

2015 Comprehensive Plan

City of Baldwin, Georgia



“The Hub of Development in Northeast Georgia.”

**August, 2015
Adopted December, 2015**

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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. This document, the *City of Baldwin 2015 Comprehensive Plan*, represents the culmination of the efforts to plan for the future well-being for the City, the residents and various stakeholders by identifying the critical, consensus issues and goals for the community. Implementing the plan will help the community address those critical issues and opportunities while moving towards realization of the unique vision for its future. As outlined by Georgia's planning standards (see below):

Statewide benefits of comprehensive planning

City and county comprehensive planning should be conducted in the context of Georgia's strong and vibrant intergovernmental system that clearly recognizes the important role cities and counties play in fostering the state's image as an attractive place to invest, conduct businesses and raise a family. City and county comprehensive planning enhances coordination at many levels.

Local benefits of comprehensive planning

The highest and best use of comprehensive planning for local governments is to show important relationships between community issues. A local comprehensive plan is a fact-based resource for local constituents that tracks implementation of community-based policies. Furthermore, local comprehensive planning creates an environment of predictability for business and industry, investors, property owners, tax payers and the general public. In addition, the plan helps local governments to recognize and then implement important economic development and revitalization initiatives. For these reasons, the state finds that well-planned communities are better prepared to attract new growth in a highly competitive global market.

In short, local planning should recognize that:

*Assets can be **accentuated** and **improved**;*

*Liabilities can be **mitigated** and **changed** over time; and*

*Potential can be **sought after** and **developed**.*

SCOPE

This document addresses the local planning requirements and community development of the City of Baldwin, Georgia. Some consideration has been given to those areas and political entities outside the City that influence conditions within the City, but all the cited issues, objectives and opportunities discussed herein are solely focused on the City of Baldwin.

This document will be offered as supplemental material for the respective comprehensive plans for Banks County and Habersham County. The City of Baldwin is politically appointed as a municipality of Habersham County but does feature some properties and residents within Banks County, as well. Those jurisdictions are responsible for their own community planning, however both the Counties and the City of Baldwin work together to ensure coordination among initiatives and plan implementation.

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. It is essential that the plan be prepared in compliance with these rules and guidelines in order for the City of Baldwin to maintain its Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. Further, State law requires that the City of Baldwin update its comprehensive plan every 5 years.

"The purpose of Minimum Standards is to provide a framework for the development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans at the local, regional and state government level. They reflect an important state interest: healthy and economically vibrant cities and counties are vital to the state's economic prosperity."

***(1) Community Goals.** The purpose of the Community Goals element is to lay out a road map for the community's future, developed through a very public process of involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the future of the community. The Community Goals are the most important part of the plan, for they identify the community's direction for the future, and are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, thereby leading citizens and leadership to act to ensure that the plan is implemented.*

The Community Goals must include at least one or a combination of any of the four components listed below:

***(a) General Vision Statement.** Include a general statement that paints a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.*

***(b) List of Community Goals.** Include a listing of the goals the community seeks to achieve. Review the suggested community goals in the Supplemental Planning Recommendations for suggestions.*

(c) Community Policies. *Include any policies the local government selects to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Goals.*

(d) Character Areas and Defining Narrative. *This option lays out more specific goals for the future of the community by community sub-areas, districts, or neighborhoods, and may be prepared using the guidance provided for the Land Use Element.*

(2) Needs and Opportunities. *The locally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities the community intends to address. Each of the needs or opportunities... identified as high priority must be followed-up with corresponding implementation measures in the Community Work Program. The list must be developed by involving community stakeholders in carrying out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or similar analysis of the community.*

(3) Community Work Program. *This element of the comprehensive plan lays out the specific activities the community plans to undertake during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities, identified Target Areas (if applicable), or to achieve portions of the Community Goals. This includes any activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems (such as site plan review, design review, etc.) to be put in place to implement the plan. The Community Work Program must include the following information for each listed activity:*

- *Brief description of the activity;*
- *Legal authorization for the activity, if applicable;*
- *Timeframe for initiating and completing the activity;*
- *Responsible party for implementing the activity;*
- *Estimated cost (if any) of implementing the activity; and*
- *Funding source(s), if applicable.*

In addition to the required elements the City of Baldwin is including a full land use element. Located along the growing and busy Highway 365 corridor within the Georgia Mountains region, Baldwin sits within an area experiencing dynamic development forms and pressures and faces several challenges on this front. The analysis provided by the updated land use section will ensure the City is properly managing development related issues and objectives.

Lastly, local comprehensive plans in Georgia are now required to include an assessment of compliance and consideration for the appropriate regional water plans for each community.

Consideration of the Regional Water Plan and the Environmental Planning Criteria. *During the process of preparing its comprehensive plan, each community must review the Regional Water Plan(s) covering its area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria... to determine if there is need to adapt local implementation practices or development regulations to address protection of these important natural resources. The community must certify that it has considered both the Regional Water Plan and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria when it transmits the plan to the Regional Commission for review.*

After consideration of the GMRC Regional Plan and the Coosa-North Georgia Watershed management Plan, the City of Baldwin is considered compliant with both documents. The City also maintains the necessary policies for compliance with the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The process for this plan update was begun in early 2014, as the City was working with Habersham County and the other communities within the county to assess growth management and economic development concerns along the Highway 365 corridor. A public meeting was held in the Baldwin Police Department on February 22, 2014. This opportunity to review and discuss land use and development was used to initiate discussions about Baldwin and their upcoming comprehensive plan update. A total of 21 people attended this event and offered their thoughts about prospective changes for the area and their priorities with regards to the types of growth desired. In general the crowd supported larger development along the 365 corridor and in the industrial park as part of efforts to bring jobs to the area, which was considered critical. Smaller scale development would be amenable within the historic downtown, and there was casual support for coordinated utility improvements with other communities in the area.

The bulk of the planning process was then carried out during FY15, with various meetings and communication with stakeholders and key officials. Primary stakeholders considered for this update mirrored the list from the 2009 plan process, including the City's elected and appointed officials and main admin staff. Additionally, key local business owners, residents and others were consulted in the process. Additional parties contacted included prominent employers and operations in and around the city, including: Baldwin Elementary School, the Habersham County Airport, Windstream, GTS, SteelCell South State Bank, and Fieldale Farms. Plan materials were also made available to other parties via the City offices and through the local Chamber of Commerce.

Local stakeholders had no major changes recommended to the existing comprehensive plan. The biggest objectives cited in these discussions concerned economic growth, long-term plans for utility improvements and the eventual redevelopment of the downtown area. Major transportation infrastructure was considered good though some local roads and sidewalks would need maintenance over time. The schools were considered a quality asset but additional contact with the region's technical colleges to support job skills training was a recognized need. There was also a desire among area business owners to see more new housing introduced to the area, which they felt would come in time with new jobs.

GMRC staff also conducted field surveys in local restaurants and shops on June 26, 2015. This included casual discussions with patrons within popular local eatery the Stew & Que, as well as visitors at the City Park. In all 15 people were asked their thoughts about the City and the general area. Most spoke favorably of Baldwin's charm as a place to live, describing it as "*a great small town close by to spots for jobs and for shopping.*" Every favored the low cost of living but also agreed much of the housing stock was getting old and is considered small by current market standards. Everyone unanimously supported measures to bring more jobs to the area, and they liked having the airport and industrial park nearby, hoping to fill the empty lots there soon. There was no major concern offered regarding utilities or other City services, but there was hope for some improved intersection management along Highway 365.

Final public hearings for the draft plan were held on August 6th and 11th, 2015. Both meetings were held in the evening at the Baldwin Police Department, with the first coinciding with the City Council's work session. No one offered new comments during the first hearing and only 3 people attended the second meeting, with only minor comments reflecting edits for the document. After further reviews and considerations based on pending developments outside the city, the document would be approved for submittal to the State.

Community Vision

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Identification of Community Ideals in a Simply Expressed and Understood Statement

The Minimum Standards and Requirements for Local Comprehensive Planning 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.*” It is required as an element of the comprehensive plan so that communities can truly establish a pure and simple ideal for themselves in a format that is easily expressed and understood.

Visioning provides communities with an opportunity to pause and consider the “big picture” as well as to attempt to clearly define their ideal future. Developing a vision means that community has at least tried to identify current values, describe how they’re to be realized in the future and use that image as a foundation for short and long-term planning. As a process this also requires the community to develop a consensus on what conditions to change or to preserve.

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

The community needs and opportunities described in this section of the plan are a final compilation of key factors impacting the future of Baldwin. They reflect an assessment of the conditions and factors influencing the city, stakeholder knowledge of the community and comments received throughout the planning process.

In order to effectively implement Baldwin’s vision for the future, the city must develop a well-defined implementation plan. By identifying the core issues and opportunities of the community, the City 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 community because they form the basis for the development of Baldwin’s long and short-term work action plans.

For this process the City’s list of issues and opportunities from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan were used as the template for the discussion with local officials, stakeholders and the general public invited to comment on the need to change, add or subtract any of items. Participants were asked to consider the community’s strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in identifying the needs for Baldwin. This was accompanied with an updated assessment of statistical data and information about the community.

Most of the core issues remained intact as the city is relatively unchanged since 2009 due to the general stagnation of the area during the recession. The regional economy has shown some recent signs of progress but on the whole the City remains unchanged, with no new prominent construction since 2011. The City has used this time to formalize their plans regarding new parks, City Hall and select utility improvements, all of which remain underway or in the concept development stage.

The resulting Needs and Opportunities are presented here in a narrative format comparable to the existing 2009 plan, with amendments and updates as needed.

Population & Demographics

2010 Census Profile – Baldwin, GA

	#	%
Total Population	3,279	100
<15 yrs	851	26
15-64 yrs	2,004	61
65+ yrs	424	13
Race & Ethnicity		
White	2,402	73.3
Black or African American	114	3.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	55	1.7
Asian	93	2.8
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	6	0.2
Some Other Race	550	16.8
Two or More Races	59	1.8
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,227	37.4
Not Hispanic or Latino	2,052	62.6
In Households	3,141	95.8
In Group Quarters	138	4.2
Average Household size	2.90	
Average Family Size	3.44	
Housing Occupancy		
Total housing units	1,278	100
Occupied housing units	1,083	84.7
Owner-occupied housing units	598	55.2
Renter-occupied housing units	485	44.8
Vacant housing units	195	15.3
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent) [8]	4.9	
Rental vacancy rate (percent) [9]	17	

Need to adapt for population growth – The City of Baldwin’s population grew from 2,425 in 2000 to an estimated 3,309 in 2014, a 36% increase in population for the City during the last 14 years.

The City lies along the developing Highway 365 corridor, just north of Hall County and the fringes of metropolitan Atlanta and a burgeoning industrial quarter. The bulk of the region has seen a decline in the textile manufacturing industry over the last decade and in its place communities are attempting to diversify their economic base. These changes have had a cause and effect relationship with the general labor force, attracting residents seeking employment and accelerating the region’s change from a rural, agrarian economy to one featuring more service industries and goods production. Baldwin, as part of this corridor, has seen steady growth as a result, even through the recession.

