



# **BEN HILL COUNTY AND CITY OF FITZGERALD**

*Prepared By: Ben Hill County, City of  
Fitzgerald, and Marcus L. McConico, SGRC*

## **2026 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

A special acknowledgment for the Stakeholders and SGRC Staff members who dedicated their time and hard work to this project. They ensured that the plan would become a workable plan and guide the city, county, and citizens.

**SGRC STAFF:**

James Horton - Planning Director

Alexandra Arzayus – Planner II

Mykaela Brown – Planner

Marcus L. McConico – Planner

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# **I. Chapter 110-12-1. Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning**

## **1. Introduction**

The 2021 County Comprehensive Plan was prepared following the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective October 1, 2018.

As required by the Local Comprehensive Planning Standards, the 2026 Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Comprehensive Plan consists of the following elements:

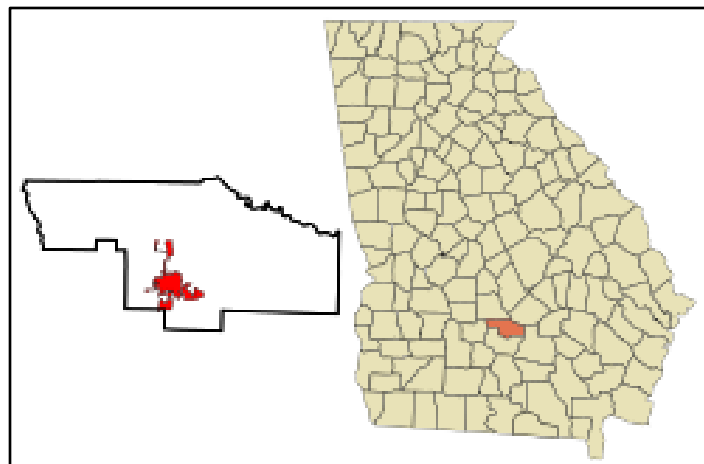
- 1. Community Goals**
- 2. Needs and Opportunities**
- 3. Community Work Program**
- 4. Broadband Services**
- 5. Economic Development Element** (as a community included in 2020 Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 category).  
Although a separate summarized economic development element is included in this Comprehensive Plan, which by reference adopts the current regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), any economic development goals, policies, needs, opportunities, and objectives of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald have also been integrated directly into their parallel components in this Comprehensive Plan.
- 6. Land Use Element** (as a community with zoning or land development regulations subject to the Zoning Procedures Law).

## 2. History



Ben Hill County covers 252 square miles of South-Central Georgia. Georgia's 146th county was carved from Irwin and Wilcox counties in 1906 and is named for Benjamin Hill, a U.S. senator who served as Troup County's state representative and senator in the mid-1800s.

The county seat is Fitzgerald, founded in 1895 by Philander H. Fitzgerald, a newspaperman from Indiana. The town's settlers opened a public school, which became the first school to provide textbooks free of charge. The courthouse was built in the first decade of the twentieth century and renovated during the 1950s. Still in use, the courthouse was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.



Although agriculture has always been important to the county, the high concentration of population in its county seat has resulted in a higher-than-average percentage of employment in the manufacturing sector. One of the largest employers in the area is Shaw Industries, and major agricultural crops are cotton, poultry, peanuts, timber, and tobacco.

Among the historic places listed on the National Register are the Ben Hill County Jail, the Charles W. Kimball House (also known as the C. W. Smith House), and the Dorminy-Massee House, all located in Fitzgerald. Also in Fitzgerald is the Blue and Gray Museum. The county boasts nine recreational parks and one river-access park to the Ocmulgee River. Annual spring events include the Wild Chicken Festival, the Ebony-in-Arts Festival, and the Colony City Chase.



A satellite campus of Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (WGTC) is located in Fitzgerald.

Cooksey, Elizabeth. "Ben Hill County." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Jun 10, 2022.  
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/ben-hill-county/>

### **3. Community Involvement**

All of the required elements have been developed with extensive opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders throughout Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald. The following steps were taken to ensure that this plan reflected the full range of needs and opportunities from the many stakeholders and residents in the communities:

- a) Stakeholders and Steering Committee were identified. These included local governments' department heads and staff, tourism and development authority employees, and elected officials.
- b) Participation techniques were identified. Methods used included a kick-off public information meeting, printed public information in local newspapers, and information on the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's website and local government websites.
- c) A participation program was conducted. Identified stakeholders were invited and attended, yielding specific input in plan content. The steering committee held regular meetings to provide information and feedback. The final draft of the plan was reviewed by all the stakeholders/steering committee.
- d) Community Involvement Activities were documented. This document includes a list of stakeholders and an overview of their participation. (Photos, sign-in sheets, published advertisements, emails, social media posts, etc.)

*Steering Committee*

Name	Title/Jurisdiction	Email
Hampton Raulerson	Ben Hill county Manager	<a href="mailto:hampton.raulerson@benhillcounty-ga.gov">hampton.raulerson@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Jack Hughes	Ben Hill County EMA	<a href="mailto:jake.hughes@benhillcounty-ga.gov">jake.hughes@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Brandy Elrod	City of Fitzgerald Tourism, Arts & Culture Director	
Keith Newell	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	
Tim Allmond	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	
Hal Wiley	Ben Hill County Chairman	<a href="mailto:hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov">hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Jeff Lewis	Fitzgerald Utilities	
Tom Calhoun	Fitzgerald Utilities	
Whitney Justice	City of Fitzgerald Assistant Community Development Director	<a href="mailto:wjustice@fitzgeraldga.org">wjustice@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Jason Dunn	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Development Authority Director	<a href="mailto:jasondunn@fbcca.net">jasondunn@fbcca.net</a>
Melissa Dark	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Chamber of Commerce Director	<a href="mailto:melissa.dark@fitzgeraldchamber.org">melissa.dark@fitzgeraldchamber.org</a>
Hal Wiley	Ben Hill County Chairman	<a href="mailto:hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov">hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Jason Holt	Mayor of Fitzgerald	<a href="mailto:mayorholt@fitzgeraldga.org">mayorholt@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Kathy A. Young	City Administrator	<a href="mailto:kyoung@fitzgeraldga.org">kyoung@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Emily Ray	City of Fitzgerald	
Keith Morris	DLS	
James Reynolds	Fitzgerald PD	
Tony Tucker	Building Inspector	<a href="mailto:ttucker@fitzgeraldga.org">ttucker@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Holley Lee	Dorminy Medical Center/PR Marketing Director	
David Walker	City of Fitzgerald Planning and Zoning Administrator / Project Manager	<a href="mailto:hlee@dorminymedical.org">hlee@dorminymedical.org</a>

**1st Public Hearing – “Kick-Off”**

The public hearing kick-off for the comprehensive planning process was held on April 8, 2025, at the Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners, located at 321 Dewey McGlamry Road, Fitzgerald, Georgia. It was held to make any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review were now underway, explain the purpose of the update, and encourage residents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the plan update.



*Kick-off Public Hearing 4-8-2025*

#### **4. Identification of Stakeholders and Steering Committee**

A comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was compiled with input from the Development Authority, elected officials, and department heads from the city and county. A complete list of all the stakeholders is included in this plan.

#### **5. Identification of Participation Techniques**

The following participation techniques were utilized during the update process:

- Public Hearings
- Workshops
- Extensive e-mail correspondence with stakeholders
- SGRC website as well as Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald websites
- Dissemination of information in the newspaper

#### **6. Participation Program**

A foundational principle utilized by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in all of its planning projects is public and stakeholder participation from, and coordination with, multiple and diverse interest groups. Outreach to the public, local governments, and other stakeholders and interested parties was accomplished by e-mail correspondence, direct communication, the project website, and updates provided at workshops and other group meetings. Opportunity for public comment was presented at public hearings and city and county commission meetings. The Steering Committee reviewed the plan ensuring the broadest buy-in and diversity of input into the comprehensive plan update.

In addition to the two required public hearings, SGRC held a series of three workshops to discuss several elements of the plan. The first workshop was used to review the existing goals, issues, and opportunities; in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, participants updated the list of goals, issues, and opportunities to meet current needs. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix along with public hearing notices.

The policies were reviewed to reflect the revised issues and opportunities. The Report of Accomplishments and Community Work Program was discussed and developed in individual meetings with each community. Emphasis was put on achievable, realistic projects for the next five years. A section for long-term projects the communities plan to undertake has been added to the Community Work Program.

The third workshop was utilized to update the Economic Development Element and the Land Use Element and Maps as desired by the local governments.

In addition to the two required public hearings, SGRC held a series of three workshops to discuss several elements of the plan.

### **First Workshop**

The first workshop was used to review the vision statement, existing goals, issues, and opportunities; in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, participants decided to continue using the goals and vision state from the 2021 plan. The group used index cards to list issues, and opportunities to meet current needs of Ben Hill County. This workshop was held on May 20, 2025, at 4-H and Ben Hill County Extension Service Building.



### **2nd Workshop**

The Policies and Report of Accomplishments were developed in the second workshop, held on June 24 2025, along with the updated Community Work Program draft. The participants developed the Community Work Program to include specific action items and projects that would be feasible for the County and the individual communities to implement should funding become available. This workshop was also held at City Hall in Fitzgerald.



### **3rd Workshop**

The third workshop was utilized to update the Land Use Element and Maps as desired by the local governments. Two meetings were held on the same day. One with the county and the second with city to discuss and change the Future Land Use maps. Following the meeting emails were exchanged to ensure that everyone agreed to the final maps because certain character areas were in both the City of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County.

### **2nd Public Hearing - Transmittal Hearing**

The second public hearing was held on January 6 2026, before the Ben Hill County Commission, at the at 321 Dewey McGlamry Road, Fitzgerald, Georgia.



**Adoption of Comprehensive Plan**

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan was adopted by resolution by the Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners on \_\_<sup>th</sup> day of (month), 2026, and adopted by the City of Fitzgerald on \_\_<sup>th</sup> day of (month, 2026).

## 7. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the local governments must review both the Regional Water Plan covering its area and the GDR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria, as laid out in Chapter 391-3-16, to determine whether any local implementation practices or development regulations need to be adapted to be consistent with both.

### Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

Ben Hill County is within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, which was adopted in June 2023. The Suwannee-Satilla Council is one of 11 planning regions charged with developing Regional Water Plans and encompasses 18 counties in the southeastern portion of Georgia (shown in Figure ES-1). An overview of the updated findings and recommendations for the Suwannee- Satilla Region are provided in this Executive Summary. The Suwannee- Satilla Council's Regional Water Plan is available on the Council's website.



Source: CDM Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Figure ES-1

The Suwannee-Satilla Council has identified 13 goals for the region. It is important to note that the goals are summarized below, not presented in order of priority, but instead were assigned a number to identify specific goals addressed as part of the water management practice selection process.

*“The Vision of the Suwannee- Satilla Regional Council is to manage water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia’s regulated riparian and regulated reasonable use laws to support the state’s and region’s economy, to protect public health and natural resources, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens; while preserving the private property rights of Georgia’s landowners, and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.”*

### **Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Goals:**

1. Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, industrial water needs, and agricultural water needs, including all agricultural sectors (this includes the agroforestry economy of the region).
2. Manage groundwater and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
3. Manage the region's and state's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.
4. Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs, while protecting environmental resources.
5. Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies, and water and wastewater infrastructure.
6. Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
7. Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
8. Protect, maintain, and where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality, and river base flows.
9. Protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities.
10. Identify opportunities to manage stormwater to improve water quantity and quality.
11. Identify and implement cost-effective water management strategies.
12. Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens of the region.
13. Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

### ***Addressing Water Needs and Regional Goals***

This Section presents the Suwannee-Satilla Council's water management practices selected to address resource shortfalls or challenges identified and described in Section 5, and/or meet the Council's Vision and Goals described in Section 1.

### ***Identifying Water Management Practices***

The comparison of Resource Assessments and forecasted needs presented in Section 5 identifies the Region's likely resource shortfalls or challenges and demonstrates the need for region and resource specific water management practices. In the cases where shortfalls or challenges appear to be unlikely based on the comparison of the Region's Resource Assessments and forecasted needs, the management practices described in this section have been selected to also meet those needs specified by the

Council (e.g., facility/infrastructure needs and practices, programmatic practices, etc.) that are aligned with the Region's Vision and Goals. In selecting the actions needed (i.e., water management practices), the Council considered practices identified in existing plans, the Region's Vision and Goals, and coordinated with local governments and water providers as well as neighboring Councils who share these water resources.

### ***Review of Existing Plans and Practices***

The Council conducted a comprehensive review of existing local and regional water management plans and relevant related documents to frame the selection of management practices. The types of plans/studies that were reviewed to support identification and selection of management practices for the Suwannee-Satilla Region consisted of the following:

- Comprehensive Work Plans (local and regional scale)
- Regional infrastructure and permitting plans
- EPD databases (permitted withdrawals, planned projects, and proposed reservoirs)
- State-wide guidance documents (conservation, cost, and water planning)
- Best Management Practices (forestry, agriculture, and stormwater management)
- Water quality studies including Watershed Protection Plans (basin, watershed, and local scale)
- TMDL evaluations

When possible, successful management practices already planned for and/or in use in the Suwannee-Satilla Region formed the basis for the water management practices selected by the Council.

## 2. Plan Elements

### Community Goals

#### **Goal 1: Natural Resources**

Conserve and protect the functions and values of Ben Hill County's natural resources for future generations' appropriate use and enjoyment.

#### **Goal 2: Cultural Resources**

Protect, preserve, and promote the historic and cultural resources of Ben Hill County through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, and tourism and education programs focused on historic preservation.

#### **Goal 3: Land Use**

Ensure the highest quality living environment possible through a mixture of compatible land uses and character areas reflecting the residents' needs and desires and their vision for Ben Hill County.

#### **Goal 4: Economic Development**

Improve the Ben Hill County economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, diversify the local economy, and help Ben Hill County compete in the regional economy.

#### **Goal 5: Housing**

Provide opportunities for homeownership and housing resources for all residents of Ben Hill County through public/private partnerships.

#### **Goal 6: Community Facilities and Services**

Ensure that needed community facilities such as water, sewer, solid waste, police, fire, EMS, and hospitals/healthcare are provided in a practical, environmentally sound, safe, and economic system, consistent with present demand and future growth.

#### **Goal 7: Intergovernmental Coordination**

Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public entities to maintain the best Greater Ben Hill County's quality of life and resources.

#### **Goal 8: Broadband**

Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met.

#### **Goal 9: Transportation**

To promote transportation facilities, protect our community resources, promote efficient infrastructure use while supporting quality economic development.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

Needs	Opportunities
Resurfacing of county-maintained roads and routes with the state system.	Removal or Conversion of the old high school to improve upon the land and prevent the continued degradation of the property itself. (2)
Continue to improve drainage (repair/replace) in the low-lying areas of the both the city and county.	Continue to use Code Enforcement to clean up abandoned homes/lots and clean up those areas with expansive blight.
More affordable housing for purchase	Continue to work with the Chamber and Economic Development to repurpose existing shopping properties (retail). (3)
More affordable housing for rental	Low cost of living that can attract new residents.
More sit down/casual dining restaurants (4)	City, County, Chamber, Economic Development, and work together well. (4)
Focus on filling/renovating vacant buildings	Recent increase in manufacturing.
New hotel/motel for visitors affiliated with industry (4)	Continue to grow medical services at Dorminy Medical Center (3)
Improved roads (7)	Increase small businesses which is vital for the community
Public storm shelter and personnel to manage the shelter	Patrol and protect the investment we have that have been made (splash pad, parks, and basketball court)
More funding for road repair and maintenance	Improve animal control. Spay and Neuter program that is cost effective.
Less Government Housing	Continue to revitalize downtown and old shopping centers (4)
Support for startup companies/businesses	Market our natural gas system to residential customers by promoting tankless hot water heaters
A stronger/larger workforce	Promote local technical college programs for student growth
Improve 911 communication system (3)	Venue in White Swan Parking lot
Disaster shelter with backup generator	Farmers market downtown (2)
Alternative route to cross railroad tracks	Support economic development opportunities
Short term rental ordinance (2)	Make use of millennium Tech Park
Funding for aging infrastructure (water/sewer system)	Actively Recruit airport business
Expansion of land application sewer system and water treatment plant to promote industrial growth	Market Industrial Park to small industries
Expand and ----- natural gas system for increased capacity for industrial growth/commercial and residential	Market Millennium Park at Wiregrass (WGTC)
Improved public safety communication	
Continue to improve coordination between local government, schools and other agencies	
Funding for more transportation and road improvements	
Grocery Store (2)	
More downtown businesses	
Health food store	
Farmer Market	
Primary Care Physicians	
Mental Health Services	
Homeless shelter/resources	
Replace road equipment	
Encourage local us of the hospital	
Adopt hotel/motel tax in unincorporate parts of the county	

## Needs and Opportunities

The Needs and Opportunities listed in this section were developed through discussions with stakeholders and residents; from the experiences of stakeholders and residents; through analysis of statistical data and information; and through review and revision as applicable of the issues and opportunities identified in the Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald's current plan. Each of the following Needs and Opportunities is addressed by related policies in the "Community Policies" section.

### *Natural Resources*

#### Needs

- *Continue to market the agricultural and natural resources in the county.*
- *A feasibility study is needed for Lake Beatrice.*
- *Create a Rural Regional Water Management agency.*
- *Encourage more use of local rivers for recreational use.*

#### Opportunities

- *Ben Hill County has a good supply of ground/drinking water.*

### *Cultural Resources*

#### Needs

- *Maintenance and rehabilitation of historical and cultural resources are needed.*
- *Continue to update the comprehensive local (historic/cultural/natural) resource guide and virtual video on website.*

#### Opportunities

- *Patrol and protect the investment we have that have been made (splash pad, parks, and basketball court)*

### *Land Use*

#### Needs

- *Short term rental ordinance*

#### Opportunities

- *Continue to use Code Enforcement to clean up abandoned homes/lots and clean up those areas with expansive blight.*
- *Annually reassess the zoning code to ensure it meets the communities' needs.*

### *Economic Development*

#### Needs

- *Focus on filling/renovating vacant buildings*
- *A stronger/larger workforce*
- *Support for startup companies/businesses*
- *New hotel/motel for visitors affiliated with industry*
- *Grocery Store*
- *More downtown businesses*
- *Health food store*
- *Farmer Market*
- *Primary Care Physicians*
- *Mental Health Services*
- *Encourage local use of the hospital*

#### Opportunities

- *Continue to revitalize downtown and old shopping centers*
- *The recent increase in manufacturing*
- *Support economic development opportunities*
- *Promote local technical college programs for student growth*
- *Make use of millennium Tech Park*
- *Farmers market downtown*
- *Actively Recruit airport business*
- *Market Industrial Park to small industries*
- *Increase small businesses which is vital for the community*
- *Market our natural gas system to residential customers by promoting tankless hot water heaters*

### ***Housing***

#### Needs

- *The zoning ordinance needs regular assessment that ensures adequate housing for the community's needs.*
- *More affordable housing for purchase*
- *More affordable housing for rental*
- *Homeless shelter/resources*

#### Opportunities

- *Low cost of living that can attract new residents*
- *Continue the removal of blighted old homes under the Redevelopment Plan.*
- *Create a marketing strategy for housing such as "Aging in Place."*
- *Chip and CDBG Grants to improve current housing*

### ***Community Facilities and Services***

#### Needs

- *Public storm shelter and personnel to manage the shelter*
- *Disaster shelter with backup generator*
- *Funding for aging infrastructure (water/sewer system)*
- *Expansion of land application sewer system and water treatment plant to promote industrial growth*
- *Expand and ----- natural gas system for increased capacity for industrial growth/commercial and residential*
- *Replace road equipment*

#### Opportunities

- *Continue to grow medical services at Dorminy Medical Center*
- *Removal or Conversion of the old high school to improve upon the land and prevent the continued degradation of the property itself*
- *Market Millennium Park at Wiregrass (WGTC)*
- *Venue in White Swan Parking lot*

### ***Intergovernmental Coordination***

#### Needs

- *Improve 911 communication system*
- *Improved public safety communication*
- *Continue to improve coordination between local government, schools and other agencies*

#### Opportunities

- *City, County, Chamber, Economic Development, and work together well*
- *Improve animal control. Spay and Neuter program that is cost effective*
- *Collaboration with surrounding counties concerning essential/emergency services through inter-local agreements*
- *Establish regional partnerships for mutual and emergency services, training, and education*

### ***Broadband Services***

#### Needs

- *Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met*

#### Opportunities

- *Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and the business community.*
- *Encourage partnership of providers to allow better broadband services.*
- *Public/private partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive broadband coverage consistent, reliable, and equitable.*
- *Broadband infrastructure may be included during road project development to increase project efficiencies and outcomes*

### ***Transportation***

#### Needs

- *Alternative route to cross railroad tracks*
- *Improved roads*
- *More funding for road repair and maintenance*
- *Continue to improve drainage (repair/replace) in the low-lying areas of the both the city and county.*

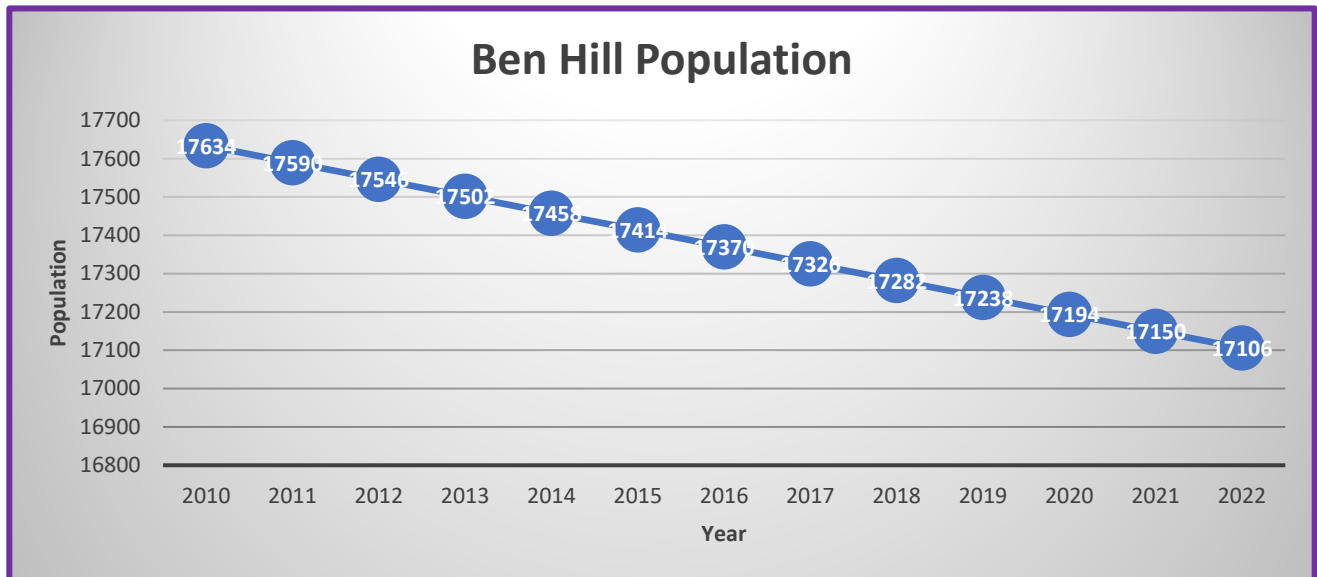
**Opportunities**

- *Improve roads near Wiregrass (WGTC) for truck driving program*
- *Grants are available through CBGS, LMIG, GDOT, etc., for funding costs.*
- *SPLOST and T-SPLOST will also allow funding for many improvements, including resurfacing the main arterial roads.*

