

Chapter 7: Land Use

Introduction

Since the adoption of the Joint City/County Comprehensive Plan in 1993, the county has experienced a relatively small amount of growth. Overall, the county remains a rural area and has not experienced the suburban growth seen elsewhere in the region. This chapter links other elements of the plan to create a vision for the future of Elbert County, Bowman, and Elberton and provide direction for managing anticipated growth.

Purpose

The purpose of the Land Use element is to ensure that the distribution of land uses meets the future economic, social, physical and environmental needs of Elbert County. The Future Land Use map can assist local governments in making development decisions that complement long-term goals established throughout this plan and avoid the emergence of inefficient development patterns. The Governor's Office has formulated a set of statewide goals that include Quality Community Objectives, to coordinate local government planning throughout the state under each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Statewide Land Use Goal:** *To ensure that land resources are allocated for uses that will accommodate and enhance the state's economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, and housing to protect and improve the quality of life of Georgia's residents.*

In accordance with the overall goal the state has developed a set of Quality Community Objectives to help direct local governments formulate a set of local goals, policies and objectives. The statewide objectives are as follows:

- **Traditional Neighborhood Objective:** *Traditional neighborhood patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.*
- **Infill Development Objective:** *Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional core of the community.*

Organization

The chapter is divided into two main sections, existing and future land use respectively. The existing land use section inventories existing development patterns and assesses change over time and its contributing factors. The future land use section assesses the needs established throughout the plan, forecasts the amount of land needed to accommodate the projected growth, and outlines the goals and policies needed to implement the future land use map.

Existing Land Use

An existing land use map categorizes every parcel by its predominate land use. This plan represents an update to the initial land use map created in 1993. The Department of Community Affairs Minimum Planning Standards state that the overall goal of the land use element is to "Ensure that land resources are allocated for uses that will accommodate and enhance economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, and housing; and to protect and improve residents quality of life."

Existing Land Use Acreages

The Existing Land Use map illustrates the existing county land use, generated from the county tax assessor’s office. Every parcel of land is assessed according to its use for tax purposes and this information is transferred to a parcel coverage map of the entire county to produce the existing land use map.

Table 1 presents the total acreage according to the following land use categories; Agriculture/Forestry, Residential (single-family and mobile/manufactured home), Multi-Family Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Government, Public/Institutional, Parks/Recreation/Conservation, and Transportation/Communication/Utilities. Table 2 illustrates municipal land use acreage totals.

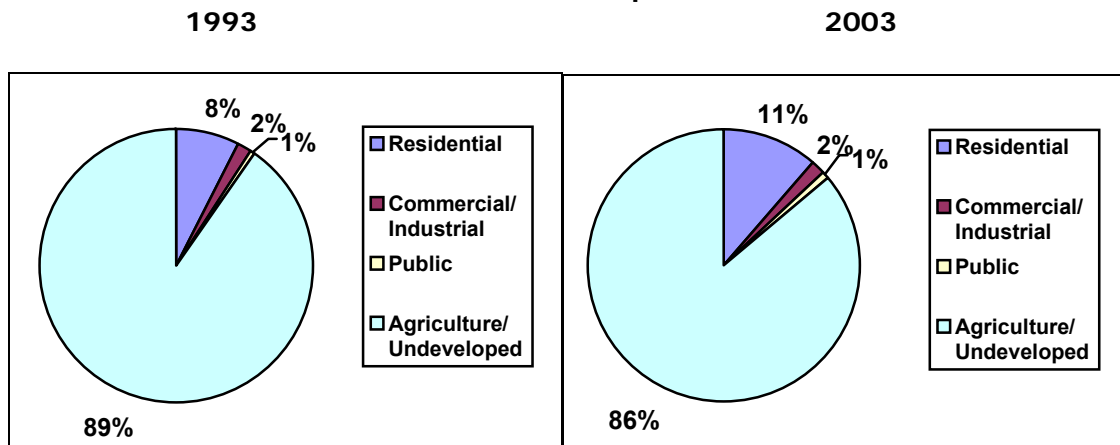
Figure 1 illustrates the percentage changes in developed land since the 1993 Comprehensive Plan land use inventory. There were no significant changes in land use other than an increase in residential land from 8% to 11% and a corresponding decrease in agriculture/forestry categories dropping from 89% to 86%. There was little fluctuation in other land use categories reflecting the overall rural characteristics of the county. Figure 1 illustrates location of new development throughout the county.