Need to adapt to changing demography – Baldwin continues to see a dramatic increase in residents of Hispanic origin. In 2000 this demographic represented 25.9% of the population. In 2010 that percentage had jumped to 37.4%

North Georgia is home to numerous poultry plants, poultry farms, dairy farms, cattle farms and general agricultural farms and various construction related businesses. A large portion of the employee base for these industries is day laborers and seasonal workers. This attracts a lot of immigrant workers, many of who may be undocumented. This presents a unique challenge to the city because these individuals have a very different social, cultural and educational background than other citizens. Their native language is something other than English and the city is obligated to provide adequate access to services. They also tend to be more skeptical of government services and public safety agencies. To complicate matters, most of this population has very limited education and minimal, if any, English speaking, reading or writing skills.

Need to adapt for an aging population – The aging population of the city and surrounding areas continues to be of concern. Because of healthier lifestyles and advances in medicine, people are living longer than ever before. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) projections, Baldwin’s 65+ population (seniors) is projected to increase by 62% between 2005 and 2030. In addition, this segment of our society has a much different view of their “retirement” years than previous generations. They desire a healthier, more active lifestyle than previous generations- so much so, that they have been labeled as the “active-adult” community by many consumer-based organizations who are targeting this group for offering products and services too.

This is particularly important to the City of Baldwin in relation to demands on the housing market to offer new products designed to meet the growing demands of this emerging consumer group. For example, in recent years the Traditional Retirement Community (age-restricted independent care, assisted living, nursing home or group home) has been replaced by the Active Adult Community- which offers age-restricted living that includes independent living in larger homes with “step-down-in-housing” options as one ages into assisted living or long-term nursing care (known as *Aging in Place*), a variety of new “senior friendly” design standards (known as *Easy Living Standards*) and an environment that promotes healthy, active lifestyles with scenic landscaping, activity centers, health & fitness centers, recreational and shopping opportunities and is pedestrian friendly. This presents a challenge to the City because current zoning and/or building and development regulations may not be conducive to the needs of these types of mixed-use, master planned developments.

Lingering need to improve income and poverty levels – The City of Baldwin has a significantly higher number of citizens that are below the federal poverty level. As of 2013, approximately 34.3% of Baldwin’s residents were below the federal poverty level as compared to the statewide average of 15%. Baldwin’s 2013 mean household income of \$42,646 had increased by 8% but still lagged behind State and regional averages.

The City of Baldwin can take a proactive role in reducing poverty by working with local and state educators, local business leaders and community leaders to encourage young children to stay in school and encourage its citizens to seek post-secondary education and job training opportunities. Furthermore, the City and area economic development groups can continue to aggressively recruit new business investments in the community.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Produce annual reports for utilities and infrastructure to ensure efficiency and sustainability within the system
- ☞ Closely monitor and produce annual reports on land use activities including annexations, rezoning and development permits that evaluate cumulative impacts, from year to year, to city services and infrastructure
- ☞ Establish a Senior Citizens Committee to advise the City Council on needs of seniors in the community
- ☞ Seek-out opportunities to partner with local groups to plan and host special events that include and are of interest to seniors
- ☞ Develop internal programs that are designed to meet the needs of all population groups including those who may be foreign born
- ☞ Work with local, regional and state agencies and non-profits to develop programs that meet the needs of non-English speaking citizens
- ☞ Seek-out opportunities to partner with local groups to plan and host special events that include and are of interest to diverse population groups
- ☞ Develop new programs and strategies for increasing employment opportunities in professional and high-tech industries while increasing employment opportunities in the manufacturing and industrial sectors that offer competitive wages that are comparable to state and national salary averages

Housing

Need to expand, and improve conditions of, local housing Inventory – Like many smaller rural communities, Baldwin’s housing inventory is decidedly aging and consists mostly of smaller, outdated homes. A full 25% of the city’s housing units are more than 30 years old, meaning those units are now subject to needs for major renovations and maintenance if such work has not already been addressed. Others still are more than 20 years old and may lack the modern amenities to sustain market values. This is critical as middle and lower-income households typically view housing as a major part of their long-term investment for wealth.

Condition	#	%
Total Units	1,098	
Year of Construction		
1999 - 2009		23.0
1980-1999		51.4
< 1980		25.6

Another key housing issue for the city is the continued aging and dilapidation of existing residential structures in some areas of the city. Many older homes have been converted from owner occupied to rental properties. Landlords and renters have not properly maintained some structures and property.

There have been similar problems with some owner occupied properties in the city. As a result, some areas of the community are becoming more and more blighted.

As Baldwin proceeds into future, the city needs to seek-out new opportunity for traditional neighborhood, mixed-use and master planned community developments that offer a variety of housing options and access to an environment where residents can “live, work and play.” Furthermore, the city needs to re-evaluate its local code enforcement regulations and enforcement policies. Where needed, the city should enhance such policies and regulations.

Need to accommodate abilities to age in place – As a larger segment of the population continues to age, there’s a growing need to provide residential opportunities for Baby Boomers and empty nesters who are seeking to “age in place.” Currently, seniors have few options other to remain in their own homes if they wish to remain in their own neighborhoods. There are some senior housing opportunities inside the City Limits including Habersham Retreat, Oak Heritage Health Care and Manor Place Apartments. Habersham Retreat is an adult daycare and assisted living facility. Oak Heritage is a local nursing home healthcare facility. Manor Place is a 55 plus independent living apartment complex. In addition, there are a few senior living options available in the nearby counties of Habersham, Hall and Jackson Counties.

As previously discussed, Baldwin is prime for exploring new opportunities for promoting senior living inside the city limits through regulation and policy changes that would encourage “aging in place” options for both new and existing residents.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Develop land-use policies that encourage and promote diverse housing opportunities for all citizens including affordable housing/workforce housing
- ☞ Develop, implement and enforce policies that promote the maintenance and up-keep of existing residential structures and properties
- ☞ Develop, implement and enforce a new rental property ordinance that protects the health and welfare of renters and ensures quality living standards within the city
- ☞ Develop and implement policies that promote the preservation, restoration and maintenance of historic properties within the city limits
- ☞ Develop and implement a Senior Housing Ordinance that promotes “aging in place” and “easy living” standard

Economic Development

Need to sustain improvements in education attainment rates– Baldwin’s educational attainment has improved over the years but the share of adults with a high schools degree or greater level remains comparably low at just over 60%.

Population 25 years and over	2,100
Less than 9th grade	22.5%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	16.2%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	25.0%
Some college, no degree	12.5%
Associate's degree	8.8%
Bachelor's degree	10.1%
Graduate or professional degree	4.9%

Baldwin's residents have access to a variety of educational resources within a 50-mile radius. Area public elementary and secondary schools continue to meet federal AYP criteria under the "No Child Left Behind" legislation initiative. There are also at least five private schools serving the area, access to regular and night/weekend classes for GED programs, adult learning initiatives, technical schools, 2-year community colleges, 4-year degree programs, graduate and doctoral programs. Area adult literacy service can be obtained through the North Georgia Technical College Adult Literacy Center in Cornelia. Area post-secondary schools within 15 mile radius include: North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College. A 25-mile radius includes: Truett-McConnell College, Brenau University and Toccoa Falls. A 45-mile radius includes: Lanier Technical College, University of North Georgia (Gainesville) and the University of Georgia.

Need to continue improving quality of labor force – Like Banks County, Baldwin's wages lag behind the market and state in almost every category. Job numbers in the city and surrounding counties is not keeping up with the population growth of the area. As a result, the majority of the working population (16 and older) travels out of the city and county for employment opportunities. There are limited job opportunities for high school and/or young college educated workers in the city.

As Baldwin continues to grow and more importance is placed on educational attainments, there are significant opportunities for the city to secure new economic investments- including new commercial and industrial investments from both the traditional and high-tech sectors- thereby increasing the number of jobs available potentially increasing wages to area residents.

Must expand/ diversify tax base – Baldwin's tax base remains imbalanced towards residential properties, most of which are very small and at the lower end of evaluations. There is a limited amount of commercial and industrial property within the city limits, for which revenue can be generated. Many of the existing commercial/industrial facilities remain unoccupied or under-utilized. Therefore, residential property owners bare the majority of the local tax burden. Baldwin's access to key resources such as major road networks, educational institutions, natural resources, recreational opportunities, water resources and significant sewer capacity provides it with the opportunity to increase its commercial and industrial tax base over the next decade. Furthermore, Baldwin has kept a low tax rate even though it has experienced significant growth pressures during the last decade. These low rates make the city attractive to potential residents and industry.

Opportunities to expand commercial & industrial activity – Existing commercial and industrial development is limited in nature and many of these facilities remain unoccupied or under-utilized within the city, particularly older structures in need of extensive renovation. However, the City has recently annexed more of the industrial properties surrounding the airport, providing greater tax revenues and solidifying the water and sewer services to these businesses. Baldwin has extensive road frontage along SR 365, which passes through the city limits. The 365 Corridor is prime for commercial and industrial development because of its access to extensive road frontage, relatively flat lands for construction, it feeds into Interstate 985- a major thoroughfare into Atlanta- and it offers access to an abundance of recreational and natural resource opportunities for employees who wish to live near their workplace. The city is also "small-business friendly" and encourages the small businessman's entrepreneurial spirit.

Need to capitalize on regional tourism – Because Baldwin is nestled along the SR 365 and US 441 corridors, it serves as a gateway to those who are visiting North Georgia's Blue Ridge Mountains. However, due to the lack of sufficient tourism related industries within the city limits, Baldwin is unable to capitalize on the situation. The city has an insufficient number of quality retail shops and restaurants along these two corridors to captivate and retain the attention of these visitors as they pass through the city to their destinations. Furthermore, the local hotels/motels serving the area are dilapidated and in serious states of disrepair, discouraging visitors from remaining in the area overnight.

Baldwin needs to capitalize on the natural resources of the area that attract and retain the attention of visitors. There is a need to enhance retail shopping, restaurant and overnight stay services within the city along both the 365 & 441 corridors to capture revenue from visitors to the area. Baldwin should seek to replace existing hotels/motels with modern facilities that complement the scenic mountain vistas of the 441 Corridor and rustic plain of the 365 Corridor. The 441 Corridor would make an excellent location for a new regional convention center for hosting major events in North Georgia. There is also opportunity for the city to become a showcase for environmental education and design standards because of local natural resources (scenic mountain views, continental divide, headwaters of Chattahoochee River and other waterways feeding Lake Lanier).