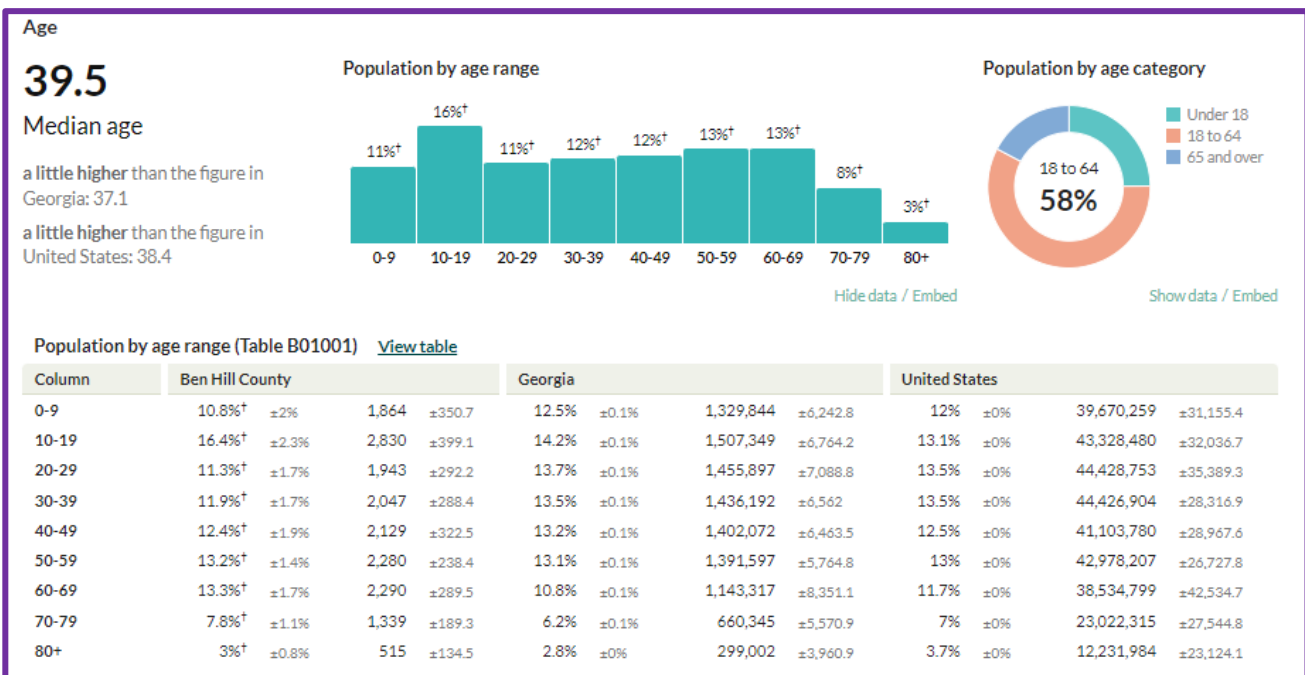
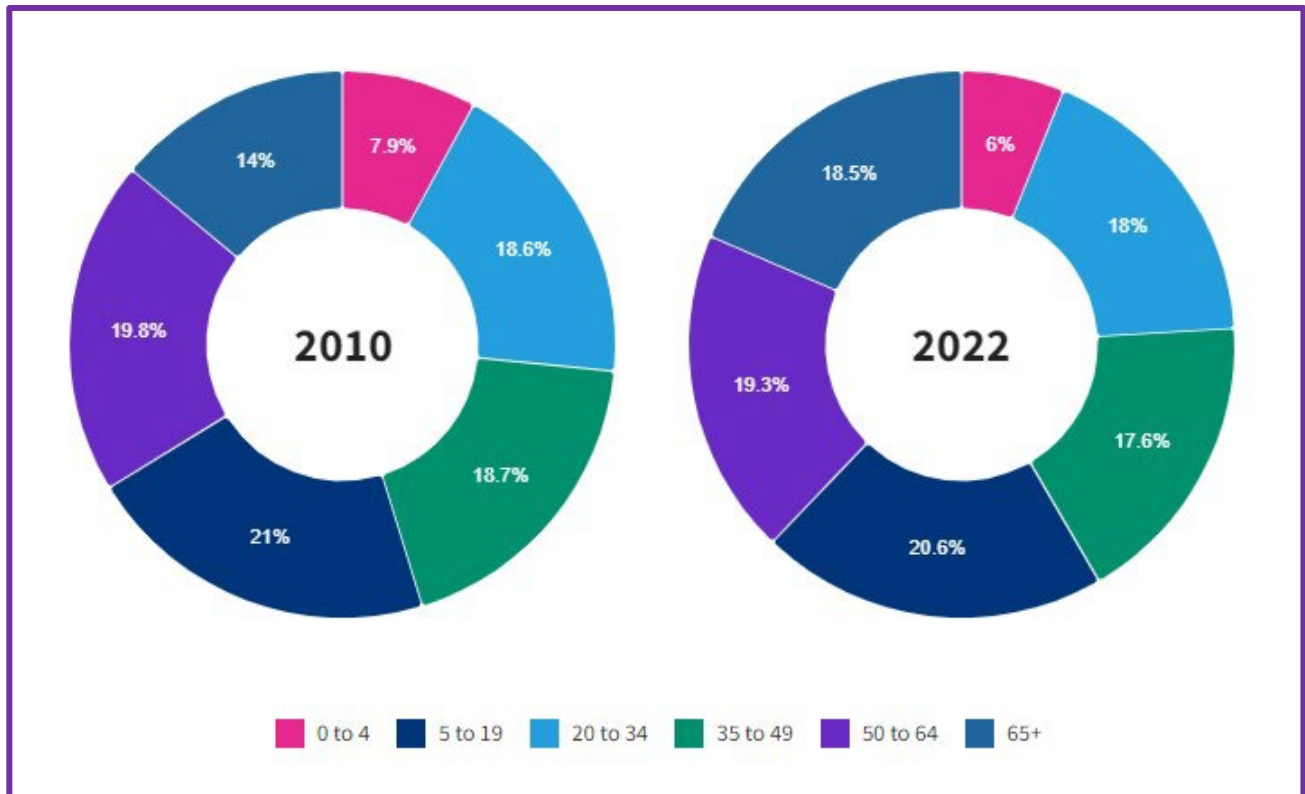
**3. Analysis of Data and Information**

**Ben Hill County**

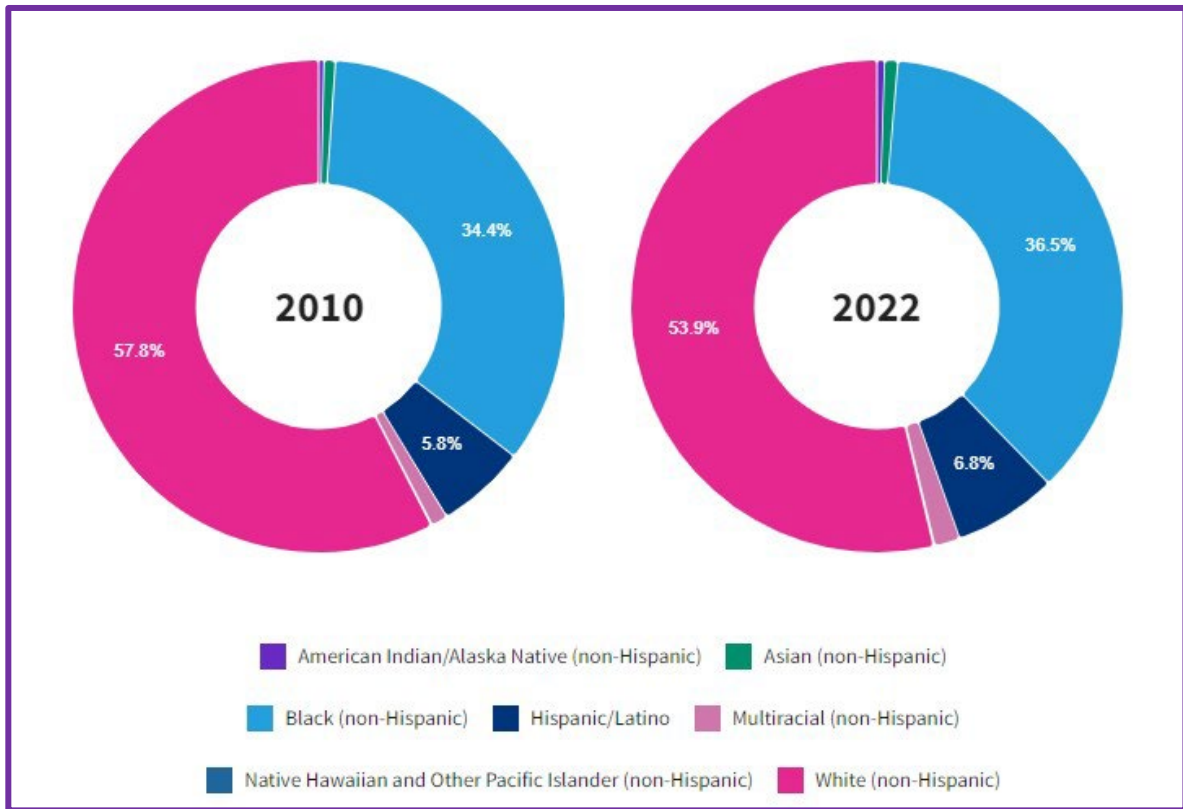
Ben Hill County, Georgia's estimated 2022 population is 17,062 which is a rate decrease of 0.26% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data. Ben Hill County, Georgia is the 102nd largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 17,634 and has seen a decrease of 3.24% since that time.



According to 2022 estimates, the age distribution in Ben Hill County among six age groups—0-4, 5-19, 20-34, 35-49, 50-64, and 65 and older—indicates that the 65+ group was the fastest growing between 2010 and 2022, with its population increasing by 28.2%. Conversely, the 0 to 4 age group experienced the largest decline, dropping by 26.6% during the same period.

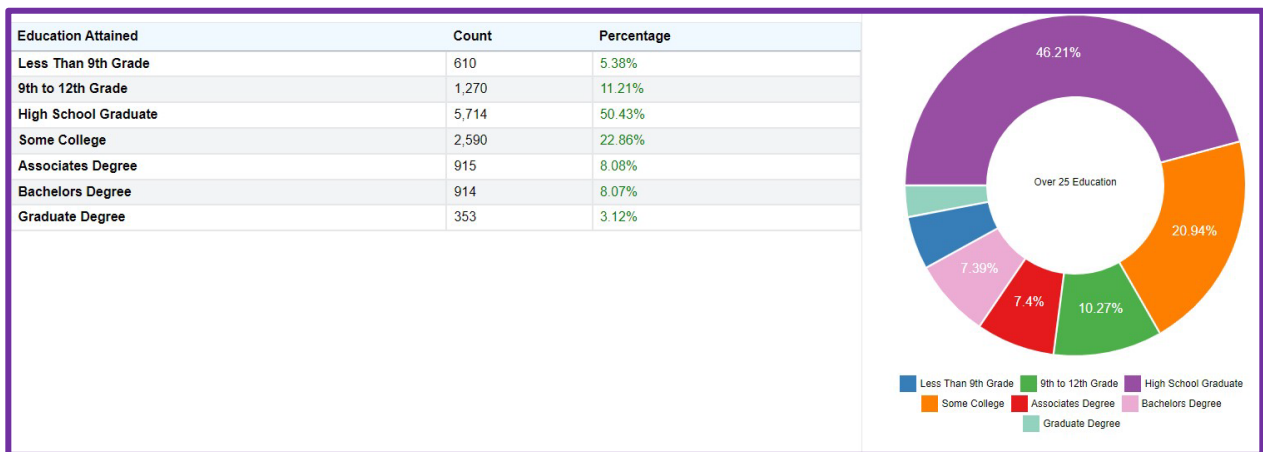


In 2022, Ben Hill County was more diverse than it was in 2010. In 2022, the white (non-Hispanic) group made up 53.9% of the population compared with 57.8% in 2010. Between 2010 and 2022, the share of the population that is Black (non-Hispanic) grew the most, increasing 2.1 percentage points to 36.5%. The white (non-Hispanic) population had the largest Decrease dropping 3.9 percentage points to 53.9% from 2010 to 2022.



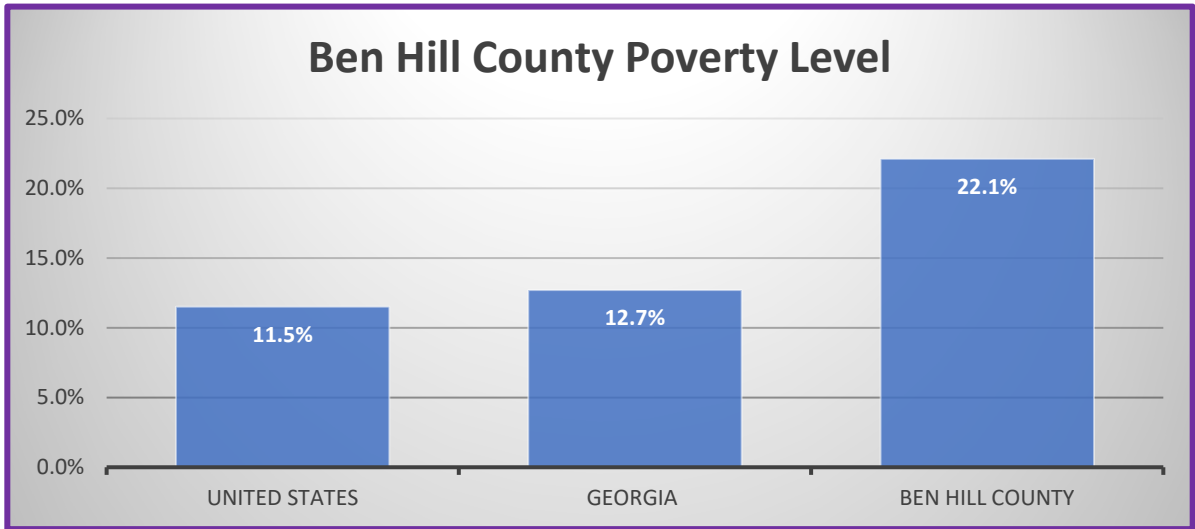
In 2022, the largest racial or ethnic group in Ben Hill County was the white (non-Hispanic) group, which had a population of 9,203. Between 2010 and 2022, the Black (non-Hispanic) population had the most growth increasing by 152 from 6,079 in 2010 to 6,231 in 2022.

The Education Attainment for Ben Hill County for the 9th Grade or less is 5.38%. 9th to 12th Grade attainment is 11.21%, 50.43% for High School Graduates, 22.86% for some college, 8.08% for associate degrees, 8.07% for bachelor’s degrees, and 3.12% for graduate degrees.



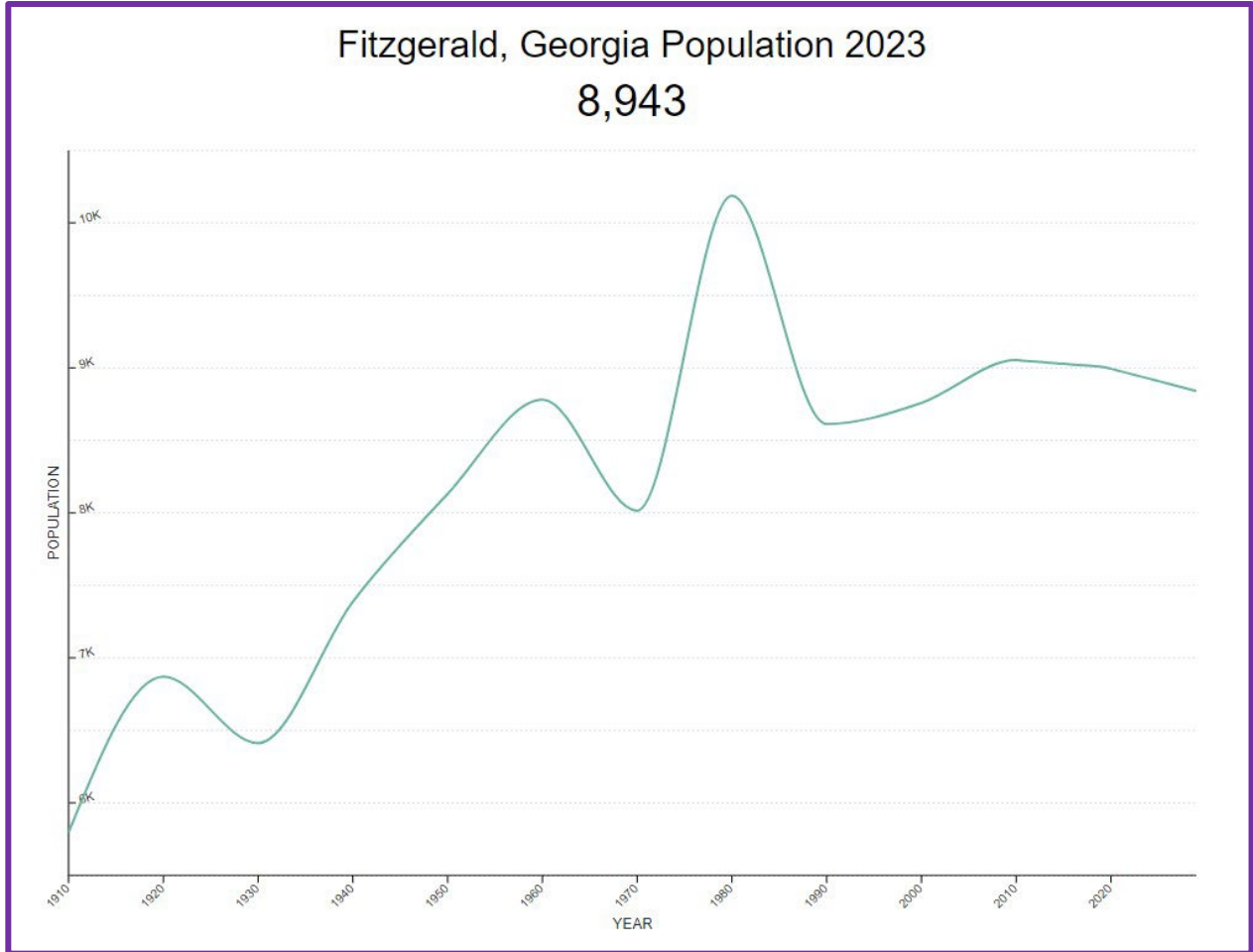
The median household income in Ben Hill County is \$34,455, with a poverty rate of 25.65%. The Family’s Median Income is \$40,553, the Married Family’s Median Income is \$66,934, and the Median Non-Families Income is \$20,760.

The current poverty rate in Ben Hill County was estimated at 26.8% as of July 1, 2023, according to U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts. An estimated 4,679 of 17,456 people in Ben Hill County live in poverty. The poverty rate of 22.1% was more than Georgia’s poverty rate of 12.7% and higher than the United States poverty rate of 11.5%.



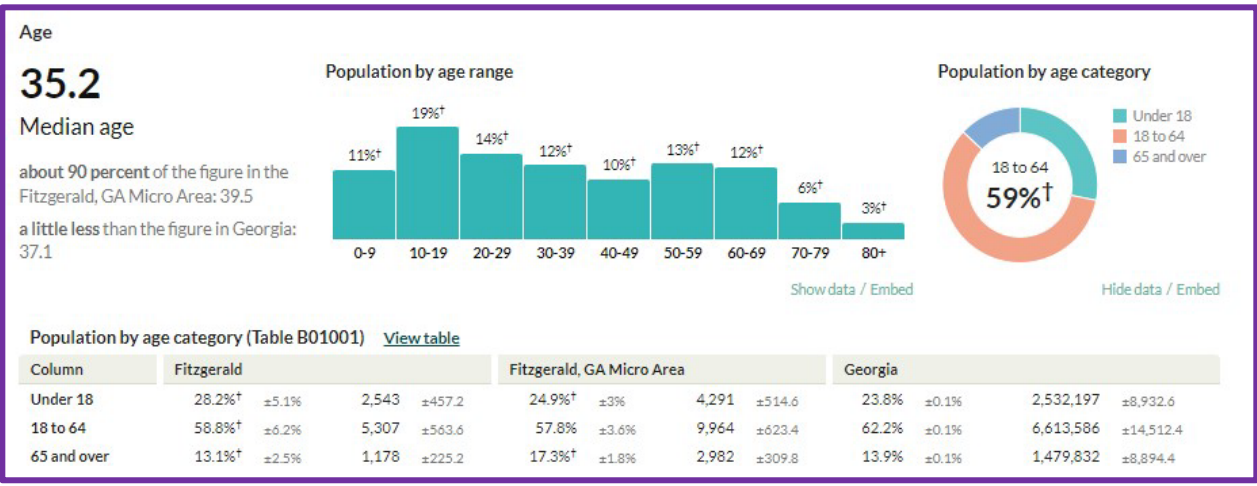
**Fitzgerald**

Fitzgerald is the county seat of Ben Hill County. Its population in 2023 was 8,943. Fitzgerald population decreased at a rate of (-0.19%) annually, and its population has decreased (-0.57%) since the last census, which recorded a population of 8,994 in 2020.