Table 1
2003 Existing Land Use Acreage County Totals

Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Total Residential	26,800	11.40
Single-Family	26,768	11.83
Multi-Family	32	0.01
Commercial	2,466	1.05
Industrial	1,313	0.56
Government	932	0.40
Public/Institutional	721	0.31
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	27,785	11.83
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	183	0.08
Undeveloped/Unused	296	0.13
Agriculture/Forestry	174,414	74.25
Totals	234,910	100.00

Source: Elbert County Tax Assessor’s Office; calculations by NEGRDC

Figure 1
1993-2003 Comparison



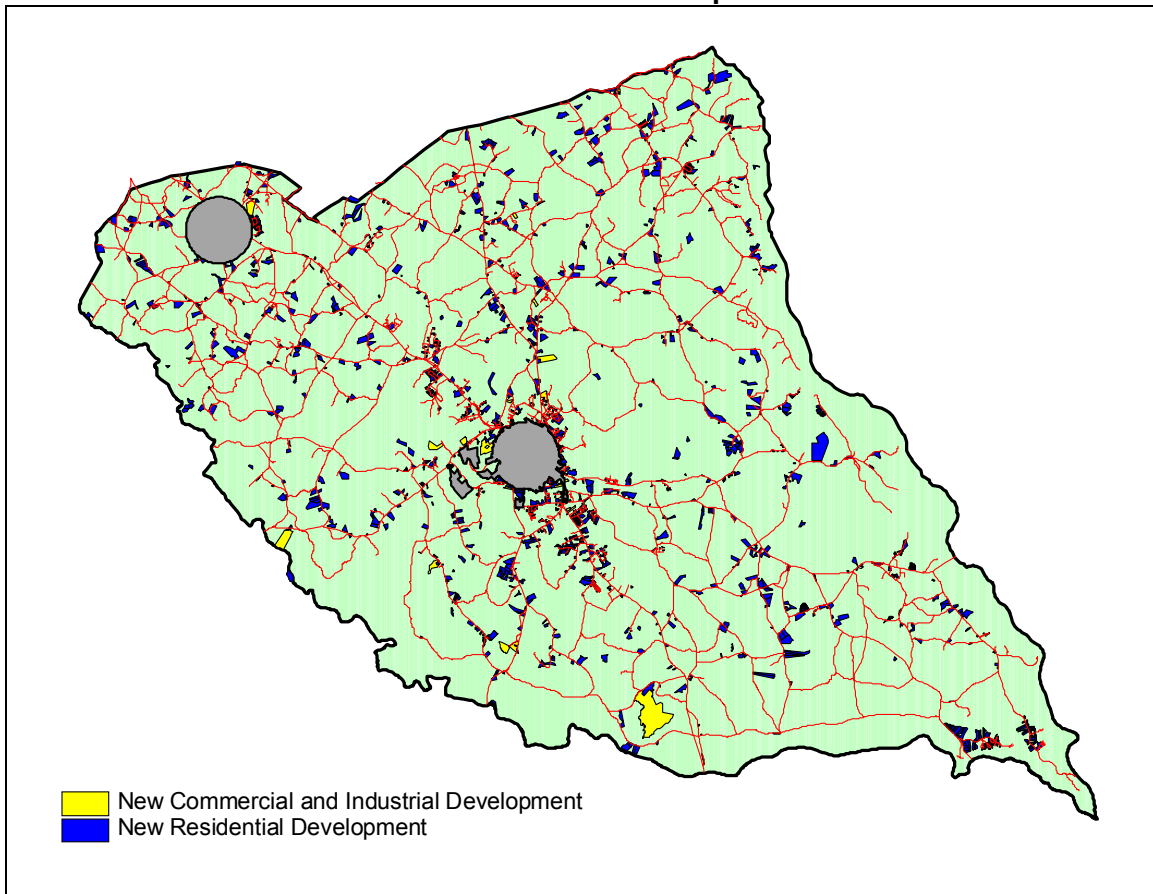
*Public includes transportation/communication/utilities and agriculture/undeveloped includes parks/recreation/conservation.