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Work with local education centers to promote new educational resources that are designed to enhance opportunities for all citizens
- ☞ Work with local high schools to develop programs that promote high school graduation
- ☞ Work with local schools and colleges to promote post-secondary education
- ☞ Work with the local business community to improve wages within the city
- ☞ Promote new economic investment from local, national and international sources that offers higher wage earning opportunities such as high tech, medical research,
- ☞ Develop a more diverse labor force including managerial, professional, and skilled workers.
- ☞ Actively promote policies that encourage new investment opportunities for commercial and industrial development within the city limits
- ☞ Establish an Industrial Development Authority for the city
- ☞ Develop and implement an economic development program for the city
- ☞ Work with local chambers of commerce, state and regional authorities and trade associations to develop and implement a coordinated marketing strategy for promoting investment within the city
- ☞ Work with local partners to establish an annual trade show and luncheon that promotes the city
- ☞ Ensure that Baldwin is presented at trade shows and economic development events across the state and southeast to promote investment in the city
- ☞ Develop and implement a grant funded program that assists local entrepreneurs and business owners with developing sustainable business plans and practices
- ☞ Establish overlay districts for the US 441 and SR 365 that enhances the aesthetics and promotes the desired character for each of the corridors
- ☞ Adopt and promote local ordinances that protect mountain vistas along the US 441 corridor and throughout the city
- ☞ Obtain funding to secure the ownership of the Baldwin Falls properties and create a recreational facility for users that includes multi-purpose trails and possible connectivity with the Tallulah Falls Rails-to-Trails project in Cornelia
- ☞ Obtain funding to secure and redevelop the old whiskey distillery property and market it as a local tourist attraction
- ☞ Promote and encourage the development of a regional convention center within the city limits.
- ☞ Promote and encourage the development of an environmental education center for water resource management within the city limits
- ☞ Encourage new business investment in the 441 and 365 corridors that support tourism activities such as hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, retail shops, restaurants, cafes, specialty shops and related sales and services
- ☞ Establish a regionally coordinated tourism program through partnerships with local chambers of commerce and various local, regional and state tourism authorities
- ☞ Ensure that the Baldwin is represented at regional, state and national tourism events

Natural & Cultural Resources

Opportunity to market and protect natural resources – The City of Baldwin recognizes the value in protecting mountain and valley views created by the topography of Banks and Habersham Counties. This draws many residents and visitors to the area and thus feeds the local economy. Protecting these view sheds is important in order to maintain the quality of life and preserve the historic rural character of the community and area.

Baldwin should thoroughly explore opportunities to secure significant natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas surrounding the current city limits for the purpose of preserving and protecting these resources for future generations. Baldwin should also consider utilizing creative zoning and land use regulations and practices as a tool for managing new growth while preserving key resources in the community.

Opportunity to market and protect historic resources – Just as it is important to protect our natural resources, we must also protect our historical resources throughout the community. There are many historic structures and one historic place within the city limits of Baldwin. A number of Baldwin's historic resources remain intact, although a great deal have been altered or damaged over the years and thus are no longer eligible for preservation listing because of the loss of historical integrity. As current historic properties and newly eligible properties age, more and more seem to be falling into disrepair. Preserving these properties is imperative if we want to help future generations understand the rich history of our community.

Baldwin's current inventory of historic resources include the Jackson Store, the Sweet Pea Plantation (formerly known as Habersham Retreat), the Parks Home, the Baldwin Garment Manufacturing Company, the Baldwin Bank Building, the Lewallen House, the Baldwin Baptist Church, the Carwood Manufacturing Building, the Hodgson-Rudeseal House, the Perry House and the Martin House. Baldwin should strongly encourage owners of such property to maintain and/or restore aging properties. Furthermore, when renovations occur to one of these properties, the city should work with the owners to ensure that historical integrity remains intact. The City should, whenever possible, actively support and encourage efforts to list individual properties on the national register and work towards developing an historic district for the old downtown properties.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Develop and implement a local natural resource protection program that promotes the long-term preservation of resources through-out the community and where possible coordinate with other area governments to establish a regional program to protect surround areas along key corridors (i.e. greenspace programs)
- ☞ Explore opportunities to secure financing for greenspace, natural preserves, sensitive environmental areas, historic and cultural resources and recreational areas
- ☞ Adopt a conservation ordinance that protects mountain visas from intrusive development and encourages property owners to preserve such resources for future generations through the use of conservation designs during development
- ☞ Implement a historic resource protection program that promotes the preservation of resources throughout the community. This includes establishing a Historic Preservation Committee to advise the city and assist property owners with restoration and maintenance of properties
- ☞ Adopt a development ordinance that protects historic properties from intrusive development and encourages property owners to preserve such resources for future generations

Community Facilities & Services

Need to continue expansions and improvements of water infrastructure – Baldwin maintains its own water and sewer infrastructure, an asset for luring business but much of the existing network is outdated and insufficient to meet long-term future capacity needs. The impoundment pond is filled with silt and is in desperate need to be dredged, cleaned-out and updated. One of the City's treated water tanks needs to be condemned and replaced. There are several areas in the city that suffer from low-pressure in the lines due to insufficient pipeline connections that restrict water flow. Furthermore, the entire infrastructure on the Banks County side of Baldwin is substandard and will need replacing and/or rehabilitation during the next 20-years. Another challenge is in building and maintaining a stronger consumer base for water supply. The city currently has a very narrow customer base and needs to expand in order to adequately support the system.

Baldwin currently has more than a million gallons per day of excess water capacity available for use, and recently completed the construction of a new water tower. Baldwin continues to explore opportunities for developing a regional water impoundment reservoir to address future raw water storage capacity needs. In addition, the city has also been in negotiations with the counties and surrounding cities regarding its service delivery strategy for water. Currently, the city is working to expand water service delivery into current areas that surround the city but have previously been unclaimed which includes all of SR 365 from the city limits to the Hall County line. The city is also exploring new technologies, such as electronic metering devices with leak detection capabilities to help reduce preventable losses in the system.

Need to continue expansions and improvements of sewer infrastructure – As with water, Baldwin has major challenges with its aging sewer infrastructure. Much of the system needs to be upgraded and rehabbed including gravity lines and manholes. The current wastewater treatment facility needs to expand its capacity to treat raw sewage. The system lacks sufficient long-term storage capacity and the aging equipment is insufficient to handle future demands. The sludge pond needs to be repaired and expanded.

Baldwin recognizes the need to upgrade and modernize its sewer infrastructure throughout the city over the next 20-years. The city is actively planning and preparing for these future needs. The city has been experimenting with alternative financing tools for making needed repairs such as establishing a dedicated special fund that retains portions of state and federal fines for violation- that would otherwise be paid for infractions- and using those funds to make much needed repairs to the system that prevents future occurrences of the same or similar type violations. The city is also seeking traditional funding tools such as state and federal grants and/or loans to make needed changes to the system. Baldwin is also in service delivery negotiations with Habersham County and its cities. This will allow Baldwin to expand its current area to include service for unclaimed areas and Alto's water service delivery area.

Need to upgrade City Hall & pursue a Community Activity Center– Baldwin's existing City Hall has become insufficient to meet the future needs of the community. The aging structure can no longer serve the long-term needs of the community. Currently, the City of Baldwin lacks a community event center for hosting various public activities such as folk art and local artisan events, community plays or special productions, etc.

The city recognizes that it needs to relocate City Hall from its existing facility to a new location that better serves its business needs. The City has purchased the old Garment Manufacturing Company and is actively pursuing funds to rehabilitate the historic structure for use as the New City Hall. Furthermore, the city also needs a place that encourages community gatherings for special occasions and events. The old Carwood Manufacturing Building would make an excellent place for such a facility. Use of this

building would result in the restoration and use of an unoccupied historic structure that offers sufficient space to host both small and large community gatherings and events. Grants, donations and other special funds such as SPLOST could be utilized for the future purchase and rehabilitation of the facility.

Opportunities for new community recreation facilities – Baldwin currently owns three park facilities within the city limits. However, only two are operational: the new park on Willingham Avenue and the Roadside Park on US 441. The third facility is the old City Park located near the airport on City Park Drive. There isn't any playground equipment nor are there any picnic/pavilion areas because everything has been removed or relocated to the new park on Willingham. Some residents still use the park for playing baseball or soccer and their facility lights within the park. There are no other public recreational opportunities within the city that are available to residents.

The city has opportunities to rehabilitate the old city park as well as acquire additional property for use as passive and active recreational facilities. The city has expressed desire to purchase the properties containing Baldwin Falls and open the facility for recreational uses such as hiking and non-motorized mountain biking. In addition, the city also has opportunity to acquire the old Maxwell Liquor Company property, which is also part of the Baldwin Falls properties. The city could recreate the old distillery and use it as an active history park that teaches people about the early history of Baldwin and what life was like during its operations in late 1890's. Multi-use trails could connect this facility to Baldwin Falls as well as the planned Tallulah Falls Rails-to-Trails project in downtown Cornelia; serving as a trailhead and major tourist and recreation facility for Baldwin residents.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Investigate opportunities to develop and implement a comprehensive water & sewer management master plan for the city
- ☞ Integrate water & sewer infrastructure planning into the land use decision-making process
- ☞ Analyze, monitor and evaluate the impacts of land use decisions (proposed and approved annexations, rezoning and construction activities) on the city's water & sewer infrastructure
- ☞ Develop and implement annual city-wide infrastructure assessment program to evaluate existing conditions and needs assessments for water and sewer infrastructure
- ☞ Integrate strategic planning for water & sewer infrastructure into the city's financial mgmt.. system
- ☞ Perform a cost/benefit analysis to determine the viability of rehabilitating the old Garment Factory for use as a new City Hall
- ☞ Perform a cost/benefit analysis to determine the viability of rehabilitating the old Carwood Building for use as a new community center
- ☞ Explore various grant programs including local, state, federal and/or private resources to find opportunities to fund the new City Hall and community center and, where possible, secure funds
- ☞ Investigate opportunities to develop and implement a comprehensive parks & recreation master plan for the city
- ☞ Explore various grant programs including local, state, federal and/or private resources to identify opportunities to fund recreation projects throughout the city

Transportation

Must improve transportation planning– Baldwin does not currently engage in long-range community planning activities related to the impacts of land use decisions on transportation infrastructure. As the Comprehensive Plan enters the implementation stage it is critical that the city begin to actively engage in transportation planning throughout the community. The anticipated growth needs to be strategically

planned and the necessary strategies must be implemented to ensure that congestion is mitigated as it occurs.

Baldwin recognizes that it must manage its existing transportation network and plan for future growth. Because the city has yet to experience major growth, there is plenty of opportunity to begin planning efforts without having to play “catch-up.” Congestion remains very low and if the City begins now, it will have a major advantage over most communities in Georgia. There is opportunity for the city to develop and implement a comprehensive multi-modal transportation plan and merge land-use decisions and infrastructure development into a strategic and coordinated planning initiative.

Must upgrade city streets – As cited in the previous plan, Baldwin’s street network is old and many of the streets have a narrow design that is not conducive for modern automobile use. Streets need to be widened and upgraded to withstand modern “wear-n-tear.” Furthermore, there are serious drainage problems occurring along some city streets. Poor drainage is resulting in “wash-out” and potholes, which are very costly to the city.

Baldwin recognizes that it must upgrade its existing transportation network. The city is actively planning for needed changes and is working to widen city streets, repair damaged roads and upgrade drainage facilities. There is opportunity for the city to explore the development of curb and gutter systems throughout the city, however, such infrastructure is very expensive and may not be conducive to all areas due to the city’s topography.

Need to improve pedestrian accessibility– Baldwin lacks the preferred degree of pedestrian accessible environments throughout the city. Sidewalks and multi-use paths are sparsely distributed throughout the city, with much of the inventory aging and in need of improvements. The City lacks the resources to regularly maintain the existing inventory, yet improvements are needed as soon as possible to achieve the desired level of ADA compliance and neighborhood connectivity.

