

## Chapter Seven

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# Land Use

## Introduction

Comprehensive Plans are required to include a Land Use element if a community has zoning or similar land use regulations subject to the Zoning Procedures Law. This element includes either a character area map or a future land use map to guide citizens, developers, professionals, and decision-makers in understanding the community's character and shaping the development process. While character areas were considered, it was determined that the plan should rely on a future land use map.

During the Bainbridge Tomorrow 2025 planning process, significant attention was given to what defines Bainbridge and why it remains beloved by many long-term residents despite its challenges. Residents highlighted the city's strong sense of place, its ties to the Flint River, and its quiet ambiance as qualities that attract and retain both established citizens and newcomers. Some questioned recent development decisions, but many agreed that "place" is central to livability and to maintaining a healthy, successful community. Supporting distinctive and inviting places should therefore remain a central goal of land use planning in Bainbridge.

# Key Community Goals

Residents want to see continued improvements to their city while ensuring that growth does not come at the expense of the qualities that make Bainbridge unique. They have expressed a desire for a balanced approach to development — one that enhances quality of life, expands amenities equitably across neighborhoods, and prioritizes reinvestment in the city's future.

## 1. Ensure Equitable Growth Across Bainbridge

While development along Tallahassee Highway has continued to expand, many residents feel that growth in this corridor is outpacing investment in other areas of the city, particularly in West Bainbridge and older neighborhoods. West Bainbridge residents have emphasized the need for the same level of public amenities, infrastructure improvements, and commercial opportunities that are available in other parts of the city. Ensuring that all areas of Bainbridge benefit from reinvestment is a key community priority.

## 2. Maximize Underutilized Land for Future Growth

Many parcels across Bainbridge, particularly along major corridors, remain underutilized. These areas present significant opportunities for mixed-use development, infill housing, and commercial revitalization. Residents have voiced support for policies that encourage redevelopment of vacant or underperforming properties, rather than allowing development to continue spreading outward without reinvesting in the city's established core areas.

## 3. Strengthen Downtown and Neighborhood Identity

Bainbridge's downtown is one of its greatest assets, and residents want to see its continued growth. Expanding mixed-use development, preserving historic structures, and improving public spaces will help strengthen the area as a hub for businesses, tourism, and community activities. Similarly, protecting the unique character of Bainbridge's neighborhoods while allowing for appropriate new development is an ongoing concern.

## 4. Support Commercial and Industrial Growth Without Negative Impacts

Economic growth is a priority for Bainbridge, but residents want to ensure that commercial and industrial expansion does not disrupt quality of life in adjacent areas. Businesses that provide jobs and services are welcomed, but concerns exist about land use conflicts and ensuring that new development is well-integrated into the city's long-term vision.

## 5. Enhancing Access to Parks and Public Spaces

Residents have consistently expressed a desire for expanded recreational opportunities, particularly in underrepresented areas. Ensuring that West Bainbridge and other neighborhoods have access to high-quality green spaces is a key priority. Additionally, making better use of the Boat Basin and riverfront park system remains an important opportunity to strengthen Bainbridge's identity as a scenic, livable community.

## 6. Placemaking and Beautification

Many community members have called for aesthetic improvements that reinforce Bainbridge's sense of place. Streetscape enhancements, better lighting, wayfinding signage, and public art are all ways to make the city more inviting and pedestrian friendly. Investing in these improvements can help Bainbridge maintain its small-town charm while attracting new residents and businesses.

## 7. Infrastructure and Land Use Compatibility

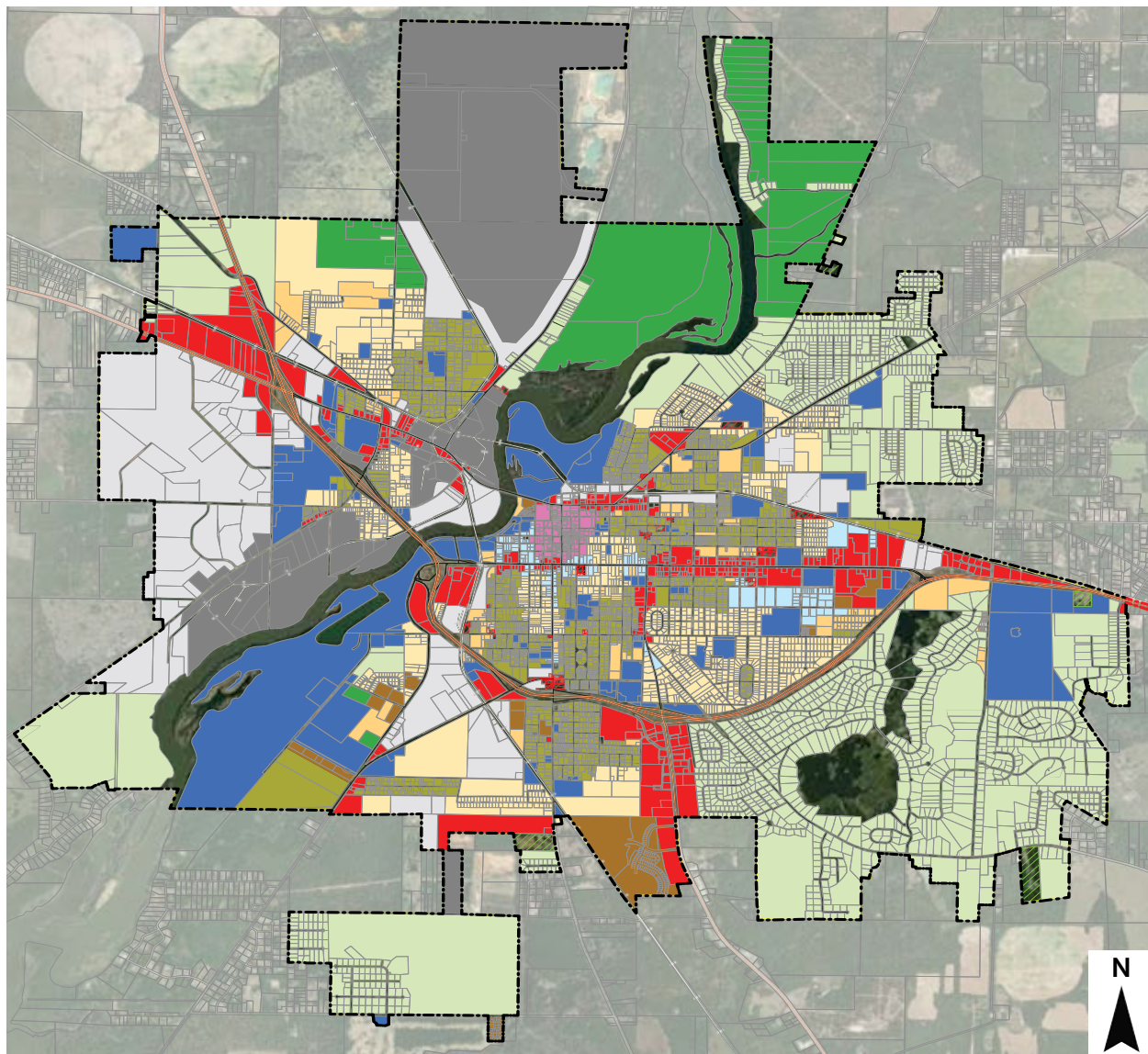
As Bainbridge grows, it is important to ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with development. Residents have noted concerns about traffic congestion, stormwater management, and the need for updated zoning regulations to guide future growth in a way that respects existing neighborhoods. Thoughtful land use planning will be essential to balancing new development with community needs.

