

Appendix B – Growth and Development Trends

I. 2025 Greater Ben Hill County Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

Ben Hill County is located in south-central Georgia and has a land area of 163,200 acres, or about 255 square miles. Current 2005 population is 18,294 persons and is projected to be 21,732 persons by 2025. There is one incorporated city, Fitzgerald, and the population density (persons per square mile) will rise from 70 persons per square mile in 2000 to 86 persons per square mile by 2025. Most of the land is well drained and thirty-two percent is used for agriculture and sixty-five percent for forestry uses. The physical landscape is fairly homogenous with two rivers, the Ocmulgee River on the northeastern edge and the Alapaha River along the northwestern border of the county.

The county and city have adopted zoning and land development regulations that govern the construction of buildings, division of land, and include water resource protection provisions for wetlands, floodplains, groundwater recharge areas and river corridor protection. The future land use plan provides provisions for in-fill within the incorporated city and provides space for future development within the urban service area as the infrastructure (water and sanitary sewer) is constructed.

Part III of the 2025 Greater Ben Hill County Comprehensive Plan (see Appendix B-II) provides a succinct summary of the future projected growth and development of Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald:

FUTURE LAND USE PLANS

A future land use plan reflects the consensus of community and county values that are inherent in goal and policy statements. It is designed to provide a summary of recommended growth patterns, which are depicted on the respective future land use maps. For Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald, the recommendations are designed to reflect goals and policies with strong emphasis on local government's provision of basic services; water, sewer and transportation. (The land use goals and policies are detailed in "Part II - Where Do We Want To Be?"). These plan concepts propose land use patterns which take advantage of existing and planned infrastructure. This prevents undue hardship on local governments to provide unnecessary infrastructure improvements or additions. When growth is planned in a logical and straightforward manner and takes advantage of public investments, there will be positive benefits for all with an increase in long-term economic stability.

GREATER BEN HILL FUTURE LAND USE (IN GENERAL)

The concepts discussed in this section will apply to the future land use plans of Ben Hill County. The Goals and Policies define and emphasize a distinct separation between an Urban Service Area (USA) and a Rural Service Area (RSA). Greater Ben Hill, for future land use purposes, is divided into these two major service areas and they are graphically depicted on Maps III-1 and III-2. The USA represents the centralized growth center (Fitzgerald area) where there is already existing infrastructure and concentrated urban services to accommodate urban style development. All future urban development should locate in this area. The RSA comprises all of the remaining portions of the unincorporated county. This area should retain a dominantly rural character.