The balance of residential neighborhoods around the historic core of the city means Baldwin can begin exploring its options for pedestrian accessibility throughout the city. This is especially true for connecting major activity centers and recreational facilities to residential areas of the city. Although resources are limited and funding for such projects will not likely be available for some time, the city can begin planning efforts by developing a citywide pedestrian plan. The City can also use the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission to assist with sidewalk plans as well as the development of a bike and trail plan, if desired.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Investigate opportunities to develop and implement a comprehensive transportation plan including subarea and collector street planning to develop a grid pattern and access management planning promotes inter-parcel connectivity & driveway consolidation
- ☞ Integrate transportation planning into the land use decision-making process
- ☞ Analyze, monitor and evaluate the impacts of land use decisions (proposed and approved annexations, rezoning and construction activities) on the city’s transportation infrastructure
- ☞ Develop and implement a Corridor Management Plan for both SR 364 and US 441
- ☞ Evaluate and, if necessary, amend the city’s design standards for road construction and signage
- ☞ Require inter-parcel connectivity among adjacent uses, where appropriate and possible
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan
- ☞ Integrate bicycle and pedestrian planning into the community development process
- ☞ Develop bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within existing neighborhoods
- ☞ Integrate strategic planning for transportation infrastructure into the city’s financial mgmt. system

Intergovernmental Coordination

Need to sustain/improve coordination among emergency service providers – Coordination between the City of Baldwin public safety personnel and neighboring county and municipal emergency service communication networks will be necessary in order to provide the City with an acceptable level of protection and emergency preparedness. The City maintains Service Delivery Agreements with both Habersham and Banks Counties, but more effective Immediate Aid Agreements for first responder services would ensure residents have access to the best protection available.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Develop and implement a strategic plan for intergovernmental coordination issues including but not limited to education, annexations, re-zonings, construction activities, economic development, emergency management and other matters with appropriate organizations and agencies
- ☞ Coordinate with Banks County to develop a watershed protection ordinance
- ☞ Work with the school system and other local governments to develop a uniform system for sharing growth and development data and information to assist them in planning for future enrollments and facility expansions
- ☞ Work with other jurisdictions in Banks and Habersham County to establish an annual or bi-annual meeting to discuss issues of mutual interest and areas of conflict
- ☞ Maintain an adequate service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreements where appropriate and needed regarding certain services.

VISION STATEMENT

The Community Vision statement was developed after a series of Steering Committee meetings and public workshops designed to gather information from stakeholders and citizens regarding their desire for the future of the City of Baldwin. These discussions revealed several common themes that contributed to the development of the proposed vision statement for Baldwin.

Many stakeholders and citizen participants expressed a strong desire to preserve and build upon existing resources including two valuable corridors, historic resources and surrounding natural resources. The key aspects included developing the US 441 as a Tourism Corridor, developing SR 365 as a Business/Industrial Corridor, preserving the historic character of the downtown area and expanding this characteristic to nearby areas of the community, and preserving valued natural resources such as Baldwin Falls and other scenic and environmentally sensitive areas in and near the city. Participants also expressed a strong desire to create a “sense of place” for the city, which is currently lacking. They desired to establish and main a clear identity for the city through the use of new design criteria for residential and commercial development that promotes a “live, work and play” environment. Finally they expressed a strong desire to enhance economic opportunities for all citizens by promoting business & industrial growth throughout the community that offers a mix of skilled/unskilled labor and professional/management employment opportunities.

Based on this feedback and other input received during the planning process, the following consensus statement was developed for the community:

THE CITY OF BALDWIN IS, AND WILL REMAIN, A FAMILY-ORIENTED COMMUNITY THAT SEEKS BALANCED GROWTH AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL CITIZENS WHILE RESPECTING OUR PAST AND ENVISIONING A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

As a guidepost and barometer for Baldwin, the vision statement will be used to ensure that capital improvements and development policies are oriented around strengthening the local neighborhoods and their connections with the economic activity centers. Further, retail and service operations should complement the ideal of creating a pedestrian friendly urban core, as should programs related to parks, sidewalks and supporting the local school.

The vision statement will also serve as a call to arms for keeping the City aggressive in its pursuit of economic development, working with area partners in recruiting and expanding area industries. The City must also work to establish and implement policies that strive to preserve historic structures and fosters more community activities and events, building civic pride and a stronger identity among residents and within the region.

If the City works toward these ends then Baldwin will move closer to achieving the stated vision, becoming a better version of the community idealized by citizens today.

COMMUNITY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

During the development of the Vision Statement participants discussed various key goals and objectives that would be necessary in order to achieve the vision of the community. Below is a consensus list of the goals and objectives that resulted from those discussions:

Goal #1: To create a “Sense of Place” for the city.

Objective #1: Establish and maintain a clear community identity.

Objective #2: Develop design criteria for new residential and commercial development that protects, promotes and preserves the identity of the community.

Objective #3: Promote and support development activities that encourage a “live, work and play” environment for the city.

Goal #2: To develop and maintain a stronger sense of community.

Objective #1: Encourage citizens to become more involved in the decision-making process through attendance at public hearings and meetings and their active participation in citizen advisory boards.

Objective #2: Host quarterly, seasonal, annual and/or semi-annual activities and events that encourage citizens to become more involved and engaged in our community.

Objective #3: Work with area non-profits and community organizations to actively promote and encourage citizens to participate in local volunteer efforts.

Goal #3: To promote balanced, responsible growth throughout the city.

Objective #1: Actively manage new growth and development to ensure that it complies with all federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Objective #2: Conduct an analysis of existing development and code enforcement regulations to ensure that such requirements support the city’s efforts to achieve balanced and responsible growth within the city.

Objective #3: Where appropriate, develop and implement new development regulations to address current deficiencies. This may include new overlay districts, design guidelines, subdivision regulations, development regulations and/or code enforcement ordinances.

Objective #4: Codify all City codes and ordinances.

Objective #5: Develop and implement a “customer service oriented” construction and development review process for the city. This includes the development and production of a “How to” guide for annexations, rezonings, land development and construction activities within the city.

Objective #6: Coordinate development activities with other local governments, regional authorities and state and federal regulatory agencies.

Goal #4: To create new economic opportunities for all citizens.

Objective #1: Actively promote business growth throughout the city, including industrial, commercial and retail development.

Objective #2: Support local businesses by working with area Chambers of Commerce, development authorities or other local, regional and state business associations to develop grant funded programs that assist area entrepreneurs and business owners with the development of sustainable business plans, teaches sustainable business practices such as financial management skills, marketing and merchandising concepts and the effective management of human capital resources.

Objective #3: Work with local businesses and commercial property owners to encourage the rehabilitation or replacement of existing facilities that have become a visual impairment

to the city as a result of damage, disrepair or having an architectural design that is not conducive to the city's image.

- Objective #4: Establish an Industrial Development Authority (IDA) for the city and develop a city-operated industrial park that generates sustainable local revenue for the city.*
- Objective #5: Actively work with local, regional and state partners to encourage and promote economic investment in the city from local, national and international sources.*
- Objective #6: Actively encourage the development of new businesses that supports local tourism and shopping in the city, including hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, retail shops, restaurants, cafes, specialty shops and related sales and services.*
- Objective #7: Coordinate tourism activity with local Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitor Bureaus and other tourism and business related authorities.*
- Objective #8: Create new opportunities for capturing tourism activity within the city. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) the creation of a new regional convention center, (2) the creation of an environmental education center for water resource management, and (3) the creation of new recreational opportunities such as a Baldwin Falls natural preserve area.*

Goal #5: To protect and preserve our natural and historic resources.

- Objective #1: Encourage and support owners of historical properties to restore, maintain and preserve such properties for future generations to enjoy.*
- Objective #2: Encourage and support owners of natural resources to maintain and preserve such properties for future generations to enjoy.*
- Objective #3: Actively encourage and work with property owners to annex valued resources into the city.*
- Objective #4: Establish necessary ordinances and regulations that support the long-term preservation of historic and natural resources throughout the city.*
- Objective #5: Work with Banks and Habersham Counties and adjacent municipalities to encourage the preservation of scenic areas, natural resources and historical resources surrounding or near the City of Baldwin.*
- Objective #6: Where possible, the City should secure the ownership of valued resources through the use of grants, SPLOST recreation funds and partnerships with non-profit property and land preservation organizations/groups.*

Community Development Strategy

3

LAND USE

Since the 2009 comprehensive plan Baldwin has experienced only modest development pressures, though signs are the trend is picking up. Much of this was due to the national recession that drained the financial reserves of most every household, suppressing demand for new construction and most expendable retail ventures. As a smaller rural community Baldwin suffered most via the loss of jobs within the region with few alternatives for residents. As a result, the City has not changed dramatically since 2009.

The near-term future has shown strong signs of economic expansion, however, and the locations and conditions that placed Baldwin in the center of growth prior to the recession are at work in similar fashions today. The Highway 365 corridor, which is already heavily trafficked by tourists and through travelers moving between metro Atlanta and the Carolina mountains, has seen a resurgence of the industrial development that began in Hall County in the late 1990's. Much of southern Habersham County is now poised to receive varieties of manufacturing, warehousing and other industrial development, plus all the affiliated commercial and new residential uses that will support those facilities.

Baldwin is one of several Cities along this corridor that will be working to manage utilities to attract new growth but manage it properly to ensure protection of local resources and maintaining a balance of live, work and play options. As part of this land use management the City annexed additional portions of the Airport Industrial Park nestled in between downtown and the airport itself. The City is also working with Habersham County, Cornelia and Demorest to provide a unified development strategy for the highway corridor, including the possibility of eliminating crossing intersections and coordinating land use to retain large scale properties for high-intensity development.

Within the heart of the City, Baldwin needs to find additional resources that can assist with revitalizing local neighborhoods and helping residents with their efforts to reinvest in their home properties. There remains the raw elements to sustain highly attractive and functional neighborhoods surrounding the downtown commercial district, the elementary school and some City parks, however most houses are relatively smaller and older compared to most newly constructed units, with many suffering various degrees of disrepair or dilapidation.

Land Use Needs & Opportunities

Agricultural/residential Issues – Agricultural-residential land use conflicts can emerge when new residents move to areas with intensive farming.

Strip Commercial Development Issues – Strip commercial development areas will require special attention to prevent underutilization and blight as market and economic conditions change.

Scenic Corridor Issues – New development along routes such as U.S. 441 could alter the character of the county and city dramatically if development occurs without an emphasis on protecting scenic views.

Preservation of Agricultural Lands Issues – As new development increases property values throughout the city, pressure to convert from agricultural uses to residential or commercial uses increases. Preservation of the remaining agricultural residential property is considered important for sustaining the city's rural character in the long-term.

Zoning Issues – Due to the age of the currently adopted Future Land Use Map and the amount of development that has occurred since its adoption in 1992, decisions on a case-by-case basis for converting agricultural land to residential or commercial have been occurring in what some consider spot zoning throughout the city. However, the city has fared better than Banks and Habersham Counties.

Intensive Use Issues – It will be important for the city to accommodate more intensive commercial, industrial or residential uses in the future in order to take advantage of continuing economic opportunities in certain corridors such as SR 365 and portions of US 441.

Bedroom Community Issues – Baldwin has maintained its distinct culture and character as a rural community. However, rapid development in the next 20-years could alter this to the point of becoming a bedroom community, leading to greater economic imbalance and associated challenges.

Mixed-use Development Opportunities – Most development in the city is suburban residential development that separates residential from commercial. A mixed-use approach in future development could provide the city with the opportunity to provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences in specific portions of the city.

