



Chapter Two

Community Engagement

Introduction

A comprehensive plan is only as strong as the voices that shape it. Good urban planning centers public participation and reflects the community's collective vision, needs, and aspirations. Meaningful public engagement ensures that plans are closely aligned with residents' daily realities and effectively address local challenges.

This chapter details the community engagement strategies for developing the Bainbridge Tomorrow comprehensive plan, including public meetings, stakeholder discussions, interactive workshops, and online outreach. These efforts were designed to be inclusive, transparent, and action-oriented, ensuring that all voices — especially those historically underrepresented — were heard. This chapter also summarizes the community's input and highlights how public feedback has been incorporated into the final recommendations.

Public Outreach & Engagement Approach

Five primary stakeholder meetings¹ were held throughout the planning process, strategically spaced one to two months apart to allow for ongoing participation while accommodating some breathing room between meetings. At the end of the planning process is a thorough review period by Bainbridge City Council, the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWGRC) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). This final review process with local and state government ensures that the final plan meets all local and state requirements. The completion of this plan marks an important milestone, but continued engagement remains essential as the city moves forward with implementation.

Community Outreach Strategies & Engagement Methods

The Bainbridge Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was developed through a multi-faceted community engagement process designed to capture diverse perspectives and ensure broad participation. From public meetings to innovative engagement methods, these efforts reflect Bainbridge's commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration.

Online Engagement

The project's website, www.bainbridgetomorrow.com, served as a central hub for information, meeting materials, and community updates. Launched the day of the first public hearing on June 18th 2024, the site includes:

- Principles: An overview of the core values guiding Bainbridge's goal-setting and planning efforts.
- Bainbridge Today: A detailed analysis of current conditions within the city, providing context for future planning.
- Approach: List of elements identified by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). DCA Elements guide the organization of the plans by influencing the chapters and sections included for the plan.
- Resources: All of the materials presented at each meeting, as well as a list of relevant reports with direct links to the full source materials.
- Implementing the Plan: Information about how strategies and recommendations from the plan will be put into action in Bainbridge after formal adoption of the Plan.
- How to Get Involved: Information on how to contribute to the planning process.
- Contact Us: A channel for residents to join the mailing list to get emails about upcoming meetings and submit questions, comments, or feedback regarding the plan.

¹ One kick-off Public Hearing and Four Public Stakeholder Meetings.

Input shared by Bainbridge residents shaped the website's structure and content to ensure it aligns with their needs and priorities. The website was a resource for those who could not attend in person, as well as a container of all meeting materials for those who did attend but wanted to view the materials again.

Civic Interaction

Bainbridge Middle School students conducted a parallel project to analyze West Bainbridge and develop innovative solutions. This initiative allowed students to learn about urban planning while sharing their ideas for Bainbridge's future.

In-Person Engagement

Public engagement began with the required public hearing to introduce the planning process and continued with a series of stakeholder meetings and interactive workshops. These events provided opportunities for residents to:

- Learn about the Comprehensive Plan's purpose and structure.
- Review draft goals and land use designations and characteristics.
- Contribute to exercises like the SWOT Analysis and the Land Use Charrette. Workshops were designed to foster hands-on interaction, with participants actively engaging with maps, models, and planning tools to share their vision for Bainbridge.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee played a pivotal role in guiding the planning process, representing diverse sectors of the community. Steering members provided insights, reviewed drafts, and helped drive discussions. At the same time, during the engagement process it was emphasized that all input — from steering committee members and from the broader public — was equally valued to ensure inclusivity.

Organization	Name
Bainbridge City Council	Kregg Close
Bainbridge City Council	Roslyn Palmer
Planning Commission	Lachanda Mackey
Bates Engineering	Jason Lee
Recreation Authority	Jeff Rich
COB Community/Economic Development Center	Steve O’Neil
COB Engineering	Gabe Menendez
COB Administration	Roy Oliver
COB Public Safety (Police)	Redell Walton
COB Public Safety (Fire)	Ryan Deen
Hospital	Jamie Sinko
Chamber of Commerce	Kyle Kelley
Downtown Development Authority	Darrell Cox
Convention and Visitors Bureau	Alesia Brinson
School System	Boyd English
Housing Authority	Nadine Beard
Bryant Funeral Home	Landen Bryant

Table 2.01: Steering Committee Members

Visioning Exercise

The visioning exercise invited participants to articulate their hopes for Bainbridge’s future by identifying core values, priorities, and qualities they would like the city to embody in the years ahead. This activity encouraged residents to think beyond immediate needs and imagine long-term possibilities for growth, identity, and livability. Participants were asked to reflect on what makes Bainbridge unique, what should be preserved, and what changes would most

improve daily life. Their responses helped shape the foundation for the plan's goals and recommendations, ensuring that the final document reflected a locally rooted, forward-looking vision built on shared community aspirations.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats (SWOT)

The SWOT analysis served as a cornerstone of the public engagement process, offering a structured framework for participants to evaluate current conditions in Bainbridge. Residents identified the city's key strengths — such as its historic assets, natural resources (the Riverfront), and local character — while also candidly acknowledging challenges like aging infrastructure or gaps in access to amenities. By examining both internal and external factors, the exercise helped the planning team understand where the city excels, where improvements are needed, and what opportunities or threats may shape future development. The findings from the SWOT analysis informed land use strategies, goal refinement, and policy development throughout the planning process.

Land Use Charrette Exercise

The Land Use Charrette exercise (Meeting #2 – October 24th, 2024) brought stakeholders together to discuss five key areas of Bainbridge: Downtown, West Bainbridge, Southwest Bainbridge, Southeast Bainbridge, and Northeast Bainbridge. The project team facilitated discussions focused on development patterns, connectivity, and placemaking strategies.