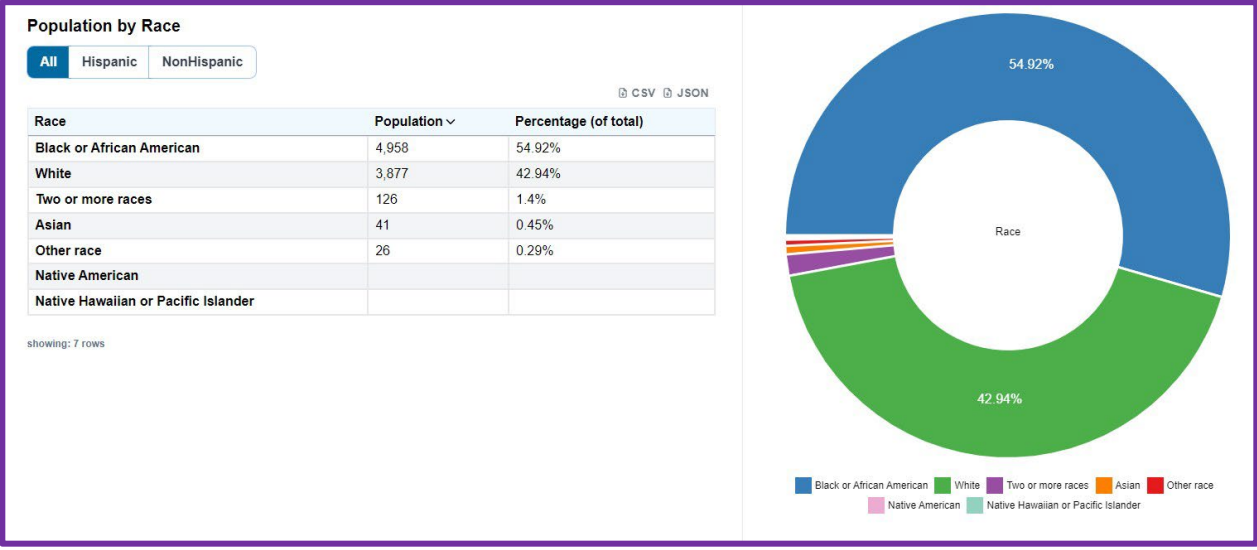


The City of Fitzgerald has a total population of around 8,900, which is about a -1.3% change from 2010. The under-18 population represents 24.9% of the population of the City of Fitzgerald. The median age in Fitzgerald is 35.2. The population of those 65 and over is 16.2% of the total population. Nearly 56% of the total population that resides in the City of Fitzgerald is female.

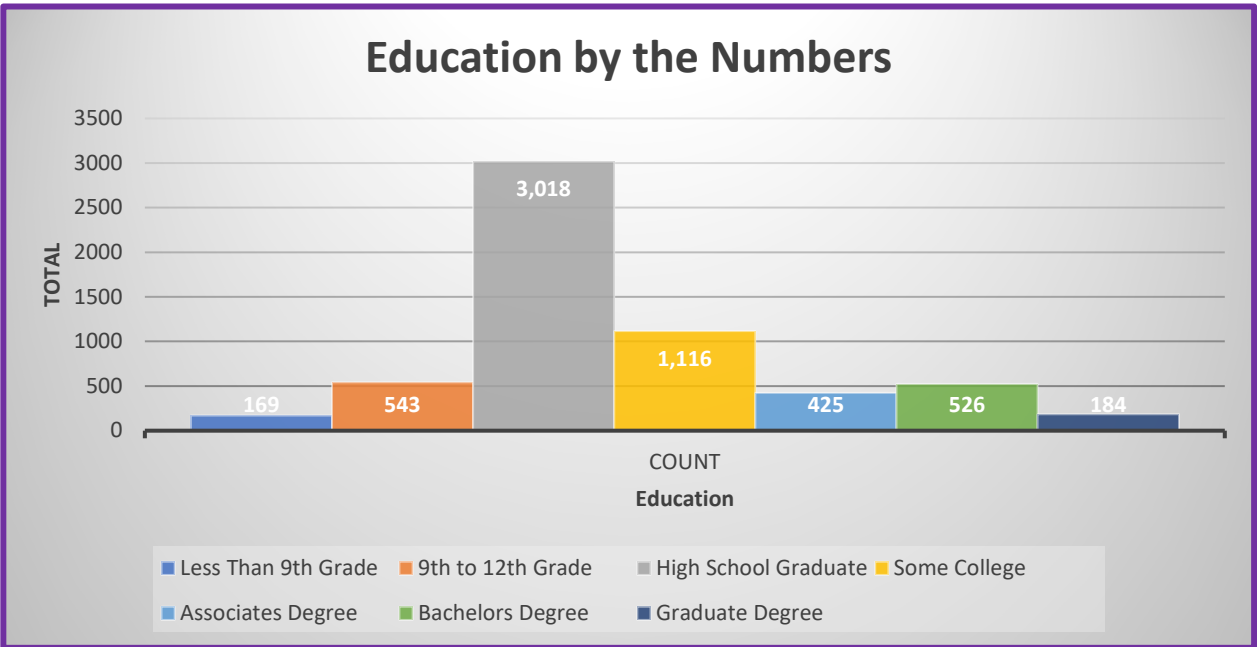
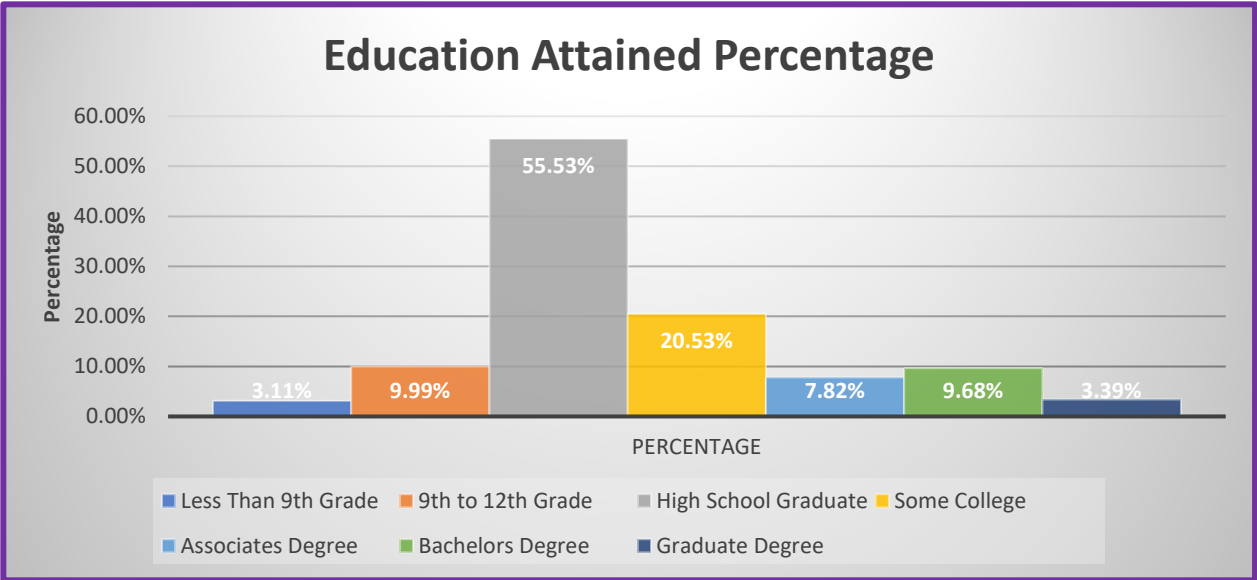
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/fitzgeraldcitygeorgia,benhillcountygeorgia,US/PST045222>



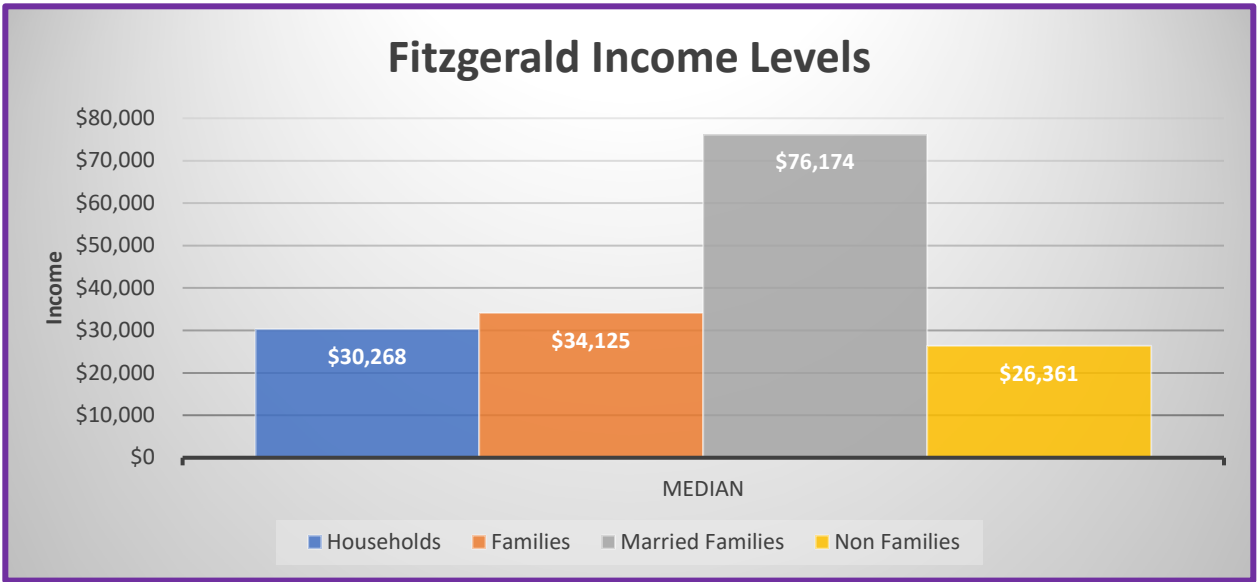
The Black or African American population is 54.92%, the White population is 42.94%, and two or more races are 1.4% of the population of Fitzgerald, Georgia.



The Education Attainment for Fitzgerald for high school graduates is 55.53%, some college 20.53%, bachelor's degree 9.68%, and post-grad 3.39%.



The median household income in Fitzgerald is \$30,268, with a poverty rate of 23.97%. The Median Families Income is \$34,125, the Median Married Families Income is \$76,174, and the Median Non-Families Income is \$26,361.



**4. Broadband Element**

In recognition of broadband infrastructure's importance to communities' vitality, the Georgia legislature passed the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act (SB 402) in 2018. The Act provides for broadband services, planning, deployment, and incentives, along with other purposes. It also requires comprehensive plans to include the promotion of the deployment of broadband services. Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald recognize the importance of broadband expansion by including this Element in their Comprehensive Plan and becoming a Broadband Ready Community.

The provision of broadband services enables residents to access several vital services such as healthcare, economic opportunity, and education. Expansion of rural broadband and improvement in the provision of broadband services can address resident out-migration concerns. Effective and efficient broadband enables internet-based businesses to succeed in the global economy. It is challenging to educate upcoming generations of students in web literacy and digital skills training without adequate broadband speed and connectivity.

The latest data shown in Map 1 below identifies 15% of Ben Hill County locations as unserved. However, it has been noted the technique of classifying unserved areas is too broad. A Census block is categorized as “served” if at least one consumer in a Census block has broadband service available to them.






<b>Ben Hill County ISP Report Card: B-</b>			
<b>Metric</b> <i>(hover for details)</i>	<b>Ben Hill County</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Fiber Availability Percent</b>	72.15%	71.48%	61.55%
<b>Average Download Speed</b>	1,573 Mbps	2,958 Mbps	2,782 Mbps
<b>Provider Count</b>	3.7	6.4	6.1

## Fitzgerald ISP Report Card: B-

Metric <i>(hover for details)</i>	Fitzgerald	Georgia	USA
Fiber Availability Percent	70.60%	71.48%	61.55%
Average Download Speed	1,549 Mbps	2,958 Mbps	2,782 Mbps
Provider Count	3.8	6.4	6.1

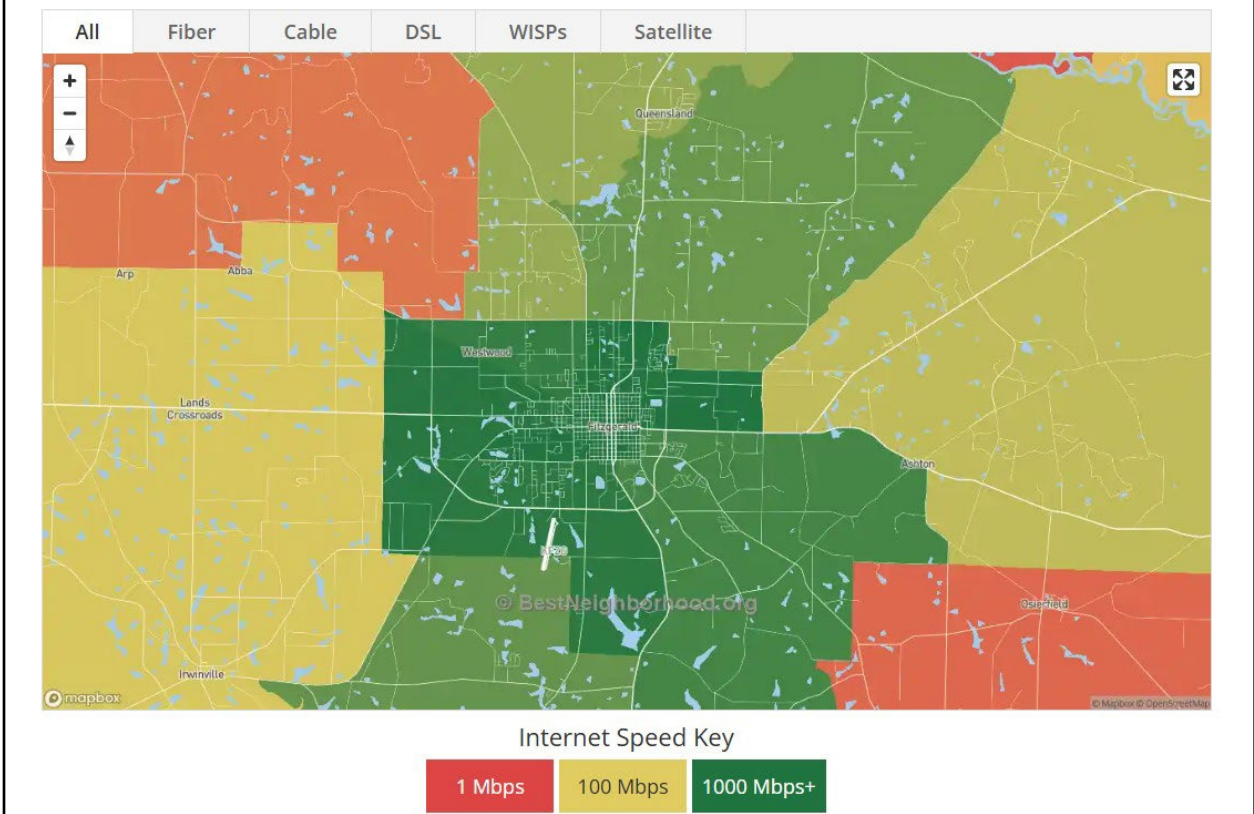
<https://ispreports.org/internet-service-providers-ben-hill-county-ga/>

### Compare Fitzgerald, GA Internet Providers Ranked by Fastest Speed

	Provider	Max Mbps Download	Type
1.	 EarthLink Fiber	5 Gbps	Fiber Internet and DSL Internet
2.	 Windstream	2 Gbps	Fiber Internet, Cable Internet, DSL Internet, Copper Internet and Phone
3.	 Viasat	150 Mbps	Satellite Internet and Phone
4.	 Xtream by Mediacom	150 Mbps	Cable Internet, Television and Phone
5.	 HughesNet	100 Mbps	Satellite Internet and Phone

<https://www.broadbandsearch.net/service/georgia/fitzgerald>

The map below shows *maximum* internet speeds by area in Ben Hill County.



<https://bestneighborhood.org/tv-and-internet-ben-hill-county-ga/>

## 5. Consideration of DCA Community Quality Objectives

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has crafted a series of objectives dealing with a broad range of issues that concern local governments. The objectives listed below are only recommendations but provide local governments with a tool to assess their needs and opportunities and develop their implementation activities. If local governments use objectives in their planning efforts, it will result in consistent planning projects and goals. These tools may translate into greater efficiency and a better quality of life for the residents. This section contains an analysis of the consistency of the community's current policies, activities, and development patterns with the Quality Community Objectives and recommends related best practices as provided by DCA.

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald
<p><b>1. Economic Prosperity</b> Encourage the development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the area's resources, and prospects for creating job</p>	<p>Community activities, including economic development efforts, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Access Georgia Assistance Programs</li> <li>❖ Business Incubator</li> <li>❖ Public/Private Partnership</li> </ul>

<p>opportunities that meet a diverse local workforce's needs.</p>	
<p><b>2. Resource Management</b>  Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. Achieve this by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation, encouraging green building construction and renovation, utilizing appropriate waste management techniques, fostering water conservation and reuse, or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.</p>	<p>Land use elements and goals, and policies related to natural resources are consistent with this objective.  Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Green Space Plan</li> <li>❖ Conservation easements</li> <li>❖ Water resource protection</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Efficient Land Use</b>  Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the community's periphery. Achieve this by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the community's traditional core, designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed, carefully planning the expansion of public infrastructure, or maintaining open space for agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.</p>	<p>The land use elements and infrastructure-related goals and policies of this plan are consistent with this objective.  Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Adaptive reuse</li> <li>❖ Brownfield redevelopment</li> <li>❖ Preserve agriculture land use</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Local Preparedness</b>  Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. Requirements might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support or direct new growth, ordinances, and regulations to manage growth as desired. Leadership and staff would be capable of responding to opportunities and addressing new challenges or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan consistent with this objective and leadership and staff capability.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan consistent with this objective and leadership and staff capability.  Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ All-hazards strategy</li> <li>❖ Capital Improvement Program</li> <li>❖ Codes for animal control and street/sidewalk standards</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Sense of Place</b>  Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. The qualities may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as the focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Revisions to Zoning Ordinance</li> <li>❖ Code Enforcement</li> </ul>

<p>with the standard features of the community, or protecting scenic and natural elements that are important to define the community's character.</p>	
<p><b>6. Regional Cooperation</b>          Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. Achieve this by actively participating in regional organizations identifying joint projects that will increase efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer or develop collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protecting shared natural resources, developing the transportation network, or creating a tourism plan.</p>	<p>There is a high level of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Regional Economic Development Efforts</li> <li>❖ Regional Roundtables</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Housing Options</b>          Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. Achieve this by encouraging the development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure the availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Georgia Initiative for Community Housing</li> <li>❖ Home Loan Assistance</li> <li>❖ Housing for the disadvantage</li> <li>❖ Housing for the elderly</li> <li>❖ Mixed-Income Housing</li> <li>❖ Land Bank</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Transportation Options</b>          Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents. Achieve by fostering transportation alternatives by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit, employing calming traffic measures throughout the community, requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments, or coordinating transportation and land-use decision-making within the community.</p>	<p>Transportation goals, policies, and projects are consistent with this objective.          Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Flexible Street Design Standards</li> <li>❖ Sidewalk/trail network</li> <li>❖ Improving street connectivity</li> <li>❖ Safe Routes to School</li> <li>❖ Public Transportation</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Educational Opportunities</b>          Make educational and training opportunities available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life</p>	<p>The goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective.          Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Public internet access</li> <li>❖ Transportation to educational facilities</li> </ul>

ambitions. Achieve this by expanding and enhancing local educational institutions or programs. Provide access to other institutions in the region. Institute programs to improve local graduation rates, develop vocational education programs, or coordinate with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

- ❖ Work Ready Program
- ❖ Experience Work Programs-help older workers
- ❖ Educational Resource Center

**10. Community Health**

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and excellent work opportunities. Achieve this by providing services to support disadvantaged residents' basic needs, including the disabled, instituting programs to improve public safety. Promote programs that foster better health and fitness by providing all residents the opportunity to improve their life circumstances and fully participate in the community.

The goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective.

Recommended best practices:

- ❖ Transportation to services
- ❖ Community Health Resource Center

## 6. **Community Policies**

The following policies, numbered to align with the Community Goals, were developed in conjunction with all stakeholders and are intended to provide qualitative guidance to address the Issues and Opportunities identified in this Plan and to provide a framework for the development of the Community Work Program. The Community Work Program then addresses the Issues and Opportunities through specific projects, for each of which the participants, anticipated cost, and time frame are identified.