Traditional Neighborhood Development Opportunities – The traditional neighborhood development approach can provide a wide range of housing types in newly developing areas with a connected pedestrian-friendly street system and ample open space. With proactive planning, Baldwin can cluster community facilities including schools, fire stations, libraries and parks in order to create a sense of place.

TDR Opportunities – Transfer of development rights can be applied to preserve agricultural lands and other sensitive areas in need of protection from development.

Conservation Subdivision Opportunities – Conservation subdivisions can be used to retain the character of agriculture and protect the natural resources of the environmentally sensitive areas.

Green Space Opportunities – Development regulations can encourage developers of residential and mixed-use development to set aside appropriate amounts of green space for public recreation and storm water collection/filtering.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Develop and implement an overlay district for key corridors and character areas (US 441, SR 365, Downtown Redevelopment, Mountain Residential, Industrial areas, etc.) within the city that clearly depicts the desired architectural and site design standards for new developments and renovation projects along each specific area
- ☞ Incorporate into the development review process a “development impact matrix” to determine impacts of specific development on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Develop partnerships with local chambers of commerce and tourism agencies to promote and enhance investment opportunities in the various key corridors
- ☞ Examine the potential use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and similar tools to encourage and promote development and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor
- ☞ Encourage the creation of CIDs, TADs & BIDs as an alternative means of financing corridor planning and improvement projects
- ☞ Develop and implement a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Conservation Subdivision ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement an Infill Development ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Senior Housing ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Mass Grading ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Natural Resource Protection ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement street connectivity requirements for new developments
- ☞ Develop and implement a Stormwater Management ordinance
- ☞ Encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for agricultural activities, sedimentation and erosion control and stormwater management to protect natural resources and water quality
- ☞ Develop a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan for Baldwin
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide recreation master plan for Baldwin
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide historic resource management plan for protecting historic resources in the community

ANALYSIS OF AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

Land use management policies and programs represent guidelines for shaping development patterns that provide for efficient growth while also protecting sensitive social and environmental areas. As such communities should take into account their current and immediately projected conditions and assess the identified needs and issues regarding the built landscape and community services for the area. This section presents an inventory of existing land use patterns and development trends for the community, allowing the local government to produce the most effective policies needed to manage the demands from projected development.

For the 2015 update process stakeholders reflected on the areas defined from the existing plan and considered them all to remain valid, with minor amendments. Baldwin has experienced little change since 2009 and the following area definitions remain concurrent with the City's goals and vision.

Areas of significant natural or cultural resources in need of attention

A revitalization of **Downtown Baldwin** remains the ambition of the City and most residents. The central blocks and remaining structures retain the form of a traditional main street community, complete with historic zero-lot-line buildings recalling the community's bygone days as a more established commercial and employment hub. Together with the surrounding neighborhoods the core of Baldwin should be retained and restored both to provide a source for civic pride and community identity but also to foster more economic development within the city center that is conducive to supporting area residents and strengthening the community's character. The hope is to restore the area's viability as a neighborhood commercial and civic center as the city grows, becoming the social hub of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Natural resources, particularly water resources, are of some concern as Baldwin experiences population growth and associated housing and commercial development. Greenspace planning and preservation will be important to achieve preservation of natural resources and provision of recreation facilities and transportation alternatives for residents. It is important to encourage development in the areas planned for infrastructure expansion. Additionally, future infrastructure expansions should be coordinated with, and guided by, land use planning that is consistent with a comprehensive vision for growth and development.

The most prominent of these areas without current protection remains northern Banks County in general and the **Baldwin Falls** area in particular. These scenic areas have been historically left undeveloped because of steep slopes and topography but recently there has been pressure to convert to residential land. The Baldwin Falls area to the east of the city, considered a key social and scenic area to many residents, has historically been undeveloped and preserved through private interests in recent years, featuring a steep hillside overlooking Banks County with scenic views reaching miles outward. There are also several creeks and beautiful wooded landscapes. Baldwin seeks to preserve this area of Banks County because it is an environmentally sensitive area that offers citizens excellent recreational opportunities within the city limits.

Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur

The only areas expected to see significant changes in development remain the major arterial corridors, particularly the portions where utilities are already in place. The **Highway 365 corridor** and the **US 441 corridor** are both attracting attention for various development opportunities. These major transportation routes provide direct, four-lane highway connections between communities, plus they also offer special opportunities for targeted economic development activity that is reliant on regional accessibility, such as large scale employers. These areas also contain undeveloped/underdeveloped lots conducive to easy purchasing and development when full utilities are available. The City, together with Habersham County and Cornelia, is focusing more intense development along these corridors.

Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation

The City is working on a new water tank in 2015, which will improve system expansion capability. Plans are also in place for additional future improvements that will help the City's utilities maintain pace with demand in both quantity and quality. Provided the City can continue with the improvement plans, which rely on outside funding assistance, Baldwin should be able to satisfy overall utility demands.

Assuming utility improvements are completed as proposed, local road improvements could become the critical issue within the City. Many of the **roads within established neighborhoods** are older and deteriorating, often with minimal lane widths and eroding shoulders. As modern vehicles exhibit wider bodies and faster speeds there is growing concerns for safety on and alongside these roads. The City has proposed a transportation master plan to identify the most urgent priorities and options for pursuing a long-term improvement strategy, since most of this work can only be done with outside funding. This would also include improved crosswalks and sidewalks to enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity within the urbanized portions of the city, especially around the elementary school and downtown.

Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness

Again, **Downtown Baldwin** with its historic structures and classic main street character is ideally suited for small-town commercial activity. The City and area residents would like to see this area revitalized.

Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated

There are two small-to-mid sized, **older brick industrial buildings with the City's downtown core** that are not only becoming eyesores and health risks but represent opportunities for ideal locations that could be put to better use. They may be dilapidated to the point that renovation is no longer cost effective, in which case the land itself is still in prime locations for either economic activity or new residential properties.

Any/all other empty industrial or commercial properties are already being marketed through local economic development organizations and renovation efforts will have support and guidance from the respective local government.

CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENT

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

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the development of a Character Area Map that reflects the city's vision for future growth and development during the course of the planning period. This vision was developed through an extensive public visioning process and expresses the unique character of various portions of the city. The various character areas, when combined, form a single map that is intended to supplement the Future Development Map by organizing common themes of development patterns throughout the city. 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 following pages present the map and narratives of each Character area associated with the City of Baldwin.

Each identified character area outlines a specific vision or plan that includes the following:

- Written description and pictures or illustrations that make it clear what types, forms, styles, and patterns of development are to be encouraged in the area.
- Listing of specific land uses and/or zoning categories to be allowed in the area.
- Identification of implementation measures to achieve the desired development patterns for the area, including more detailed sub-area planning, new or revised local development regulations, incentives, public investments, and infrastructure improvements.

The Character Area Map for the City of Baldwin identifies the following nine areas:

- US 441 Tourism Corridor
- SR 365 Business Corridor
- Downtown Redevelopment
- Traditional Rural Residential
- Mountain Residential
- Natural Resource/Scenic Preserve
- Traditional Neighborhood Commercial
- Industrial

US 441 Tourism Corridor

The US 441 Tourism Corridor character area describes the portion of US 441 located with the city limits from Banks County on the southeast end of the city north to Habersham County on the north end of the city near Cornelia. This area serves as a primary transportation artery connecting North Georgia to I-85 and Athens, Georgia. However, many drivers use the highway system as an alternative travel route to/from places further south, such as middle & south Georgia and even to places like Florida and North Carolina. This tourism related travel makes the corridor prime for developing tourism related industries along the corridor. Baldwin could serve as a major hub for attracting and retaining tourism industry investments.



Desired Development Patterns

- Maintain traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor and by developing patterns of inter-parcel connectivity through shared drives and networked side streets
- Restrict the use signs and bill boards
- Cluster developments into activity nodes along the corridor
- Prevent typical linear “strip center” and “big box” development along the corridor
- Establish a unique physical character for the corridor that complement the mountain and scenic vistas, which is aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian friendly in nature
- Require the use of rustic building materials such as stacked stone, brick, wood, shakes, shingles, cement siding with natural tones and colors throughout the corridor for all new structures
- Encourage existing property owners to redevelop blighted areas and/or renovate structures that do not conform to the desired character of the area
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and mass transit opportunities
- Require internal and external sidewalk connections for all new developments along the corridor. This includes connection to adjacent developments or public facilities such as multi-use trails, bike routes, mass transit, etc
- Strongly encourage existing properties to connect into future pedestrian facilities
- Require the use of paved, brick or stone crosswalks, crosswalk signals, pedestrian street lamps, covered benches, bike racks, trash cans, signage and other ancillary devices used by pedestrians
- Encourage enhanced streetscaping and landscaping within and surrounding developments, including but not limited to, manicured lawns, street trees, shade trees, shrubs, brick, stone or wooden business signs, and antique street signs
- Encourage commercial and mixed-use development to utilize site designs with minimal building set-backs, parking in the rear or to the center of the development and reduced impervious surfaces
- Better integrate stormwater management BMPs into sight designs and encourage onsite filtration and/or treatment where possible

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail use
- Professional offices
- Mixed-use development
- Residential development

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Develop and implement an overlay district for the US 441 corridor that clearly depicts the desired architectural and site design standards for new developments and renovation projects
- ☞ Examine the potential use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and similar tools to encourage and promote development and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor
- ☞ Encourage the creation of CIDs, TADs & BIDs as an alternative means of financing corridor planning and improvement projects
- ☞ Develop and implement a Stormwater Management ordinance
- ☞ Develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan for the corridor and city
- ☞ Develop partnerships with local chambers of commerce and tourism agencies to promote and enhance investment opportunities in the corridor

SR 365 Business Corridor

The SR 365 Business Corridor character area describes the portion of SR 365 located within the city limits from Alto-Mud Creek Road on the southwest end of the city north to Level Grove Road on the northwest end of the city near Cornelia. This area serves as a primary transportation artery connecting North Georgia to I-985, Gainesville and Atlanta, Georgia. Many drivers use the highway system as a primary commuter route for employment and entertainment. This business related travel makes the corridor prime for developing commercial and industrial interests along the corridor. Baldwin could serve as a major hub for attracting and retaining business investments including major industries, corporate headquarters and commercial/retail businesses.