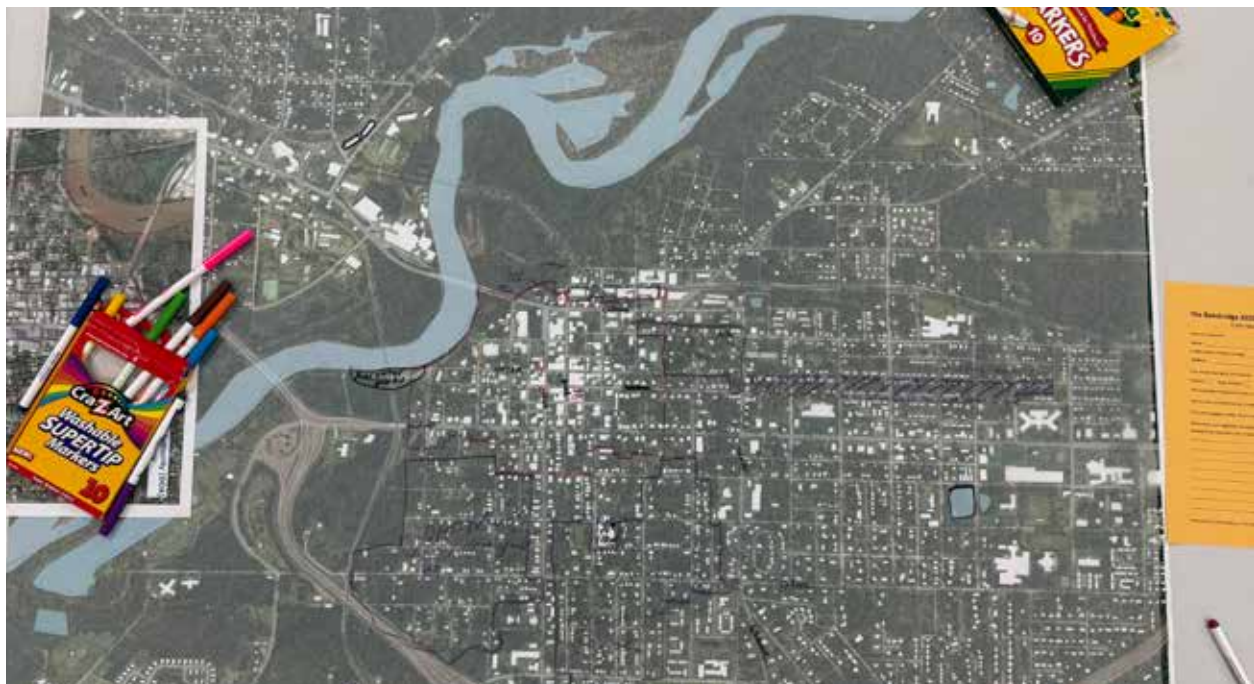


Figure 2.01: Drawing & Discussion Board for Land Use Charrette

Public Hearing & Kickoff Meeting - June 18th, 2024

On June 18, 2024, the City of Bainbridge held a public hearing during a regularly scheduled City Council meeting at City Hall (101 S. Broad Street) to formally launch the Bainbridge Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. This meeting, conducted in accordance with the Georgia Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (Chapter 110-12-1), served as the official start to the planning process. While attendance was not recorded specifically for this agenda item, residents were invited to participate, ask questions, and offer comments following the presentation.

The presentation introduced the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, emphasizing its role in shaping the city's long-term growth and ensuring eligibility for future funding. It outlined how the plan must meet requirements set by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and align with the Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) Quality Community Objectives. Maintaining the city's Quality Local Government (QLG) status was highlighted as particularly important for accessing grants such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and State Housing Trust Fund programs.

Attendees were also briefed on the planning structure, including major milestones, anticipated deadlines, and the role of the steering committee, which was formed to help guide the plan's development. However, it was emphasized that all residents have a voice in the process, and broad public engagement would be a priority throughout.

To support transparency and encourage ongoing participation, the city launched a dedicated project website — www.bainbridgetomorrow.com — on the day of the hearing. The site serves as a central hub for updates, meeting materials, and opportunities for public input. Residents were encouraged to share the site and help raise awareness about the plan to ensure diverse community perspectives are reflected.

The hearing concluded with a call to action: community involvement will be central to creating a plan that reflects Bainbridge's shared vision. This kickoff marked the beginning of a sustained effort to engage residents, shape policy, and set a course for the city's future.

Public Stakeholder Meeting #1 - August 29th, 2024

The first public stakeholder meeting for the Bainbridge Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was held on August 29, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. This event marked a critical step in the city's planning process, providing residents and stakeholders an opportunity to engage directly in shaping Bainbridge's future. A total of 29 community members signed in, in addition to members of the consulting team and subconsultants.

The meeting opened with an overview of the Comprehensive Plan's purpose and significance. As a long-term roadmap for Bainbridge's growth and development, the plan is required to meet the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning. Maintaining compliance ensures that the city remains eligible for key funding sources and retains its Quality Local Government (QLG) status — an important designation that supports access to grants such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund, and the State Housing Trust Fund.

Attendees were introduced to the planning process, including major milestones, the role of the newly formed steering committee, and the required elements of the plan. The project website — www.bainbridgetomorrow.com — was presented as the central location for updates, meeting materials, and opportunities for public input. Transparency and community engagement were emphasized as core priorities, with all participants encouraged to spread awareness and invite others to future meetings.

To support informed input, the planning team shared a review of existing conditions in Bainbridge, establishing a baseline for identifying needs, challenges, and opportunities. This was followed by a discussion of local priorities, including concerns raised by attendees about aging housing infrastructure and the importance of preserving access to healthcare.

Visioning & SWOT Analysis

Participants were invited to engage in interactive visioning exercises designed to surface shared values and aspirations for Bainbridge's future; and a structured SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) allowed for deeper exploration of the city's current landscape and potential. During the Visioning exercise, attendees were asked the following questions:

- What makes Bainbridge unique?
- What do we need to preserve?
- What should change to improve quality of life?

During the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, stakeholders identified:

- Strengths – Thriving historic downtown; unique cultural heritage; recreation, tourism, and natural resources (Flint River); and community character.
- Weaknesses – Aging housing stock and associated limited housing options, infrastructure limitations, and lack of public transportation.
- Opportunities – Economic growth, continued downtown growth and improvement, and increased tourism potential.
- Threats – Economic disparities, issues with stormwater management on select streets, and workforce retention challenges.

DCA's quality community objectives were presented as framework for updating and modifying the city's existing goals in the updated comprehensive plan. The community was asked if existing goals, as found in the preceding iteration of the comprehensive plan, were still consistent with their desires for the city's future, and whether they would like to introduce new goals into the comprehensive plan.

To help contextualize future strategies, the presentation concluded with a comparative analysis of peer cities that share similar demographic and geographic characteristics. These examples offered inspiration and insight into best practices that could be adapted to Bainbridge's unique needs. Following the meeting, stakeholders were encouraged to review materials on the project website, provide additional comments, and participate in future meetings.

Altogether, the meeting reinforced the role of the Comprehensive Plan as both a policy document and a community vision — shaped by public input and aligned with local priorities. It set a collaborative tone for the planning process ahead, emphasizing that every resident has a voice in building Bainbridge's future.



Figure 2.02: Sticky Notes placed on Map to record Public Comments

Public Stakeholder Meeting #2 – October 24th, 2024

The second public stakeholder meeting, and third public meeting overall, for the Bainbridge Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was held on October 24, 2024, at the Bainbridge Public Safety Training Center. A total of 16 attendees signed in, representing a range of community members, city staff, and stakeholders. The meeting included a Land Use Charrette, which provided a hands-on opportunity for participants to contribute to the planning process by focusing on key areas of the city.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to facilitate meaningful discussion about land use in Bainbridge through an interactive, map-based charrette; to gather feedback on land use designations; inform development priorities; and to encourage collaboration among participants to identify local strengths, needs, and challenges that could guide future planning decisions.

Meeting Format & Activities

Participants were divided into small groups to discuss five distinct areas of the city: (1) Downtown Bainbridge, (2) West Bainbridge, (3) Southwest Bainbridge, (4) Southeast Bainbridge, and (5) Northeast Bainbridge. Each table had a facilitator from either the city staff or the consultant team to guide discussions.

Participants were encouraged to share their observations, ideas, and concerns for each area, including:

- Existing strengths and assets.
- Opportunities for improvement.
- Barriers to growth and development.

Table rotations were scheduled to ensure community members could voice their concerns and preferences for multiple parts of the city. At the conclusion of the charrette, one member from each group reported their group's findings, summarizing the key insights and priorities identified during the discussions.