Table 2
2003 Existing Land Use Acreage – Municipal Totals

Land Use	Bowman		Elberton	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Total Residential	794	39.45	1,302	57.21
Single-Family	788	39.18	1,275	47.21
Multi-Family	6	0.27	27	1.00
Commercial	29	1.43	484	17.92
Industrial	0	0.00	200	7.39
Government	28	1.40	292	10.80
P/I	25	1.24	166	6.14
P/R/C	56	2.78	72	2.67
T/C/U	0	0.00	7	0.27
Agriculture	944	46.95	156	5.79
Undeveloped	30	6.73	21	0.79
Totals	1,905	100.00	2,700	100.00

Source: Elbert County Tax Assessor's Office; calculations by NEGRDC

**Figure 2
Illustration of New Development**



Land Use Assessment

Historical Factors

Existing development patterns can be attributed to the rural characteristics of Elbert County. Elberton and Bowman's presence in the county, as established communities, has led to the focus of new development in and around the cities, minimizing suburban type development in the rural areas.

Elbert County's location outside major metropolitan areas is a major determining factor in the pace of development. The distance between Elbert County and the Athens and Anderson metropolitan areas continues to be perceived by the respective workforces as being greater than they are willing to commute. This is illustrated in the Economic Development chapter's discussion on commuting patterns. Data tells us that Athens is the third largest destination of Elbert County commuters but the number of commuters has decreased between Census years. The rapid expansion of the Athens Metro area has yet to generate any major impacts on Elbert County's development patterns.

Land Use Patterns and Infrastructure Availability

Infrastructure is an umbrella term that relates to many of the community facilities and services referred to in Chapter 6. Certain types of infrastructure, such as water, sewer, and transportation influence where and how much development occurs.

Transportation

Transportation is one of the strongest influences on land use patterns. Travel behavior and the existence of roads have a direct impact on the location of new development. Elbert County has an abundance of state routes intersecting the rural areas and linking them with Bowman and Elberton, as discussed in the Transportation chapter. Historically, development patterns in the unincorporated areas have occurred along, or within close proximity to these major road networks, as illustrated in the Existing Land Use map and in Figure 2.

The improved efficiency of road networks has led to our increased reliance on automobile travel, which is reflected in the way we develop our neighborhoods. The most prominent features of our subdivisions are garages, driveways, wide roads, and a lack of sidewalks. The increased mobility of the population, in general, has led to a drastic decrease in mixed-use and neighborhood commercial development and has decreased our mobility options through a forced reliance on the automobile, even for the shortest of trips.

Availability of Water and Sewer

The lack of major infrastructure networks within the unincorporated regions of the county has led to this dispersed pattern illustrated in Figure 2 with little opportunity for clustered development. Elberton's extension of water and sewer networks outside its boundary, as illustrated in the Community Facilities chapter, has allowed commercial, industrial and residential development to occur at higher densities adjacent to the city.

The lack of water and sewer in the unincorporated areas of the county limits the economic development options outside of the infrastructure networks service areas and requires low-density single-family residential development.

The unavailability of sewer means that all new development outside of the Elberton, and Bowman service areas must rely on individual septic tanks to dispose of their wastewater. The environmentally sound use of septic systems relies on the ability of the soils to naturally absorb the septic treated wastewater and on individual homeowners to properly maintain their septic systems. The increased use of septic tanks not only increases the potential for raw waste leaks into groundwater sources, but also limits the ability to reuse treated wastewater. As discussed in the Natural and Cultural Resources and Community Facilities chapters, new development requiring individual septic systems needs to be coordinated with the location of soils suitable for development.

Environmental Issues

The ability to develop a parcel of land is directly related to the environmental constraints present on that parcel. Environmental constraints vary widely from the presence of wetlands to the inability of soil to absorb septic wastewater. Refer to Chapter 5A, Natural and Cultural Resources, for a more detailed discussion on the environmental features presented throughout the county.

Some of the most obvious environmental constraints are the presence of floodplains, wetlands, or steep slopes. The abundance of stream and river corridors intersecting the county creates a roadmap of environmentally sensitive areas. Refer to Chapter 5A and the section on Water Resources for illustration of the occurrence of these areas in the county.

Some of the less obvious environmental constraints are much more difficult to regulate and have the potential to pose greater development restrictions in the future if they are mismanaged now. One of the largest issues throughout the state is the protection of water quality. Water quality is affected by a multitude of variables including raw sewage, urban runoff, poorly maintained septic systems, farm-animal wastes, and sprawling development.