# Zoning

A 2025 zoning map for the city is provided as a reference to illustrate the types of uses that are allowed by the city's zoning ordinance at the point in time when the plan was being prepared. The zoning ordinance identifies 14 separate districts and two zoning overlays. The city maintains an interactive map with regular updates at [www.bainbridgecity.com/page./planning](http://www.bainbridgecity.com/page./planning). The city's interactive maps identify many of the requirements set by the zoning ordinance:

- Size of development
- Residential density
- Lot sizes, widths, and front, side, and rear setbacks and buffers
- Building site coverage, open space, and height requirements.
- Accessory building requirements

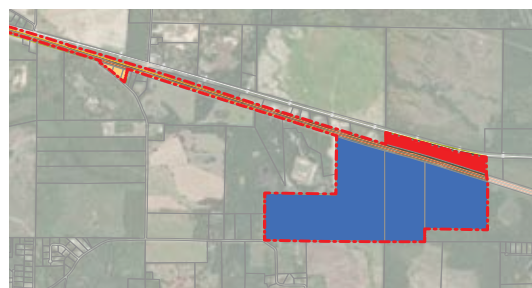




- Central Business District
- Institutional
- Highway Commercial
- Urban Medium Density Residential
- Urban Low Density Residential
- Urban High Density Residential
- Office Professional
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Planned Unit Development
- Rural Residential
- Suburban Residential
- Manufactured Home Parks
- Neighborhood Business



Key Plan



Zoning Map Enlarged Plan

Source: bainbridgega.maps.arcgis.com

Note: Waterbodies are not included in the zoning map.

Figure 7.01: Zoning Map - 2025

The City of Bainbridge Zoning Ordinance includes overlay districts that are applied over the established zoning district categories that provide additional regulations to manage and support development quality and growth. The two overlay districts are the Historic Gateway Overlay District and the Avenue C Overlay District. A zoning overlay district establishes added or more strict standards and criteria in addition to the underlying zoning district.

The Historic Gateway Overlay District is an area on both sides of West and East Calhoun Street between the Flint River, the CSX Railroad to the north, and an irregular boundary on the east and south sides that incorporates about 70 parcels.

The Avenue C Overlay District is bounded by Avenue C, Avenue B, Gee Street, and Second Street in the southwestern area of Bainbridge. The overlay was created to provide a uniform process to help increase property values and promote “health, safety, order, prosperity, and general welfare” of citizens through regulation of use, design, location, and the building size and structure (due to proximity to the City of Bainbridge Solid Waste Transfer Facility). The overlay provides for an administrative design process to allow approval of conditional uses with specific site design standards.



Figure 7.02: --- Avenue C Overlay District  
Source: bainbridgega.maps.arcgis.com

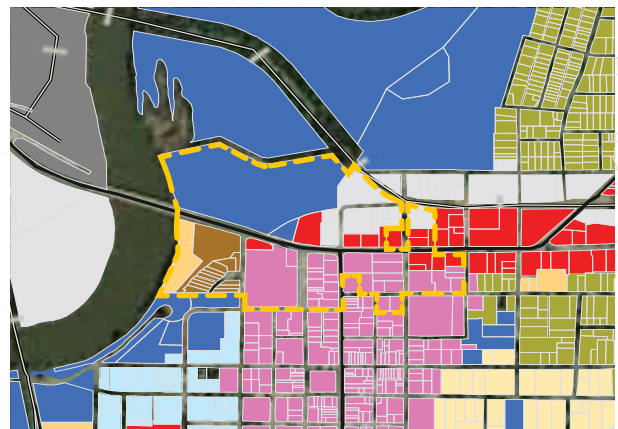


Figure 7.03: --- Historical Gateway Overlay District  
Source: bainbridgega.maps.arcgis.com

# Land Use & Placemaking Strategies

## Existing Land Use

Planning and placemaking start with the review of existing resources:

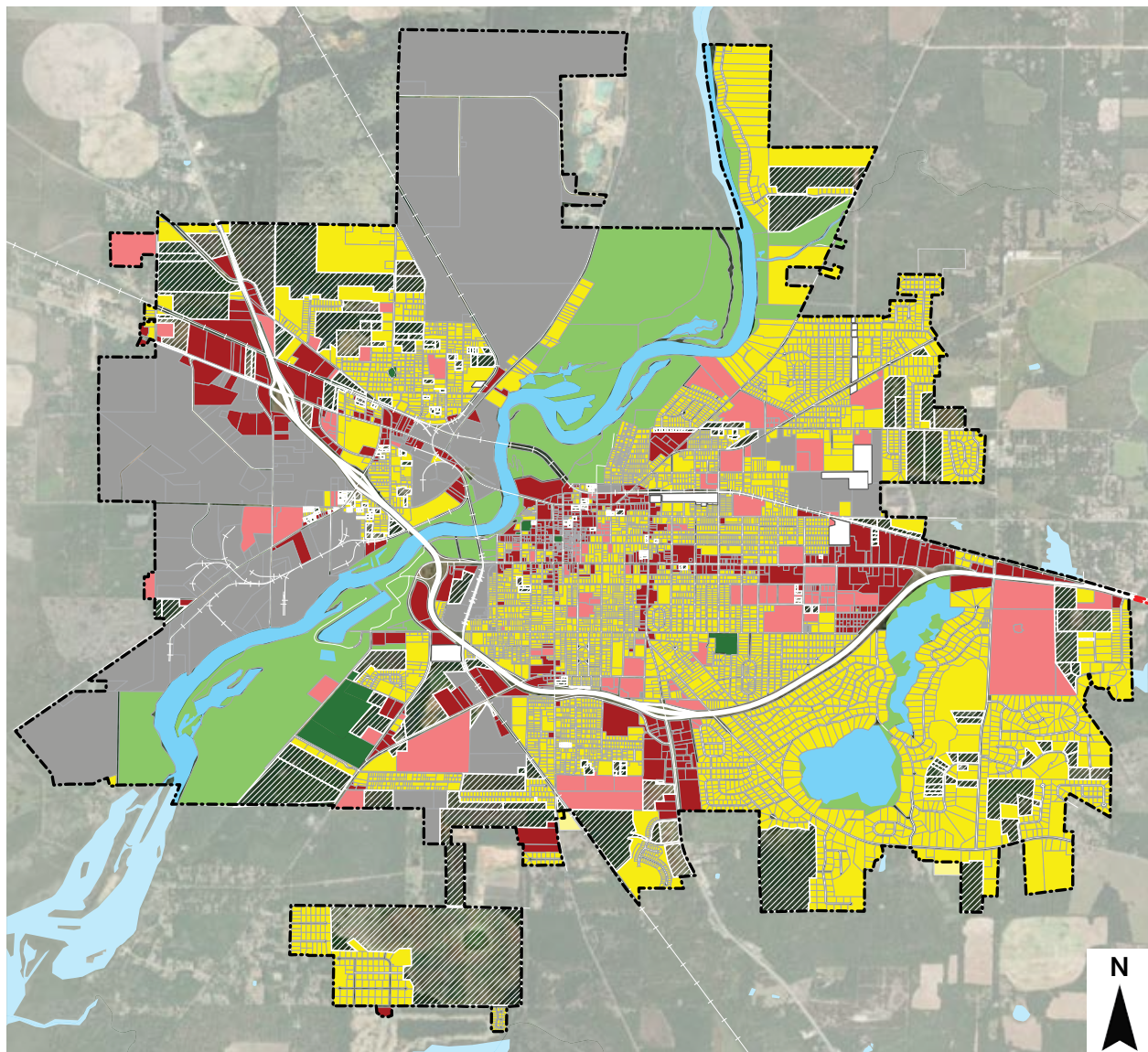
- "What is current?"
- "How is land use defined?"
- "How does land use relate to the surrounding environment?"