These policies are organized around the issues identified in the "Needs and Opportunities" section, and are further organized around the seven important topics of the Plan:

1. **Natural Resources**
2. **Cultural Resources**
3. **Land Use**
4. **Economic Development**
5. **Housing**
6. **Community Facilities and Services**
7. **Intergovernmental Coordination**
8. **Broadband Services**
9. **Transportation**

### Natural Resources

**Goal 1: Conserve and protect the functions and values of Ben Hill County's natural resources for future generations' appropriate use and enjoyment.**

#### Needs & Policies

*Need: Continue to market the agricultural and natural resources in the county.*

*Policy 1.1 **Marketing.** City, County, Chamber and Economic Development coordinate to ensure that the region has knowledge of agricultural and natural resources provided in Ben Hill County.*

*Policy 1.2 **Marketing.** Use social media platforms to promote agricultural lands and products and the county's natural resources.*

*Need: A feasibility study is needed for Lake Beatrice.*

*Policy 1.3 **Feasibility Study** Plan to have a feasibility study completed for Lake Beatrice*

*Need: Create a Rural Regional Water Management agency.*

*Policy 1.4 Plan to have a study completed in order to find the best practices to manage water in Ben Hill County*

*Need: Encourage more use of local rivers for recreational use.*

*Police 1.5 The Tourism Department and Chamber of Commerce should actively promote the rivers as prime destinations for kayaking, canoeing, and fishing.*

### Cultural Resources

**Goal 2: Protect, preserve, and promote the historic and cultural resources of Ben Hill County through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, and tourism and education programs focused on historic preservation.**

#### Needs & Policies

*Need: Maintenance and rehabilitation of historical and cultural resources are needed.*

*Policy 2.1 Organize a plan to maintain and rehabilitate the historical and cultural resources in Ben Hill County*

*Need: Continue to update the comprehensive local (historic/cultural/natural) resource guide and virtual video on website.*

*Policy 2.2 Establish a schedule to update resource guides and video for digital distribution.*

### Land Use

**Goal 3: Ensure the highest quality living environment possible through a mixture of compatible land uses and character areas reflecting the residents' needs and desires and their vision for Ben Hill County.**

Needs & Policies

*Need: Short term rental ordinance.*

*Policy 3.1 Gather information to create a short-term rental ordinance for Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald*

### Economic Development

**Goal 4: Improve the Ben Hill County economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, diversify the local economy, and help Ben Hill County compete in the regional economy.**

Needs & Policies

*Need: Focus on filling/renovating vacant buildings.*

*Policy 4.1 Create a plan to renovate and find occupancy for vacant buildings*

*Need: A stronger/larger workforce.*

*Policy 4.2 Form a group of that works with the education system and Wiregrass (WGTC) to create a strong workforce*

*Need: Support for startup companies/businesses.*

*Policy 4.3 Create a plan for Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce to better aid startup businesses*

*Need: New hotel/motel for visitors affiliated with industry.*

*Policy 4.4 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a hotel in Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County*

*Need: A new Grocery Store.*

*Policy 4.5 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a new grocery store for Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County residents*

*Need: Fitzgerald needs more downtown businesses.*

*Policy 4.6 Work with property owners in downtown to encourage more new businesses in downtown.*

*Need: The county needs a Farmer Market for residents and visitors.*

*Policy 4.7 Encourage local farmers to work with entrepreneurs to start a Farmers' Market.*

*Need: More Primary Care Physicians to provide healthcare to residents.*

*Policy 4.8 Create a plan to work the local hospital to encourage primary care physicians to open offices in Fitzgerald/Ben Hill.*

*Need: Bring in Mental Health Services to provide services to residents.*

*Policy 4.9 Create a plan to work the local hospital to encourage Mental Health Services providers to open offices in Fitzgerald/Ben Hill.*

*Need: Encourage local use of the hospital*

*Policy 4.10 Market the local hospital to encourage residents to receive healthcare locally.*

## Housing

**Goal 5: Provide opportunities for homeownership and housing resources for all residents of Ben Hill County through public/private partnerships.**

### Needs & Policies

*Need: The zoning ordinance needs regular assessment that ensures adequate housing for the community's needs.*

*Policy 5.1 Plan to update zoning ordinance as community needs change.*

*Need: More affordable housing for purchase*

*Policy 5.2 Encourage developers to build a variety of housing types.*

*Need: More affordable housing for rental*

*Policy 5.3 Develop plans to create more rental opportunities throughout the county.*

*Need: Homeless shelter/resources*

*Policy 5.4 Work with the Regional Commission to develop a plan for a future homeless shelter.*

## Community Facilities and Services

**Goal 6: Ensure that needed community facilities such as water, sewer, solid waste, police, fire, EMS, and hospitals/healthcare are provided in a practical, environmentally sound, safe, and economic system, consistent with present demand and future growth.**

### Needs & Policies

*Need: Public storm shelter and personnel to manage the shelter*

*Policy 6.1. Create a plan and scout a location potential storm shelter.*

*Need: Disaster shelter with backup generator*

*Policy 6.2 Identify locations for disaster management center with backup generator.*

*Need: Funding for aging infrastructure (water/sewer system)*

*Policy 6.3 Produce a plan to fund and replace aging infrastructure.*

*Need: Expansion of land application sewer system and water treatment plant to promote industrial growth*

*Policy 6.4 Identify funding sources to expand the sewer system and water treatment plant.*

*Need: Expand and ----- natural gas system for increased capacity for industrial growth/commercial and residential*

*Policy 6.5 Create a plan and identify funding sources to expand natural gas system.*

*Need: Replace road equipment*

*Policy 6.6 Create a list road equipment that needs to be replaced and identify funding sources to purchase.*

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

**Goal 7: Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public entities to maintain the best Greater Ben Hill County's quality of life and resources.**

Needs & Policies

*Need: Improve 911 communication system*

*Policy 7.1 Research new communication system to replace old 911 system.*

*Need: Improved public safety communication*

*Create a plan for public safety organizations to improve communication between them.*

*Need: Continue to improve coordination between local government, schools and other agencies*

### **Broadband**

**Goal 8: Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met.**

Needs & Policies

*Need: Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald are met.*

*Policy 8.1 Review ordinances to ensure that broadband access can be available to all Ben Hill County citizens.*

### **Transportation**

**Goal 9: To promote transportation facilities, protect our community resources, promote efficient infrastructure use while supporting quality economic development.**

Needs & Policies

*Need: Alternative route to cross railroad tracks*

*Policy 9.1 Create options for a future railroad bypass.*

*Need: Improved roads*

*Policy 9.2 Produce a list of roads that need to be improved in Ben Hill County.*

*Need: More funding for road repair and maintenance*

*Policy 9.3 Identify alternative funding sources for road repair and maintenance.*

*Need: Continue to improve drainage (repair/replace) in the low-lying areas of the both the city and county.*

*Policy 9.4 Identify areas that need drainage improvement in both the county and city.*

## 7. Community Work Program

### Ben Hill County Report of Accomplishments Community Work Program 2021-2025

BEN HILL COUNTY										Accomplishments
PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Develop a page on the county website to promote the agricultural lands and products, and natural resources within the county	Staff Time	County	General Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x	Deleted because of lack of staff
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Continue to seek grant and loan opportunities for rehabilitation projects	Staff Time	County	CDBG SPLOST	2, 4	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
<b>LAND USE</b>										
Continue to enforce codes within the county to ensure the highest quality of land use	Staff Time	County	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Continue to update Zoning Ordinance	Staff Time	County SGRC	General Fund	3	x	x	x			Ongoing
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>										
Prepare and maintain an inventory of incentives, business programs, housing stock, and available sites to accommodate new businesses and business expansions, and provide the list on the county website	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	City and County Joint Service Funds	4	x	x	x			Deleted because of lack of staff
Develop a guidebook for development that describes the local development process and provides useful information to potential new businesses regarding zoning, site plan approval, permitting, and potential incentives	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	City and County Joint Service Funds	4	x	x	x			Deleted because of lack of staff
Approve and implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan through the coordinated efforts of all economic development organizations	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	City and County Joint Service Funds	4	x	x	x	x		Complete

<b>HOUSING</b>										
Continue to participate in community redevelopment and enforce codes	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Fund	3, 5	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Seek funding for housing redevelopment in blighted areas	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Fund	3, 5	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>										
Complete renovations for the auditorium and classroom building at Recreation Services complex (Monitor Building)	\$200,000	County, City	City, County, SPLOST (pending SPLOST approval)	3, 6	x	x	x			Complete
Implement airport improvements as listed in 5- year CIP for 2016-2020	\$4.66 million	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Airport Commission	Federal, State, and Local	3, 6	x	x	x			Ongoing
Construct a multi-use recreational facility, offices, gymnasium, and swimming pool	\$1.5 million	County, City	General fund, SPLOST (pending SPLOST approval)	3, 6	x	x	x			Ongoing
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>										
Continue to research opportunities for inter-governmental agreements with surrounding counties to better facilitate emergency services	Staff Time	County, City	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
<b>BROADBAND</b>										
Provide adequate high-speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses	\$10 million	County, City Public/Private Partnership	General Fund, SPLOST, grants, Private funding	8	x	x	x			Complete
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>										
Repair and resurface 82.1 miles of roads  Changed to: Repair and resurface 20 miles of roads	<del>\$8.2 million</del> Changed amount to \$6 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge at House Creek	\$1.5 million	County	General Fund,	9	x	x				Ongoing

			LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST <b>(TIA)</b>							
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge at Otter Creek	\$1.5 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST <b>(TIA)</b>	9	x	x				Ongoing
Replace Tulip Road Bridge	\$700,000	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x				Ongoing
Complete Peachtree Corridor realigning, widening, in intersection improvements  <b>Changed to: Complete Peachtree Corridor realigning and intersection improvements Funding source changed to just TSPLOST</b>	\$5.913 million  <b>Amount changed to: \$12 million</b>	County, City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST <b>(Changed to only TSPLOST)</b>	9	x	x	x	x		Ongoing
Construct Merrimac Drive sidewalks from Central Ave to Roanoke Drive  <b>Removed due to corridor is in the city limits</b>	\$250,000	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x				<b>Removed due to corridor is in the city limits</b>
Resurface Evergreen Road	\$523,500	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x	x			Complete
Resurface and widen Fitzgerald Perimeter Rd	\$5.165 Million  <b>Amount change to \$6 million</b>	County, City	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT <b>(TIA)</b>	9	x	x	x			Ongoing
Resurface Appomattox Road	\$415,400	County	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x	x			Complete

**City of Fitzgerald Report of Accomplishments Community Work Program 2021-2025**

CITY OF FITZGERALD										
PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	ROA
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Re-evaluate existing Tree Ordinance and develop a replanting strategy	Staff Time	City	General Fund	1, 2	x	x				Complete
Closeout MSW site at the landfill	Staff Time	City, County, Landfill Authority	Fees, Closeout Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Develop Synagogue Interpretive Center Project	\$100,000	City	General Funds Grants, SPLOST & others	2, 4	x	x	x	x	x	Deleted now privately owned
Complete renovation of Federal Building and integrate into Grand/Carnegie Complex	\$40,000	City	General Funds Grants, SPLOST	2, 4	x	x	x			Ongoing  There are water issues in the basement and possibly mold. Currently investigating this project.
<b>LAND USE</b>										
Develop and adopt a Tiny House Ordinance	\$3,000	City SGRC	General Fund	3, 5	x	x	x			Complete
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>										
Continue construction of Topiary Chicken (maintain Topiary Chicken as structure is complete)	\$200,000 (Changed to Staff Time)	City (Added Development Authority)	SPLOST (added General Fund)	1, 2, 4	x					Ongoing  Previous mayor started the project. Partnering with VSU and setting up focus groups. Wants to establish an outside committee and let the committee own the topiary and let the community decide what to do with it.
Develop a Downtown Master Plan	Staff Time	City	General Fund	2, 3, 4	x	x				Ongoing Working on restart of Main Street Program. Haven't had a Main Street Program since 2004.
Complete Monitor Enrichment Construction	\$880,000	City (moved to County section)	CDBG, SPLOST	2, 3, 4	x	x				Deleted because it's a county project
Continue to evolve and implement a Comprehensive Tourism	Staff Time	Convention and Visitor's Bureau	General Fund	4	x	x	x			Ongoing Deleted and moved to County work program

Master Plan (moved to County section)											
Partner w/ ABAC- Rural Studies program for meaningful curriculum	Staff Time	City	General Fund	4, 6	x	x	x				Deleted no longer have the partnership
Develop a Senior/Retiree Marketing Strategy	Staff Time	Convention and Visitor's Bureau	General Fund	2, 4, 5, 7	x	x					Deleted Staff changes have changed direction
<b>HOUSING</b>											
Utilize the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) programs for redevelopment or renovation of housing (adding to CHIP to Funding sources)	Staff Time	City SGRC	General Fund, CDBG, Grants, CHIP	2, 5	x	x	x	x	x		Ongoing
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>											
Review and implements improvements to ADA compliance plan by adding facilities annually	Staff Time	City	TAP Grant		x	x	x	x	x		Ongoing  Added sidewalks to Grand Theater . Applying for TAP Grant for more ramps, sidewalks, and playground equipment.
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>											
None											
<b>BROADBAND</b>											
Provide adequate High speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses	\$10,000,000	County, City, Public/Private Partnership	General Fund, SPLOST, grants, private funding	8	x	x	x				Complete
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>											
Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Sherman Street to Merrimac Drive	\$600,000	City	TSPLOST	6,9	x	x					Ongoing
Complete TAP Engineering for Main & Central Corridors and apply for construction funding	\$1,300,000	City	SPLOST TAP Grant	4, 6, 9	x	x	x	x	x		Ongoing  Applied and approved for funding for Phase II. Completed engineering work. Bids will be taken and decided in late Summer or early Fall.

Reconfigure Peachtree Road Complete Peachtree Corridor realigning and in intersection improvements <b>(Changed funding source to just TSPLOST)</b>	\$6,000,000	City	General Fund, SPLOST, and LMIG, <b>TSPLOST</b>	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Resurface Airport Rd.	\$74,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Resurface Evergreen Rd	\$523,500	City	General Fund TSPLOST	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
Resurface Monitor Drive	\$150,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing  Portion competed with SPLOST.
Resurface Frank Rd	\$74,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Resurface Norman Dorimny Drive	\$19,200	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Resurface JC Hunter Dr <b>(added SPLOST, Ben Hill County Schools)</b>	\$550,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST, <b>SPLOST, Ben Hill County School</b>	6,9	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing  Majority of work completed. A section of this Drive needs work.

## Ben Hill County 5-Year Community Work Program Update

(2026 - 2030)

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Provide support to Fitzgerald High School forest maintenance West Frazier to develop forest lab on the campus of College and Career Academy (new)	Staff Time	County/City	General Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Continue to seek grant and loan opportunities for rehabilitation projects	Staff Time	County	CDBG SPLOST	2	x	x	x	x	x
<b>LAND USE</b>									
Continue to enforce codes within the county to ensure the highest quality of land use	Staff Time	County	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
Continue to update Zoning Ordinance	Staff Time	County SGRC	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
Draft and adopt a short-term rental ordinance to regulate and manage the use of residential properties for short-term lodging (new)	Staff Time	County SGRC	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
PROJECT S	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
Complete Monitor Enrichment Construction (moved from city section)	\$880,000	County/City	CDBG, SPLOST	4	x	x			

Continue to evolve and implement a Comprehensive Tourism Master Plan (new)	Staff Time	Convention and Visitor's Bureau	General Fund	4	x	x	x		
Adopt Hotel/Motel tax in the unincorporated Ben Hill County (new)	Staff Time	Tourism Department, City/County, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	General Fund	4	x	x	x	x	x
Recruit businesses to Fitzgerald Municipal Airport (new)	Staff Time	General Fund	General Fund	4	x	x	x	x	x
Identify land to acquire and/or control to develop for future economic development expansion (new)	Staff Time	County, City, Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce	General Fund	4	x	x	x	x	x
<b>HOUSING</b>									
Continue to participate in community redevelopment and enforce codes	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Fund	5	x	x	x	x	x
Seek funding for housing redevelopment in blighted areas	Staff Time	County	CDBG, Grants, General Funds	5	x	x	x	x	x
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>									
Implement airport improvements as listed in 5- year CIP for 2016-2020	\$4.66 million	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Airport Commission	Federal, State, and Local	6	x	x	x		

Construct a multi-use recreational facility, offices, gymnasium, and swimming pool	\$1.5 million	County, City	General fund, SPLOST (pending SPLOST approval)	6	x	x	x		
Coordinate with the Hospital Authority to encourage use of the local hospital by Ben Hill County residents (new)	Staff Time	County, City, Hospital Authority	General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase two vehicles annually for the Sheriff's Office (new)	\$100,000	County	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase two motor graders (new)	\$200,000	County	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase a backhoe (new)	\$75,000	County	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase two dump trucks for the road department (new)	\$300,000	County	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Identify a location for housing backup generator for the hospital (new)	Staff Time	County, City, Hospital Authority	General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Identify funding sources to replace water cooler chiller at the hospital (new)	Staff Time	Hospital Authority	General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Create a plan to replace cast iron piping at the hospital (new)	Staff Time	Hospital Authority	General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Create a plan for unused property owned by hospital (new)	Staff Time	Hospital Authority	General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x

Gather information on how to better serve mental health patients within the county (new)	Staff Time	Hospital Authority	General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>									
Continue to research opportunities for inter-governmental agreements with surrounding counties to better facilitate emergency services	Staff Time	County, City	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x
Development Emergency Management procedures to maintain internet/radio infrastructure for essential facilities (new)	Staff Time	County, City, EMA	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x
Identify a location for Natural Disaster Shelter (new)	Staff Time	City, County, EMA, Hospital Authority	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x
Maintain contact information for Golden Boy Food and Polar Beverages for the purposes of Emergency Management (new)	Staff Time	City, County, EMA	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x
Support Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (WGTC) in creating new electrical lineman program (new)		City, County, Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority	General Funds	7	x	x	x	x	x
<b>BROADBAND</b>									

Continue providing adequate high-speed broadband access for local industries and commercial businesses (New)	\$2,000,000	County, City Public/Private Partnership	General Fund, SPLOST, grants, Private funding	8	x	x	x		
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PROJECT S	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>									
Repair and resurface 20 miles of roads	\$6 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge at House Creek	\$1.5 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Replace Bethlehem Church Road Bridge at Otter Creek	\$1.5 million	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Replace Tulip Road Bridge	\$700,000	County	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST, TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Complete Peachtree Corridor realigning and in intersection improvements (Changed funding source to just TSPLOST)	\$12 million	County, City	TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	
Resurface and widen Fitzgerald Perimeter Rd	\$6 Million	County, City	General Funds, SPLOST, GDOT	9	x	x	x		
Wiregrass (WGTC) partner with city, county, and Irwin County on widening Perry House Rd. to support Truck Driving Program (new)		City, County, WGTC	SPLOST, GDOT, and TSPLOST	7, 9	x	x	x	x	x

Complete backing pad for Wiregrass (WGTC) Truck driving program (new)		County, City Wiregrass	SPLOST, GDOT, TSPLOST	7.9	x	x	x	x	x
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**City of Fitzgerald 5 – Year Community Work Program Update**  
(2026-2030)

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Closeout MSW site at the landfill	Staff Time	City, County, Landfill Authority	Fees, Closeout Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x
Devise a plan to development the pond at the Milton "Buddy" Hopkins Nature Preserve into a public fishery, picnic area, kayaking destination, and walking trail. Partner with UGA and the DNR Resources to develop the plan, implementation, and funding (new)	Staff Time	City County	General Funds	2	x	x	x	x	x
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Complete renovation of Federal Building And integrate into Grand/Carnegie Complex	\$40,000	City	General Funds, Grants, SPLOST	2	x	x	x		
<b>LAND USE</b>									
Continue to update zoning maps as zoning changes take place (new)	Staff Time	City	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
Maintain Topiary Chicken	Staff Time	City, Development Authority	General Fund (Removing SPLOST from Funding Source)	4	x	x	x	x	x
Develop a Downtown Master Plan	Staff Time	City	General Fund	4	x	x			
Market the newly developed Peachtree Business Park	Staff Time	City, County, Development Authority	General Fund	4	x	x	x	x	x

and Forward Fitzgerald GRAD online to small and midsize business owners to attract new and existing businesses to the community (new)									
Actively market partnership with Mana Nutrition to promote Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County as the "Hunger Solution Capital of the World" (new)	Staff Time	City, County, Development Authority	General Fund	4	x	x	x	x	x
Create a plan for restocking the inventory of community controlled industrial land to ensure continued recruitment and retention of Industrial employers (new)	Staff Time	City, County, Development Authority	SPLOST, Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Development Authority, One Georgia Grant	4	x	x	x	x	x
Redevelop properties on the Grant/Sherman Corridor to promote small business growth and entrepreneurial starts (new)	Staff Time	City, County, Development Authority	SPLOST, Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Development Authority, One Georgia Grant	4	x	x	x	x	x
Implement partnerships and ideas that promote the advancement of initiatives such as Georgia FLEX and the Fitzgerald High School College and Career Academy (new).	Staff Time	City, County, Development Authority	SPLOST, Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Development Authority, One Georgia Grant	4	x	x	x	x	x

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**HOUSING**

Utilize the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) programs for redevelopment or renovation of housing	Staff Time	City SGRC	General Fund, CDBG, CHIP <i>(Removed GRANTS)</i>	5	x	x	x	x	x
Continue to utilize Georgia Tech housing study for Ben Hill and Fitzgerald (new)	Staff Time	City, County	General Fund	5	x	x	x	x	x

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Review and implement improvements to ADA compliance plan by adding facilities annually	Staff Time	City	TAP Grant	6	x	x	x	x	x
Utilize the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) programs for redevelopment or renovation of housing (new)	Staff Time	City SGRC	General Fund, CDBG,	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase new Fire Engine for FFD (new)	\$1.7 million	City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase four new Police Vehicles each year (new)	\$360,000	City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Upgrade Computer software use by the city departments (new)		City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Renovate the Public Works Building (new)	\$200,000	City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x

Purchase new equipment to maintain city streets (new)		City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase 2 preowned dump trucks (new)	\$140,000	City	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase a preowned Mini Excavator (new)	\$60,000	City	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase Camel Jet for maintaining sewer system (new)		City	SPLOST	6	x	x	x	x	x
Renew Lease for 2 backhoes (new)	\$2000	City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase used vehicles for city Fleet (new)	\$250,000	City	SPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Renovate terminal at the Ben County Airport (new)	\$135,000	City, County, Airport	SPLOST, TSPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase pumps for underpass (new)	\$500,000	City	SPLOST, TSPLOST, General Fund	6	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase backup generator for underpass pumps (new)	\$1,500,000	City		6	x	x	x	x	x
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>									
Improve public safety communications (new)	\$7,000,000	City, County	SPLOST, General Fund, Grants	7	x	x	x	x	x
Create a plan with the Chamber of Commerce to have Emergency Management Protocols (new)	Staff Time	City, County, Chamber	General Fund	7	x	x	x	x	x
<b>BROADBAND</b>									
Continue providing adequate high-speed broadband access for local industries and	\$2,000,000	County, City Public/Private Partnership	General Fund, SPLOST, grants, Private funding	8	x	x	x		

commercial businesses (New)									
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>									
Construct Sultana Drive (SR90) sidewalks from Sherman Street to Merrimac Drive	\$600,000	City	TSPLOST	9	x	x			
Complete TAP Engineering for Main & Central Corridors and apply for construction funding	\$1,300,000	City	SPLOST TAP Grant	9	x	x	x	x	x
Reconfigure Peachtree Road Complete Peachtree Corridor realigning and in intersection improvements <i>(Changed funding source to just TSPLOST Amount changed to \$12,000,000)</i>	\$12,000,000	City	TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	X
Resurface Airport Rd.	\$150,000 <i>(cost changed)</i>	City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface Monitor Drive	\$150,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, SPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface Frank Rd	\$74,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface Norman Dorimny Drive <i>(Cost Changed to \$36,000)</i>	\$36,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST	9	x	x	x	x	x
Resurface JC Hunter Dr. <i>(added SPLOST, Ben Hill County Schools)</i>	\$550,000	City	General Fund, LMIG, TSPLOST, SPLOST, Ben Hill County School	9	x	x	x	x	x

Resurface Terminal Drive (new)	\$70,000	City	SPLOST, TSPLOST, LMIG	9	x	x	x	x	x
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## 8. Economic Development Element

The 2022-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) under a grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, is hereby incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan to serve as the Economic Development Element for Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald.

The SGRC’s CEDS was designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The CEDS contains an analysis of the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, investment priorities, and funding sources.

As a performance-based plan, the CEDS plays a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the region’s unique advantages to maximize economic opportunities for its residents by attracting job-creating private investment. The CEDS is a regionally owned strategy that is the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with regional public- and private-sector participation. The CEDS sets forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the Southern Georgia region and clearly defines the measures of success.