Another of the less obvious environmental constraint relates to the air quality of the region. Sprawling development patterns have increased the reliance on the automobile and forced people to drive greater distances to their workplace. The increased road traffic has led to increased vehicular emissions to the point that air quality in metro areas fails to meet the EPA's standards. This problem does not directly affect Elbert County, as it has not urbanized at a rapid pace, nor is it adjacent to any major metropolitan areas. However, as suburban development continues to sprawl further into rural areas this may generate negative impacts on Elbert County. In order to preempt these

impacts, compact development patterns, focused in those areas with access to the necessary supportive infrastructure, need to be promoted.

These are problems that do not know political boundaries and cannot be solved by a single jurisdiction. In order to fully combat these problems full intergovernmental cooperation is needed on a regional scale.

Opportunities for Infill Development

The notion of infill development is quite simple and refers to maximizing development in areas already served by infrastructure before developing in areas requiring infrastructure expansion. Traditionally this requires urban areas that have experienced suburban flight as traditional downtown commercial development has relocated to suburban strip shopping centers. Generally, there is already water, sewer, transportation, and in many cases the actual physical infrastructure present. Downtown revitalization projects can generate a more vibrant downtown district through mixed-use residential and commercial projects.

Neither municipality has a concentration of dilapidated areas nor can a general area can be fully classified as blighted and in need of redevelopment. However, both municipalities are actively promoting the revitalization of their respective downtown districts, as discussed in the Economic Development chapter. The increased mix of land uses can stimulate economic development and foster a greater sense of community downtown.

This does not only relate to cities, there may be opportunities for infill in the unincorporated area. The one benefit of “leapfrog” or scattered development is that there is generally a void between developments that can be exploited for infill purposes. This is not readily apparent on the county’s existing land use map because of the lack of development that has occurred in the rural areas. However, as has been discussed elsewhere in this document, the City of Elberton is the main provider of water and sewer to areas both within and surrounding the city boundary. As these infrastructure networks expand outside the existing service area these “gaps” in development may become more apparent and infill development may be appropriate to create a contiguous development pattern between the incorporated city limits and the low-density development in the county facilitating further infrastructure expansion. Land use patterns must be continually monitored to identify where these opportunities may exist.

Future Land Use

Assessment of Needs

Throughout this document each of the elements has provided a set of goals and policies that relate to the future development of the county and the municipalities. Each of the elements is highlighted here in terms of how their needs affect the development of the future land use plan.

Economic Development

The major issue stemming from the economic development section is increasing the skill level of the local labor force to stimulate business and industrial recruitment. The county struggles in its ability to attract quality employers because of the overall lack of a highly educated labor force.

Another important issue is the development of a local tourism industry. As discussed in the Economic Development chapter, the enormous tourism potential in the county has yet to be fully utilized. The abundance of natural and historic resources in the county and cities is an opportunity to attract visitors from outside the county, region, and state. This potential must be closely tied with future land use patterns to ensure that future development generated from increased tourism does not negatively impact the very resources that allowed it.

Natural and Historic Resources

The implementation of the Department of Natural Resources Environmental Planning Criteria will help to preserve the natural environmental features of the county and enhance the residents' quality of life. This is closely linked with increasing economic development through tourism initiatives. Currently, federal regulations limit all types of development within 300 feet of Lake Russell. The county anticipates that these regulations are going to be changed to allow development in specifically designated areas. It is imperative that this development does not negatively impact the environmental integrity of the lake. It is also imperative that future land use patterns be adjusted accordingly to correlate with the area designated for development to ensure efficient, environmentally sound development patterns emerge in this environmentally sensitive region.

These initiatives must be fully adopted and regulated in order to ensure the preservation of the natural environment. This includes the preservation of historic resources. The county has a rich and illustrious history that is preserved in the abundance of historic resources throughout the county, particularly in the cities of Bowman and Elberton. It is important that the county and municipalities treat these resources as susceptible environmental areas to ensure that they are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Community Facilities, Services and Transportation

The timing and location of facility and service expansion is a major contributor to the ability of the county and municipalities to manage growth. Intergovernmental cooperation is a necessity in order to take full advantage of existing facilities and to help curb the unnecessary development of vacant land in the county. The ability to focus new developments into those areas that can accommodate them with the necessary infrastructure is the key to the successfully managing growth.

This is more applicable to the municipalities because of their existing infrastructure networks. But as mentioned in the Community Facilities section, Elberton's water and sewer service areas extend outside of the city boundaries and those areas are more capable of handling increased economic and residential growth.

Sprawling patterns of development further decrease the economic feasibility of extending public infrastructure in the county and will further increase the costs associated with providing public services. The ability to develop in a compact fashion decreases the costs associated with providing the required infrastructure and creates population clusters that are easier to service for the school system, law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services.