The Existing Land Use Map for the Bainbridge Tomorrow 2025 Comprehensive Plan illustrates current land uses using conventional categories to identify and define specific uses. The existing land use map is based on an assessment of the primary or predominant use of each parcel or lot as interpreted through a review of existing maps, aerial photographs, tax records, and field surveys by the planning project team.

The existing land use categories assume that the predominant land use for each parcel represents the best interpretation for developing the comprehensive plan.

- Conservation Areas represent dedicated properties that are reserved for open space, nature preserves, wildlife, and passive recreation uses.
- Active Recreation/Agriculture illustrates two separate types of use that have similar impacts on surrounding properties: (1) Active agricultural uses are croplands, pastures, livestock production facilities, timber yards, pulpwood harvest yards, or similar uses. Private timberlands are included in this category as agricultural uses unless they have been dedicated for an alternative use. (2) Active parks are dedicated public or private playgrounds, recreation centers, ball fields, and gathering spots that provide active recreation or entertainment activities and may have more intensive impacts on surrounding properties due to lighting, noise, or parking.
- Residential land use is predominantly single-family and multi-family development including public housing and supporting infrastructure. Residential land uses do not distinguish a difference in traditional construction or manufactured housing, and may include accessory uses, utility lots, and other parcels that provide part of the community infrastructure.
- Commercial land uses assume the primary use is for retail sales, shopping centers, service and office buildings, theaters, private entertainment venues, and similar activities. The planning team assumed that government or private offices in rented office buildings that include or are surrounded by retail commercial uses may be identified as commercial land uses.



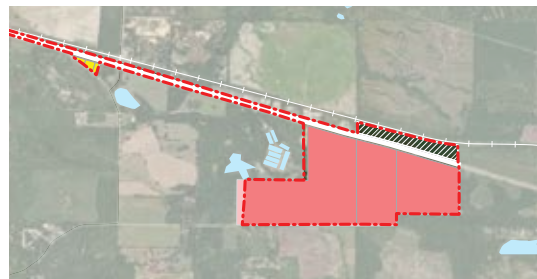


- Conservation Area
- Active Recreation/Agriculture
- Residential
- Commercial
- Public/Institutional (Office/  
Professional)
- Industrial
- Vacant Land
- Transportation/  
Communication/Utilities

Figure 7.04: Existing Land Use Map











Key Plan



Existing Land Use Enlarged Plan

- Public/Institutional (office/professional) land uses include local, state, and federal government offices, libraries, post offices, fire and police stations, corrections and military installations, and private professional uses such as banks, churches, fraternal organizations, and similar institutions.
- Industrial provides the category for manufacturing, warehousing, and wholesale trade facilities, and mining or similar uses. The landfill and recycling facilities are classified as industrial uses.
- Vacant lands are urban properties served by public utilities that have not been identified for a specific use.
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities are rail and highway rights of way, airports, power plants, switching stations, and similar uses.

Existing Land Use		Total Acreage	Percentage Acreage
	Conservation Area	1,708	12.32%
	Active Recreation/Agriculture	93	0.67%
	Residential	3,904	28.17%
	Commercial	872	6.29%
	Public/Institutional (Office/Professional)	1,062	7.66%
	Industrial	4,316	31.14%
	Vacant Land	1,728	12.47%
	Transportation/Communications/Utilities	178	1.28%

Total Area of Bainbridge (21.66 sq. miles)	13,861	100.00%
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Note: Acreage for waterbodies is included in the acreage for Conservation Areas.

Table 7.01: Percentage of total acreage for each existing land use

# Shaping the Built Environment: Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map provides a framework for guiding growth and addressing long-term development challenges over the next five, ten, and twenty-five years. City staff identified a preference for retaining conventional land use categories in the future land use map to support clear, parcel-level decision-making. This approach ensures that residents, staff, and elected officials can more easily interpret appropriate uses for specific properties across the city.

The map and accompanying narrative represent the recommended pattern of land uses moving forward and employ standard land use categories — such as residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use — to describe intended development patterns. In particular, downtown Bainbridge is expected to continue to evolve as a vibrant mix of public, institutional, commercial, entertainment, and recreational uses. While infill will generally occur through separate structures, a shift toward vertical mixed-use is anticipated, with residential units increasingly occupying upper floors in walkable downtown environments.