The Southern Georgia CEDS gives an overview of the region, briefly describing the geography, population, economy, labor and workforce development and use, education, transportation access, environment, and regional resources. It reviews the state of the regional economy and provides a list of achievable goals and objectives for the region, a plan of action to ensure success, and performance measures used to evaluate the strategy’s successful development and implementation.

Policies, needs, opportunities, and projects drawn from the current comprehensive plans for each jurisdiction in the 18-county SGRC region were used extensively to develop the EDA Investment Priorities, CEDS Strategic Focus Areas, Goals and respective Action Plans. Furthermore, the CEDS was also used to provide guidance for developing the goals, opportunities, policies, and projects in this local Comprehensive Plan.

Goals, needs and opportunities, policies, and community work program projects related to economic development can be found in the “Economic Development” subsections of the relevant sections of this Comprehensive Plan (goals in Section 1, needs and opportunities in Section 2, policies in Section 6, and work program projects in Section 7).

Furthermore, included below are strategic focus areas, goals, and action plans from the regional CEDS that are strongly aligned with the current economic development goals of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald.

### **Strategic Focus Area # 1 - State of the Regional Economy**

- ❖ Promote economic development strategies that encourage entrepreneurship, support existing industries, attract new employers, and stimulate tourism.

Goals	Action Plan
<p><b>Create regional groups to take ownership of existing, underdeveloped industrial parks to build out infrastructure for industry</b></p>	<p>Identify existing industrial parks that could be considered regional</p>
	<p>Identify a funding source for infrastructure and ongoing maintenance</p>
	<p>Establish community collaboration or MOU for revenue sharing</p>

<b>Implement programs to foster entrepreneurship growth</b>	Teach the value of entrepreneurship at the elementary level
	Development of entrepreneurial strategies for identifying assets in the community
	Connect with community network
<b>Recruit and encourage agribusiness</b>	Identify commodities for agribusiness
	Develop product infrastructure for food processing
	Partner with agriculture community
<b>Infrastructure assessment</b>	Analyze infrastructure age, capacity, and availability
<b>Adequate staffing industries</b>	Seek out resources to assist employers in filling positions
<b>Land availability for new growth</b>	Identify 3 to 5 regional mega sites

**Strategic Focus Area # 2 - Transportation, Community Facilities, Infrastructure, & Broadband**

- ❖ Protect, expand, and enhance critical infrastructure and connectivity for existing and future community growth.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
<b>Expand natural gas service</b>	Pursue funding to improve existing infrastructure
<b>Develop more family event venues</b>	Work with GDECD tourism to develop regional strategy for local community venues to attract tourism dollars
<b>Pass T-SPLOST (TIA-2)</b>	Submit regionally significant transportation projects
<b>EV Stations</b>	Expand the network of charging stations in the region
<b>Create better connectivity between I-75 and I-95</b>	Widen corridors that have a positive regional impact
<b>Provide broadband to all unserved and underserved people throughout the region</b>	Pursue funding to increase broadband availability

**Strategic Focus # 3 - Education and Workforce Development**

- ❖ Facilitate the growth and development of an educated, skilled, prepared workforce by utilizing available programs and resources.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
<b>Start Career Education earlier in school system</b>	Recruit high school graduates for jobs with local industries
	Educate middle school students about the importance of careers in their home community
<b>Strong official partnership between school system, technical college, &amp; industries to address skills currently in demand and for future needs</b>	Identify responsible agency for facilitating and holding accountable the partnership
	Incentivize industry participation
<b>Increase labor force participation rate</b>	Better skills training
<b>Improve the quality of the workforce</b>	Target skills training to meet business and industry needs
<b>Increase accessibility to high-demand technical curriculum and programs</b>	Expand high-demand career education on high school and technical school campuses

**Strategic Focus # 4 - Population and Housing**

- ❖ Create an inviting sense of place through rural renewal and other strategies in order to retain population and to attract new members to our community.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
<b>Regional Housing Studies and cooperation</b>	Determine where the commuters are traveling from and whether or not there is a demand
<b>Regional recruitment</b>	Better marketing of regional assets and amenities
	Pool resources between the communities
<b>Increase housing stock</b>	Pursue funding for housing rehabilitation, reconstruction, and demolition in declining neighborhoods
	Strengthen code enforcement
	Develop incentives for construction of workforce housing
<b>Change mindset concerning multifamily affordable housing</b>	Analyze infrastructure age, capacity, and availability
<b>Limited Access to affordable workforce housing</b>	Seek out resources to assist employers in filling positions

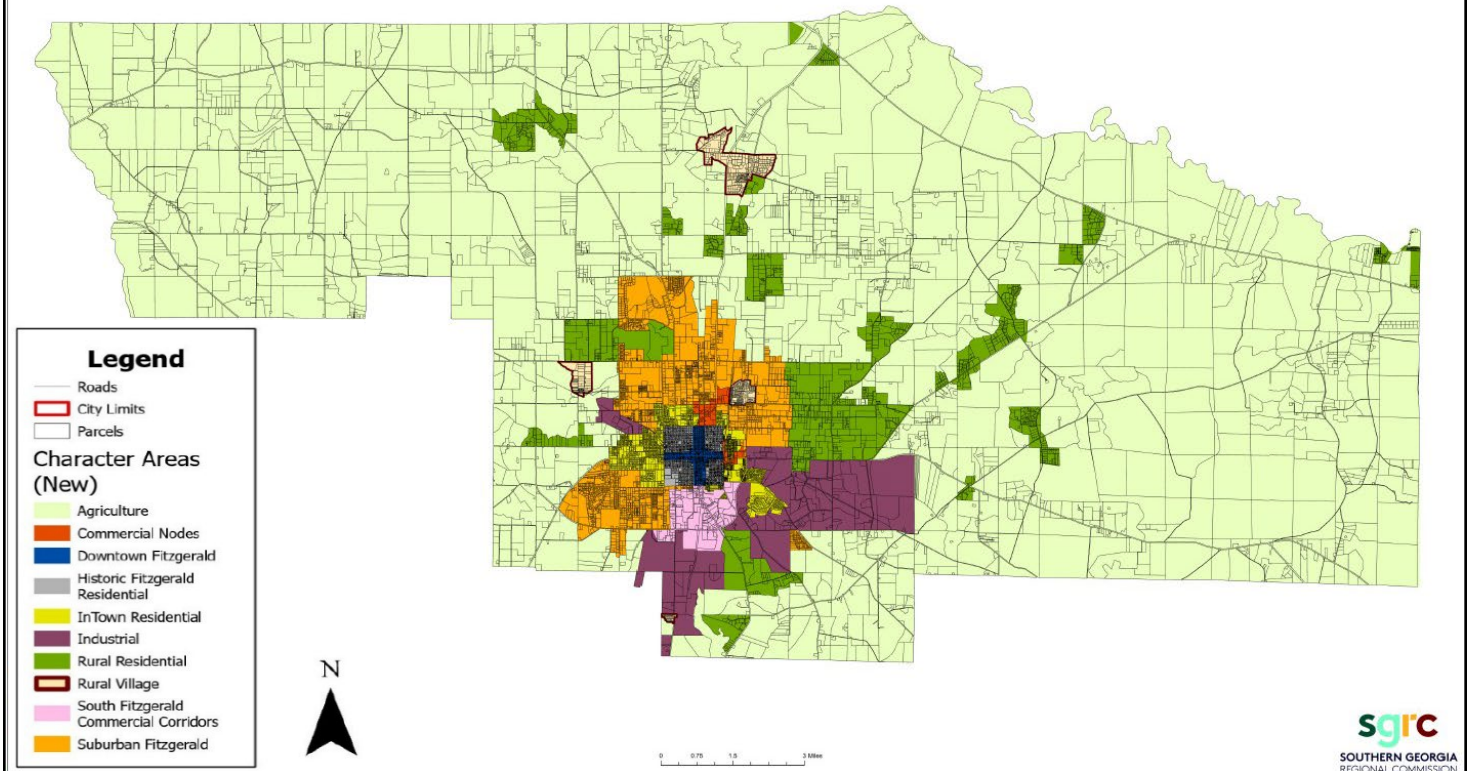
## 9. Land Use Element

### Character Areas

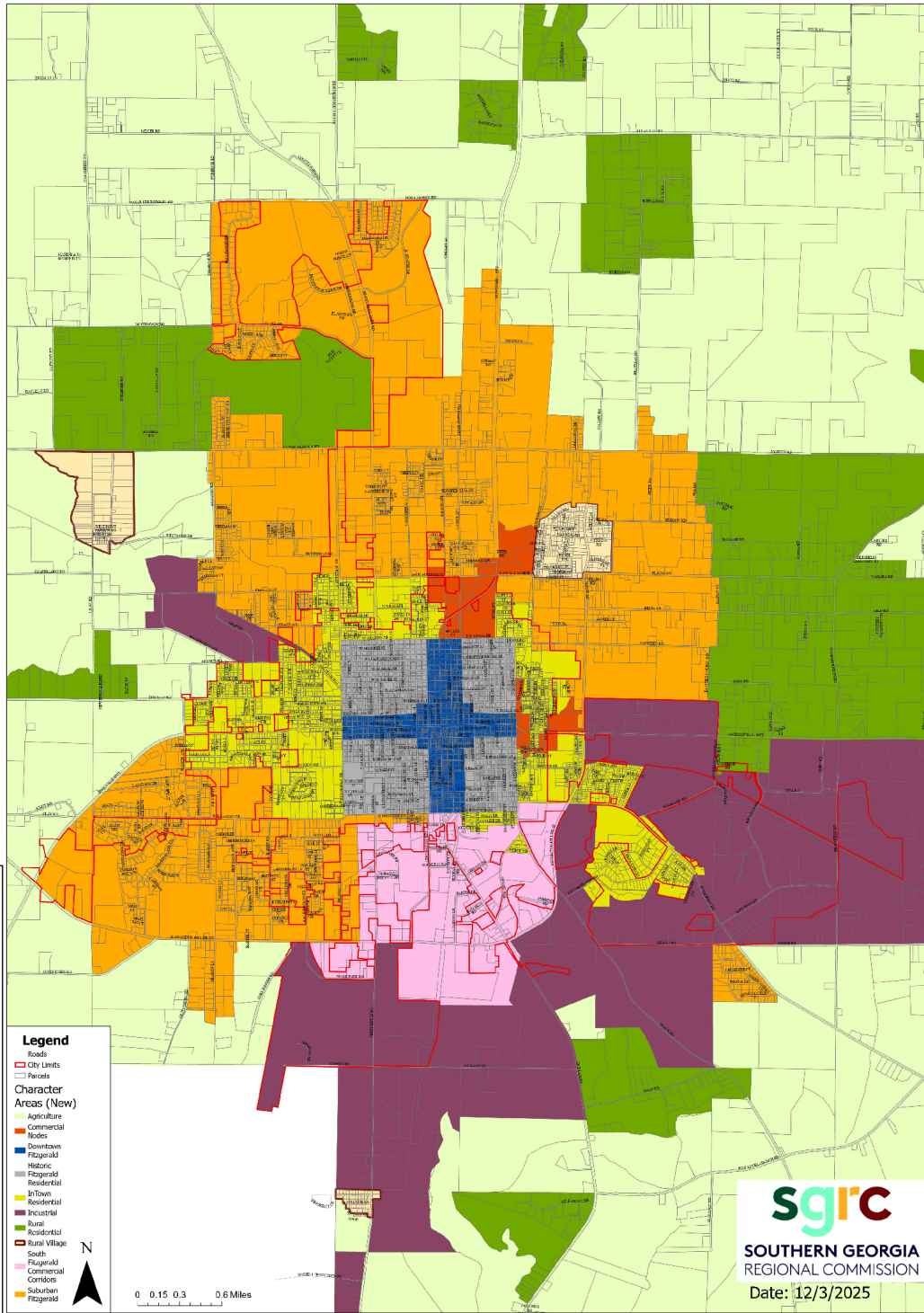
In keeping with State Minimum Planning Standards, every part of the Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Community was delineated into specific Character Areas. Character areas are intended to serve as guidance for future land use and land development. Each of the following character area narratives was developed based on stakeholder input, existing land uses, anticipated development, planned infrastructure improvements and expansions, and guidance found in the *State Planning Recommendations*. As with the Plan in general, these character area descriptions and goals should not be considered final. As the community gains a greater understanding of character areas' roles and values, their descriptions should be fine-tuned. Additionally, as the community continues to grow, specific character area depictions may need adjusting.

Each Character Area narrative has a unique **Description** stating either the existing or desired qualities for that area. (Please note the associated picture for each area represents the specific area's current state and should not be construed to necessarily represent the desired state, although this may be the case for some descriptions.) The stated **Development Strategy** should serve as a guide for all development and redevelopment in the Character Area. Adherence to these development strategies will ensure consistent and complementary growth, promoting a greater sense of place and overall improved quality of life. The listing of **Permitted Zonings** guides as to the type of land uses encouraged within each Character Area. While many of the differences between uses can be masked through site design and development standards, specific uses are incompatible with surrounding uses and should not be permitted. As required by the State, the **Quality Community Objectives** demonstrate the unique ideals established for each Character Area. While there is certainly a value to regional planning, planning on the neighborhood (or character area) level allows for greater implementation of specific objectives, which ultimately promotes an improved quality of life. The **Implementation Measures** are the specific activities or programs that could occur within each of the Character Areas. While the suggested list of measures may or may not currently exist in the Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Community, their implementation in appropriate areas would help achieve the established objectives and overall development strategy for each Character Area. In most cases, these measures should be considered joint efforts between the local government, development community, and citizens alike. The changes to the new character area map will change **Fitzgerald Municipal Airport Industrial, Old Rail Depot Industrial, and South Fitzgerald Commercial Corridors** have been combined to create one **Industrial** category.

## Ben Hill County Character Areas (Proposed)



# City of Fitzgerald Character Areas (Proposed)



**Legend**

- Roads
- ▭ City Limits
- ▭ Parcels

**Character Areas (New)**

- ▭ Agriculture
- ▭ Commercial Nodes
- ▭ Downtown Fitzgerald
- ▭ Historic Residential
- ▭ InTown Residential
- ▭ Industrial
- ▭ Rural Residential
- ▭ Rural Village
- ▭ South Fitzgerald Commercial Corridors
- ▭ Suburban Fitzgerald

**Legend**

- Roads
- ▭ City Limits
- ▭ Parcels

**Character Areas (New)**

- ▭ Agriculture
- ▭ Commercial Nodes
- ▭ Downtown Fitzgerald
- ▭ Historic Residential
- ▭ InTown Residential
- ▭ Industrial
- ▭ Rural Residential
- ▭ Rural Village
- ▭ South Fitzgerald Commercial Corridors
- ▭ Suburban Fitzgerald

**sgirc**  
 SOUTHERN GEORGIA  
 REGIONAL COMMISSION  
 Date: 12/3/2025

## CHARACTER AREAS

### *AGRICULTURE CHARACTER AREA*



#### Description

Agriculture character area designation in Ben Hill County is intended for those areas outside of the urban area which is associated with agricultural farm operations and related activities, forestry, natural resource conservation, groundwater recharge areas, and very low-density residential development accessory to agricultural or farm operations of varying sizes.

#### Predominant Land Use

Land uses are agriculture and related activities, forestry, conservation, groundwater recharge areas, and very low-density residential development.

#### Development Strategy

Preserve farming and conservation options as a viable and vital part of the Ben Hill County industry by maintaining very low-density residential development primarily accessory to farm operations and right-to-farm principles. The use of conservation easements to protect environmentally sensitive areas should be encouraged.

#### Permitted Zoning Districts

G-F – General Farming R-R –  
Rural Residential R-1, R-1A -  
Residential

#### Quality Community Objectives

Economic Prosperity Resource



## Management Sense of Place

### **Implementation Measures**

*Policy 1.1 **Marketing.** City, County, Chamber and Economic Development coordinate to ensure that the region has knowledge of agricultural and natural resources provided in Ben Hill County.*

*Policy 1.2 **Marketing.** Use social media platforms to promote agricultural lands and products and the county's natural resources.*

*Policy 1.4 Plan to have a study completed in order to find the best practices to manage water in Ben Hill County*

*Policy 4.7 Encourage local farmers to work with entrepreneurs to start a Farmers' Market.*

### **Conservation Easements**

Encourage owners of important properties—especially those in environmentally sensitive areas, identified in the local greenspace plan, or designated for agricultural use—to consider tools like conservation easements or selling development rights to protect their land from future development. A conservation easement allows a landowner to donate their development rights to a qualified conservation group or government agency in exchange for potential tax benefits. Similarly, selling development rights lets landowners receive compensation while ensuring their property remains protected. In both cases, giving up the development rights provides permanent protection, preserving the land as greenspace or farmland for future generations.

### **Creating a Network of Greenways and Trails**

Landscaping and buffer requirements should ensure that planting areas help screen unattractive land uses, create visual and sound barriers between incompatible properties, enhance community appearance, and protect water quality in rivers and streams. Communities may also want to adopt a tree protection ordinance to complement these standards. Poorly planned landscaping can harm the environment by requiring excessive water and pesticides or by interfering with sewers, sidewalks, and vehicle access. Promote environmentally responsible landscaping that uses low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, and native or non-invasive plants—and ensures the right tree is planted in the right place

### **Water Resource Management**

Managing and protecting water supply and watersheds; providing safe drinking water and wastewater treatment services.

### **Storm Water Management**

Mitigating the impact of development on watersheds, aquatic habitat, streamflow and geometry, and water quality.

### **Preserve Agriculture Land Use**

Help contain sprawl development by preserving agricultural lands in your community. This may be accomplished by combining the following:

- 1) Require an agricultural buffer for all new non-agricultural development adjacent to designated agricultural land. This will minimize future potential conflicts between ag and non-ag land uses.
- 2) When a land use permit or building permit is applied, and the land is abutting, or within 1,000 feet of

agricultural land, the applicant will be required to sign a waiver. The waiver shall indicate that the applicant understands that agricultural land exists near the subject property and that a farming operation is ongoing adjacent to his existing or proposed use.

3) Develop a program to assist local farmers in selling their products or otherwise profiting from their farms. These include Agri-tourism, farmers' markets, farm festivals, and related activities.

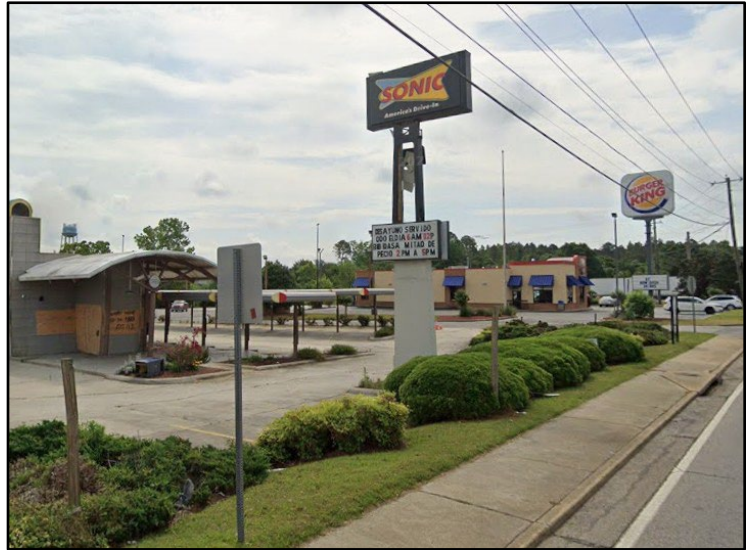
## SOUTH FITZGERALD COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS CHARACTER AREA

### Description

The Commercial character area consists mainly of larger-scale commercial uses, which are less compatible with residential areas due to the size of lots and buildings located on major roadways and heavy traffic volumes created by the businesses' regional draw.

### Development Strategy

The focus should be on reinforcing stability by encouraging maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for the infill development of new, architecturally compatible buildings. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided.



### Predominant Land Use

These areas include a wide variety of both established and newer commercial uses.

### Permitted Zoning Districts CC -

Community Commercial G-B -

General Business P – Professional

WLI - Wholesale-Light Industrial

### Quality Community Objectives

Economic Prosperity

Resource Management

Efficient Land Use Sense of

Place

### Implementation Measures

*Policy 4.1 Create a plan to renovate and find occupancy for vacant buildings*

*Policy 4.3 Create a plan for Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce to better aid startup businesses*

*Policy 4.4 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a hotel in Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County*

*Policy 4.5 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a new grocery store for Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County residents*

*Policy 4.6 Work with property owners in downtown to encourage more new businesses in downtown.*

*Policy 4.7 Encourage local farmers to work with entrepreneurs to start a Farmers' Market.*

### Conservation Easements



Encourage owners of priority properties—such as those in environmentally sensitive areas or designated for agricultural use in the comprehensive plan—to consider conservation easements or selling development rights to protect their land from future development.

A conservation easement allows landowners to donate their development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency in exchange for potential tax benefits. Likewise, selling development rights provides compensation while ensuring the land remains protected.

Both tools permanently remove development rights, helping preserve the property as greenspace or farmland for generations to come.

### **Greyfield Redevelopment**

Provide support and/or incentives to encourage the redevelopment of declining or abandoned shopping centers and strip malls. These areas already have existing infrastructure and typically avoid the environmental cleanup challenges associated with brownfields. With the right investment, greyfields can be transformed into walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments that revitalize the surrounding community.

### **Brownfield Redevelopment**

To help encourage the redevelopment of abandoned Brownfields—old industrial sites that may be contaminated—your community can create a program that includes:

1. Identify all Brownfield sites. Start by making a list of every abandoned or underused industrial property in the community.
2. Assess each site. Determine what kinds of contamination may be present and estimate the cost of cleanup or containment.
3. Provide financial support or guidance. Cleanup can be expensive, so offer incentives or connect property owners with available funding sources to help make redevelopment possible.

This approach helps turn problem properties into productive community assets.

## COMMERCIAL NODES CHARACTER AREA

### Description

The Commercial Node character area consists mainly of a designated area, that serves as a focal point for businesses, retail, offices, and services, acting as a localized hub for community needs, ranging from small neighborhood shops to larger regional centers, strategically placed for accessibility and economic activity.



### Development Strategy

The focus should be on reinforcing stability by encouraging maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for the infill development of new, architecturally compatible buildings. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided.