Figure 2.03: Public meeting #2 - Presentation

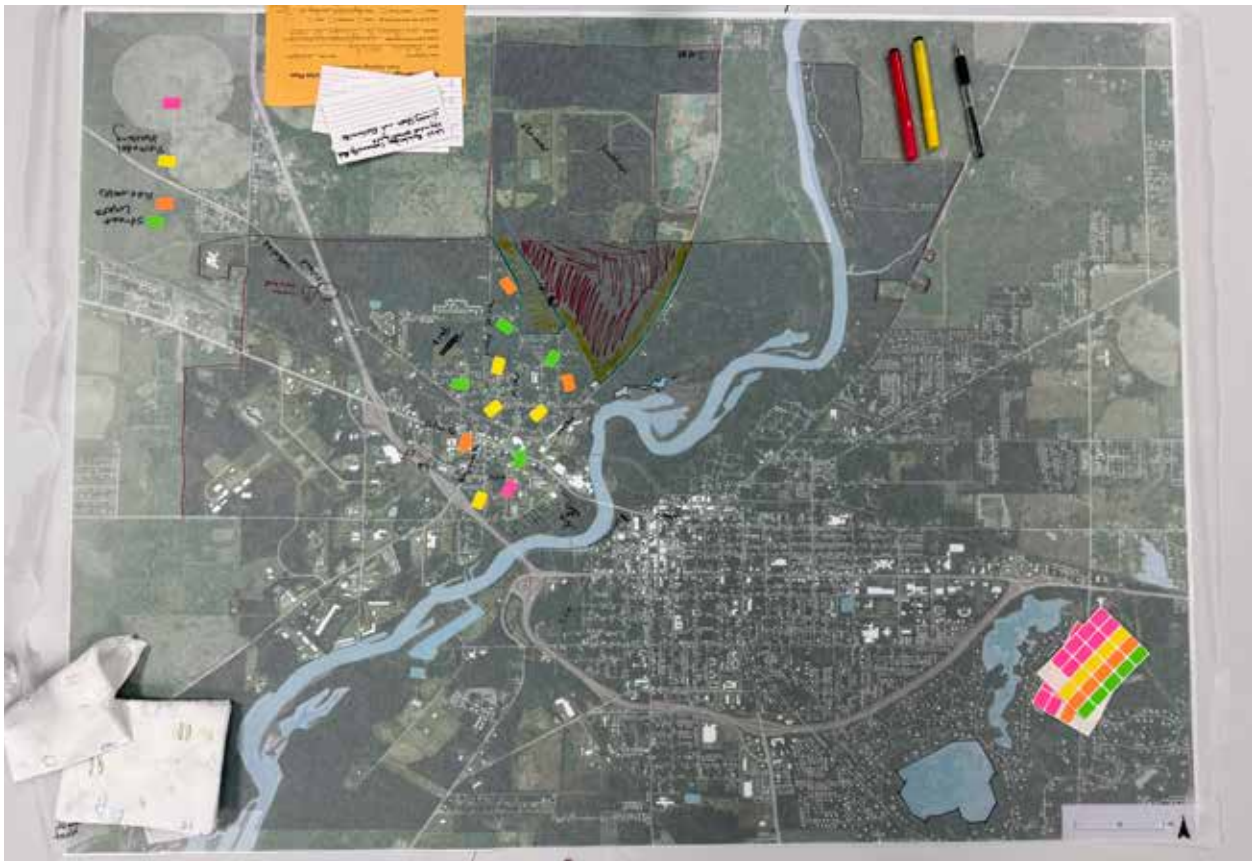


Figure 2.04: Land Use Charette

Key Takeaways from the Charrette

During the group discussions at the charrette, several important themes emerged that reflected community priorities and concerns. Participants expressed strong support for maintaining the positive momentum of downtown revitalization while also preserving the area’s historic character.

Specific attention was given to West Bainbridge, where residents identified a pressing need for infrastructure improvements, such as enhanced lighting, new sidewalks, and housing rehabilitation. Improved connectivity between West Bainbridge and other parts of the city was also seen as a priority.

Participants highlighted the absence of amenities in West Bainbridge that are available elsewhere in the city — including community parks, retail options, grocery stores, and restaurants — emphasizing the need for more equitable access to everyday resources.

In addition, areas located south of Shotwell Street and north of the expressway were noted as needing better nighttime lighting and targeted housing revitalization.

The feedback gathered during this meeting helped start the conversation on land use, which was continued at Meeting #3 in November.



Figure 2.05: Public meeting #2 - Land Use Charrette

Public Stakeholder Meeting #3 – November 21st, 2024

The third stakeholder meeting for the Bainbridge Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was held on November 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Joe Sweet Community Center. This session continued the ongoing engagement process, focusing on placemaking, and priorities related to economic development, education, housing, and healthcare.

The meeting aimed to solidify ideas for key development and livability goals, incorporating insights gathered during previous sessions. The structure facilitated open dialogue and collaborative brainstorming to ensure a comprehensive understanding of community priorities.

One central objective of the meeting was to revisit and refine the geographic zones that guide land use and development decisions — ensuring they reflect the community's current conditions and future aspirations. The meeting also introduced placemaking strategies aimed at enhancing public spaces and fostering a stronger sense of belonging throughout the city.

In addition, the discussion prioritized several critical focus areas. Economic development was addressed through conversations on strengthening the local economy and expanding opportunities for residents. Education and workforce development were explored in terms of improving access to training and skill-building programs. Housing was discussed in relation to availability, affordability, and overall quality, while healthcare emerged as another key priority, with emphasis placed on improving access to local services and resources.

Participants were invited to share input, propose ideas, and voice concerns during the presentation as well as at the end, to help ensure the evolving plan continues to reflect the community's diverse perspectives and priorities.

Public Stakeholder Meeting #4 – January 9th, 2024

The final public meeting for the Bainbridge 2025-2050 Comprehensive Plan took place on January 9, 2024, at Bainbridge City Hall, with ten attendees signing in. The meeting began with a student-led presentation on the economic revitalization of West Bainbridge, followed by a review of the city's 2019-2024 accomplishments, and concluded with interactive discussions on key planning topics.

Students from Bainbridge Middle School (6th, 7th, and 8th grades) presented research they had conducted throughout the year on strategies for revitalizing West Bainbridge. Their proposals included a mix of housing solutions, commercial and mixed-use development, and recreational amenities. Among their recommendations was a multi-use center called Westside Connection, designed to attract businesses and provide essential services, and AquaBlitz Water Park, envisioned as a recreational destination that could boost tourism. The students used Google Earth and 3D modeling software to develop their concepts, demonstrating their engagement in urban planning and economic development.

Following the student presentation, Robert and Company provided an overview of the city's 2019-2024 Report of Accomplishments, highlighting completed and ongoing initiatives. Among the achievements were adopting the Housing Plan in 2024, infrastructure improvements to the Industrial Park, enhancements to the Boat Basin and West Street Gateway, completion of the Disc Golf Course from the Parks Master Plan, and the expansion of the city's Fiber Optic Network. Several projects remain ongoing, including the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan, expansion of the Riverfront Walking Path, upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, and various street improvement projects. Some initiatives, such as the HUD Revitalization Study, have been deferred until additional funding is secured, while others, including the relocation of the fishing dock and kayak launch, require further planning.