## Future Land Use Categories

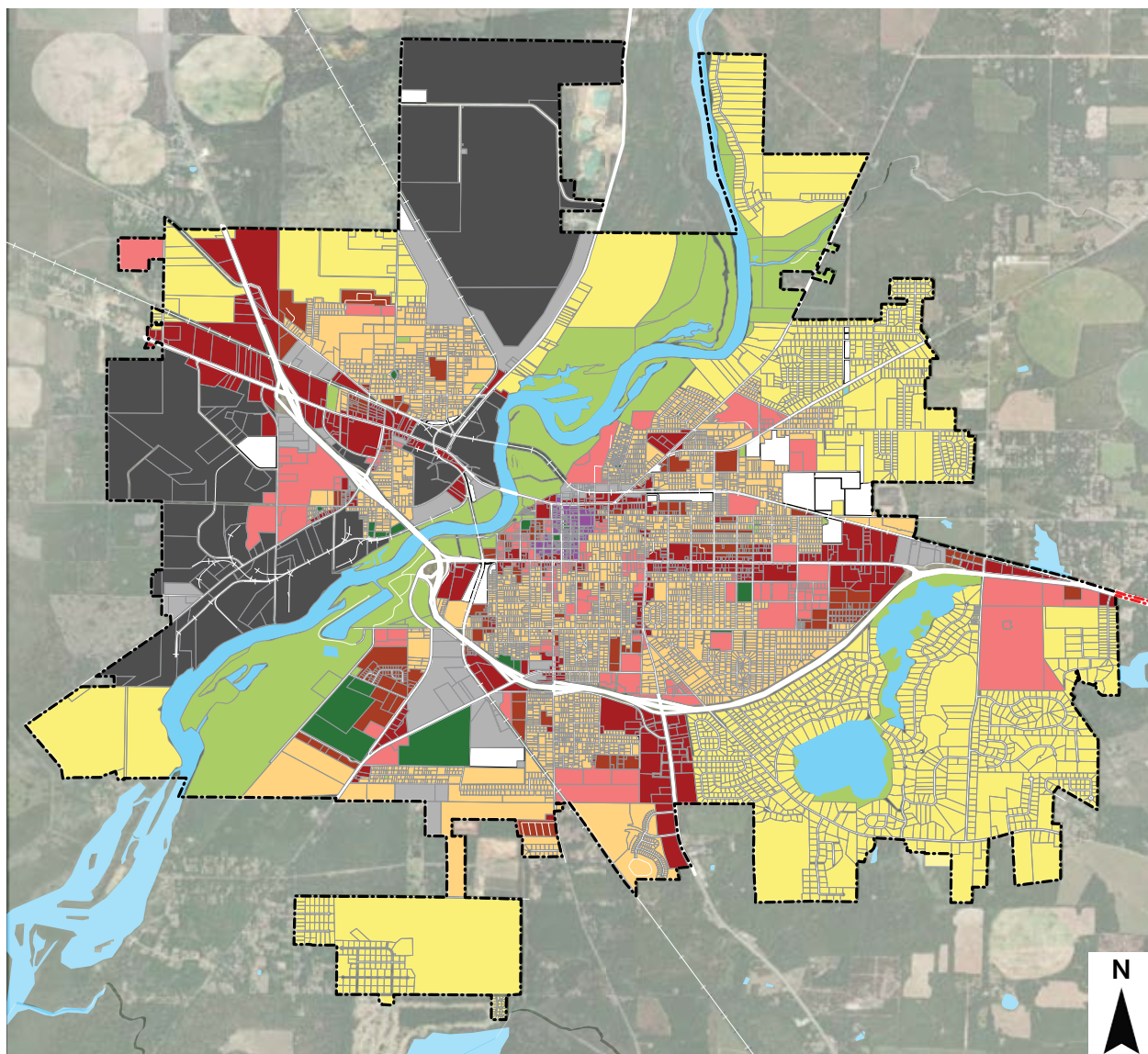
### Low Density Residential

Suburban single-family residential land uses are identified as Low Density Residential in the future land use plan. Low density residential areas are dominated by single-family dwelling units and support infrastructure including garages, sheds, barns, or utility structures. The primary use is for single-family although some accessory dwelling units may be located on an individual property lot in the land use category. Some additional uses may be allowed including an “accessory dwelling unit” if approved by the city. The type of construction of the structure (i.e., manufactured housing) is not considered whereas the number of units on the parcel is considered. Temporary housing structures (hotels, motel, boarding houses, RV and tent campgrounds, etc.) are considered commercial uses and are not appropriate in this or other residential categories.

### Medium Density Residential

General residential uses in the medium density residential category include a mix of individual and attached single-family residential structures and supporting infrastructure. These uses may include single, duplex, triplex, quadplex, or attached “town home” housing and manufactured housing on individual lots. The future land use plan identifies these areas may also include some small non-residential uses in adapted residential structures or mixed-use structures to serve neighborhood needs for local services. Accessory dwelling units and apartments in mixed-use structures may be included in this land use category.



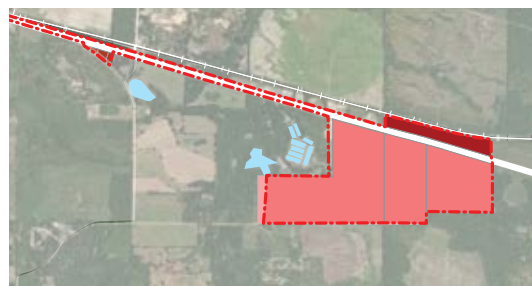


- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Retail Commercial
- Public/Institutional (Office/ Professional)
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Transportation/ Communication/Utilities (TCU)
- Conservation Area (Park/ Recreation)
- Active Recreation/Agriculture
- N/A Undeveloped/Vacant
- Mixed Use

Figure 7.05: Future Land Use Map



Key Plan



Future Land Use Enlarged Plan - 2030

## High Density Residential

The future land use plan includes properties primarily identified as multi-family including apartments and condominiums. Mobile home parks that include multiple dwelling units on a single property are considered to be a type of multi-family development and are limited to multi-family zoning. Single family structures may also be included in this land use category along with accessory uses and infrastructure.

## Retail Commercial

Commercial land uses represent retail sales outlets, shopping centers, service and office buildings, theaters, and entertainment venues. Hotels, motels, and temporary housing are considered part of the commercial land use category. Accessory parking lots for these uses are assumed to be part of the primary land use. Commercial structures intended to provide short-term temporary housing for travelers (hotels, motels, boarding houses, RV (recreational vehicle) and tent campgrounds, etc.) are not considered to be a primary land use and are not considered appropriate in this land use category.

## Public/Institutional (Office/Professional)

Public/Institutional (Office/Professional) land uses identify dedicated federal, state, and local government facilities including the post office, city hall, administration buildings, fire and police stations, corrections, libraries, schools, public hospitals and clinics, museums, military installations, other public buildings, and cemeteries. Active recreation centers are shown as Public/Institutional uses due to their potential impact on surrounding land uses. The Public/Institutional land use category also includes private facilities that have similar characteristics such as churches, banks, fraternal organizations, and private hospitals and clinics. Accessory parking lots for these uses are assumed to be part of the primary land use.

For the purposes of the comprehensive Plan, government offices in general office buildings may be identified as commercial, and passive public parks and recreation facilities are identified as conservation uses. Colleges, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals are identified as institutional uses, and public housing is classified as residential.

## Heavy Industrial

Heavy industrial land uses represent manufacturing, warehousing, and wholesale trade facilities. The Industrial land use category also illustrates mining, quarries, landfills, junkyards, or similar uses. The landfill and recycling facilities are depicted as industrial uses.

## Light Industrial

Light industrial land uses represent manufacturing, warehousing, and wholesale trade facilities. The Industrial land use category also illustrates mining, quarries, landfills, junkyards, or similar uses.



## Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU)

Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU) includes rail and highway rights of way, airports, power plants, switching stations, and similar uses. Dedicated utility corridors, owned by a utility, are considered to be in the TCU category; however, utility easements are considered to be an accessory use.

## Conservation Area (Park/Recreation)

Conservation Area (Park/Recreation) includes dedicated public or private open space, parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, nature preserves, or conservation areas.

## Active Recreation/Agriculture

Active Recreation land uses include dedicated public or private playgrounds, recreation centers, ball fields, and gathering spots that provide active recreation or entertainment activities. Agriculture land uses include farms, croplands, pastures, and livestock production facilities. Agriculture land uses are not considered likely within the existing boundary of the City of Bainbridge, and no specific areas of agricultural land uses were identified in the future land use map. However, agricultural land use is considered to be a potential land use in areas that may be annexed into the city in the future and is reserved for that purpose.

