance as land development regulations are developed.

Policy 3: Encourage the clustering of future residential, commercial and industrial land uses in the unincorporated areas to avoid the scattered break up of large agricultural lands.

Policy 4: Develop land use regulations to protect sensitive environmental and prime agricultural lands as needed and as administratively possible.

Policy 5: We will continue to protect river corridors and flood plains through local ordinances in Newton and Baker County.

Objective 2: To protect and preserve existing residential areas and to promote the orderly development of land throughout the City and County.

Policy 1: We will encourage infill development in residential areas of Newton and in unincorporated communities to insure efficient infrastructure and service delivery.

Policy 2: We will develop consistent regulations for the development and siting of manufactured homes in the City of Newton and Baker County.

Policy 3: We will encourage the development of adequate buffers between incompatible land uses and residential areas when developing new land use regulations.

Policy 4: We will encourage re-development of blighted flood areas of Newton.

Policy 5: We will promote the development of several small neighborhood parks in unincorporated communities.

Policy 6: We will promote the development of land use regulations which will provide adequate guidance to ensure orderly development patterns in Newton and Baker County.

Objective 3: To provide adequate land to encourage the development of residential, commercial and industrial areas near existing public services.

Policy 1: To promote industrial development in city limits.

Policy 2: We will encourage infill development in Newton outside of the flood plain along Georgia Highways 37 and 91.

Policy 3: We will monitor fringe area development and land use needs in Newton for possible annexation needs.

Objective 4: To provide an adequate amount of land for all land use categories to meet the needs of the existing and future population of Baker County.

Policy 1: We will encourage the long-term development of parks and open space throughout Baker County communities.

Policy 2: We will encourage the conversion of agricultural lands within municipalities to other land uses which may best be served by existing infrastructure so as to protect the agricultural lands throughout the County.

Historic and Archaeological Resources

GOAL 1: To enhance the quality of life in Baker County communities through the identification, preservation, protection, development and promotion of historic and archaeological resources and to stimulate related economic development and tourism activities.

Objective 1: To develop a countywide historic preservation plan which will deal with all aspects of historic and archaeological protection and development.

Policy 1: We will support a countywide Historic/Archaeological Preservation Commission.

Policy 2: We will support grant applications to update county-wide historic surveys.

Policy 3: We will identify and prioritize nominations to the National Register for residential and commercial historic district boundaries.

Policy 4: We will educate the public on the state and federal tax incentives related to historic

Policy 5: To encourage the acquisition of historic preservation funding and cultural development²⁹ funding from private foundations and all other sources.

Objective 2: To promote the development of tourism, heritage and other economic development activities related to historic and archaeological resources.

Policy 1: We will develop brochure listing points of historical interest, scenic views etc. in Baker County and the City of Newton.

Policy 2: We will establish annual events such as home tours, cultural events, heritage days, etc. which would highlight historic resources and Newton/Baker County's rich past.

Policy 3: To develop stronger relationships with the Georgia Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, Plantation Trace Historic Region and the State Historic Planning Office, and the RDC Historic Preservation Planner.

Policy 4: Pursue the identification of highways 37 and 91 as scenic byways.

Objective 3: To promote heritage and cultural education throughout Baker County.

Policy 1: To encourage heritage education in Baker County Elementary and Mitchell-Baker High School.

Policy 2: To encourage adult heritage education programs throughout the County.

Policy 3: To support heritage workshop training for local teachers in conjunction with other communities.

GOAL 2: To work with the Historic Trust, Baker County Historic Society, and other interested parties to preserve significant historic resources located in the City of Newton which are threatened by property buyout or to mitigate the impacts of property buyout.

Objective 1: To save and restore any historic buildings of the City of Newton

Policy 1: The City and County will promote a museum as a showcase of history to be used in conjunction with other heritage education tools to promote local history in area schools.

Objective 2: To work with the Historic Trust on the historic features that will be a part of the redevelopment of the hazard mitigation buy out area in downtown Newton.

Policy 1: Coordinate with the Historic Trust and other interested parties, to design and create a park in the hazard mitigation buy out area that will complement existing historic resources and will commemorate those resources lost to time and/or floods.

Objective 3: To insure that documentation of the City of Newton's heritage is not destroyed during the property buyout program implementation.

Policy 1: Inventory and document (photo and written description) all historic structures that will be demolished in the hazard mitigation buy out.

Policy 2: To promote the past development of Newton through historical photos, the development of an interpretive park and a museum.