After the presentation, attendees participated in breakout group discussions to explore key community issues. The discussions covered topics such as placemaking, mobility, housing, healthcare, economic development, land use efficiency, public utilities, workforce education, and community facilities. Each group spent time on an initial set of topics before switching to cover additional areas, ensuring all participants had the opportunity to contribute to the conversation. Among the most widely discussed issues were strategies to support Bainbridge's unhoused population and ways to make the most out of the public right-of-way. Participants shared concerns about coming up with a sustainable solution for those experiencing homelessness, with suggestions including partnerships with regional service providers (though it was also noted that a partnership would not be without its own challenges). Discussions about the public right-of-way focused on improving pedestrian infrastructure and enhancing streetscapes (e.g., sidewalks and lighting).

In addition to the discussions, one attendee submitted a written comment card suggesting direct community outreach through canvassing in public spaces such as the Boat Basin, where a diverse range of residents could be engaged in conversation about the city's future. The suggestion emphasized the importance of reaching residents in their daily environments to encourage broader participation in the planning process.

The background of the page is a photograph of a large, multi-story building with a classical architectural style. The building features a prominent portico with several columns and large arched windows. A flagpole stands in front of the building, flying the American flag. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

Chapter Three

Community Goals

Introduction

Community goals outline long-term strategies that reflect the shared priorities of Bainbridge's residents, officials, planners, and developers. These goals guide local decision-making and daily operations, while establishing a framework for monitoring progress during the first five years and continuing improvements over the next ten, twenty, or more years.

The steering committee and other stakeholders engaged with public input through presentations, questions, and open discussion at community meetings. These meetings provided a forum to identify challenges, opportunities, and priorities, and to develop and confirm the goals that form the foundation of the comprehensive plan.

Bainbridge Vision Statement

The vision represents the commonly held sense of a community as expressed by residents, officials, visitors, and other stakeholders. It prioritizes the protection of city assets and resources that are associated with the city's character and sets a value to governing the community with responsibility and care.

The participants in the public meeting did not identify a single collective statement of the city's vision; however, the following statement provides a collective expression of many representatives of the community that attended the public meetings:

Bainbridge should be a "great" place to live, raise a family, conduct business, work in a productive job or career, and enjoy access to quality housing, health care and public services.

The goals listed in this chapter reflect these values and the intent of the plan to achieve a successful future.

Bainbridge Goals & Policy Statements

Many of the goals from the 2019–2024 plan were carried forward into the updated 2025–2050 Comprehensive Plan and restated in the policy statements below, with additional goals incorporated where needed. The following goals guide the recommendations of the Bainbridge Tomorrow 2025–2050 Comprehensive Plan.

The planning effort examined and updated community goals using the Georgia DCA framework: a citywide vision statement, city policies, and narratives tied to community goals. This approach aligns local priorities with DCA’s Community Quality Objectives and ensures that development patterns address state, regional, and community issues.

In addition to documenting community preferences, the process identified resource limitations and barriers to implementation. Stakeholders also ranked priorities and identified responsible parties for carrying them out. Transparency in decision-making emerged as a top public priority.

Focus Areas

The community identified several areas of the city that require intentional focus for future investment. Housing was the most frequently mentioned concern, as much of the city's stock is aging and many older homes are in poor repair. The steering committee and the public highlighted West Bainbridge and the neighborhoods between the downtown core and the bypass to the south and east as priority areas for reinvestment. The recent Shotwell and Scott Small Area Study reinforced these concerns and raised the possibility of using public infrastructure improvements to revitalize the main commercial corridor along East Shotwell Street and the smaller neighborhood corridor on South Scott Street.

Bainbridge Middle School undertook a project on the revitalization of West Bainbridge, exploring potential opportunities to enhance the community, particularly in residential areas affected by older industrial development along Dothan Road. This plan recognizes the need to update strategies for West Bainbridge, calling for more direct involvement by the city to improve neighborhood character and create a viable path for accommodating both businesses and residents.

"Downtown Bainbridge and the Flint River are the community's highest priorities for growth and reinvestment. Redevelopment in the city's core has already created a positive image for Bainbridge and reinforced its appeal as an interesting place to live, work, and play. The Flint River provides a unique destination and focal point that anchors downtown's continued revitalization and offers a foundation for future investment.

At the same time, growth along the Tallahassee Highway corridor, from the Bypass to the southern city limits, has introduced new businesses and national chains that provide jobs and resources for residents. However, this automobile-oriented development risks diverting investment from Bainbridge's traditional commercial corridors. To balance growth, reinvestment in the Shotwell and Scott Streets area is needed to revitalize older commercial properties and strengthen the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Dothan Road corridor in West Bainbridge includes many of the city's older industrial uses with some commercial uses along the corridor and older residential immediately behind the industrial and commercial uses. The area has been affected by past economic decisions to develop new commercial and residential uses elsewhere in the city. In addition, the commercial uses along the corridor are less attractive to the nearby residents. Although the Dothan Road corridor provides significant industrial uses and employment, residents are concerned that their area needs to attract reinvestment, even though it may be difficult in a competitive marketplace. The city's goals should reflect the above community interests in redevelopment and enhancing the area as an attractive place to live.

Economic Prosperity

Goals & Objectives

- Expand existing businesses and industries suitable for the City and its workforce.
- Consider local skills in proposed economic development projects.
- Identify best locations for industries and extend utilities to accommodate future industrial development in identified areas.
- Encourage Downtown Development.
- Work with vocational training programs to ensure adequate supply of trained workforce.
- Create diverse economic assets to provide resistance to economic recession.
- Increase tourism to improve regional tax base and local government abilities to provide services and recreational opportunities.
- Ensure access to internet and continued expansion of Broadband to support opportunities for education and enterprise.

The city has worked hard to expand both existing and new businesses and created programs to support workforce development. Downtown Bainbridge is thriving, and tourism has increased. New shops and services have located downtown in existing and rehabilitated structures, and new automobile-oriented development is occurring along Tallahassee Highway (US 27) between the Bypass and the city limits. Emphasis on Chason Park, downtown events, and enhanced access to the Flint River has connected the city's core with recreational and entertainment venues that attract both tourists and investors.

Access to the internet and broadband support the ability of local citizens (and visitors) to access the opportunities provided by modern communication and technology systems. Broadband is a major element of the Comprehensive Plan as discussed in Chapter 5.

Resource Management

Goals & Objectives

Public infrastructure

- Continue to identify and implement public facilities and maintenance list to address street conditions and flooding.
- Expand utilities consistent with expansion of development.
- Consider impact fees for new development consistent with State Laws.

Private Development

- Update zoning and building code requirements to ensure developers provide adequate facilities to accommodate new development that do not negatively affect existing communities.
- Pursue public grant opportunities that help attract private investment and promote economic growth.

The community recognizes that the city cannot accomplish its desired goals or plans without partners. Therefore, the city should update the city's zoning and development code requirements to encourage and assist private development in pursuing projects that are essential to the growth and well-being of the city. The code update also needs to be ready to accommodate a variety of applicants, adapt recently updated construction codes and best practices, and accomplish reviews and recommendations with the small professional planning staff and limited resources of a small city.

During the goal review process, stakeholders briefly considered implementing a form-based code or a unified development ordinance, such as the SmartCode. A form-based code is an alternative to traditional zoning that regulates site design, circulation, and building form rather than separating uses. Form-based regulations control land development to achieve a specific urban form. As an example, a form-based, unified development ordinance allows the city to address development at all scales of design from initial development and location planning to building signage and operational capacities. The "Smart Code" is based on the rural-to-urban transect and integrates a continuum of design that fits the situation and circumstance of a location whether in the rural or a more urban planning area. As a unified development ordinance, SmartCode addresses all scales of planning, from the region to the building on a specific parcel of property and considers analysis of the environment. For more information on the Smart Code, the editable freeware model is available on www.smartcodecentral.org and www.transect.org.