Active Recreation and Agriculture land uses share attributes that may have more intensive impacts on surrounding properties due to activity lighting, noise, traffic, access, or parking that should be addressed in land use and development decisions. The Active Recreation/Agriculture land use category provides for these shared characteristics in the Future Land Use Plan.

## Undeveloped/Vacant

Undeveloped/Vacant land uses identify urban properties served by public utilities, but which do not have a specific identified use. Vacant land is likely to occur, but it is the task of the future land use map to identify a proposed land use. Therefore, the Bainbridge Tomorrow Plan does not identify any vacant land in the future land use plan but does include the category as part of the Future Land Use map.

## Mixed Use

Mixed Use is a type of urban development that blends multiple uses, such as residential, commercial, institutional and other land uses, that function together to provide a compatible, integrated, social and economic entity. As a small city, the Mixed Land Use category is limited to the downtown area of the City of Bainbridge in the Future Land Use Plan map.

Future Land Use		Total Acreage	Percentage Acreage
	Low Density Residential	3,426	24.72%
	Medium Density Residential	1,898	13.69%
	High Density Residential	348	2.51%
	Retail Commercial	767	5.53%
	Public/Institutional (Office/Professional)	1,059	7.64%
	Heavy Industrial	2,866	20.68%
	Light Industrial	1,481	10.68%
	Transportation/Communications/Utilities (TCU)	336	2.42%
	Conservation Area (Park/Recreation)	1,471	10.61%
	Active Recreation/Agriculture	172	1.24%
N/A	Undeveloped/Vacant	0	0.00%
	Mixed Use	37	0.27%

Total Area of Bainbridge (21.66 sq. miles)	13,861	100.00%
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Note: Acreage for waterbodies is included in the acreage for Conservation Areas.

Table 7.02: Total and Percentage Acreage of Each Future Land Use

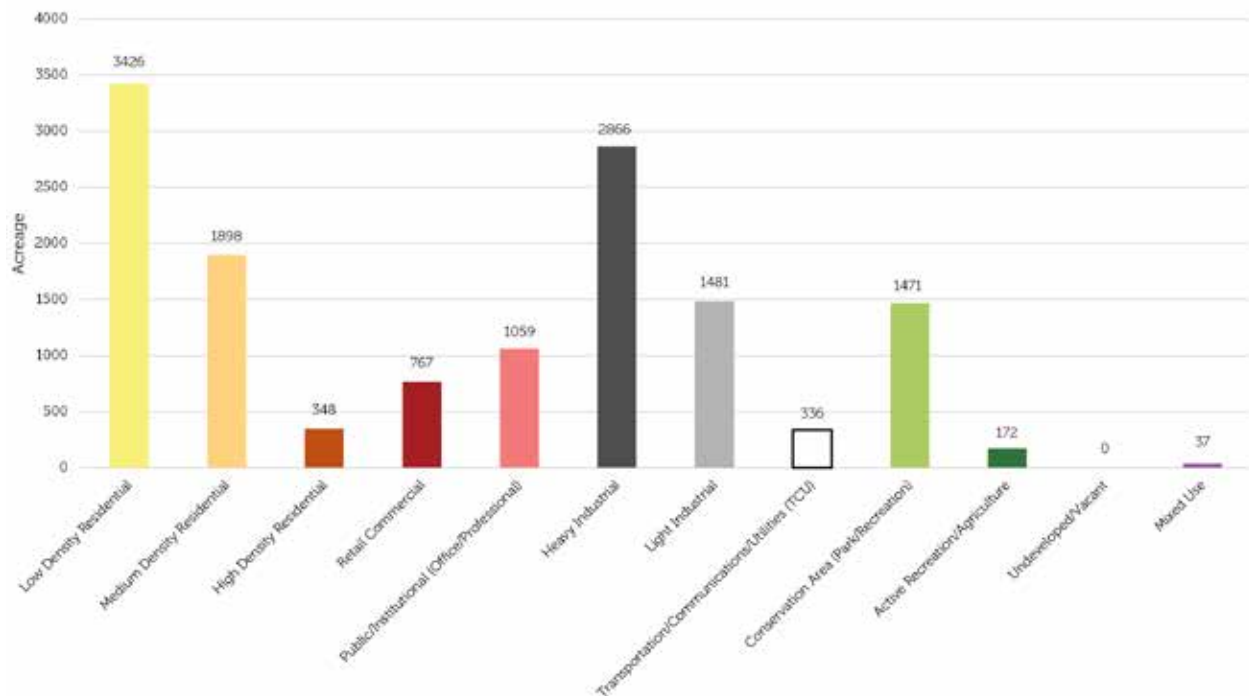


Figure 7.06: Projected Land Use Distribution for 2030

## Mixed-Use Summary

The future land use plan identified 37 acres designated as mixed-use. The mixed-use area in the future land use plan currently includes 2.71 acres of residential use (7.5%), 2.46 acres of vacant land (6.6%), and 31.83 acres (85.8%) allocated for commercial purposes (including public and institutional uses).

The future mix is assumed to provide an increase in residential use to approximately 10% as “downtown living” becomes more readily available on upper floors and access to food and household necessities becomes available.



Figure 7.07: Proposed Mixed Use Area



Figure 7.08: Downtown Bainbridge

# Land Use & Placemaking Priorities

## Live/Work/Play

Live/Work/Play is a concept for communities to combine residential, work, and recreational spaces in close proximity to provide convenience and improve health and quality of life by reducing commute travel times and isolation. Benefits can improve work/life balance, promote access to amenities, community development, and sustainable development. Businesses benefit through access to more nearby customers for longer periods of the day, and proximity to more diverse innovators and creative trendsetters. In a small to medium-sized city like Bainbridge (10,000–20,000 residents), shorter travel times create more opportunities for family, recreation, and community engagement, and less time spent on the highway.

However, Live/Work/Play success depends on the combinations of all components including access to basic needs and amenities. The residential component supports Live/Work/Play when it supplies a variety of housing options and supports residents of diverse incomes and lifestyles that choose to live close to work. Employers find the smaller community creates greater worker engagement on the clock with less worry for family or friends that may be outside immediate access if all three components are made available.

Land use planning must focus on the balance of jobs, houses, necessities, and interesting things to do in a safe and secure environment. The city should prioritize the efficient management of local government resources that capitalize on recent success in expanding industrial, amenities, and commercial development to address significant issues with the quality of housing and access.

## Priority Investment Areas

Investors are faced with a variety of choices regarding where to invest their resources and money, and local governments must determine where to apply their resources in a similar fashion. Identifying land use planning investment priorities is the process of setting up an order for making improvements to maximize results and align government initiatives with appropriate goals; suitable land uses; balanced social, economic, and environmental demands; and sustainable development and community growth. Key areas for public resource investment may be relatively obvious, but the process is long-term beginning with data for the state of existing conditions and the need for immediate repairs and periodic maintenance.

Priorities for land management and development will evolve and change as land uses mature and establish settled edges, and as new economic and social activities emerge at key locations within the city.