City of Newton Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Housing</i>								
Contract for building inspection/permit services	X	X	X	X	X	City	variable	fees/GF
Adopt Building Codes	X	X	X	X	X	City	variable	General Fund
Conduct a housing needs survey in cooperation with Housing Authority		X				City, Housing Authority	variable	Operating Budgets
Develop and implement housing plan based on findings of housing needs survey			X	X	X	City, Housing Authority	\$500,000	CDBG, CHIP
Using Eminent Domain acquire all agricultural land within the city limits for the land bank			X	X	X	City/County	\$300,000	Redevelopment grant
Examine the possibilities of the remediation of dilapidated manufactured housing stock	X	X	X	X	X	City/County	Variable	fees
<i>Natural Resources</i>								
Continue support of Best Management Practices as advocated by Natural Resources agencies, and enforcement of Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, environmental ordinances, Soil and Sedimentation Act and related agricultural regulations.	X	X	X	X	X	City, NRCS, Forestry Service, RDC	N/A	Operating Budgets
<i>Historic/Archaeological Resources</i>								
Work with RDC Preservation Planner and property owners to nominate significant remaining properties to the National Register	X	X	X	X	X	City, Historical Society, RDC	variable	Grants operating budget
Get Highways 37 & 91 Identified as scenic byways	X	X	X	X	X	City, County, RDC, DOT	N/A	N/A

City of Newton Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Economic Development</i>								
Complete streetscape/park plan for courthouse	X	X	X	X	X	City, County	\$200,000	TEA, Grants
Support development and implementation of county economic development plan	X	X	X	X	X	County Economic Development Committee	variable	Grants, General Fund,
Develop City Website with links to community businesses and county resources	X	X	X	X	X	City, County	variable	General Fund
Develop city wide sidewalks with context appropriate street lighting	X	X	X	X	X	City	Variable	GDOT, grants, General Fund
Study the possibility of Weekend Farmers Market in Commercial node	X	X	X			City	N/A	General Fund
In conjunction with County, develop a business incubator and entrepreneurial support facility	X	X	X	X	X	City/County	N/A	General Fund
Develop business retention package that includes reduced taxes, decreased parking standards etc	X	X	X			City	N/A	General Fund

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City of Newton Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Community Facilities</i>								
Waste Water Treatment Plant				X	X	City	3 million	Bonds, SPLOST, Loans
Sewer System				X	X	City	2 million	Bonds, SPLOST, Loans
Meet with DOT engineers, city engineer, RDC and council concerning drainage issues within the city	X	X				City, DOT, RDC	N/A	Operating Budget
Continue road and drainage projects according to current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	City	\$1 million	City, DOT, Grants
Continue ROW acquisition according to current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	City, DOT	variable	City, DOT
Develop LARP priority list annually	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	Operating Budget
Require certification training for new water system operators	X	X	X	X	X	City,	\$1,000	Operating Budget
Develop and adopt map of bicycle routes	X	X				City, RDC	variable	Operating Budget
Develop a method of public mobilization to change school board. Commission and publish a cost/benefit analysis of merging school districts with neighboring county	X	X				City/County	N/A	Operating Budget
Entertain the idea of consolidating city/county governments	X	X	X	X	X	City/County	N/A	General Funds
Demand school district provide youth initiatives to encourage achievement and reduce drop out rate	X	X	X	X	X	School Board	N/A	Operating Budget
In conjunction with the County develop additional river access points/boat ramps	X	X	X			City/County	N/A	Operating Budget

City of Newton Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Public Safety</i>								
Develop plan for facility and operational improvements to fire protection to improve ISO rating for county, including consolidation of city and county departments	X	X				County/Newton	N/A	Operating Budget
Begin implementation of facility and operational improvements, as feasible		X	X	X	X	County/Newton	\$500,000	USDA, CD BG
Study availability and cost of additional training for police officers		X				City	N/A	Operating Budget
Develop perk based staff retention package including lowered taxes and utility fees	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	Operating Budget
<i>Cultural Facilities</i>								
Re-establish multi-purpose center at old school on Rosedale	X	X				City, Community Volunteer Groups	Variable	Grants, Operating Budgets
Establish 12-step and other social service programs, such as Parenting Classes, Adult learning center to be housed in multi-purpose center	X	X	X			City, Community Volunteer Groups	Variable	Grants, Operating Budgets
Establish transportation between all regional post secondary education institutions and Newton. Extend transportation network to include large employers in the area.	X	X				City, Albany Tech, Economic Development Committee	Variable	Albany Tech, RTCC, Fees