However, city officials expect that implementing a form-based code would require more complex applications and review processes than current zoning and building codes. This was considered a potential obstacle due to the limited resources of a small city to accommodate more rigorous staffing and review requirements. Still, an update of the zoning and building codes should incorporate principles of smart growth and new urbanism to guide high-quality development in the future. Therefore, the city has determined that it is not yet ready to transition to a form-based code as part of the 2025–2030 Community Work Program. However, this plan does not preclude the opportunity to adopt a form-based code after the next five years.

Sense of Place

Goals & Objectives

Parks & Public Spaces

- Provide pleasant public gathering places and parks to serve the community.
- Support river access for residents and visitors.
- Continue to implement the waterfront connectivity plan to provide active and passive recreational opportunities.

Downtown

- Continue to implement the Bainbridge Downtown Master Plan.
- Continue to promote and ensure downtown safety for visitors and local businesses.

Downtown Bainbridge and the city's parks and recreation areas were consistently identified by both the steering committee and the public as defining features of what makes Bainbridge special. River access was especially important to participants, with the River Walk improvements and the enhancement of Chason Park cited as major successes. Goals discussions emphasized that river access must serve residents as much as visitors, and expanding opportunities for local use should remain a priority.

At the same time, some participants expressed concern that investments in Chason Park, the River Walk, and the Bill Reynolds Sports Park placed greater emphasis on large, visitor-oriented facilities while smaller neighborhood parks have been overlooked. Increased maintenance and improvements to local parks were highlighted as an important community need.

The downtown renaissance has also produced significant private investment, creating strong momentum to continue attracting new businesses and residents to the city's core. Public improvements to downtown have proven successful in drawing private resources, and local leaders view the downtown plan as a model for how strategic public investment can stimulate ongoing growth

Efficient Land Use, Regional Cooperation, & Emergency Preparedness

Goals & Objectives

Efficient Land Use

- Work with local neighborhoods to identify and manage potential land use conflicts, impacts, and transitions consistent with community character.
- Update zoning and development regulations to address conditional uses, mixed uses, buffers etc.

Regional Cooperation

- Work with Regional Commission to address air and water quality issues.
- Work with GDOT to enhance safe regional truck access around activity areas.

Local Emergency Preparedness

- Continue to coordinate with Decatur County, State, and other agencies to manage public communications, warnings, readiness and rapid recovery operations.
- Identify programs to mitigate impacts of excessive heat on vulnerable elements of the community.

Bainbridge's neighborhoods each have unique characteristics and needs, yet many of the city's older areas are experiencing deterioration and aging housing. New communities on the city's edges are growing farther from the core, and these developments may require costly extensions of public utilities and services. Developers often prefer greenfield projects over the more expensive task of rehabilitating older housing, but this diverts resources from established neighborhoods, leaving older homes to decline and weakening both nearby businesses and the character of the city's traditional grid-patterned streets. Updating zoning and development codes to make rehabilitation easier will be critical for preserving neighborhood stability and encouraging reinvestment.

Water resources are managed at the state level in Georgia and assigned to regional commissions. The city and county should continue working with the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to protect the Flint River basin, which remains a vital resource and an essential part of Bainbridge's identity.

Bainbridge's role as a transportation hub is critical for sustaining and attracting jobs. The city partners with the Georgia Department of Transportation to improve truck routes will reduce strain on local streets and better support new commercial projects that serve residents, visitors, and regional travelers.

Preparedness includes local cooperation with county, regional, state, interstate, and federal entities. It also demands city coordination with non-government organizations, churches, charities, and citizen volunteers to coordinate efficient operations that best place resources where they are most needed. The city cannot predict disasters or other emergencies, but the city must do what it can to prepare and be ready to act to support the community with immediate and effective care as needed. That requires the use of best practices and communications to accommodate the unknown impacts such as hurricanes and other damaging storms, heat waves, flood or wind events, or human-caused disasters through accident or negative intent.

Housing

Goals & Objectives

- Help transition residents from public subsidized housing to affordable homes.
- Encourage housing policies, choices, and patterns that move people upward from dependence to independence (home ownership).
- Encourage development of housing options for all income ranges.
- Encourage property maintenance and reduce the percentage of substandard housing.
- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in the community.
- Improve and use code enforcement to help improve neighborhood appearance.
- Address homelessness and partner with organizations that can assist.
- Identify and coordinate with organizations that can help fight against homelessness.
- Assess the needs of individual homeless people.
- Help low-income families avoid becoming homeless.

The city's housing goals emphasize providing options across all price ranges and helping residents move from subsidized housing to affordable homes. These priorities, along with other housing objectives, continue from the previous plan. The recent housing assessment identified eight specific goals, including developing more affordable infill housing, addressing blight, encouraging property maintenance, supporting homeownership, reducing housing cost burdens, and reducing homelessness. Goal 7 focuses on expanding access to housing resources and services, while Goal 8 emphasizes increasing collaboration within the housing sector. Together, these highlight the broader need to strengthen support systems for local housing.¹

1 City of Bainbridge. "Bainbridge Housing Needs Assessment," pgs. 39-42.

Access to Education & Healthcare Opportunities

Goals & Objectives

Educational Opportunities

- Support local technical colleges and expanded local college course opportunities to increase workforce training and continuing education resources in the region.
- Work with Decatur County Schools to support vocational training for emerging industries and technologies.
- Support river management and freshwater environmental education opportunities.

Community Health

- Identify and maintain programs to support the Bainbridge Hospital and Manor and expand local healthcare resources such as neonatal, emergency care etc.
- Support senior care and retirement facilities in the area to allow older residents and incoming retirees to age nearby.

Expanding access to education is essential to Bainbridge's long-term success. Local technical colleges provide courses that build practical life skills, such as financial literacy, household management, and digital safety, that help residents navigate the challenges of modern family and work life. The city should support these educational opportunities, particularly for citizens balancing the demands of employment, childrearing, and caregiving.

Vocational training is another critical tool for preparing Bainbridge's workforce. Strengthening partnerships with technical colleges and regional employers can equip local jobseekers with the skills needed for industries that may locate in the area, ensuring residents are well positioned to benefit from future economic growth.

Healthcare access is equally vital. A strong local healthcare system builds confidence in Bainbridge's ability to meet the needs of residents and visitors alike. Memorial Hospital and Manor must continue to update facilities and services to remain competitive, both in attracting medical providers and in securing financial resources.

As Bainbridge's population ages, senior housing and care facilities will play an increasingly important role. The city should encourage the development of options that not only meet the needs of current residents but also position Bainbridge as an attractive destination for retirees seeking affordable living and quality healthcare in southwest Georgia.

Transportation & Mobility

Goals & Objectives

- Plan for pedestrian and bicycle connections between major bicycle traffic generators and destinations (residential neighborhoods, schools and shopping).
- Support expansion of mobility opportunities for disabled and elderly citizens.
- Provide opportunities for transit to jobs, medical care, and recreation.
- Ensure adequate downtown parking. Work with GDOT to ensure safe regional truck access to appropriate activity areas and around inappropriate residential areas.
- Support reinvestment in the Bainbridge Port Facilities and expand inter-modal transportation facilities.