# Job and Activity Centers

## Downtown Bainbridge

Downtown Bainbridge is the heart of Bainbridge and is defined as an Urban Center. Downtown includes the central business district (CBD) and access to the river at Chason and Cheney Griffin Parks opening a link between the most heavily developed urban area and the conservation area along the riverbanks. The area is an asset for the city that enhances the opportunity for visitors to pursue passive recreation and active entertainment activities with nearby urban convenience. Downtown Bainbridge offers the best opportunities for mixed use development, including residential uses with an existing plan and an active Downtown Development Authority. The primary land uses in Downtown Bainbridge are mixed use, commercial, and institutional.



Figure 7.09: Downtown Bainbridge

## Spring Creek

Spring Creek includes the Commodore Industrial Park and the Georgia Ports Authority facilities south of Dothan Highway (US84) and west of the Georgia Wiregrass Parkway (US27) (aka Bainbridge Bypass). The area is Industrial and includes Decatur County and City of Bainbridge public works and correctional facilities in addition to warehouses, tank farms, and logistics facilities. A small enclave of General Residential blocks remain at the eastern end of Butler Ferry Road along Dickerson Street and Church Street as a remnant of West Bainbridge that was cut off by the construction of the Flint River bridge and US27 as a grade-separated highway. This community could easily be forgotten, and a long-term plan is needed to identify if it should be protected or bought out for industrial uses. Protection of this residential area and access to the remainder of West Bainbridge will require commitment of resources to mitigate the industrial impacts and resolve past legacies of ignoring pre-existing communities during the construction of transportation and heavy industrial uses.

The industrial and commercial area along Dothan Highway is discussed below with the West Bainbridge neighborhood.

## The Faceville Highway Industrial Area

The Faceville Highway Industrial Area is a triangular area on both sides of Faceville Highway between Old Quincy Road and the railroad and extending south to property lines north of Avenue A. This industrial area includes the Georgia Industries for the Blind, a timberyard, other small industrial uses, open fields recently used for agriculture, and the Grace Christian Academy Athletic Complex.

## Downrange Industrial Park

Downrange Industrial Park is a new industrial park that has begun to change land use dynamics to the north of West Bainbridge. The industrial park is located north and east of the railroad connecting to Blakely. Access is primarily available via Newton Road (Georgia SR253). A significant buffer was negotiated along the southern edge of the new industrial park to limit potential conflicts with residential uses on Lake Drive (Pondtown Road) to the south and the eastern side of Newton Road. Truck traffic will be limited to Newton Road to protect Lake Drive. However, worker access through the residential areas north of Bethel Road and Dothan Highway should require a new access route to US27 be identified and constructed to relieve Newton Road and give the industrial traffic an alternative for access and egress that avoids West Bainbridge residential uses.

## Shotwell and Scott Streets

Shotwell and Scott Streets provide access for US84 Business and US27 Business corridors providing access to the Bainbridge downtown. The corridors are commercial corridors providing commercial retail, healthcare and institutional uses for the Bainbridge community. Older residential land uses are located adjacent to the corridors. A study completed in 2024 provided recommendations for the area to address the worn look of older commercial structures and street infrastructure. The Shotwell and Scott Plan recommended “Complete Street” improvements to connect and improve the existing and broken sidewalks, consolidate curb cuts, and provide street furniture and sustainable planted materials along the corridors to establish a consistent positive image for the streets that would revitalize interest in rehabilitating the housing and community infrastructure for the adjacent neighborhoods and for northern and eastern elements of Decatur County. The plan recommends the city support any interest in creating a Community Improvements District for the area to support a renaissance of the streets to serve local needs for public and commercial services.



Figure 7.10: Shopping Centers along Shotwell and Scott Streets



## Tallahassee Highway

Tallahassee Highway to the south of the Georgia Wiregrass Parkway (Bypass) has seen exceptional development over the past decade. The development of successful (and well-known) new shopping anchors, including Wal-Mart and the new Publix, have attracted peripheral shops and businesses to the location. This commercial corridor is expected to continue attracting retail development. While the corridor continues to attract commercial growth, the adjacent Southgate subdivision maintains a suburban residential character, oriented toward the Tallahassee Highway instead of linking with residential areas to the north.



Figure 7.11: Development along Tallahassee Highway



Figure 7.12: Early development of "Southgate" residential neighborhood

The development of Southgate mirrors the historic pattern of residential growth along East Shotwell Street, where nearby households support adjacent businesses. In the case of Southgate, new residential growth supports commercial activity on Tallahassee Highway. Unlike Shotwell, however, this growth occurs on the city's periphery as largely greenfield development, while older areas of Bainbridge see less reinvestment as growth and development pressure concentrate along Tallahassee Highway. Although opportunities exist for adaptive reuse and infill development, these will be less likely to materialize if development pressure continues to concentrate at the edge of the city.

An unfortunate consequence of green field development has been the lure of the "new" creating a negative impression of the older existing commercial areas of the city. Downtown Bainbridge has shown a way to compete with both local relocation of commerce and regional development of competing cities by using the city's location adjacent to the Flint River to attract tourism and reinvestment in downtown structures to accommodate visitors from a larger region rather than Decatur County. The Shotwell and Scott Streets Plan recommends a similar path to use public funds to enhance the access, safety, and appearance of the centerline streets to energize private investors to re-invest in the private businesses with the potential to reinvigorate adjacent residential development.

# Neighborhoods

## The Residential Historical District

The Residential Historical District includes numerous residential parcels classified as “historic,” and the city is justifiably proud of the area’s history. Unfortunately, many of these residential structures in the eastern and southern portions of the historic district are deteriorating due to age, intensive use, or lack of continuous maintenance. The character of the Historic Residential District is General Residential interfacing with the Urban Center character of Downtown Bainbridge. The primary “showpieces” for the city are on the East Shotwell and South West Street corridors featuring large homes that were built prior and during the early 20th century. Rehabilitation of the older residential structures has focused on these corridors.

The Bainbridge Historic Preservation Commission works to promote the city’s historic, cultural, and aesthetic heritage to stimulate revitalization to protect and enhance attraction for tourists and local business. However, deteriorating structures do not enhance the city’s efforts. The city needs to support the revitalization of housing assets to help retain the character that is attractive to tourism and residents alike through a concerted program to ensure structures are renovated in character with the aesthetic that makes Bainbridge a recognizable “place”.



Figure 7.13: Historic Homes

## Vada Road

Vada Road represents the primary corridor for Georgia State Routes 309 and 311 through the northern area of Bainbridge east of the Flint River. The area is medium-density residential southwest of Morningside Baptist Church and the old fairgrounds, transitioning to low-density residential northward toward Spring Creek Charter Academy and Whigham Dairy Road (just outside the city limits). The pending change of the designated state highway along Vada Road is expected to release truck traffic to Whigham Dairy and encourage infill residential to continue along Belcher Lane.