### Predominant Land Use

These areas include a wide variety of both established, newer commercial uses and small residential area

### Permitted Zoning Districts CC -

Community Commercial G-B -

General Business P – Professional

WLI - Wholesale-Light Industrial R-6,

R-9 Residential

### Quality Community Objectives

Economic Prosperity

Resource Management

Efficient Land Use Sense of

Place

### Implementation Measures

*Policy 4.1 Create a plan to renovate and find occupancy for vacant buildings*

*Policy 4.3 Create a plan for Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce to better aid startup businesses*

*Policy 4.4 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a hotel in Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County*

*Policy 4.5 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a new grocery store for Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County residents*

*Policy 4.6 Work with property owners in downtown to encourage more new businesses in downtown.*

*Policy 4.7 Encourage local farmers to work with entrepreneurs to start a Farmers' Market.*

## Conservation Easements

Encourage owners of priority properties—such as those in environmentally sensitive areas or designated for agricultural use in the comprehensive plan—to consider conservation easements or selling development rights to protect their land from future development.

A conservation easement allows landowners to donate their development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency in exchange for potential tax benefits. Likewise, selling development rights provides compensation while ensuring the land remains protected.

Both tools permanently remove development rights, helping preserve the property as greenspace or farmland for generations to come.

Both tools permanently remove development rights, helping preserve the property as greenspace or farmland for generations to come.



## Greyfield Redevelopment

Provide support and/or incentives to encourage the redevelopment of declining or abandoned shopping centers and strip malls. These areas already have existing infrastructure and typically avoid the environmental cleanup challenges associated with brownfields. With the right investment, greyfields can be transformed into walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments that revitalize the surrounding community.

## Brownfield Redevelopment

To help encourage the redevelopment of abandoned Brownfields—old industrial sites that may be contaminated—your community can create a program that includes:

1. Identify all Brownfield sites. Start by making a list of every abandoned or underused industrial property in the community.
2. Assess each site. Determine what kinds of contamination may be present and estimate the cost of cleanup or containment.
3. Provide financial support or guidance. Cleanup can be expensive, so offer incentives or connect property owners with available funding sources to help make redevelopment possible.

This approach helps turn problem properties into productive community assets.

## *DOWNTOWN FITZGERALD CHARACTER AREA*

### **Description**

This is the area within the City of Fitzgerald where the public, institutional, and commercial development originally occurred due to its location along major transportation corridors and at a major intersection. The Downtown Fitzgerald area is located along US Highways 129 and 319 at the intersection of GA Highway 107 and GA Highway 90. As the original site of city development, this area contains most of the county's major cultural and historic buildings and sites and requires special attention to ensure its preservation.



### **Development Strategy**

Preserve, restore, and reuse historic buildings. Improve the environment for private investment and development. Expand green and civic spaces. Mix land uses and controls building typology. Implement a balance of transportation options and design.

### **Predominant Land Use**

City services, entertainment, commercial recreation, traditional Main Street businesses, mixed-use buildings, business support services, urban neighborhoods, and traditional older, stable neighborhoods.

### **Permitted Zoning Districts D-C –**

Downtown Commercial C-C -  
Community Commercial G-B -  
General Business

P - Professional

MR - Multi-Family Residential

### **Quality Community Objectives**

Economic Prosperity  
Efficient Land Use Sense  
of Place

### **Implementation Measures**

*Policy 4.1 Create a plan to renovate and find occupancy for vacant buildings*

*Policy 4.3 Create a plan for Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce to better aid startup businesses*



*Policy 4.4 Encourage Development Authority to active recruit a hotel in Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County*

*Policy 4.6 Work with property owners in downtown to encourage more new businesses in downtown.*

### **Economic Development Strategy**

Create a local economic development strategy by working together with key partners—such as local business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Development Authority. Talk with these stakeholders to understand the skills your local workforce already has, what kinds of businesses or industries the community needs, and what challenges may be holding back business growth.

### **Flexible Parking Standards**

Update land development regulations to reduce overly strict parking requirements and prevent the creation of unnecessary parking spaces. This can include lowering the number of required spaces or allowing shared parking arrangements between neighboring businesses or facilities.

### **Greyfield Redevelopment**

Provide support and/or incentives to encourage the redevelopment of declining or abandoned shopping centers and strip malls. These areas already have existing infrastructure and typically avoid the environmental cleanup challenges associated with brownfields. With the right investment, greyfields can be transformed into walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments that revitalize the surrounding community.

### **Brownfield Redevelopment**

To help encourage the redevelopment of abandoned Brownfields—old industrial sites that may be contaminated—your community can create a program that includes:

1. Identify all Brownfield sites. Start by making a list of every abandoned or underused industrial property in the community.
2. Assess each site. Determine what kinds of contamination may be present and estimate the cost of cleanup or containment.
3. Provide financial support or guidance. Cleanup can be expensive, so offer incentives or connect property owners with available funding sources to help make redevelopment possible.

This approach helps turn problem properties into productive community assets.

## HISTORIC FITZGERALD RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA



### Description

Located within the historic city 16-by-16-block square, this area comprises predominantly older residential structures dating back to the 1930s and beyond. The houses, buildings, and properties of these areas are often of historical and architectural significance and are located on small lots in a grid pattern.

### Development Strategy

Protect existing historic structures through the use of incentives and requirements for review and approval of modifications. Promote the preservation of deteriorating historic structures through rehabilitation programs. Ensure neighboring uses do not diminish the area's historic character through setback and buffering requirements for new development.

### Predominant Land Uses

Residential, with some smaller schools and churches mixed in, and some very limited neighborhood commercial.

### Permitted Zoning Districts

R-6, R-9 - Residential  
MR – Multiple Residential CC –  
Community Commercial

### Quality Community Objectives

Sense of Place Housing  
Options

### Implementation Measures

*Policy 2.1 Organize a plan to maintain and rehabilitate the historical and cultural resources in Ben Hill County*

### Rehabilitation Codes

Adopt building codes with standards appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes help keep costs down, thereby encouraging rehabilitation of older properties.

### **Promote infill housing**

Incentivize and reward revitalization of abandoned properties and demolish vacant unsuitable housing to construct new homes.

### **Promote clean up and improved maintenance of existing properties and buildings**

Consider working with Code Enforcement and the City Police to encourage clean-up and develop incentive and rewards programs to foster voluntary participation.

### **Creating a Network of continuous sidewalks**

This will increase the safety of neighborhoods and provide a more coherent look to the neighborhood.

## **Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Guidelines**

### **Sign regulations**

Language should be reviewed in the Zoning Ordinance to regulate all exterior signs and their lighting. These standards should help manage the visual impact of signage by guiding the location, size, and overall appearance of advertising signs.

### **Tree protection ordinance**

Require new developments to preserve a meaningful number of existing trees, especially large and mature ones. Communities can also choose to protect special “heritage” trees that have unique or important characteristics.

## INDUSTRIAL CHARACTER AREA

### Description

This area consists of predominantly industrial uses, with some public/institutional and agricultural mixed in. Of particular note is the historic Evergreen Cemetery location at Evergreen and Ben Hill Drive within this character area. Overall, the site serves as the City's primary industrial land. The Ocilla Highway, Frank Road, Evergreen Road, and the old railroad lines run through the area.



### Development Strategy

Encourage development, redevelopment, and infill within the area to ensure it continues to be a vital part of the local economy. Continue to provide adequate infrastructure and public services to the site to help local businesses succeed while minimizing adverse impacts on neighborhoods and the environment. Protect and preserve the historic Evergreen Cemetery.

### Predominant Land Uses



Agricultural Industries, Construction Services, Manufacturing, Millwork, Motor Freight Transportation and, Warehousing, Wholesale Trades, and other similar uses.

**Permitted Zoning Districts** WLI – Wholesale-Light Industrial  
HI – Heavy Industrial

G-F – General Farming  
P – Professional

**Quality Community Objectives**  
Economic Development

### Implementation Measures

*Policy 4.3 Create a plan for Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce to better aid startup businesses*



### Targeted Industry Analysis

Strategically choose which types of business to recruit and support using relevant community characteristics to determine which will be the best fit for local job needs, workforce skills, or to complement existing businesses. Also, consider growth rates, for various industries, in the region, the

state, and the U.S.

### **Access Control Measures**

To ensure neighborhoods and commercial properties are interconnected to allow for greater traffic circulation and increased public safety.

### **Design guidelines**

Evaluates buildings' appropriateness, properties, and land use to create an architecturally and physically cohesive area of a specified character.

### **Flexible parking standards**

Adjust local development regulations to eliminate overly strict parking requirements and prevent the creation of unnecessary parking spaces. This can include lowering the number of required spaces or allowing neighboring businesses and facilities to share parking areas.

### **Infill Development Program**

Infill development means building new homes, businesses, or facilities on vacant or underused land within an already developed area—rather than expanding outward into undeveloped land.

Examples include:

- Turning an empty lot in a neighborhood into new housing
- Redeveloping an old shopping center into mixed-use space
- Building new offices on a previously unused parcel in a downtown area

The goal is to make better use of existing infrastructure, reduce sprawl, revitalize older areas, and strengthen communities without pushing development farther out.

### **Landscaping and buffer requirements and guidelines**

Require landscaped areas to help screen unattractive land uses, create visual and sound buffers between conflicting uses, improve community appearance, and protect water quality in rivers and streams. Communities should also consider adopting a tree protection ordinance to support these goals.

Poor landscaping choices can harm the environment by needing too much water or chemicals, or by creating problems with sewers, sidewalks, and driveways. It's important to promote environmentally friendly landscaping—using low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, and native or non-invasive plants—and to make sure each tree is planted in the right place.

### **Sign regulations**

Language should be reviewed in the Zoning Ordinance to regulate all exterior signs and their lighting. These standards should help manage the visual impact of signage by guiding the location, size, and overall appearance of advertising signs.

### **Streamlined Development Permitting**

Updating the local development review process can make it easier to get needed approvals, especially for new or innovative projects. This may include removing unnecessary steps, combining steps, or providing a clear step-by-step guide to help applicants understand the process.

### **Brownfield Redevelopment**

To help encourage the redevelopment of abandoned Brownfields—old industrial sites that may be contaminated—your community can create a program that includes:

1. Identify all Brownfield sites. Start by making a list of every abandoned or underused industrial property in the community.
2. Assess each site. Determine what kinds of contamination may be present and estimate the cost of cleanup or containment.
3. Provide financial support or guidance. Cleanup can be expensive, so offer incentives or connect property owners with available funding sources to help make redevelopment possible.

This approach helps turn problem properties into productive community assets.

### **Reuse of Greyfields**

Greyfield redevelopment can be supported through programs like the State’s Redevelopment Fund. This fund provides local governments with flexible financial assistance for projects that aren’t eligible for typical public grants or loans. It helps finance public–private partnerships that spur investment in commercial, downtown, and industrial redevelopment—projects that might not move forward without this support.

Provide support and/or incentives to encourage the redevelopment of declining or abandoned shopping centers and strip malls. These areas already have existing infrastructure and typically avoid the environmental cleanup challenges associated with brownfields. With the right investment, greyfields can be transformed into walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments that revitalize the surrounding community.

### **Utility relocation**

Relocating overhead utilities out of view either below ground or at the rear of lots. This is intended to improve the appearance of commercial strip corridors that typically include tangles of overhead power and telephone lines stretching across and along the roadways.

### **Stormwater Management**

Create and carry out a local stormwater management plan that includes:

1. Incentives for low-impact development (LID): These techniques manage stormwater on-site by allowing it to soak into the ground or evaporate instead of flowing into traditional drainage systems. Examples include rain gardens, permeable pavers, bioretention areas, rain barrels, infiltration swales, tree box filters, green roofs, narrower streets, and disconnected downspouts.
2. Limits on impervious surfaces: Set maximum percentages for hard surfaces like pavement and rooftops, especially in areas that drain directly into water supply streams or reservoirs, to help reduce runoff and protect water quality.

### IN TOWN RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA



#### Description

These areas are located within the City of Fitzgerald, with small- to medium-size residential lots in a more suburban setting. They typically include single-family residential, and the density ranges from low to medium with predominantly single-family homes and very few commercial uses.

#### Development Strategy

These areas focus on reinforcing the neighborhoods' stability by encouraging higher homeownership rates and maintenance or upgrading existing structures. Minimize owners using possible rental homes as short-term rental.

#### Predominant Land Use

The predominant use is residential, with some smaller schools and churches and some very limited neighborhood commercial.

**Permitted Zoning Districts:** R-6, R-9, R-15, R-20 - Residential R-R – Rural Residential

MR – Multiple Residential  
C-C - Community Commercial

#### Quality Community Objectives

Efficient Land Use Local  
Preparedness Sense of  
Place Housing Options

#### **Implementation Measures**

*Policy 5.1 Plan to update zoning ordinance as community needs change.*

*Policy 5.2 Encourage developers to build a variety of housing types.*

*Policy 5.3 Develop plans to create more rental opportunities throughout the county.*

### **Rehabilitation Codes**

Follow building codes with standards appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes help keep costs down, thereby encouraging the rehabilitation of older properties

#### **Promote infill housing**

Develop incentive and rewards programs to utilize abandoned properties and demolish vacant unsuitable housing to construct new homes.

#### **Promote clean up and improved maintenance of existing properties and buildings**

Consider working with Code Enforcement and the City Police to encourage clean-up and develop incentive and rewards programs to foster voluntary participation.

#### **Creating a Network of continuous sidewalks**

This will increase the safety of neighborhoods and provide a more coherent look to the neighborhood.

### **Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Guidelines**

#### **Sign regulations**

Language should be reviewed in the Zoning Ordinance to regulate all exterior signs and their lighting. These standards should help manage the visual impact of signage by guiding the location, size, and overall appearance of advertising signs.

#### **Tree protection ordinance**

Require new developments to preserve a meaningful number of existing trees, especially large and mature ones. Communities can also choose to protect special “heritage” trees that have unique or important characteristics.

## RURAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA



### Description

These rural land areas are likely to face development pressure for large-lot, low-density residential subdivisions. Such developments typically consist of sizeable residential lot subdivisions and open space. The majority of the Rural Residential areas can be found on the City of Fitzgerald's outer periphery, along major collector roads leading into the city. The density ranges from low to medium, with primarily single-family homes and very few commercial uses mixed in.

### Development Strategy

Provide connecting green space and recreational areas to maintain the area's low-density rural character, emphasizing rural residential rather than agricultural activities. Encourage development closer to the city limits as oppose to further out in the county where water services are more difficult and costly to provide.

### Predominant Land Use

The predominant uses are agricultural and large-lot single-family residential.

### Permitted Zoning Districts

G-F – General Farming R-R  
– Rural Residential  
R-1, R-1A, R-6M - Residential C –  
Community Commercial

### Quality Community Objectives

Sense of Place Efficient  
Land Use Housing Options

### Implementation Measures

*Policy 5.1 Plan to update zoning ordinance as community needs change.*

*Policy 5.2 Encourage developers to build a variety of housing types.*

*Policy 5.3 Develop plans to create more rental opportunities throughout the county.*

**Rehabilitation Codes**

Follow building codes with standards appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes help keep costs down, thereby encouraging the rehabilitation of older properties.

**Agricultural Buffers**

To minimize future potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and protect public health, safety, and general welfare, all new non-agricultural development adjacent to designated agricultural land shall be required to provide an agricultural buffer.

**Agriculture Use Notice and Waiver**

The use of Notices and Waivers to residential and potential residential landowners in this area will help to minimize potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses.

**Cluster Development**

Provides for small lot residential development in agricultural, forestry, and rural residential districts. Local governments that wish to consider the preservation of open space more extensively will want to discuss land trusts and provide conservation easements.

**Conservation Easements**

An arrangement where private landowners donate their property's development rights to a qualified conservation organization or government agency in exchange for tax savings. This permanently protects the property from development and thereby ensures that it remains as open space or farmland.

## RURAL VILLAGE CHARACTER AREA

### Description



The “rural villages” in Ben Hill County are small, and most historic communities have developed in the unincorporated county away from Fitzgerald. These are compactly developed areas with varied lot sizes that generally share a historical background, are formed around a natural or cultural feature, or grew around an old intersection. Each community has been given a name (usually of historical origins) and label on the associated map.



### Development Strategy

Promote these historic communities' continued existence with good communication, coordination, and active protection and guidance. Encourage the development of small, local businesses that will meet the communities' needs so that the residents will not have to make long, frequent vehicular trips. Ensure adequate enforcement of existing codes to prevent the decline of any of these “villages.”

### Predominant Land Use

The predominant uses are agricultural and single-family residential.

### **Permitted Zoning Districts**

R-R – Rural Residential

R-1, R-1A, R-9, R-22 - Residential MR -  
Multiple Residential

MHP – Manufactured Housing Park P –  
Professional

CC - Community Commercial

### **Quality Community Objectives**

Efficient Land Use Local

Preparedness Sense of

Place Housing Options

### **Implementation Measures**

*Policy 5.1 Plan to update zoning ordinance as community needs change.*

*Policy 5.2 Encourage developers to build a variety of housing types.*

*Policy 5.3 Develop plans to create more rental opportunities throughout the county.*

### **Housing**

Encourage the construction of quality and affordable housing for all age and economic groups.

### **Codes and Ordinances**

Review the regulations that permit substandard structures in the city and the county to assure that they will be maintained or demolished.

### **Community Businesses**

Encourage the location of businesses supporting a neighborhood to attract quality housing.

## *SUBURBAN FITZGERALD CHARACTER AREA*



### **Description**

These areas are predominantly smaller-lot residential areas outside the historic city, mainly in unincorporated Ben Hill County, with newer and denser development than in the surrounding agricultural areas and older residential communities. These areas are characterized by traditional subdivision development on lots ranging from 10,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet. Typical Suburban Neighborhood areas are located at the north, northeast, and southwest edges of the City of Fitzgerald.

### **Development Strategy**

The suburban neighborhood areas should be encouraged to develop at lower densities as master-planned developments, emphasizing connectivity and walkability. Also, care should be taken to control growth and ensure that any development will occur concurrently with the provision of necessary infrastructure and equitable distribution of project-created infrastructure costs to the new developments. The areas should provide for interconnectivity between subdivisions and encourage alternate modes of transportation. These areas should also provide open space within and outside subdivisions to offer additional green space and passive and active recreation areas to serve the residents.

### **Predominant Land Use**

The predominant land use is low- to medium-density residential with scattered strip commercial development and civic or institutional uses such as convenience stores, waste collection sites, and churches.

### **Permitted Zoning Districts**

R-R – Rural Residential

R-1, R-1A, R-22 – Rural Residential  
M-R – Multiple Residential

P – Professional

CC – Community Commercial

### **Quality Community Objectives**

Efficient Land Use Local

Preparedness

Housing Options  
Transportation  
Options

**Implementation Measures**

*Policy 5.1 Plan to update zoning ordinance as community needs change.*

*Policy 5.2 Encourage developers to build a variety of housing types.*

*Policy 5.3 Develop plans to create more rental opportunities throughout the county.*

**Housing**

Encourage the construction of quality and affordable housing for all age and economic groups.

**Rehabilitation Codes**

Encourage the construction of quality and affordable housing for all age and economic groups.

**Community Businesses.**

Encourage the location of support businesses supporting a neighborhood to attract quality housing.

## *BEN HILL COUNTY ZONING DISTRICTS*

**G-F General Farming:** The purpose of this district is to permit agricultural uses, to encourage the maintenance of the rural countryside, to preserve forests and other undeveloped lands away from areas of population growth, and to allow residents to retain their traditional ways of life. The district's preferred land use is agricultural, either active in crops or passive in forest management or pasture lands. The G-F district should be utilized as a land use designation where more intensive land use is unlikely to occur soon. The district's requirements are designed to encourage a rural character's maintenance until more intensive development is feasible.

**R-R Rural Residential:** This district's purpose shall be to allow residential development on lots of less than three acres in appropriate areas designated in the Comprehensive Plan in unincorporated Ben Hill County. With Health Department approval, such districts may use individual water supply and sewerage disposal systems. The minimum gross floor area per dwelling unit in this district shall be a minimum of 800 square feet.

**R-1 Single Family Residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of one acre (43,560 square feet), said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of these uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. With health department approval, such districts may use individual water supply and sewerage disposal systems. Minimum gross floor area per dwelling unit in this district shall be a minimum of 1,200 square feet.

**R-22 Single-Family Residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of twenty-two thousand (22,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. Consideration for designation for the district requires a minimum of public water service.

**M-R Multiple Residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide orderly development of higher density residential areas for one, two, three and multifamily dwellings, with minimum lot sizes of 6,000 square feet, said areas being protected from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment. Consideration for designation for this district requires a minimum of public water and public sewer service.

**M-H-P Manufactured Housing Park:** This district's purpose is to provide for the development of property that is suitably located and planned for manufactured housing park use. Property developed in this district is to remain in single ownership for rental or leasing purposes only. Manufactured housing parks shall be developed only in strict accordance with the Manufacturing Housing Park provisions of this ordinance.

**P Professional:** The purpose of this district shall be to create an area in which residential, professional, educational, and institutional uses can be compatibly mixed while maintaining a healthful living environment for the residents of the district and at the same time preventing the development of blight and slum conditions. The minimum lot size in this district shall be 6,000 square feet.

**C-C Community Commercial:** The purpose of this district is to provide for and protect areas that can accommodate a variety of sales and services that are commonly needed by the Ben Hill County citizens.

**G-B General Business:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide for and encourage the proper grouping and development of uses which include a wide variety of sales and services that will best accommodate the needs of the county and the traveling public in order to reduce highway traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and blight along the public streets and highways of the county.

**WLI Wholesale-Light Industrial:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect areas for those wholesale and light industrial uses which do not create excessive noise, odor, smoke, dust, and which do not possess other objectionable characteristics which might be detrimental to surrounding neighborhoods, or to the other uses permitted in the district.

**H-I Heavy Industrial:** This district's purpose shall be to provide and protect areas for those industrial uses that cannot comply with the WLI District's regulations.

*R-15, R-9, R-6, and R-6-M zoning classifications/districts were created by previous Ben Hill County Zoning ordinances and currently exist on the Official Zoning Maps of Ben Hill County, Georgia. As of the adoption of this resolution, and into the future, no parcels may be zoned in accordance with these districts/classifications as they no longer exist in Ben Hill County's future land use plan.*

**R-15 single-family residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of 15,000 square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**R-9 single-family residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of 9,000 square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**R-6 residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide residential areas with a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet, said areas being protected from uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**R-6-M residential:** The purpose of this district is to create an area that, in addition to conventional housing, allows mobile homes as a matter of right in a conventional subdivision. Lots in this district must have a minimum of 6,000 square feet. These districts shall be protected from the encroachment of incompatible uses which are detrimental to a sound residential environment.

## CITY OF FITZGERALD ZONING DISTRICTS

**G-B General Business:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide for and encourage the proper grouping and development of uses which include a wide variety of sales and services that will best accommodate the needs of the city and the traveling public in order to reduce highway traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and blight along the public streets of the city.

**C-C Community Commercial:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect convenient areas for community shopping facilities consisting of a wide variety of sales and service.