Access is particularly important to the residents of the city. As the city grows downtown and at the fringe or outside the city, the centralized resources may make existing jobs and commercial development less accessible to the population that lives in the areas between. Continued maintenance and improvement of roads and streets needs should be supplemented by providing for alternate modes of travel and access for residents that do not have a car, are disabled, or are otherwise limited in getting to the locations where jobs, commerce, medical care, or recreation are accessible.

Needed automobile improvements should include reduction of delays at signals, access to parking within a reasonable distance to the destination, and safe interaction between vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Traffic through residential areas should be commensurate with the character of the area including diversion of truck traffic where it disrupts the ability of the community to enjoy the quality of life.

The growth of Bainbridge for many years centered on Georgia's first inland port facilities. Although the port is not heavily used for industrial river barge traffic at the current time, the city needs to work with the State to determine if there are opportunities to improve river travel facilities that can be pursued regardless of whether they are short term or long term.

Responsible Governance

The Comprehensive Plan public meetings identified key questions regarding the city's goals:

- Are existing goals too vague or too specific?

No. However, the addition of more specific goals helps ensure that the goals provide relatable expressions of the community's intent. The recommended goals are relatively generic and open-ended to support the ability of the city to adapt to changing conditions.

- Are the City's goals comparable with DCA's Community Quality Objectives?

Yes, the updated presentation of goals specifically aligns with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs quality objectives.

- Are existing community policies consistent with goals?

Yes, the city is continuing to adopt or modify planning and development policies to better reflect the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. However, additional transparency and communications are desirable.

- Are existing community policies sustainable and/or resilient?

Yes, community policies include consideration of sustainability, resilience, and recovery from unexpected events that affect the city's goals.

- Do existing policies provide economic development (workforce) readiness?

Yes, the city is working on additional efforts to address local resident training in addition to supporting the needs of industry and commerce to find necessary labor resources to fill job opportunities.

Chapter Four

Needs & Opportunities

Introduction

Through a combination of public input, data analysis, and alignment with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) guidelines, this chapter outlines the city's most pressing challenges and emerging opportunities within the next five years.

The purpose of this section is twofold:

- First, outline a set of locally agreed-upon priorities that require immediate or focused attention, forming the foundation for the implementation strategies detailed in the Community Work Program.
- Second, this element of the plan aims to identify opportunities that will drive growth, enhance quality of life, and position Bainbridge as a thriving and resilient community in Southwest Georgia.

To ensure the accuracy and relevance of these priorities, the planning process incorporated multiple layers of analysis and community input. Public meetings and steering committee discussions played a crucial role in gathering insights from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. A comprehensive SWOT analysis was conducted to assess Bainbridge's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, providing a structured approach to identifying critical challenges and advantages. Data-driven research (see Chapter One), including demographic, economic, housing, transportation, and environmental assessments, contributed to our understanding of local trends.

The identified needs and opportunities in this chapter align with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Quality Community Objectives, ensuring that Bainbridge's planning efforts meet state standards while supporting sustainable development and community well-being.

Economic Prosperity

To build a more resilient and dynamic economy, Bainbridge must expand the economic base beyond its past reliance on a few dominant industries. A wider economic base will reduce vulnerabilities to market shifts and create more stable job opportunities for residents. Support for a diverse mix of businesses, including small enterprises, emerging industries, and technology-driven sectors, will strengthen the local economy.

Equally important is ensuring that Bainbridge's workforce is prepared to meet the demands of new and evolving job opportunities. Expanding workforce training, educational programs, and job placement partnerships — particularly with institutions like Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) Bainbridge and Southern Regional Technical College — will equip residents with skills necessary to succeed in emerging fields.

Strategic economic development efforts should also focus on attracting industries that align with Bainbridge's workforce capabilities and long-term economic vision. The Down Range Industrial Park presents a prime opportunity for growth, and a targeted strategy is needed to draw businesses that will complement the city's existing strengths while contributing to a sustainable economic future.

To support business growth and entrepreneurship, Bainbridge must ensure that permitting and licensing processes remain clear, efficient, and business-friendly. Streamlining these procedures will encourage investment and make it easier for new businesses to establish themselves in the community. Business development should also provide the opportunity to consider indirect economic and social impacts on the community that may affect valued quality of life and management of limited physical and human resources in addition to direct economic benefits.

As industrial and commercial activity expands, the city must proactively plan for the necessary infrastructure improvements to accommodate growth. Expanding water and wastewater capacity in industrial areas will be crucial to supporting continued business recruitment and ensuring that new developments have access to essential utilities.

Needs

- Broaden the economic base to reduce reliance on a few dominant industries.
- Improve workforce preparedness to meet demands of new and evolving job opportunities.
- Expand workforce training, education programs, and job placement partnerships.
- Attract industries aligned with local workforce capabilities and long-term goals.
- Plan proactively for infrastructure improvements, particularly in water and wastewater capacity in industrial areas.
- Assess and manage indirect social and environmental impacts of economic development alongside direct economic benefits.

Opportunities

- Support growth of small businesses, emerging industries, and tech-driven sectors.
- Streamline permitting and licensing processes to be more efficient and business-friendly.
- Leverage Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and Southern Regional Technical College as workforce development partners.
- Capitalize on Down Range Industrial Park as a catalyst for attracting new businesses.
- Encourage entrepreneurship through improved development procedures.
- Use strategic economic development as a tool to enhance long-term sustainability and quality of life.

Resource Management

Persistent stormwater drainage issues have been a recurring concern for residents, particularly in specific street segments prone to flooding. Addressing these challenges through targeted infrastructure improvements will help mitigate flood risks, protect properties, and enhance overall roadway resilience. Similarly, maintaining and upgrading Bainbridge's streets will require ongoing resurfacing, repairs, and strategic investments in transportation infrastructure. A commitment to regular upkeep will improve mobility, safety, and the overall aesthetic of the city's streetscapes.



Figure 4.01: Inadequately draining stormwater inlet

Existing wastewater collection and sewer systems require multiple pump stations to assist gravity flow due to the relatively flat terrain. Where feasible, collection systems should be systematically linked to reduce the number of pumps and the power required to maintain them.

Expanding Bainbridge's use of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology can help with asset management and future planning efforts. Completing GIS mapping of utilities and cemeteries will improve accessibility to critical information, support long-term infrastructure planning, and enable more efficient municipal operations.

Ensuring the Bainbridge Wastewater Treatment Plant remains efficient, environmentally compliant, and capable of supporting future growth is a priority. Upgrades to the facility will help maintain public health standards and ensure the city's wastewater infrastructure can accommodate future development and expansion.

The currently expanding broadband footprint will help facilitate remote work and increase telehealth and online education opportunities. Ensuring equitable access to these digital resources will help bridge connectivity gaps and provide more residents with the tools needed to thrive in a technology-driven economy.

The completion and implementation of the City's Utilities Master Plan will be a guide for future infrastructure investments, ensuring that utility capacity keeps pace with maintenance, growth, and development needs for water, wastewater, stormwater, access, and telecommunications systems operated by the city.