## East Bainbridge

East Bainbridge is the area formed by the extended downtown grid system of streets to the east along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, East Water Street, and East Broughton Street. MLK Jr. Drive is an east/west corridor connecting Planters Street to Old Whigham Road in the unincorporated county. The character of the neighborhood is General Residential between the railroad and East Broughton Street interfacing with the northern side of the East Shotwell Street corridor. The most prominent land use exceptions are Hutto Elementary School on the north side of MLK Jr Drive and Jones Wheat Primary School south of Broughton. Many of the neighborhood homes are older blue-collar single-family structures that suffer from aged construction and inadequate maintenance. The distance from downtown Bainbridge is countered by the proximity of the East Shotwell corridor supporting access to jobs and resources.



Figure 7.14: East Bainbridge

East Bainbridge is a designated Opportunity Zone (OZ) by the State of Georgia and is eligible for funding to help public and private development address commercial and housing deficiencies due to the low-income levels of people that live in the community (as defined by the census tract boundaries). The city proposes to use the OZ designation to support improvements and access to resources for the East Bainbridge community.

## South Bainbridge

South Bainbridge comprises the neighborhoods south of the Shotwell Street corridor. Major public and institutional uses anchor the area, including Memorial Hospital and Manor, Bainbridge Middle School, and the Decatur County Board of Education properties around the stadium. Retail and additional public/institutional uses are concentrated along South Scott Street and South West Street, while the remainder of the area is primarily medium-density residential.

The most pressing development concern in South Bainbridge is its aging housing and commercial infrastructure. The Shotwell and Scott Streets Study recommended streetscape improvements along Scott Street to strengthen pedestrian access to local businesses and to create conditions that encourage private reinvestment. Paired with stronger code compliance, these improvements are intended to enhance safety and security for the surrounding residential community.

The relocation of the Middle School creates an issue regarding what uses might replace the school. The city has a vested interest in negotiating with the Decatur County Board of Education regarding the reuse or disposition of the Middle School property and will work to identify private as well as public opportunities for consideration by the Board.



Figure 7.15: Bainbridge Middle School



Figure 7.16: Additional Medical Facilities behind Memorial Hospital and Manor

The Hospital Authority is preparing plans for the Memorial Hospital and Manor. The city will support the Authority in planning and development through responsible representation of the community in providing information and identifying issues that may affect access, utilities, and potential land use conflicts.



## Lake Douglas

Lake Douglas includes the areas south of the Georgia Wiregrass Parkway (Bypass) and Thomasville Highway and to the east of the Tallahassee Road corridor. The character is solidly Suburban Residential with exception of a large Special Institutional character including ABAC Bainbridge and the Southern Regional Technical College. The area is expected to continue filling in with single-family development.

## Southwest Bainbridge

Southwest Bainbridge is a collection of several neighborhoods between the Tallahassee Road corridor and the Flint River and includes an older neighborhood south of East and West Alice Street centered on South West Street leading into Fowlstown Road. The neighborhood is a medium-density residential extending west to include the Harvest Home Apartments at Faceville Highway and wedged between the railroad, the Georgia Wiregrass Parkway and the Tallahassee corridor.

Newer medium-density residential areas have developed along Old Quincy Road and Faceville Highway (Georgia State Route 97) to accommodate multi-family and small lot housing choices with close proximity to recreation facilities and the Flint River. The residential areas located along the east side of Crawford Road and north of Country Club Road are low-density residential including larger lots.

## West Bainbridge

West Bainbridge refers to the residential development, north and south of Dothan Highway between the large industrial areas to the north and south. The neighborhoods are split by Dothan Highway and the railroad corridors connecting Bainbridge to Donalsonville and Blakely. These corridors were originally important for the development of the community but crossing them has become a barrier to local access for the community. West Bainbridge is primarily made up of medium-sized framed single-family houses built between 1970 and 1999 and occupied by a mix of owners and renters. Vacancy rates are high (over 20%) and many residents are new<sup>1</sup> to the community. The area is dominated by industrial land uses.

The short commutes to nearby manufacturing jobs or into downtown Bainbridge are a positive factor, but speakers at the public meetings identified a lack of nearby recreation, amenities, and restaurants which was confirmed by the assessment provided by the middle school students who used the comprehensive planning update as an opportunity to create recommendations for the revitalization of West Bainbridge.

The busy road and rail corridors divide West Bainbridge into small, disconnected pockets that are difficult to navigate without a car. South of the Dothan Highway corridor, the older neighborhood around Church Street, between Spring Creek Road and South Miller Avenue, is hemmed in by industrial and commercial uses to the east, north, and west, and by the Spring Creek Road interchange with the limited-access US 27 (Georgia Wiregrass Parkway) to the south.

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1 Neighborhood Scout. "Bainbridge, GA (Bainbridge Southwest)." <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ga/bainbridge/bainbridge-southwest>.

The north side of West Bainbridge has faced different challenges. The relocation of West Bainbridge Elementary School from Martin Street to Zorn Road removed an important local anchor. Limited railroad crossings at Griffin Street and North Miller Avenue restrict mobility, while the absence of community recreation facilities reduces opportunities for gathering and play. At the same time, residents are wary of the potential impacts of new industrial development in the Downrange Industrial Park to the north, adding to concerns about the area's recovery and cohesion.

To address these issues, the comprehensive plan recommends a dedicated community assessment and planning study for West Bainbridge. The study should evaluate the potential for a gateway district along Dothan Highway, extending onto Calhoun Street to link US 27 and US 84 with Downtown Bainbridge. It should also assess the corridor's design, considering state bikeway provisions, pedestrian access, and the effects of zoning and development patterns on livability. The ultimate goal is to strengthen the corridor's role as a primary route, enhance adjacent land uses, and support occupancy, redevelopment, and infill within the surrounding residential community.

# Outside the Lines

Cities are not static. Many communities expand their urban influence to areas outside the city limits through extension of utilities and the influence of jobs and amenities created by the city's resources and urban service area infrastructure. Growth can be contentious if the city, county, and state have differing agendas; however, Bainbridge seeks to ensure that development proceeds efficiently and within financial limitations. The following recommendations are proposed as potential ideas for discussion with Decatur County and other providers for consideration of "best" options to accommodate development.

## Strategic Growth Corridors

### Whigham Dairy Road

Whigham Dairy Road is just outside the Bainbridge city limits and is being reconstructed as a state highway to enhance north/south access to the east of the city and reduce truck traffic currently using local streets through the city. The new route will be designated as a state highway and should reduce truck traffic on Vada Road, South West Street, East Shotwell Street, and South Scott Street. The existing character of the area is Rural/Agricultural, and improvements to Whigham Dairy Road may encourage property owners to develop more intensive uses adjacent to the corridor and seek utilities from Bainbridge to serve the new uses. New development of Suburban Residential character can be accommodated with some curb cut restrictions and limits to direct access to the highway. Bainbridge should work with Decatur County and GDOT to ensure the road capacity is maintained. The city also should consider annexation if development requiring the extension of city utilities are proposed.