<i>City Operations</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Consider implementing Capital Improvement Plan with city accountant	X	X				City	N/A	N/A
Study ways to increase city operating funds	X	X				City, Accountant	N/A	N/A
Implement annual audit recommendations	X	X	X	X	X	City, Accountant	N/A	N/A
Develop purchasing policy for city		X				City, Accountant	N/A	N/A
Host periodic citywide public meetings to discuss citizen interests	X	X	X	X	X	City	N/A	N/A

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Baker County Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Housing</i>								
Contract for building inspection/permit services	X	X	X	X	X	County	variable	fees
Develop an efficient permitting and fee system to license contractors.	X							
Examine the possibilities of the remediation of dilapidated manufactured housing stock	X	X	X	X	X	City/County	Variable	fees
Adopt Building Codes	X	X	X	X	X	County	variable	General Fund
<i>Natural Resources</i>								
Continue support of Best Management Practices as advocated by Natural Resources agencies, and enforcement of Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, environmental ordinances, Soil and Sedimentation Act and related agricultural regulations.	X	X	X	X	X	County, NRCS, Forestry Service, RDC	N/A	Operating Budgets
Appoint local representatives, as needed, to attend River Basin Management Plan meetings.		X	X			County	N/A	General Fund
Write and adopt County wide sign ordinance		X	X			County/RDC	\$2,000	General Fund

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<i>Historic/Archaeological Resources</i>									
Apply for funding for countywide historic resources survey from State Historic Preservation office		X	X				County/RDC	\$4,000	Grant, General Fund
Work with East Baker County Historical Society to nominate properties or districts to the National Register with assistance from RDC Preservation Planner	X	X	X	X	X		County, Historical Society, RDC	\$1,000	Grant, General Fund
Get Highways 37 & 91 Identified as scenic byways	X	X	X	X	X		City, County, RDC, DOT	N/A	N/A
Promote Heritage Education programs in Baker County Elementary School and Mitchell-Baker High School	X	X	X	X	X		Historical Society, School System,	N/A	Operating Budgets

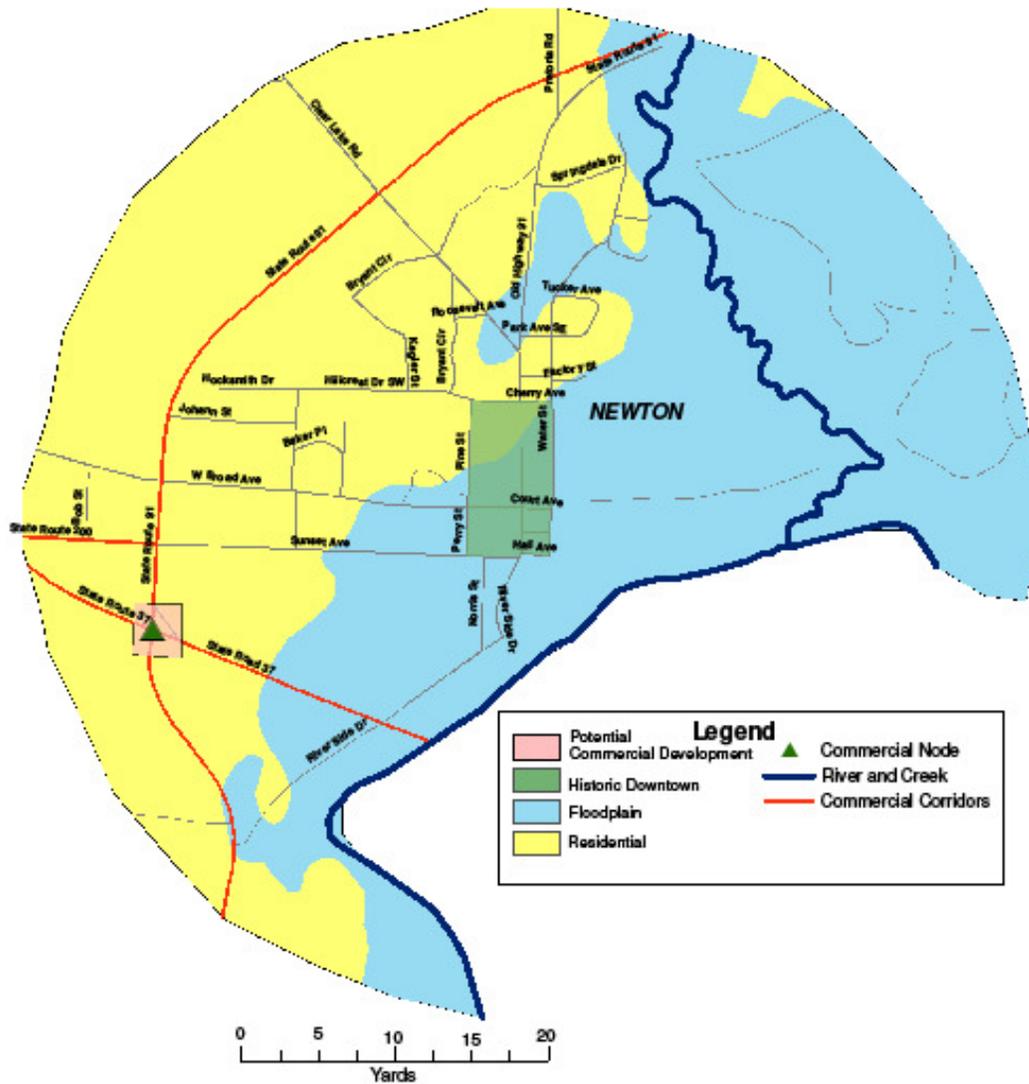
Baker County Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Economic Development</i>								
Establish committee to act as liaison between local governments and economic development agencies to provide guidance in the establishment of economic development programs. (This committee will be composed of citizens appointed by the county to augment efforts of the Baker, Dougherty, Lee and Terrell joint economic development authority.)	X					County	N/A	Operating Budget
Develop a county economic development plan which outlines projects of the committee	X					Economic Development Committee	N/A	County Operating Budget
Present county economic development plan to County Commission for approval and funding of projects.	X	X				ED Committee	N/A	Grants, General Funds
Conduct a BREP survey with assistance from GEDC staff		X		X		ED Committee	N/A	DITT funds
Support re-use of vacant commercial structures	X	X	X	X	X	ED Committee, County	\$500,000	EIP Grant
Complete streetscape/park plan for Courthouse Square-Newton	X	X				ED Committee, County	\$300,000	TEA Grant
Support efforts to develop downtown Newton area	X	X	X	X	X	County, ED Committee	N/A	General Funds
Improve access and signage for Chickasawhatchee WMA. Lobby for the establishment of Nature Center there.	X	X	X			County/City	N/A	General Funds
Develop Heritage Trails for Cemeteries, Canopy Roads, Churches and Communities link to County/City Website	X	X	X	X	X	County	N/A	General Funds
Develop Countywide Garden Club	X	X	X	X	X	County	N/A	General Funds