Beyond physical infrastructure, fostering stronger relationships between local government and residents remains a priority. Feedback from the public engagement process highlighted the need for greater transparency and clearer communication regarding city decisions. Strengthening trust through open data sharing, accessible government initiatives, and public accountability measures will help bridge this gap. Additionally, expanding community engagement through events and programs will create opportunities for residents to participate in local governance, fostering a stronger sense of civic pride and investment in Bainbridge's future.

Needs

- Address persistent stormwater drainage issues in flood-prone areas through infrastructure improvements.
- Maintain and resurface aging streets to improve mobility, safety, and visual quality.
- Ensure the wastewater treatment plant remains compliant, efficient, and scalable to support future growth.
- Complete GIS mapping of utilities and cemeteries for improved asset management.
- Ensure equitable access to broadband to close digital divides.
- Implement the Utilities Master Plan to guide infrastructure investments.

- Increase transparency and public communication regarding city decisions.
- Expand community engagement and civic participation.

Opportunities

- Use GIS technology to enhance infrastructure planning and municipal efficiency.
- Upgrade and consolidate wastewater pump stations to reduce energy use and improve efficiency.
- Leverage broadband expansion to support remote work, telehealth, and education.
- Strengthen civic trust through open data, transparency, and accessible governance.
- Build stronger resident–government relationships through community events and engagement programs
- Align infrastructure upgrades with long-term growth and economic development goals using the Utilities Master Plan as a strategic guide.

Riverfront, Recreation, & Amenities

Bainbridge's Boat Basin and riverfront park system are valuable community assets, but they remain underutilized. Fully realizing their potential will require implementing and completing projects outlined in prior plans, ensuring these spaces serve as vibrant, accessible destinations for residents and visitors alike.

Supporting the local tourism economy is another key opportunity, particularly through incentivizing recreational activities such as boat rentals, sport activities, and special events that use the river and downtown to attract attendance from the region and larger areas. Expanding outdoor recreation offerings will encourage greater use of Bainbridge's natural resources while bolstering tourism and providing local businesses with new opportunities for sales and services.



Figure 4.02: Carson Hatcher Park

Chason Park has the potential to become a more dynamic, well-utilized space year-round. Enhancing programming, events, and public amenities will help activate the park and ensure it remains a central gathering place for the community. Similarly, expanding the impact of the riverfront walking path by incorporating wayfinding signage, seating areas, and lighting will improve the user experience and encourage greater pedestrian engagement with the riverfront.

Bainbridge's recently completed Disc Golf Course presents another opportunity for enhancement. Exploring further course improvements will maximize its value and appeal to both casual players and competitive disc golf enthusiasts. Bill Reynolds Sports Park provides resources for active sports tournaments, and plans to design and construct a mountain bike course at Cheney Griffin Park, along with a complementary trail system within Earle May Boat Basin Park, would further diversify Bainbridge's recreational offerings and attract a broader range of outdoor enthusiasts.



Figure 4.03: Blue Hole Park

Needs

- Continue to activate the Boat Basin and riverfront parks to increase usage and visibility.
- Implement and complete projects from prior plans to enhance recreational spaces.
- Enhance Chason Park through expanded programming, events, and public amenities.
- Improve the riverfront walking path with signage, seating, and lighting to increase accessibility and pedestrian engagement.
- Maintain and upgrade new recreational facilities (e.g., Disc Golf Course) to sustain user interest and quality.

Opportunities

- Boost the tourism economy by promoting river-based activities such as boat rentals, sports events, and festivals.
- Leverage the river and downtown as regional destinations to attract visitors and increase local business activity.
- Maximize Chason Park's role as a year-round community hub.
- Expand the appeal of the Disc Golf Course for competitive users.
- Develop a mountain bike course at Cheney Griffin Park and trail systems within Earle May Boat Basin Park to diversify recreation options and attract outdoor tourism.

Efficient Land Use, Regional Cooperation, & Emergency Preparedness

Ensuring that land in Bainbridge is used efficiently is essential for supporting long-term growth while preserving the character of existing neighborhoods and protecting natural resources. Thoughtful planning and strategic development will help the city grow sustainably while maintaining the qualities that make Bainbridge a desirable place to live.

Prioritizing infill development, mixed-use zoning, and the revitalization of underutilized properties will allow Bainbridge to maximize existing infrastructure investments. Encouraging development in areas that are already served by public utilities and services will reduce sprawl, enhance walkability, and create vibrant, well-connected neighborhoods that support both residential and commercial activity.

Regional collaboration remains a key component of Bainbridge's planning efforts. Strengthening partnerships with Decatur County, the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWGRC), and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will ensure that economic development, infrastructure improvements, and emergency preparedness initiatives are aligned across jurisdictions.

Building resilience to natural disasters is also a priority. Enhancing emergency response strategies, improving stormwater management systems, and ensuring that critical infrastructure can withstand extreme weather events will help Bainbridge prepare for and recover from potential disruptions. By taking a proactive approach to emergency preparedness, the city can safeguard its residents, businesses, and essential services.

Emergency preparedness includes resource allocation for equipment and training for responders, short-term support for persons and properties affected, and long-term resources to assist in recovery and a return to productivity. The city should identify and pursue partnerships with churches, non-government charities, and special assistance agencies to plan for, and ready an updated strategic action plan for a variety of potential emergency scenarios to minimize impacts and speed response.

Needs

- Promote efficient land use to accommodate growth without sacrificing neighborhood character or natural resources.
- Improve emergency preparedness through updated response strategies, equipment, training, and partnerships. Prioritize infill and redevelopment over outward expansion to reduce sprawl.
- Ensure new development occurs where infrastructure already exists to optimize public investment.
- Enhance the resilience of critical infrastructure to withstand extreme weather and natural disasters.
- Allocate resources for both immediate emergency response and long-term recovery.
- Coordinate emergency planning with non-governmental and faith-based organizations.

Opportunities

- Use mixed-use zoning and revitalization of underutilized properties to create walkable, vibrant neighborhoods.
- Strengthen partnerships with Decatur County, SWGRC, and DCA for regional alignment on infrastructure, economic development, and emergency planning.
- Enhance stormwater systems to reduce flooding and improve environmental resilience.
- Develop a strategic emergency preparedness plan that engages community partners and maximizes local capacity for response and recovery.
- Align land use planning with sustainability and quality-of-life goals to preserve Bainbridge's distinctiveness as it grows.

Transportation, Mobility, & Access to Information

The Bainbridge Bypass provides a route to quickly divert traffic from the downtown core of the city for the U.S. numbered routes approaching from the northwest, west, south or east. However, truck traffic from the northeast still uses Vada Road and Calhoun Street to access US27 and US84. The construction of improvements to Whigham Dairy Road to state highway standards and relocating the truck routes is expected to divert truck traffic around the city and reduce through-traffic conflicts south of Calhoun Street including the South West Street, East Shotwell Street, and South Scott Street corridors. GDOT is expected to continue improving the regional corridors and reducing conflicts at intersections through improved design and traffic management techniques.

A proposed roundabout at US27 and Bethel Road provides an opportunity for establishing a “gateway” on the approach from the northwest to inform travelers that they are entering Bainbridge. However, the city needs to work with GDOT to carefully manage the growth of commercial development south of the bypass adjacent to the Martha Berry Highway (Tallahassee Road). As more traffic is attracted to the retail and service facilities in this area, the volume is expected to increase along with vehicle congestion and conflicts between regional and local access trips.