Desired Development Patterns

- Maintain traffic flow by limiting access points to uses along the corridor and by developing patterns of inter-parcel connectivity through shared drives and networked side streets
- Restrict the use of certain signs and bill boards
- Cluster developments into activity nodes along the corridor
- Prevent typical linear “strip center” and “big box” development along the corridor
- Establish a unique physical character for the corridor that complements the rural vistas, which is aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian friendly in nature
- Require the use of certain building materials such as stacked stone, brick, wood, shakes, shingles, cement siding with natural tones and colors throughout the corridor for all new structures built within the corridor
- Encourage existing property owners to develop or redevelop areas and/or renovate structures that do not conform to the desired character of the area
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and mass transit opportunities
- Require internal and external sidewalk connections for all new developments along the corridor. This includes connection to adjacent developments or public facilities such as multi-use trails, bike routes, mass transit, etc
- Strongly encourage existing property owners and businesses to connect into future pedestrian facilities
- Require the use of paved, brick or stone crosswalks, crosswalk signals, pedestrian street lamps, covered benches, bike racks, trash cans, signage and other ancillary devices used by pedestrians
- Encourage enhanced streetscaping and landscaping within and surrounding developments including but not limited to manicured lawns, street trees, shade trees, shrubs, brick, stone or wooden business signs, and antique street signs

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed-use developments
- Business/warehouse developments
- Light industrial developments

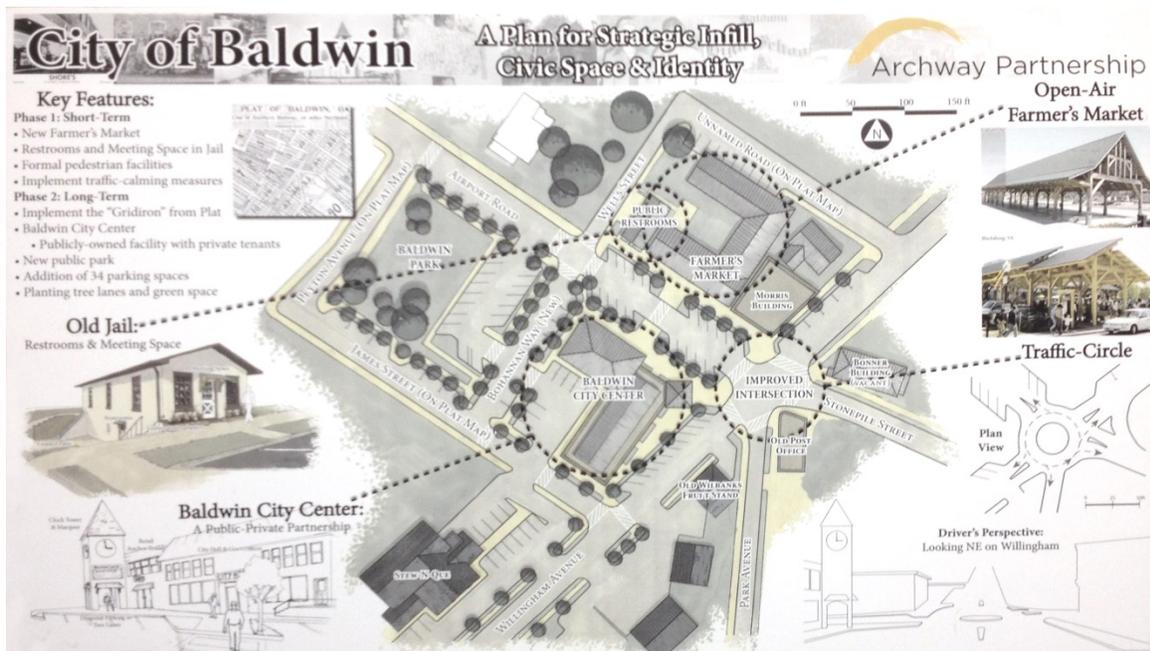
Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Develop and implement an overlay district for SR 365 corridor that clearly depicts the desired architectural and site design standards for new developments and renovation projects along the corridor
- ☞ Examine the potential use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and similar tools to encourage and promote development and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor
- ☞ Encourage the creation of CIDs, TADs & BIDs as an alternative means of financing corridor planning and improvement projects
- ☞ Develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan for the corridor and city
- ☞ Develop partnerships with local chambers of commerce and development agencies to promote and enhance investment opportunities in the corridor

Downtown Redevelopment Corridor

The Downtown Redevelopment Corridor character area describes the portion of Baldwin that includes Willingham Avenue from Hendel Street north to the Cornelia city limits and encompasses all or portions of Walden Street, King Street, Short Street, Spring Street, Switzerland Avenue, Stonepile Street, Airport Road, Grando Lane, Sandy Lane, Chandler Street, Wells Street, Chatham Street, Williams, Street, Thorn Drive, Yonah View Drive, Williams Street, Presley Street, Baldwin Falls Road and Park Avenue. This area serves as the heart of the City and includes a number of historic properties.

This part of town is already the subject on ongoing redevelopment efforts, including a study under development by the UGA Archway Partnership that proposes significant changes to the main 5-points intersection of downtown near the current City Hall. Pending the relocation of City Hall, this plan proposes a new Farmer’s Market to the north, a new community center at the corner by renovating an existing set of buildings, and the possible reconstruction of the intersection as a roundabout. The overall scheme is still under assessment but the City is using this as part of their pursuits for a larger Urban Redevelopment Strategy (currently in development) that will be part of an Opportunity Zone application.



The Farmers Market concept is in the final stages of idea development, with an application for Federal grant monies currently underway. This would take a block of the downtown core and renovate the property for a covered, open-air events space. This is part of the City’s efforts to reinvigorate the space for cultural events and foster the local economy.





Desired Development Patterns

- Protect and preserve the historic resources in the downtown area
- Restore the historic character of the downtown community
- Redevelop blighted areas and require streetscaping that enhances the aesthetics of the area.
- Infill development that compliments the scale, setbacks and style of existing homes
- Encourage master planning of neighborhoods through the use of TNDs that blend walk-able neighborhoods with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern
- Promote small lots and reduced setbacks
- Promote street designs that are slows traffic and increase pedestrian safety, such as narrower residential streets, on street parking and street trees
- Require street stub-outs to accommodate future connectivity with adjacent properties for future development
- Provide for pedestrian facilities with sidewalk connectivity, where possible
- Provide adequate open space with both active and passive recreational opportunities
- Encourage existing property owners to rehabilitate/renovate structures that have fallen into disrepair or have architectural features that do not conform to the desired character of the area
- Provide a variety of housing choices that offer opportunities for all ages and income levels

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Multi-family residential (when part of a master planned development or subarea master plan)
- Mixed-use (when part of a master planned development or subarea master plan)
- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Public/Institutional
- Parks/Recreation

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Update and implement the Downtown Redevelopment overlay ordinance that clearly depicts the desired architectural and site design standards for new developments and renovation projects within the corridor
- ☞ Develop and implement a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement an Infill Development ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Senior Housing ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Mass Grading ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement street connectivity requirements for new developments
- ☞ Examine the potential use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and similar tools to encourage and promote development and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor
- ☞ Encourage the creation of CIDs, TADs & BIDs as an alternative means of financing corridor planning and improvement projects
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide historic resource management plan
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide recreation master plan

Traditional Rural Residential

The Traditional Rural Residential character area describes the portion of Baldwin that includes existing and emerging residential development. It includes a mixture of housing types and lot sizes. Some areas are large lots and others are smaller, more traditional in nature. This character area seeks to protect agricultural areas, scenic vistas, and historic, natural and cultural resources within the community. Its purpose is to provide a safe, family-oriented environment that compliments rural, small town living.



Desired Development Patterns

- Maintain and protect the rural environment including vistas, view sheds and natural features
- Protect and preserve nearby historic, natural and cultural resources
- Reduce environmental impact of new development by encouraging use of low-impact development, conservation subdivisions, transfer of development rights and other tools
- Discourage excessive clearing and grading activities during development
- Protect water quality by reducing impervious surfaces, stormwater run-off, erosion and sedimentation
- Redevelop blighted areas
- Require streetscaping that enhances the aesthetics of the area
- Foster infill development that compliments the scale, setbacks and style of existing homes
- Encourage master planning of neighborhoods using TNDs that blend walk-able neighborhoods with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses that are linked in a compact pattern
- Promote small lots and reduced setbacks, where appropriate
- Promote street designs that slows traffic and increase pedestrian safety, such as narrower residential streets, on street parking and street trees
- Require street stub-outs for connectivity with adjacent properties for future development
- Provide for pedestrian facilities with sidewalk connectivity, where possible
- Provide adequate open space with both active and passive recreational opportunities
- Encourage owners to rehabilitate/renovate existing structures that have fallen into disrepair or have architectural features that do not conform to the desired character of the area
- Provide a variety of housing choices that offer opportunities for all ages and income levels

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Multi-family residential (when part of a master planned development or subarea master plan)
- Conservation subdivisions
- Traditional neighborhood commercial
- Public/Institutional
- Parks/Recreation

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Develop and implement a Conservation Subdivision ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Senior Housing Ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement an Infill Development Ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Mass Grading ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Stormwater Management Ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement street connectivity requirements for new developments
- ☞ Examine the potential use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) and similar tools to foster (re)development opportunities in residential areas
- ☞ Encourage the creation of CIDs and TADs as an alternative means of financing area planning and improvement projects.
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide historic resource management plan
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide recreation master plan

Mountain Residential

The Mountain Residential character area describes the portion of Baldwin that includes steep slopes, hillsides and mountain vistas, which is primarily residential in nature with limited commercial development. This character area seeks to protect mountain and scenic vistas, natural resources and agricultural areas. Typically, it contains large tracts or lots of undeveloped lands with minimal land disturbance activities. Overdevelopment can potentially harm area natural resources and scenic views due to a loss of vegetation and erosion of soil and rock surfaces. These areas contribute to the city's unique character and history. They are also vital to Baldwin's vision for the community. The goal is to respect property rights by accommodating low-density development with minimal environmental impacts.



Desired Development Patterns

- Maintain large lot sizes
- Establish a unique physical character for the area that complements the mountain and scenic vistas, which is aesthetically pleasing in nature
- Require the use of rustic building materials such as stacked stone, brick, wood, shakes, shingles, cement siding with natural tones and colors for all new structures built within the character area
- Encourage existing property owners to redevelop blighted areas and/or renovate structures that do not conform to the desired character of the area
- Reduce impact of new development on the environment by encouraging the use of low-impact development, conservation subdivisions, transfer of development rights and other conservation tools (such as greenspace programs, preservation trusts, conservation easements, etc.)
- Protect and preserve mountaintops, hillsides, scenic vistas, steep slopes, environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources and agricultural areas.
- Protect existing topography and vegetation by discouraging excessive clearing and grading activities during development
- Protect water quality by reducing impervious surfaces, stormwater run-off, erosion and sedimentation.

Primary Land Uses

- Traditional large lot single-family residential
- Conservation subdivisions
- Traditional neighborhood commercial
- Forestry/agricultural
- Passive recreation

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes.
- ☞ Develop and implement a Conservation Subdivision ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Natural Resource Protection ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Mass Grading ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Stormwater Management Ordinance
- ☞ Develop architectural and site design guidelines for the area that includes a large lot component.

Natural Resource/Scenic Preserve

The Natural Resource/Scenic Preserve character area describes the portion of land that is either inside the city limits or anticipated to be annexed inside the City of Baldwin that includes undeveloped, natural land areas and other sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, groundwater recharge sites, watersheds, floodplains, historic and cultural sites, scenic vistas and view sheds, mountain peaks, steep slopes, parks and recreation sites and other valuable resources that deserve preservation and protection from development for the enjoyment of future generations.

Included in this are plans for the proposed Wilbanks Park. Currently students from UGA are assisting with creating the conceptual design for this 5 acre property amidst the city’s residential uses, between the airport industrial area and the Highway 441 corridor. This new park would provide a walking trail and picnic facilities as well as an athletic field. Additional land across from this facility has also been identified for a potential expansion.