Baker County Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Construct a County/City Website with links to local businesses to emphasize the agri tourism opportunities, promote Quail festival and the actions of local Governments. Website should be linked to other online regional resource sites	X	X	X	X	X	County, ED Committee	N/A	General Funds
Develop County Gateways and unique signage	X	X	X	X		County, ED Committee	N/A	General Funds
Create a County/City Capital Improvement plan and budget	X	X	X	X	X	County/City	\$2,000	General Funds
In conjunction with the City, develop a business incubator and entrepreneur support service center	X	X	X	X		County/City	\$10,000	General Funds
Develop Co-Op organization of local farmers and plantation owners to centralize Heritage Tourism Resources and planning.	X	X	X			County/City	N/A	General Funds
Pursue funding for improving access to internet countywide	X	X	X	X	X	County	N/A	General Funds
<i>Community Facilities</i>								
Continue road and drainage projects according to current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	County, DOT	\$1 million	County, DOT, Grants
Entertain the idea of consolidating city/county governments	X	X	X	X	X	City/County	N/A	General Funds
Continue Bridge Construction and ROW acquisition according to current annual priority list	X	X	X	X	X	County, DOT	Variable	County, DOT
Continue development of long term maintenance plan for governmental facilities	X					County, RDC	N/A	Operating Budget
Develop plan for facility and operational improvements to fire protection to improve ISO rating for county, including consolidation of city and county departments	X	X				County/New ton	N/A	Operating Budget