### Old Whigham Road

Old Whigham Road provides east/west access crossing Whigham Dairy north of the rail line and extending to Climax and eastward. The area is Rural/Agricultural with some existing manufactured housing on large lots in subdivisions on Belcher Lane and Hunter Road and along Black Jack Road connecting to Thomasville Highway through an area of manufactured homes on large lots. Given its rural character, dispersed development pattern, and distance from core city services, the area is not considered a prime candidate for annexation.

### Thomasville Highway (US84)

Thomasville Highway (US84) is the primary corridor for access to the High School and Middle School and parallels the railroad corridor to Climax, Cairo, Thomasville, and Valdosta. The rural nature and large land parcels of the corridor provide the opportunity to expand the city's supply of large lot suburban residential development to the east with an opportunity for some neighborhood commercial development at Black Jack Road and between Nebo and Long Roads. One aspect to be considered is the time frame required to extend public water, sewer, and other

infrastructure for new development and the slow absorption rate for traditional houses on rural lots. The existing extension of the city limits and utilities to encompass the school facilities makes the potential annexation of parcels south of Thomasville Highway appropriate for review with consideration of the availability of utility extensions and capacity.

## Faceville Highway (Georgia Route 97)

Faceville Highway (Georgia Route 97) includes Suburban Residential development along Hand Road and Riverchase, Sweetgum, and Whispering Pines Drives with substantial areas of pine woods that could be developed. These areas are best suited for Suburban Residential development extending to Hand Road and Fourmile Creek, but the cost of extending public utilities grows rapidly as the extension moves farther away from the core of the city.

## Whites Mill

Whites Mill represents the northwestern edge of the city along US27 and the Martha Berry Highway. The recent development and inclusion of the Downrange Industrial Park within the Bainbridge City Limits extends the city to Pondtown Road. The railroad to Blakeley continues northwest cross country to run parallel with the US27 corridor to the north. An extension of the Downrange Industrial Park service road to Whites Mill or a reasonable alternative is desirable to support access to US27 and limit truck or work trip traffic through West Bainbridge. The character is expected to be Rural/Agricultural west of the railroad with a possibility that a large industrial site could be marketed through Georgia's economic development team. Annexation into the city may be considered as a long-term option to be preserved for future comprehensive planning.

## South Martha Berry Highway

South Martha Berry Highway is the southern extension of US27 along the Tallahassee Highway. The area is Rural/Agricultural in character with a few commercial businesses along the divided highway. The road is a major regional transportation asset for Georgia DOT and traffic speeds along the route necessitates minimal intrusions or median cuts. Annexation to provide additional sites to continue the development of commercial uses south along US27 should be assumed to place negative pressure on existing commercial property values elsewhere in the city and create added costs for the sprawl of extending utilities farther into green fields.



## Activity Centers & Economic Development Goals & Recommendations

5. Identify “Best” locations for industries and extend utilities to accommodate future industrial development in identified areas.

5.1: Communicate with the Industrial Development Authority to identify potential issues that may define what opportunities for industrial development should be considered appropriate For Bainbridge.

6. Provide local jobs for residents.

6.1: Support the location of new businesses that provide jobs close to where residents live including pedestrian opportunities within  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile.

6.2: Support transportation resources that help residents travel to local jobs using a mode of their choice including automobile, bicycle, on foot, or by appropriate transit including microtransit, business-provided bus, carpool, or taxi service.

## Neighborhoods & Housing Goals & Recommendations

7. Help transition residents from public subsidized housing to affordable homes.

7.1: Attract business and trade to Increase job opportunities and incomes for residents in public housing.

7.2: Promote programs that help educate heads of households regarding life and financial skills and home management and maintenance.

8. Encourage development of housing options for all income ranges.

8.1: Encourage the development of higher density “Missing Middle” housing structures in the general residential areas of the city.

8.2: Allow Accessory Dwelling Units in all residential areas to help property owners provide affordable housing to seniors, young persons, and less financially secure persons.

8.3: Identify the mix of housing types, sizes, or finishes proposed by a developer to determine if the mix of housing options is appropriate for the character of the neighborhood.

9. Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in the community.

9.1: Promote programs that help educate heads of households regarding home maintenance and repair and support financial management education programs.

9.2: Promote partnerships with non-government organizations (churches, charities, advocacy groups, service organizations, etc.), home stores and other local businesses to identify available home repair resources including design assistance, surplus construction materials, or funding for home repair.

10. Improve and use code enforcement to help improve neighborhood appearance.

10.1: Work with code enforcement officers to educate homeowners regarding programs to repair or maintain housing.

11. Help low-income families avoid becoming homeless.

11.1: Promote and support education programs that help educate low-income families regarding housing assistance and retention.

12. Support senior care and retirement facilities in residential areas to allow older residents and incoming retirees to age nearby.

12.1: Identify requirements for senior care facilities that can be located in existing low density residential areas to accommodate concerns regarding safety and secure visiting.

## Efficient Land Use Goals & Recommendations

13. Work with local neighborhoods to identify and manage potential land use conflicts, impacts, and transitions consistent with community character.

13.1: Identify potential transitional divides that require physical or psychological assistance in creating acceptable buffers between land uses.

13.2: Identify and monitor the location, condition, and service life of existing utility and transportation system assets to develop a strategic plan to coordinate the timing, maintenance and replacement of existing public facilities and the appropriate development of new facilities within the financial limitations of the city and the city's appropriate area for the extension of urban services.

14. Update zoning and development regulations to address conditional uses, mixed uses, buffers, etc.

14.1: Identify alternative opportunities to provide a buffer between conflicting land uses such as physical barriers including walls, hedges, directed lighting, or other barriers.

14.2: Ensure that the zoning and building codes support an appropriate set of alternatives for successful transition.

14.3: Review the building codes to ensure rehabilitation standards for older buildings are appropriate to encourage renovation without significantly increasing the costs for renovation.

# Placemaking & the Land Use Action Plan

## Sense of Place – Parks & Public Spaces Goals and Recommendations

1. Provide pleasant public gathering places and parks to serve the community.
  - 1.1 Provide public open space and park facilities within ¼ to ½ mile walking distance.
  - 1.2 Deliver diverse facilities to serve regional interests in addition to local needs.
2. Support River Access for Residents and Visitors.
  - 2.1: Continue to implement the waterfront connectivity plan to provide active and passive recreational opportunities.
  - 2.2: Ensure public access to the river serves everyone, including residents, visitors, and businesses that serve recreation, logistics, transportation, and government.

## Sense of Place - Downtown Development Goals & Recommendations

3. Implement the Bainbridge Downtown Master Plan.
  - 3.1: Continue implementing the plan to improve streets, sidewalks, wayfinding, and venues for an active downtown streetscape that promotes safe and secure access, security, safety, and aesthetics.
  - 3.2: Develop plans for marketing downtown sites for commercial and mixed-use development.
4. Promote and Ensure Downtown Safety for visitors and local businesses.
  - 4.1: Promote programs that maximize “Eyes on the Street” and rapid response to defusing security issues including morally offensive behavior.
  - 4.2: Provide appropriate wayfinding, lighting, and ADA compliant pathways and crosswalks to help visitors, residents, and patrons of all ages and abilities travel safely between downtown activities areas, event venues, and parking.