Desired Development Patterns

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views and rural characteristics
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the floodplain of river and stream corridors
- Provide opportunities for passive and active recreation, tourism destinations and environmental education
- Accommodate greenways, multi-use recreational and hiking trails, where appropriate
- Prevent further degradation of natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and wetland buffers.
- Prohibit uses that are prone to cause pollution

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas in their natural state
- Nature Preserves and WMAs
- Parks and recreation
- Agriculture

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations
- ☞ Encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for agricultural activities, sedimentation and erosion control and stormwater management to protect natural resources and water quality
- ☞ Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits to property owners
- ☞ Secure funding from state, federal and other source programs for acquiring such areas for permanent preservation, restoration and maintenance so that future generations can enjoy their presence

Traditional Neighborhood Commercial

This is a corridor district that serves as the southwest gateway into downtown, featuring a blend of residential, civic, and residential uses. The scale and styles of structures resemble the more rural theme of the area, with more definitive setbacks from the main road and individual parking lots. This area is considered a buffer zone between the projected urban density of the downtown core and the residential and industrial activity to the south and west. The aspiration is for continued use as a destination for commerce among city residents and not as much a regional draw as the 441 corridor.



Desired Development Patterns

- Retain the historic character of the community
- Redevelop blighted areas and require streetscaping that enhances the aesthetics of the area.
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setbacks and style of existing structures
- Provide for pedestrian facilities with sidewalk connectivity, where possible
- Provide adequate open space with both active and passive recreational opportunities
- Encourage existing property owners to rehabilitate/renovate structures that have fallen into disrepair or have architectural features that do not conform to the desired character of the area
- Encourage minimal parking conditions so as to prohibit large, expansive lots

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Multi-family residential (when part of a master planned development or subarea master plan)
- Mixed-use (when part of a master planned development or subarea master plan)
- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Public/Institutional
- Parks/Recreation

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Develop and implement a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement an Infill Development ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Senior Housing ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement a Mass Grading ordinance
- ☞ Develop and implement street connectivity requirements for new developments
- ☞ Examine the potential use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and similar tools to encourage and promote development and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor
- ☞ Encourage the creation of CIDs, TADs & BIDs as an alternative means of financing corridor planning and improvement projects
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide historic resource management plan
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan
- ☞ Develop and implement a city-wide recreation master plan

Industrial

The Industrial character area describes the portion of land that is either currently inside the city limits or anticipated to be annexed inside the City of Baldwin that includes land uses of low and high intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade, distribution, assembly, processing and similar uses that may or may not generate nuisance characteristics such as excessive noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisances.



Desired Development Patterns

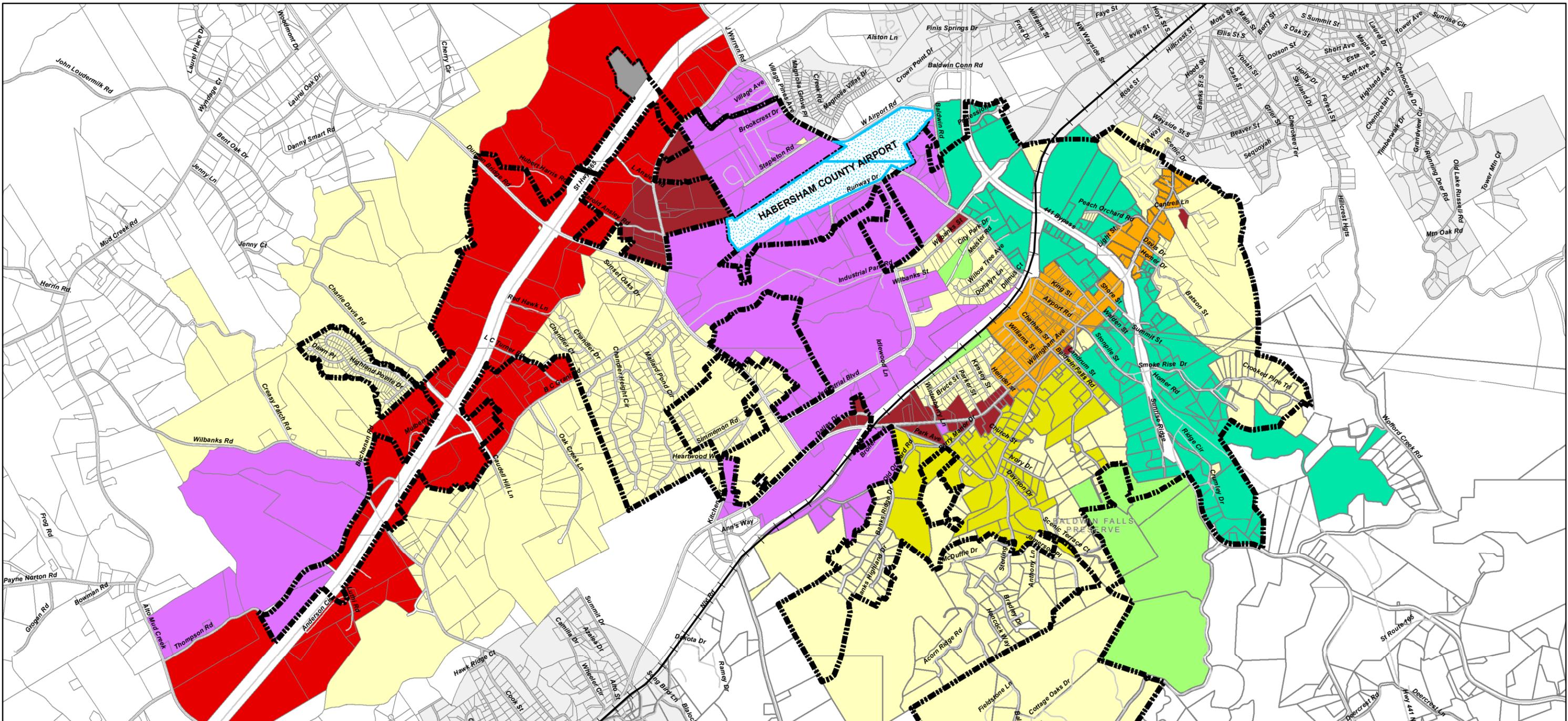
- Accommodate diverse, high intensity industrial activities and supporting uses
- Prohibit residential uses
- Limit the visibility of unsightly characteristics such as operations and parking from public right-of-way
- Develop and maintain a clear physical boundaries and transition area between adjacent uses, especially residential areas (i.e. natural buffers and enhanced landscaping)
- Incorporate enhanced landscaping techniques for vacant areas and parking lots, including shade trees
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter” or blight
- Reflect a campus or unified development site design.
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site designs
- Provide access management measures to maintain traffic flow (i.e., shared drives, inter-parcel connectivity, etc.)
- Protect air and Water Quality
- Reduce or eliminate unnecessary impervious surfaces by encouraging developments to incorporate enhanced on-site storm water management techniques such as storm water mitigation or retention features (i.e., pervious surfaces such as crushed stones, pervious concrete, paved brick, etc.)
- Prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding populations

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial
- Professional offices (corporate headquarters/medical office complexes)
- Research and Development facilities
- Mixed-use developments (commercial/industrial; but no residential)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Update existing land use and development regulations to accommodate desired changes
- ☞ Develop and implement design/development standards for industrial sites
- ☞ Incorporate into the development review process a “development impact matrix” to determine impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting new business investments



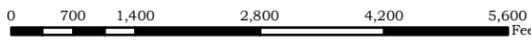
City of Baldwin, Georgia Character Areas

Legend

- Railroad
- Baldwin City Limits
- Parcels
- Airport Overlay District (County)
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities

Character Areas

- Traditional Rural Residential
- Mountain Residential
- Industrial / Mixed Use Industrial
- Natural Resource/Scenic Preserve
- Traditional Neighborhood Commercial
- 365 Business Corridor
- 441 Tourism Corridor
- Downtown Redevelopment



QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES ASSESSMENT

“Every Georgia community offers a quality of life where people and businesses can grow and prosper.”

Vision Statement, Georgia Department of Community Affairs

In the absence of a defined State plan and objectives, the 10 items listed below are adapted from generally accepted community development principles to fit the unique and idealized qualities of Georgia’s communities. Although only recommendations, communities implementing these principles often see greater efficiency and cost savings in delivering services while producing a higher quality of life for their citizens.

To encourage comparable levels of sound community planning, and to facilitate how the State can support local cities and counties, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) includes among the Minimum Standards a guide for analyzing each community’s consistency with these Quality Community Objectives. This process evaluates the community’s current policies, activities, and development patterns against these Quality Community Objectives and the supporting Best Practices promoted by DCA, identifying any special needs and opportunities for adapting local activities, development patterns and implementation practices to the achieve the results offered within the Quality Community Objectives.

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.

Baldwin Has made significant progress in working with the Airport Industrial Park and area economic development agencies, such as the GMRC and the local Chambers of Commerce. The city’s location and access to prime thoroughfares are leading the way toward renewed economic activity since the recession. However, additional effort must be made to secure more commercial activity within the core of the city and in support of existing residents and neighborhoods. Baldwin must also continue to work with area stakeholders to improve educational opportunities for local youth and the labor force in general, so as to foster a more dynamic and capable employment pool.

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.

Baldwin does not have many State vital areas within the City limits but has moved to employ the minimum environmental planning criteria and is working to preserve additional greenspace for recreational enjoyment and to protect the local ecology. The City is committed to maintaining these efforts and to ensuring local resources are properly protected.

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.

The City has begun redoubling efforts to identify and promote the adaptive reuse of vacant and dilapidated properties. Baldwin is also working to find additional resources to aid property owners in need of assistance with the renovation of older structures, of which Baldwin has many. If the City's new policies produce the effect desired, Baldwin will restore a healthier live-work-play balance around the downtown core.

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.

Baldwin has participated with and adopted the *Hazard Mitigation Strategies* for both Habersham and Banks Counties. The City also works with both Counties to regularly review and update their respective *Local Emergency Response Plans*. The City is working to update utility master plans and is seeking to develop a Transportation Master Plan.

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.

Baldwin has a classic main-street downtown and several older neighborhoods that define the community's character and are reminiscent of the area's agrarian culture and past. The City is working to keep, and compliment, these development forms in an effort to sustain the existing sense of place. This will take additional work and support, however, given the aging inventory of structures in the city and the relatively low economic health of the average homeowner.

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.

Baldwin has a good working rapport with both Habersham and Banks Counties, including adopted Service Delivery Agreements and other collaborative planning and administrative ventures. The City also regularly works with neighboring communities such as Cornelia and Lula to coordinate future development strategies and ensuring the area has sufficient utilities. Current levels of regional cooperation are considered strong.

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.

The City is in need of new higher end housing stock to balance the current supplies, and find additional resources to help homeowners reinvest in the existing, aging supplies. Baldwin has an abundance of older homes that are too small compared to modern market standards and many of these units are also in disrepair. The City also needs additional options regarding senior living options.

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.

Baldwin is ideally located at the juncture of two prominent thoroughfares and even has access to a rail line for freight traffic. The City needs to work with the two Counties and with GDOT, however, to ensure that each arterial corridor retains its efficiency levels for all manner of traffic. Baldwin also needs to complete a Master Transportation Strategy and begin measures for improving the aging internal road network in and around the city's core. Additional efforts must be made also regarding sidewalks and bicycle accessibility, both of which are considered below average.

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.