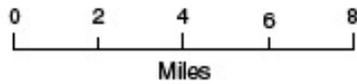
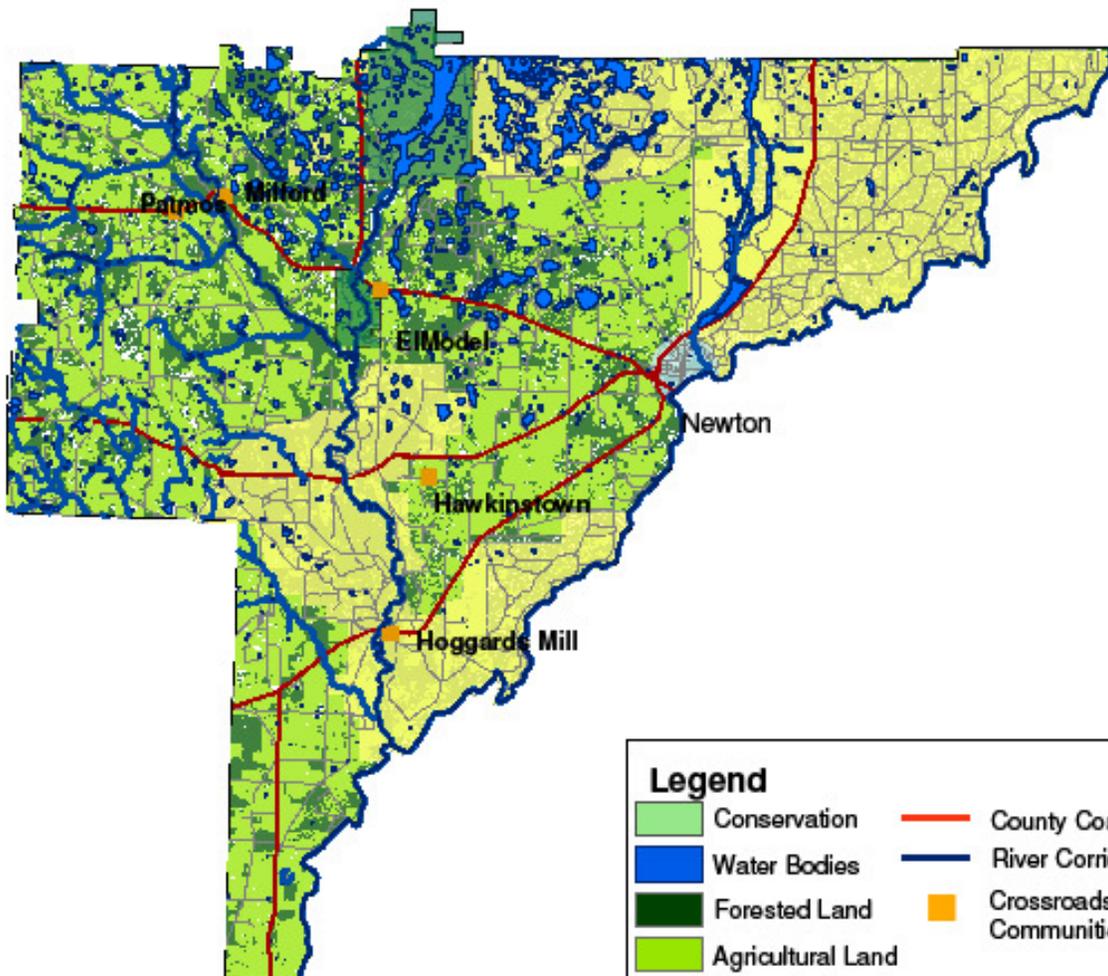
Baker County Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Begin implementation of facility and operational improvements for improved fire protection, as feasible		X	X	X	X	County/Newton	\$500,000	USDA,CD BG
Plan and build/renovate building to house Baker County DFACS offices	X	X	X			County	\$100,000	General Funds
Implement establishment of countywide 911		X	X	X		County	\$200,000	General Funds
Support development and continuation of volunteer recycling programs	X	X	X	X	X	County, ED Committee	N/A	Operating Budget
Build elevator in the County Courthouse	X	X	X			County/City	N/A	Grants, General Funds
<i>Recreation Facilities/Services</i>								
Support recreation leagues outside of county which serve Baker County youth.	X	X	X	X	X	County	Varies	General Fund
Publish cost/benefit study of combining school district with that of a neighboring county	X	X				County/City	N/A	General Fund
Formulate plan for developing small community parks in the most heavily populated sections of the county	X	X	X	X	X	County, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Support efforts to develop small community parks through available grants	X	X	X	X	X	County, RDC	Varies	General Fund .
Acquire land for Baseball Park			X	X	X	County	N/A	General Fund
Construct more boat ramps on Flint and Nochaway Creek to ease access to fishing areas						County/GDOT	N/A	TEA-Grant
Negotiate with Landowners for the creation of Birding trails throughout the county.	X	X	X					

Baker County Work Program	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
<i>Land Use</i>								
Establish a Planning Commission	X					County, RDC	N/A	Operating Budget
Adopt zoning ordinance as feasible		X				County, RDC	\$12,000	Operating Budget, DCA Contract

City of Newton Future Development Map



Baker County Future Development Map



Legend	
Conservation	County Corridors
Water Bodies	River Corridors
Forested Land	Crossroads Communities
Agricultural Land	
Plantation Land	