**N-C Neighborhood Commercial:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect convenient areas for neighborhood shopping facilities consisting of sales and services oriented to the adjacent neighborhoods.

**D-C Downtown Commercial:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide a higher density commercial development which will include a wide variety of sales which should locate in the city's historical Central Business District.

**P Professional:** The purpose of this district shall be to create an area in which residential, professional, educational, and institutional uses can be compatibly mixed while maintaining a healthful living environment for the residents of the district and at the same time preventing the development of blight and slum conditions. The minimum lot size in this district shall be six thousand (6,000) square feet.

**WLI Wholesale Light-Industrial:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect areas for those wholesale and light industrial uses which do not create excessive noise, odor, smoke, dust, and which do not possess other objectionable characteristics which might be detrimental to surrounding neighborhoods, or to the other uses permitted in the district.

**H-I Heavy Industrial:** The purpose of this district shall be to provide and protect areas for those industrial uses which cannot comply with the requirements of the WLI district.

**M-R Multiple Residential:** The purpose of this district is to provide orderly development of higher density residential areas for one (1), two (2), and multifamily dwellings, with minimum lot sizes of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**MHP MOBILE HOME PARK:** The purpose of this district is to provide for the development of property that is located and planned for mobile home use. Property developed in this district is to remain under single ownership for rental purposes only. Mobile home parks shall be developed only in strict accordance with the mobile home park provisions of this ordinance.

**R-6 RESIDENTIAL:** The purpose of this district is to provide residential areas with a minimum lot size of six thousand (6,000) square feet, said areas being protected from uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**R-6-M RESIDENTIAL:** The purpose of this district is to create an area that, in addition to conventional

housing, allows mobile homes as a matter of right in a conventional subdivision. Lots in this district must have a minimum of six thousand (6,000) square feet. These districts shall be protected from the encroachment of incompatible uses which are detrimental to a sound residential environment.

**R-9 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of nine thousand (9,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**R-15 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of those uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**R-20 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL:** The purpose of this district is to provide single-family residential areas with minimum lot sizes of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet, said areas being protected from the depreciating effects of small lot development and excessive density and from the encroachment of these uses which are incompatible to a desirable residential environment.

**Tiny house village (THV):** The purpose of this district is to provide orderly development of property and to create a district that allows tiny houses as a matter of right. All parcels zoned as such shall be surveyed with individual lots with a minimum size of two thousand (2,000) square feet. Each lot may be occupied by a single tiny house.

# APPENDICES



**Board of County Commissioners  
Ben Hill County, Georgia**

212 E. Central Avenue  
Fitzgerald, Georgia 31750  
Phone: (229) 426-5100  
<https://www.benhillcounty-ga.gov>

Hal Wiley, Chairman  
Hope Harmon, Vice-Chair  
Bennie Calloway, Member  
John Mooney, Member  
Daniel Cowan, Member  
Hampton Raulerson, County Manager  
Pamela D. Turner, County Clerk  
Nick Kinsley, County Attorney  
Nathan Fountain, Road Superintendent

January 15, 2026

Southern Georgia Regional Commission 1937  
Carlton Adams Drive  
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Ben Hill County has completed an update of its Comprehensive Plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in the development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan(s) covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Pamela Turner, County Clerk, at (229) 426.5100 or [pamela.turner@benhillcounty-ga.gov](mailto:pamela.turner@benhillcounty-ga.gov).

Sincerely,

Hal Wiley, Chairman Ben Hill  
County

**JASON L. HOLT**  
Mayor  
mayorholt@fitzgeraldga.org

**KATHY A. YOUNG**  
City Administrator  
kyoung@fitzgeraldga.org

## City of Fitzgerald

City Hall  
302 East Central Avenue  
Fitzgerald, Georgia 31750

January 6, 2026

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
1937 Carlton Adams Drive  
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Ben Hill County has completed an update of its Comprehensive Plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in the development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan(s) covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Cristian Evans, City Clerk, at (229) 426.5060 or [cevans@fitzgeraldga.org](mailto:cevans@fitzgeraldga.org).

Sincerely,



Jason L. Holt, Mayor  
City of Fitzgerald

Telephone (229) 426-5060 • FAX (229) 426-5066 • [www.fitzgeraldga.org](http://www.fitzgeraldga.org)

**Kick-Off for Comprehensive Plan  
Comprehensive Plan Update  
For Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald  
County Commissioners Meeting Room  
321 Dewey McGlamry Road  
Fitzgerald, GA 31750**

A public hearing will be held at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, in the Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners, located at 321 Dewey McGlamry Road, Fitzgerald Georgia 31750, to announce the beginning of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update for Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald. The purpose of this hearing is to brief the community on the process to be used to develop the Comprehensive Plan, announce opportunities for public participation in the development of the plan, and obtain input on the proposed planning process.

Persons with special needs related to disability access or foreign language should contact the County Clerk's Office at the Ben Hill County Commission Office at (229) 426-5100. Persons with hearing disabilities may consider using the Georgia Relay Service at 1-800-255-0135.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please get in touch with the Ben Hill County Clerk at (229) 426-5100, or Marcus L. McConico at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (229) 633-5277 or email: [mmcconico@sgrc.us](mailto:mmcconico@sgrc.us)

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
 2025 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR  
 BEN HILL COUNTY AND THE CITY OF FITZGERALD  
 Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing Kickoff  
 Date: April 8, 2025

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Deanna Griffin	Ben Hill County	(339)426-5100	deanna.griffin@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Pamela Turner	Ben Hill County	(339)426-5100	pamela.turner@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Cristal Vickers	Hall Booth Smith	229 382 0515	N Kinsley @ hallboothsmith.com
Hampton Raulerson	Ben Hill County	912-390-2080	hampton.raulerson@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Hope Harmon	Ben Hill County	229-425-8776	hope.harmon@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Hal Wiley	Ben Hill County	229-425-3400	hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Bennie Calloway	" "	229 425-8100	callbj52@yahoo.com
JUDITH WILLIAMS MOONEY	" "	229 426 5100	

Kickoff Hearing



Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
 2025 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR  
 BEN HILL COUNTY AND THE CITY OF FITZGERALD  
 Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing Kickoff  
 Date: June 24, 2025

Stakeholder 2 meeting

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Marcus McCawico	SGRC		mccawico@wiregrass.us
Jake Hughes	Ben Hill County		jake.hughes@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Hampton Rawlerson	" "		
Keith Newell	WGTC	229-468-2287	Keith.newell@wiregrass.edu
Paige Ryan	DME	229-457-9484	pryan@dominy.medical.org
Melissa Dork	Fitz Ben Hill Chamber	229-925-9357	melissa.dorke@fitzgeraldchamber.org
Hal Wiley	Ben Hill County	(229) 425-3400	hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Jason Dunn	FBHCDA	229-349-5476	jdunn@fbhcda.net
Ronald Jordan	DME	229-424-8473	RJordan@dominymedicalcenter.com

Stakeholder meeting 2

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
 2025 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR  
 BEN HILL COUNTY AND THE CITY OF FITZGERALD  
 Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder Meeting (Fitzgerald)  
 Date: July 7, 2025

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
James Reynolds	Fitzgerald Police	(229) 424-4009	jreynolds@fitzgeraldga.org
William Smallwood	Fitz PD	229-325-4799	wsmallwood@fitzgeraldga.org
W. David Walker	Fitz Public Works	229-424-4004	dwalker@fitzgeraldga.org
Will Hammond	Airport	229-425-2104	whammond@fitzgeraldga.org
Russell Searcy	Fitz. Fire Dept.	229-425-5085	rsearcy@fitzgeraldga.org
Keith Morris	Fitz/BH DLS	229-424-5445	kmorris@fitzgeraldga.org
Jarox Dunn	FBCTDA	229-349-5476	jdunn@fbctda.net
KATHY A YOUNG	CITY OF FITZGERALD	426-5060	kyoung@fitzgeraldga.org
Marcus McConico	SGRC		mconico@sgrc.us

Stakeholder meeting 3

# PUBLIC NOTICE

A public hearing to review and transmit the Joint 2026 Ben Hill County and City of Fitzgerald Comprehensive Plan Update to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review will be held at 6:00 p.m. on January 6th, 2026 at the Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners, located at 321 Dewey McGlamry Road, Fitzgerald, Georgia 31750. The purpose of the public hearing is to inform the community about the planning process and provide an opportunity to review and comment on the Comprehensive Plan Update. The public is invited to attend and participate. Copies of the draft Comprehensive Plan Update are available for public review at the County Commission office and at the Fitzgerald City Hall, and for download at the SGRC website: <http://www.sgrc.us/>.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please contact the Ben Hill County Clerk at (229) 426-5100 or Marcus L. McConico at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, at (229) 333-5277 or [mmcconico@sgrc.us](mailto:mmcconico@sgrc.us).

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
 2025 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR  
 BEN HILL COUNTY AND THE CITY OF FITZGERALD  
 Comprehensive Plan Update  
 Date: Jan 6, 2026

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Deprise Shelton	BHC Board of Commissioners	229-426-5100	deprise.shelton@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Pamela Turner	BHC BOE	770-416-5100	pamela.turner@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Hampton Ranterson	BHC BOE	" "	
Jake Hughes	BHC EMA	229-426-5149	jake.hughes@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Bennie Colbecky	BHC Board	229-425-8810	callbj52@yahoo.com
Daniel Cowan	BHC Board	229-425-5499	dcowan@benhillcounty-ga.gov
Hope Harmon	BHC BOARD	229-425-8776	hope.harmon@benhillcounty-ga.gov
James William Mowrey	BHC Commissioner	229-426-7511	
Nick Kinsley	County Attorney	229-382-0515	nkinsley@hallboallsmith.com
Marcus McConico	SGRC		mumconico@sgrc.us

Transmittal Public Hearing Sign-In Sheet

BEN HILL COUNTY

2026-06

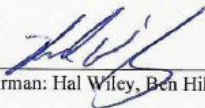
**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT  
2026 JOINT BEN HILL COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

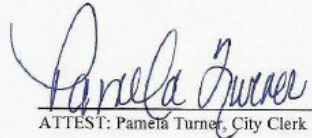
**WHEREAS**, the Ben Hill County has completed the 2026 Joint Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald Comprehensive Plan Update.

**WHEREAS**, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective January 1, 2013.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that Ben Hill County does hereby adopt the 2026 Joint Ben County and the City of Fitzgerald, Comprehensive Plan Update.

Adopted this 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026

  
Chairman: Hal Wiley, Ben Hill County

  
ATTEST: Pamela Turner, City Clerk

RESOLUTION NO. ~~826-001~~

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2026 JOINT UPDATE TO THE JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE CITY OF FITZGERALD, GEORGIA AND BEN HILL COUNTY, GEORGIA; TO PROVIDE FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fitzgerald, Georgia, ("City") seeks to maintain a current comprehensive plan that reflects the goals of the City; and

**WHEREAS**, representatives of the City and Ben Hill County, Georgia, have met and completed the proposed update to the Joint Comprehensive Plan; a copy of which is attached hereto; and

**WHEREAS**, said update was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective January 1, 2013;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Council for the City of Fitzgerald, Georgia, as follows:

**SECTION 1:** That the 2026 Joint Update to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of the City of Fitzgerald, Georgia, and Ben Hill County, Georgia, is hereby adopted and that the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Fitzgerald is hereby updated and amended as shown therein.

**SECTION 2:** Effective date. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its final approval.

**SECTION 3:** In the event that any provision or portion of this resolution shall be deemed unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining portion shall remain in full force and effect.

**SECTION 4:** Any portion of any resolution in conflict with this resolution is hereby repealed.

DATE:

February 9, 2026

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

"YES"

9

"NO"

0

"ABSTAIN"

0

APPROVED:

MAYOR

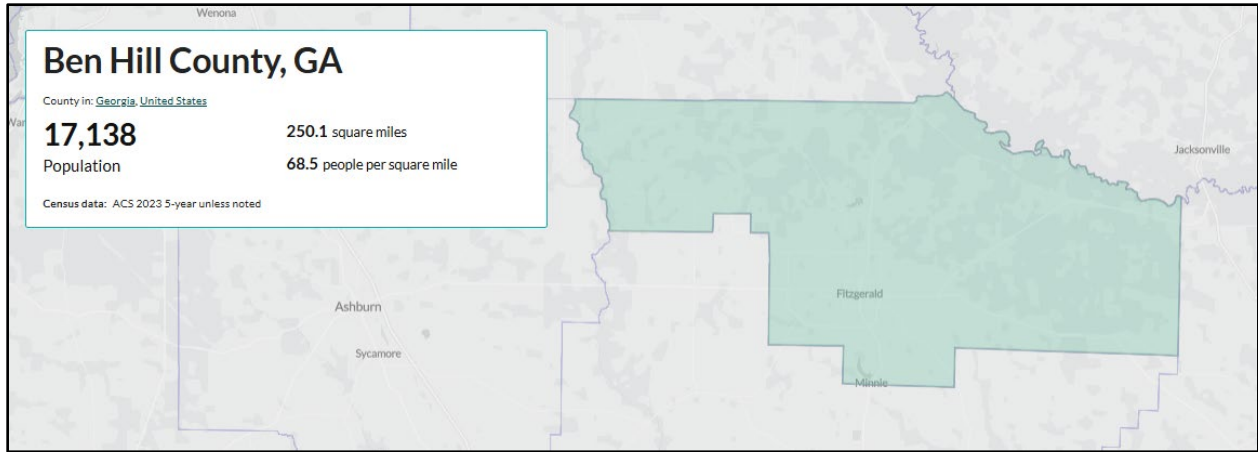
ATTEST:

CLERK



*Steering Committee*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Email</b>
Hampton Raulerson	Ben Hill county Manager	<a href="mailto:hampton.raulerson@benhillcounty-ga.gov">hampton.raulerson@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Jack Hughes	Ben Hill County EMA	<a href="mailto:jake.hughes@benhillcounty-ga.gov">jake.hughes@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Brandy Elrod	City of Fitzgerald Tourism, Arts & Culture Director	
Keith Newell	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	
Tim Allmond	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	
Hal Wiley	Ben Hill County Chairman	<a href="mailto:hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov">hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Jeff Lewis	Fitzgerald Utilities	
Tom Calhoun	Fitzgerald Utilities	
Whitney Justice	City of Fitzgerald Assistant Community Development Director	<a href="mailto:wjustice@fitzgeraldga.org">wjustice@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Jason Dunn	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Development Authority Director	<a href="mailto:jasondunn@fbcda.net">jasondunn@fbcda.net</a>
Melissa Dark	Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Chamber of Commerce Director	<a href="mailto:melissa.dark@fitzgeraldchamber.org">melissa.dark@fitzgeraldchamber.org</a>
Hal Wiley	Ben Hill County Chairman	<a href="mailto:hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov">hal.wiley@benhillcounty-ga.gov</a>
Jason Holt	Mayor of Fitzgerald	<a href="mailto:mayorholt@fitzgeraldga.org">mayorholt@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Kathy A. Young	City Administrator	<a href="mailto:kyoung@fitzgeraldga.org">kyoung@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Emily Ray	City of Fitzgerald	
Keith Morris	DLS	
James Reynolds	Fitzgerald PD	
Tony Tucker	Building Inspector	<a href="mailto:ttucker@fitzgeraldga.org">ttucker@fitzgeraldga.org</a>
Holley Lee	Dorminy Medical Center/PR Marketing Director	
David Walker	City of Fitzgerald Planning and Zoning Administrator / Project Manager	<a href="mailto:hlee@dorminymedical.org">hlee@dorminymedical.org</a>



Ben Hill County – Demographics - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US13017-ben-hill-county-ga/>

Income

**\$23,099**

Per capita income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$39,525

about half the amount in United States: \$43,289

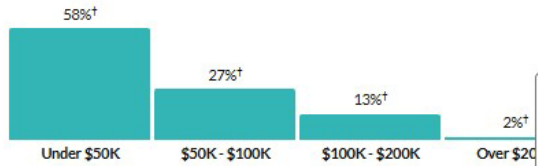
**\$39,081**

Median household income

about half the amount in Georgia: \$74,664

about half the amount in United States: \$78,538

Household income



Over \$200K less than a f Georgia: 11 about 10 pe United State † Margin of e of total value

Poverty

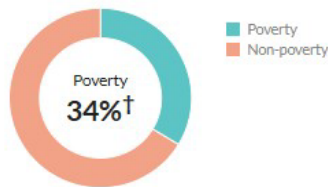
**25.7%**

Persons below poverty line

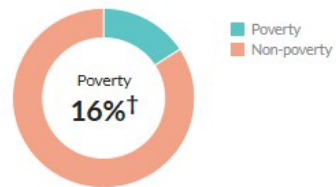
nearly double the rate in Georgia: 13.5%

more than double the rate in United States: 12.4%

Children (Under 18)



Seniors (65 and over)



Transportation to work

**16.1** minutes

Mean travel time to work

about three-fifths of the figure in Georgia: 28.3

about three-fifths of the figure in United States: 26.6

Means of transportation to work



\* Universe: Workers 16 years and over

Ben Hill County – Economics - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US13017-ben-hill-county-ga/>

**Households**

**7,162** ±246

Number of households

Georgia: 4,008,013 ±9,372

United States: 127,482,864 ±208,633

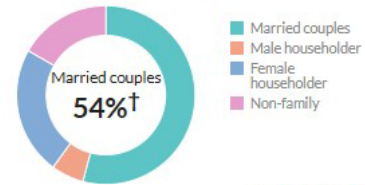
**2.4**

Persons per household

about 90 percent of the figure in Georgia: 2.6

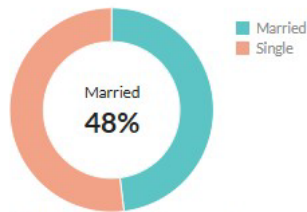
about 90 percent of the figure in United States: 2.5

**Population by household type**



Show data / Embed

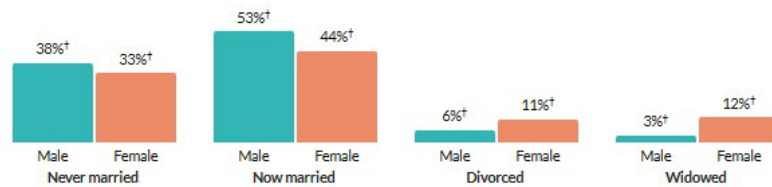
**Marital status**



\* Universe: Population 15 years and over

Show data / Embed

**Marital status, by sex**



Show data / Embed

**Fertility**

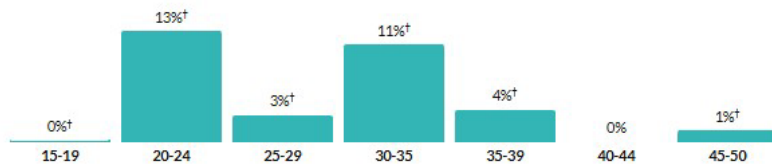
**4.9%**

Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

a little less than the rate in Georgia: 5.2%

a little less than the rate in United States: 5.2%

**Women who gave birth during past year, by age group**



\* Universe: Women 15 to 50 years

Show data / Embed

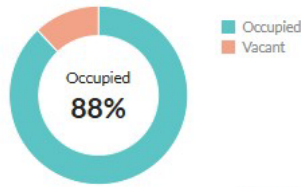
Ben Hill County – Families - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US13017-ben-hill-county-ga/>

Units & Occupancy

**8,135**  
Number of housing units

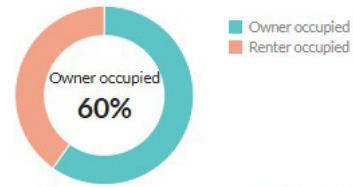
Georgia: 4,483,873  
United States: 142,332,880

Occupied vs. Vacant



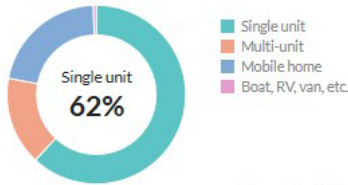
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Ownership of occupied units



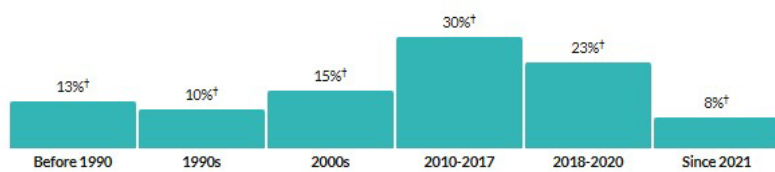
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Types of structure



Show data / Embed

Year moved in, by percentage of population



Show data / Embed

Value

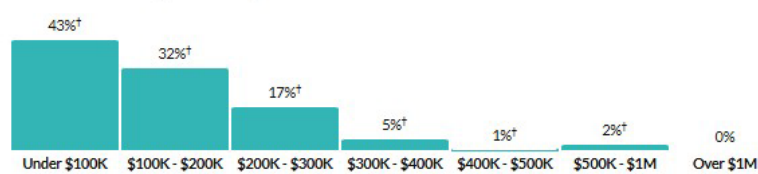
**\$114,600**

Median value of owner-occupied housing units

about two-fifths of the amount in Georgia:  
\$272,900

about two-fifths of the amount in United States:  
\$303,400

Value of owner-occupied housing units



Show data / Embed

Ben Hill County – Housing - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US13017-ben-hill-county-ga/>

Educational attainment

**84.3%**  
High school grad or higher

a little less than the rate in Georgia:  
89%

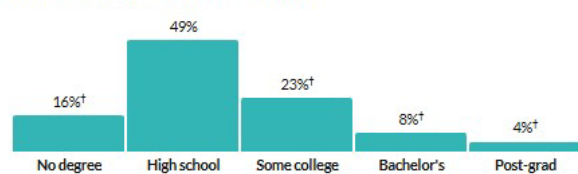
a little less than the rate in United States:  
89.4%