Baldwin does has a local elementary school and the Habersham County School District is considered generally favorable to most residents. Like many rural communities Baldwin does lack immediate access to secondary and post-secondary facilities but there are several options within a 20-mile radius. The City and Habersham County are also working to bring new programs to area youth to provide easier access to additional educational opportunities, which are needed to improve the abilities of the local labor force.

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.

Overall community health is fair but at risk. Many households are aging or in lower economic groups that are more easily at risk. However, access to regional medical facilities is considered strong, with options in Demorest and Gainesville, and the City is introducing more and new parks to encourage outdoor recreation and interaction.

From a public safety perspective Baldwin is also doing fair and improving. The City does have a local fire station but needs to maintain water line improvements to retain the caliber of fire protection, while local police are regarded favorably in maintaining law enforcement in the area.

Implementation Program

Achieving the Vision and our goals for the community

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. Identifying these items helps the community organize their actions

POLICIES AND LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

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.

Category	Proposed Planning Policies
Community Facilities & Services	Street and sidewalk connectivity requirements
Community Facilities & Services	Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Community Facilities & Services	Water and Sewer Master Plan
Community Facilities & Services	Stormwater Facility Management Ordinance
Economic Development	Establish an Industrial Development program
Economic Development	Establish an Economic Development program
Land Use	Establish a Unified Development Code
Land Use	Update & modernize development review process
Natural & Cultural Resources	Stormwater Management Ordinance
Natural & Cultural Resources	Watershed Protection Ordinance
Natural & Cultural Resources	Historic Preservation Ordinance
Natural & Cultural Resources	Historic & Natural Resource Management Plan
Transportation	Transportation Master Plan
Transportation	Bicylce and Pedestrain Master Plan

In addition to establishing policy, communities may also establish long-term or ongoing programs and activities that support identified objectives. These measures may 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.

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy
Community Facilities & Services	Purchase Baldwin Falls property. Enhance the falls area through debris clean-up.
Community Facilities & Services	Restore the old Maxwell Distillery property. Utilize the property to re-create the old whiskey distillery and operate it as a public education project teaching people about the history and early life in Baldwin.
Community Facilities & Services	Construct an environmental water quality education center that teaches people about the importance of protecting our natural resources and alternative solutions for stormwater management and water quality protection.
Community Facilities & Services	Expand the city's water treatment system by constructing a new plant and expanding and replacing water lines throughout the city.
Community Facilities & Services	Expand the city's waste water treatment system by constructing a new treatment plant and expanding and replacing sewer lines throughout the city.
Community Facilities & Services	Develop and implement a water & sewer master plan.
Community Facilities & Services	Expand fire services by constructing and equipping a new fire station to serve the SR 356 Business Corridor and surrounding areas.
Economic Development	Establish an Industrial Development Authority of the City of Baldwin.
Economic Development	Purchase land for and construct a City-owned industrial park within Baldwin.
Economic Development	Work with private investors to plan and construct a new regional convention center and hotel along the US 441 Corridor.
Economic Development	Develop and implement the use of TADs, CIDs & BIDs for promoting new growth and development as well as revitalization within Baldwin.
Economic Development	Establish an Economic Development Team for the City of Baldwin and produce an annual convention and trade show targeting new business investors from national and international sources.
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study the potential impacts of consolidating some services with counties and other municipalities.
Land Use	Develop and produce a "How to" Guide for builders and developers seeking to do business in Baldwin.
Land Use	Study Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a means for protecting certain areas from future development.
Natural & Cultural Resources	Prepare a historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan.
Natural & Cultural Resources	Develop and implement a public awareness campaign to increase public awareness and appreciation of historic, natural and cultural resources within the community.
Natural & Cultural Resources	Purchase and annex portions of Banks County that include Mountain terrain, sensitive environmental areas and scenic vistas for the purpose of preserving these resources for future generations to enjoy and for protect the economic viability of the US 441 Tourism Corridor
Transportation	Develop and implement a comprehensive transportation plan.

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

Action Item	Status	Comment
Community Facilities & Services		
Water system upgrades	Complete	
Sewer system upgrades	Complete	
Continue providing solid waste collection & disposal (private contract)	Complete	
Construct, maintain & repair city streets	Complete	
Develop & implement street connectivity requirements for all city streets	Complete	
Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of renovating old Garment Factory facility for New City Hall	Postponed	Lack of funding – 2016
Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of renovating old Carwood building for use as a new community center	Postponed	Lack of funding – 2016
Renovate &/or maintain city parks	Complete	
Stormwater collection & BMPs	In Progress	
Develop & implement bicycle & pedestrian plan	Postponed	Deferred for other priorities - 2016
Develop & implement parks & recreation master plan	Complete	
Investigate opportunities to develop city-wide water & sewer master plan	Complete	
Economic Development		
Research and analyze the use of TADs, CIDs & BIDs for promoting new growth & development	In Progress	
Work with local chambers of commerce and development authorities to promote new business investment within the city	Complete	
Work with local chambers and tourism agencies to promote the area and encourage tourism related business investments within the city	Complete	
Develop & implement an economic development program for the city	Complete	
*Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for promoting the city	Complete	
*Develop & implement programs that enhance economic opportunities within the city	Complete	
*Develop and implement a grant funded program to assist local entrepreneurs and business owners develop sustainable business practices	Complete	
Investigate opportunities to purchase Baldwin Falls properties for a natural preserve trails & a local history education center to improve tourism within the city	Postponed	Lack of funding - 2018

Action Item	Status	Comment
Land Use		
Update existing land use and development regulations	Complete	
*Implement overlay districts w/architectural & site design guidelines	Complete	
*Implement TND Ordinance	In Progress	
*Implement Infill Development Ordinance	In Progress	
*Implement Senior Housing Ordinance	In Progress	
*Implement Mass Grading Ordinance	In Progress	
*Implement Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	In Progress	
*Implement Stormwater Management ordinance	Complete	
*Implement Buffer, Landscape and Tree ordinance	Complete	
*Implement Big Box Ordinance	In Progress	
*Implement street connectivity requirements for new developments	In Progress	
*Review and modify, if necessary, city code enforcement policies and implement a new enforcement program	Complete	
Update and modify the city's development review and construction processes	Complete	
Integrate strategic infrastructure planning into the land use decision-making process	Complete	
Study successful TDR programs and evaluate its potential use in the city	Postponed	Deferred for other priorities - 2018
Inter-governmental Coordination		
Develop & implement a strategic plan for intergovernmental coordination issues	Complete	
*Work with school system and other local governments to develop a uniform system for sharing growth & development data & information	Complete	
*Work with other jurisdictions to establish an annual or bi-annual meeting to discuss issues of mutual interest & areas of conflict	Complete	
Maintain adequate service delivery strategy & intergovernmental agreements where appropriate & needed	Complete	

Action Item	Status	Comment
Natural & Cultural Resources		
Implement a natural resources protection program	Complete	
*Implement a conservation ordinance to protect mountains & vistas from intrusive development	Complete	
*Develop & implement a Dark Sky Ordinance to reduce & prevent light pollution	Complete	
Explore financing opportunities for greenspace, natural preserves, sensitive environmental areas, historic and cultural resources	Complete	
Implement an historic resource protection program	Postponed	Deferred for other priorities – 2017
Coordinate with Banks Co. re: Watershed Protection Ordinance	Postponed	Deferred for other priorities - 2017
Transportation		
Investigate opportunities to develop a comprehensive transportation plan	Postponed	Deferred for other priorities - 2018
Integrate transportation planning into the land use decision-making process	Complete	
Develop & implement a corridor mgmt. plan for SR 365 & US 441	Complete	

SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the Short-Term Work Program (STWP). 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.

Year	Action Item	Responsibility	Estimated Cost	Funding Resources
Community Facilities & Services				
2016	Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of renovating old Garment Factory facility for New City Hall	City	\$1,000	City
2016	Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of renovating old Carwood building for use as a new community center	City	\$1,000	City
2016	Stormwater collection & BMPs (from current plans)	City	\$175,000.00	Grants
2016	Develop & implement bicycle & pedestrian plan	City, GMRC	\$4,500.00	GDOT
2016	Pursue funding for new Farmers Market	City, GMRC	TBD	City
2017	Develop new Farmers Market	City	\$200,000	City, ARC
2017	Pursue grant funding for new City Hall	City	TBD	City
2017	Implement water and sewer line inventory	City	\$15,000	City, GEFA, Grants
2018	Develop new City Hall	City	\$1,000,000	Grants, GEFA, SPLOST
2018	Update water and sewer master plan	City	\$15,000	City, GEFA
2019	New water source and capacity study	City	\$15,000	City, GEFA, Grants
2019	Pursue funding for water system improvements	City	\$1,000	City
2020	Water system improvements	City	TBD	City, GEFA, SPLOST
Economic Development				
2016	Research and analyze the use of TADs, CIDs & BIDs for promoting new growth & development	City	N/A	N/A
2016	Develop business plan for Farmers Market	City	\$1,000	City
2016	Pursue Opportunity Zone designation	City	\$2,000	City
2018	Investigate opportunities to purchase Baldwin Falls properties for a natural preserve trails & a local history education center to improve tourism within the city	City	N/A	N/A
2019	Pursue 441 business and development study	City	\$3,000	City, Grants
General				
2017	Begin joint comp plan update w/Habersham	City, GMRC	\$5,000	DCA
2018	Complete comp plan update	City, GMRC	\$5,000	DCA
2018	Update Service Delivery Strategies	City, GMRC	\$1,000	DCA

Year	Action Item	Responsibility	Estimated Cost	Funding Resources
	Land Use			
2016	*Implement TND Ordinance	City	NA	NA
2016	*Implement Infill Development Ordinance	City	NA	NA
2016	*Implement Senior Housing Ordinance	City	NA	NA
2016	*Implement Mass Grading Ordinance	City	NA	NA
2016	*Implement Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	City	NA	NA
2016	*Implement Big Box Ordinance	City	NA	NA
2016	*Implement street connectivity requirements for new developments	City	NA	NA
2018	Study successful TDR programs and evaluate its potential use in the city	City	\$0.00	General Funds
	Natural & Cultural Resources			
2017	Implement an historic resource protection program	City	\$2,500.00	General Funds, Grants
2017	Coordinate with Banks Co. re: Watershed Protection Ordinance	City & Banks County	\$0.00	N/A
2018	Develop a greenspace plan (with Counties)	City, Counties, GMRC	\$5,000	City, DNR
2019	Pursue funding for acquisition of new greenspace (if needed)	City	TBD	City, DNR
2020	Pursue funding to purchase (more of) Baldwin Falls	City	TBD	Grants
	Transportation			
2016	Develop a bicycle and pedestrian master plan	City, GMRC	\$5,000	GDOT
2018	Investigate opportunities to develop a comprehensive transportation plan	City	\$0.00	N/A
2019	Implement first round of sidewalk improvements	City	\$100,000	GDOT, Grants

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BALDWIN, GEORGIA

**ADOPTION OF THE
2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

WHEREAS: The city of Baldwin, Georgia has developed a required 2015 Comprehensive Plan update; and

WHEREAS: The 2015 Comprehensive Plan update has been developed in accordance with the standards and requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS: The 2015 Comprehensive Plan update has been reviewed and approved by the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs;

Now, therefore, **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the City of Baldwin that the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update is hereby adopted.

Adopted by the City Council this 28th day of December, 2015.



Mayor



Clerk