Mobility is essential for all persons to access jobs, healthcare, services, and commerce. Transit is limited to rural regional services provided by Southwest Georgia Transit and the small population of the city. New commercial retail growth on Tallahassee Road is not close to many of the more impoverished citizens of Bainbridge. This new growth at the southern edge of the city may also reduce the viability of older, established commercial development on East Shotwell Street and South Scott Street to compete for customers, and areas to the north of Shotwell from Scott Street past Wheat Street and south of downtown to either side of South West Street house individuals and families that cannot afford an automobile and rely on walking to reach retail commercial outlets along East Shotwell or South Scott Streets for food and necessities. The developing area along Tallahassee Highway is difficult to safely access by foot, and retail/commercial uses need to be accessible to maintain the customer base needed to stay in business.

The city has developed broadband services as a city utility to keep people informed and to support the release of public information, remote learning, telehealth, and social connections. State and federal assistance have assisted in creating Bainbridge Broadband, but the city is tasked with expanding and supporting the system as an important service to the people of Bainbridge.

Needs

- Divert northeast truck traffic off Vada Road and Calhoun Street to reduce congestion and improve safety.
- Collaborate with GDOT to manage commercial growth near Martha Berry Highway to prevent increased traffic congestion.
- Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in the Tallahassee Road corridor, particularly for low-income residents without access to vehicles.
- Ensure equitable access to retail and commercial services for residents in walkable areas near East Shotwell, South Scott, and South West Streets.
- Address the risk of disinvestment in older commercial corridors due to retail shift to the city's edge.
- Expand and maintain the Bainbridge Broadband system to ensure continued access to digital resources.

Opportunities

- Complete improvements to Whigham Dairy Road to provide an alternate truck route and reduce through-traffic conflicts.
- Establish a gateway identity at the proposed US27 and Bethel Road roundabout to welcome travelers into Bainbridge.
- Coordinate with GDOT to enhance regional intersection design and associated regional traffic flow.
- Use broadband infrastructure to support public information sharing, remote education, telehealth, and digital connectivity.
- Leverage public broadband as a municipal service to improve quality of life and reduce information access disparities.

Access to Education & Healthcare Opportunities

Supporting Pre-K through 12 education is a continuing priority for the community. Advocating for school facility improvements, expanding after-school programming, and increasing access to digital learning resources will enhance educational outcomes and ensure that students are prepared for future academic and career opportunities. The city should support continuing education programs for adults to help individuals who need assistance with basic skills to lead productive lives in an increasingly technologically complex world.

Expanding access to quality education and workforce training is essential to ensuring that Bainbridge residents have the skills necessary to succeed in a changing local economy. Strengthening partnerships with local institutions such as ABAC Bainbridge and Southern Regional Technical College will help align training programs with employer needs and provide clear pathways to high-demand careers. By investing in education and workforce development, Bainbridge can create a more skilled labor force and enhance economic mobility for its residents.

Healthcare access is another critical area of focus. Memorial Hospital and Manor provides local healthcare and emergency hospital services and is working on plans to update facilities and resources to continue serving Bainbridge. Ensuring that all residents have access to preventive and specialized care will improve overall community well-being. Expanding urgent care services, mental health resources, and telehealth options will help address existing gaps in healthcare accessibility, particularly for underserved populations. The city needs to support the efforts of Memorial Hospital and Manor to make improvements and enhance the ability of the facilities to serve the city and Decatur County.

Strengthening healthcare partnerships with regional providers is also necessary to improve service availability and ensure that residents can easily reach medical facilities. Reliable transportation options to healthcare providers, especially for those in need, will help remove barriers to medical care and support a healthier community.

Needs

- Improve K–12 school facilities and expand after-school programming.
- Increase access to digital learning tools for students and adult learners.
- Support adult education programs to enhance basic skills and digital literacy.
- Align local workforce training programs with employer needs to prepare residents for high-demand jobs.
- Ensure continued investment in and modernization of Memorial Hospital and Manor facilities.
- Expand access to urgent care, mental health, and telehealth services, especially for underserved populations.
- Improve transportation options to healthcare providers for those without reliable access.

Opportunities

- Strengthen partnerships with ABAC Bainbridge and Southern Regional Technical College to enhance workforce development.
- Use continuing education to empower adults and boost economic mobility.
- Position healthcare investment as a catalyst for improved community well-being.
- Leverage regional healthcare partnerships to expand the reach and availability of services.
- Promote telehealth as a tool for closing healthcare access gaps, especially in remote or low-income areas.

Housing & Neighborhoods

Ensuring that residents have access to safe, well- built, and secure housing is a key priority. Improving the condition of existing affordable housing will help create secure, well-maintained living environments, particularly in single-family neighborhoods where there is an imbalance between owner-occupied and rental homes. Strengthening code enforcement and incentivizing reinvestment in rental properties will encourage responsible property management and enhance neighborhood stability.

Revitalization efforts are needed in neighborhoods affected by blight and neglect. Developing strategic plans to prevent further deterioration and promote long-term community investment will help maintain the character and vitality of these areas. Similarly, targeted initiatives to combat blight — such as enforcing property maintenance standards and holding landlords accountable — will contribute to healthier, more livable neighborhoods.

Encouraging new housing development and redevelopment, with a focus on infill development, will help strengthen Bainbridge's residential fabric while making the most of existing infrastructure. Ensuring that new development is inclusive and equitable will help minimize divisions within the city and provide housing opportunities for a diverse range of residents.

Preserving Bainbridge's historic neighborhoods is also a priority. Creating an inventory of historic properties will support preservation efforts and guide redevelopment in a way that respects the city's architectural heritage.

Beyond housing, improving access to healthy food options is essential for overall community well-being. Expanding opportunities for neighborhood engagement, public dialogue, and conflict resolution training will strengthen social ties and foster a sense of community. Addressing concerns about the unhoused population through a thorough evaluation of the issue and exploring partnership-driven solutions will ensure that the city's approach is effective and aligned with available resources.

Finally, improving public housing developments will help provide safe, high-quality living conditions for residents who rely on these options, ensuring that all Bainbridge residents have access to stable and dignified housing.

Needs

- Improve the condition of existing affordable housing, especially in areas with high renter-to-owner ratios.
- Strengthen code enforcement and encourage reinvestment in poorly maintained rental properties.
- Develop strategic plans to address and prevent neighborhood blight and disinvestment.
- Enforce property maintenance standards and hold landlords accountable for neglect.
- Ensure new housing development is inclusive, equitable, and avoids exacerbating social divisions.
- Preserve historic neighborhoods by creating and maintaining an inventory of historic properties.
- Address homelessness through a thorough needs assessment and coordinated, resource-aligned solutions.
- Improve conditions in public housing developments to ensure safety, dignity, and livability.
- Increase access to healthy food options in underserved areas.
- Promote community cohesion through conflict resolution training and neighborhood engagement efforts.

Opportunities

- Encourage infill and redevelopment to revitalize neighborhoods and make efficient use of existing infrastructure.
- Strengthen neighborhood identity and character through historic preservation efforts.
- Foster a stronger sense of community through expanded public dialogue and engagement programs.
- Develop partnerships with organizations to address housing insecurity and support the unhoused population.
- Use targeted revitalization initiatives to restore livability and long-term investment in distressed areas.