**12.1%**  
Bachelor's degree or higher

about one-third of the rate in Georgia:  
34.2%

about one-third of the rate in United States:  
35%

Population by highest level of education

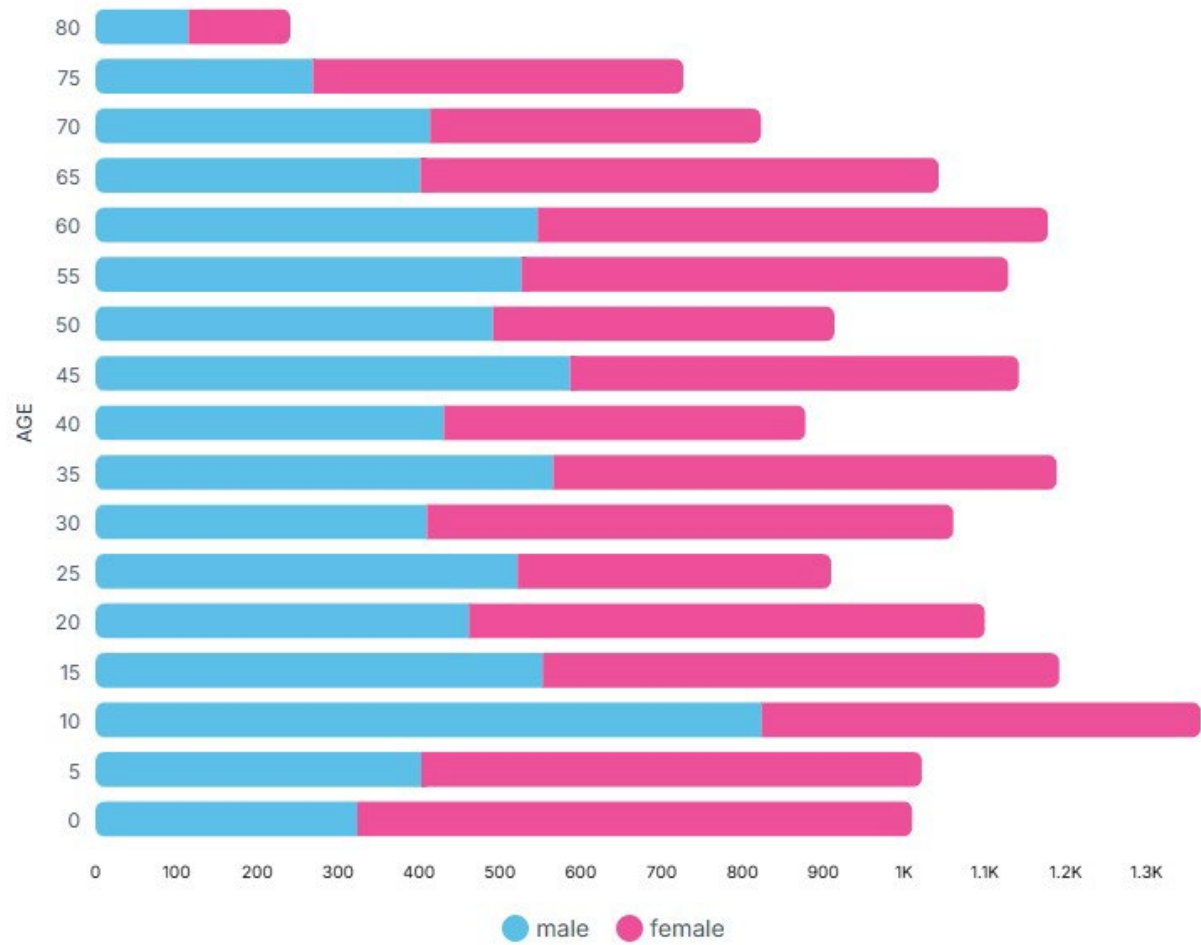


\* Universe: Population 25 years and over

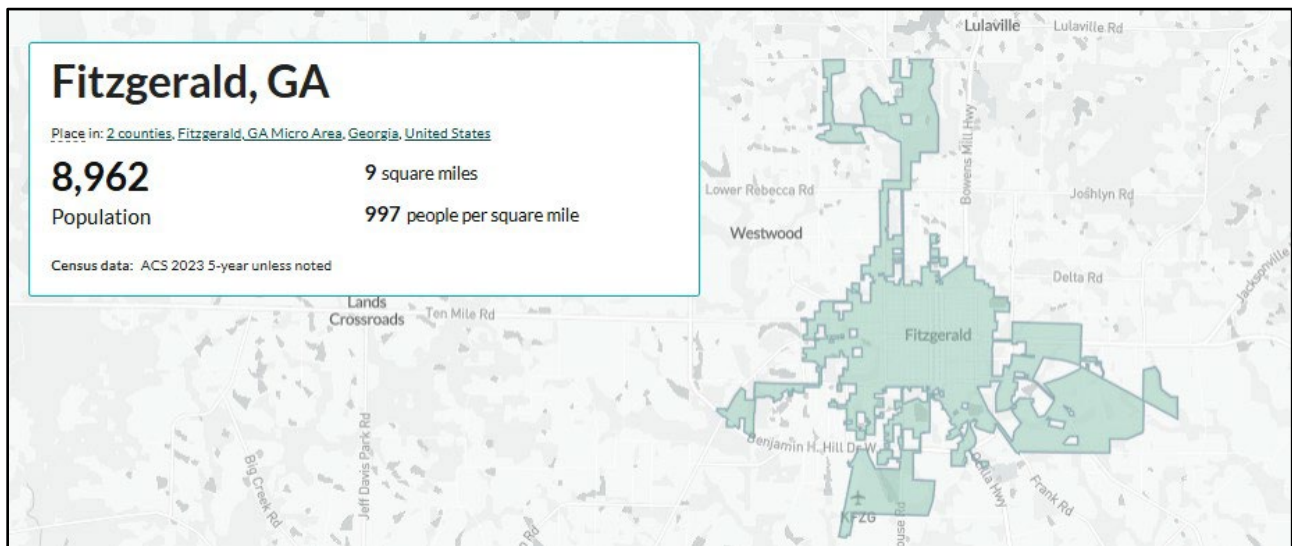
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Ben Hill County - Educational Attainment - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US13017-ben-hill-county-ga/>

### Population By Age

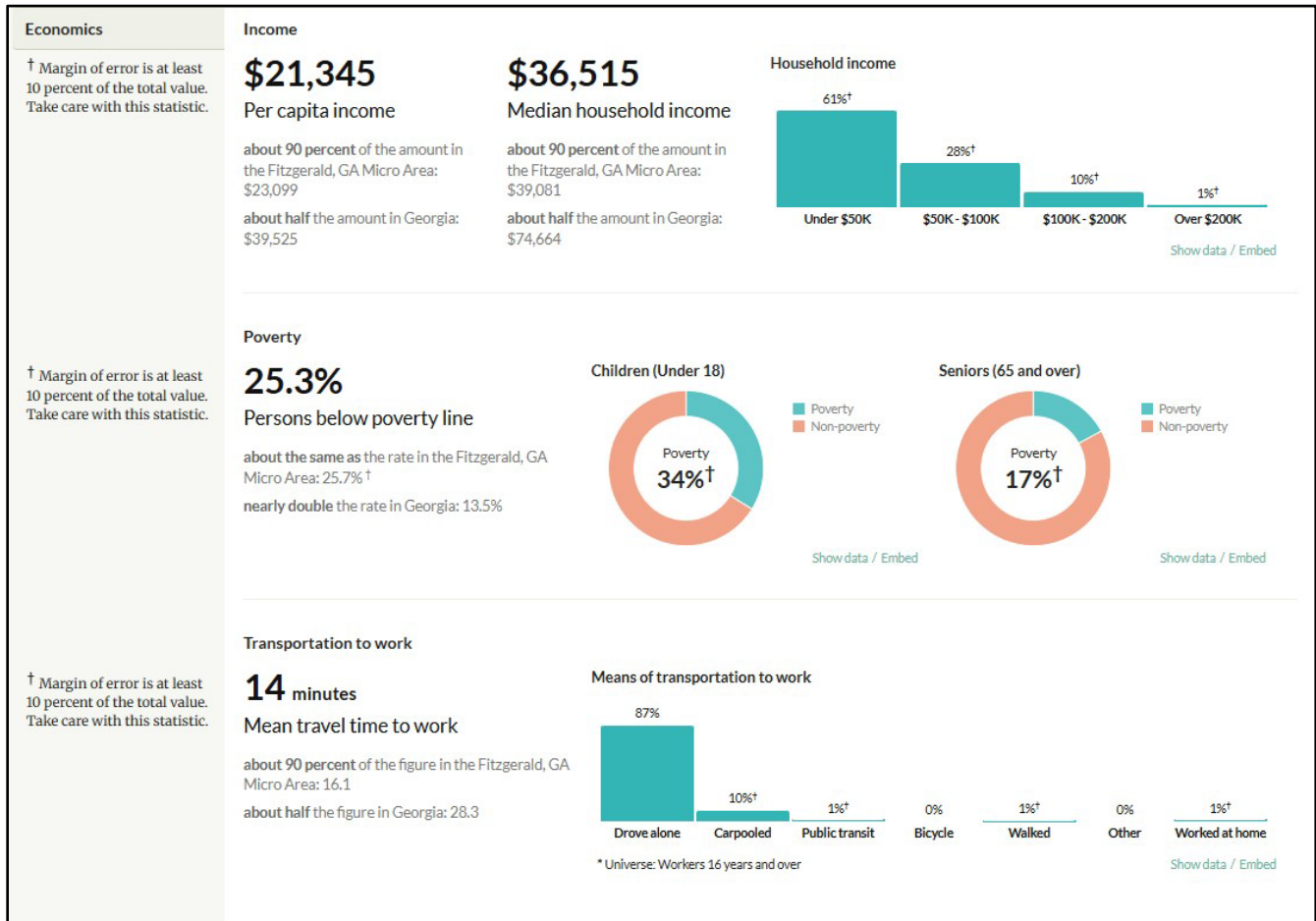


Ben Hill population by Age - <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/georgia/ben-hill-county>

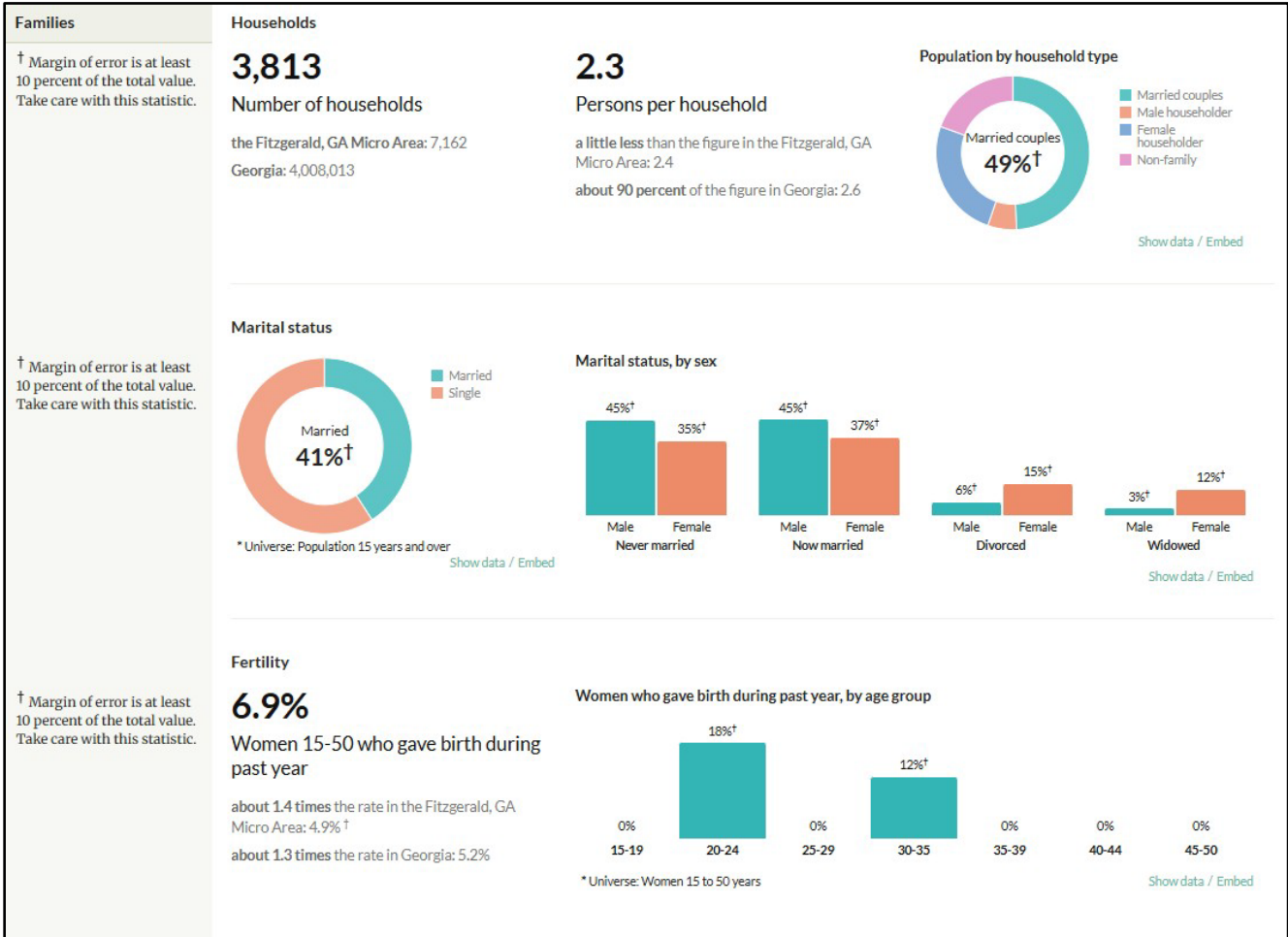




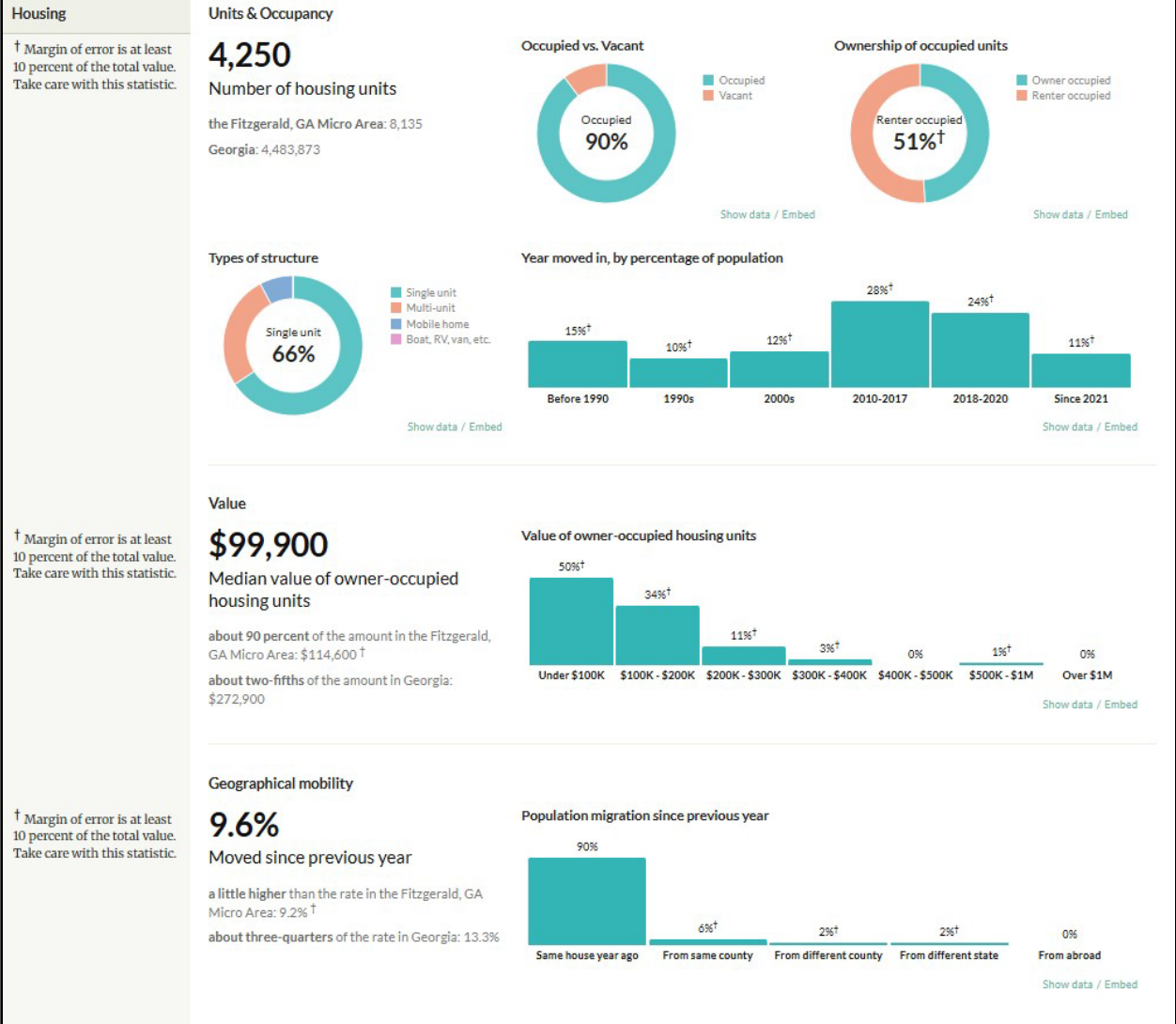
Fitzgerald – Demographics - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US1329528-fitzgerald-ga/>



Fitzgerald – Economics - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US1329528-fitzgerald-ga/>



Fitzgerald – Families - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US1329528-fitzgerald-ga/>



Fitzgerald – Housing - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US1329528-fitzgerald-ga/>

**Social**

† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value. Take care with this statistic.

**Educational attainment**

**85.1%** High school grad or higher

about the same as the rate in the Fitzgerald, GA Micro Area: 84.3%

a little less than the rate in Georgia: 89%

**13.7%** Bachelor's degree or higher

about 10 percent higher than the rate in the Fitzgerald, GA Micro Area: 12.1%†

about two-fifths of the rate in Georgia: 34.2%

**Population by highest level of education**

Level of Education	Percentage
No degree	15%†
High school	50%†
Some college	22%†
Bachelor's	10%†
Post-grad	4%†

\* Universe: Population 25 years and over

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**Language**

**N/A**

Persons with language other than English spoken at home

**Language at home, children 5-17**  
No data available

**Language at home, adults 18+**  
No data available

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† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value. Take care with this statistic.

**Place of birth**

**2%** Foreign-born population

about three-quarters of the rate in the Fitzgerald, GA Micro Area: 2.7%

about one-fifth of the rate in Georgia: 10.8%

**Place of birth for foreign-born population**

Place of Birth	Percentage
Europe	0%
Asia	25%†
Africa	0%
Oceania	0%
Latin America	75%†
Northern America	0%

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† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value. Take care with this statistic.

**Veteran status**

**7.3%** Population with veteran status

about 10 percent higher than the rate in the Fitzgerald, GA Micro Area: 6.5%†

about the same as the rate in Georgia: 7.4%

**Veterans by wartime service**

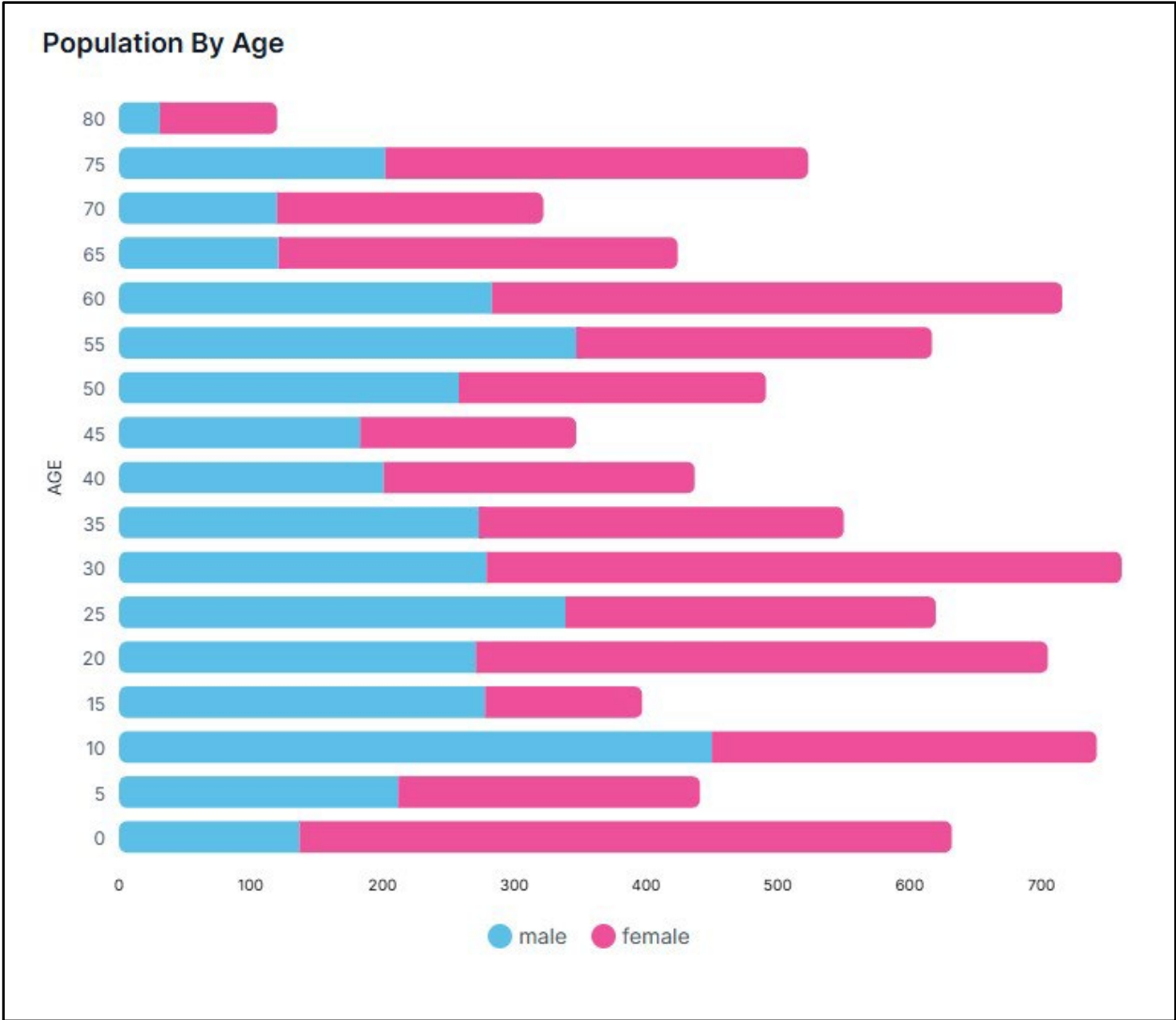
Wartime Service	Count
WWII	0
Korea	21†
Vietnam	131†
Gulf (1990s)	92†
Gulf (2001-)	49†

\* Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

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**495 Total veterans**  
**424 Male**  
**71 Female**

Fitzgerald – Social - <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US1329528-fitzgerald-ga/>



Fitzgerald Population by Age - <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/georgia/fitzgerald>