Housing

Suburban development creates a homogeneous environment dominated by single-family residential development. The dominance of a single type of housing limits housing options and segregates populations based on socioeconomic characteristics. The stigmas attached to mobile/manufactured homes prevent their inclusion in a typical subdivision, and this is generally true of multi-family dwellings as well.

The county and cities want to promote the development of various types of housing and focus residential development in areas equipped with existing, or planned, supportive infrastructure to allow greater flexibility in the type of development that can occur. In order to meet the needs of an expanding and diversifying labor force, as discussed in the Economic Development chapter, a range of housing types are required. To ensure a wide variety of types and locations, the City of Elberton is promoting residential development within its downtown increasing the mixing of uses to create a more vibrant central business district.

It is important that the county and cities continue to monitor their housing and demographic conditions to identify potential deficiencies in the housing market that they may be able to help adjust through regulation.

Projections of Required Acreage by Land Use Category

To ensure that adequate land is dedicated to each land use according to future needs acreage must be projected throughout the planning horizon to ensure the future land use map meets the minimum requirements to support the anticipated growth.

To do this the Per Capita Use Rate method is used. This method extrapolates the rate of population per acre for each land use and calculates the projected acreage requirements based on the estimates established in the population element. To provide a more accurate indication of commercial and industrial requirements the Per Capita Use Rate is done using employment per acre as opposed to population.

The problem with this method is that it uses existing patterns and densities of development and reflects what will be required twenty years from now using today’s standards. It is likely that residential densities will increase over time, as more compact forms of development are utilized. It also fails to reflect the county’s desire to increase its industrial recruitment to reduce the commuting patterns of the local workforce.

What it does point out is the future impacts generated from today’s development patterns and helps to visualize how the county and municipalities may look twenty years into the future if existing trends continue. Table 3 illustrates the Elbert County projections by land use.

The Use Ratio reflects how much acreage of a given land use is dedicated to each resident of the county. It is merely an estimate and a reflection of the prevailing development patterns. As previously mentioned, the calculations for the 2024 acreage needs assume that prevailing development patterns will remain constant throughout the horizon, which is an unlikely scenario. The low use ratio for residential development indicates that every 1.31 people require one acre of land. Using the average household size of 2.53 (the average household size countywide as reported in the 2000 Census) requires approximately 1.93 acres per average household. This reflects the low-density development in the unincorporated areas, without access to the necessary infrastructure.

**Table 3
2024 Land Area Projections**

Land Use Category	Existing Acreage	Use Ratio	2024 Acreage
Total Residential	26,800	1.31	27,955
Commercial*	2,466	0.62	3,475
Industrial*	1,313	0.44	1,377
Public	2,014	0.10	2,101
Total County Acreage	235,002		235,002
Total Developed Acreage	32,593		34,908
Total Undeveloped Acreage – includes Undeveloped/Unused and Agriculture/Forestry	202,409		200,094

Source: Elbert County Tax Assessors; Calculations by NEGRDC

*The Use Ratio for both Commercial and Industrial uses a comparison ratio of employees per acre, as opposed to population per acre.

The main illustration of this table is that prevailing development patterns will consume an additional 2,315 acres over the next 20 years and decrease the amount of undeveloped acreage by 1.1%. This is a direct correlation to the population and economic forecasts over the next twenty years, which speculate that growth will continue to be limited throughout the county. However, changes in the federal regulations governing the development of Lake Russell could drastically affect the amount of acreage needed, particularly in the Commercial and Residential categories.

This forecasting method looks only at those land uses that can be easily quantified in terms of per capita use. As discussed in the Community Facilities section, the abundance of park acreage in the county is more than adequate to provide existing and future populations ample recreation opportunities. That does not necessarily mean that all segments of the population are adequately served. The county and cities continue to work towards increasing the amount of recreation facilities and activities available to the public.

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use map is an important tool used in implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The map does not represent an exact pattern of development but identifies appropriate areas of opportunity for each land use category to accommodate the expected growth.

Throughout the planning horizon, real estate markets and the availability of infrastructure and services will determine the exact location and timing of development. The map is intended as a guideline for planning commissioners, staff, and elected officials to use in making development decisions. As local economics and demographics change over time, so too should the Future Land Use map. It requires periodic monitoring to ensure that development decisions are being made using the most accurate illustration of the desired future growth patterns.

Future Land Use Categories

These land use categories correspond to those on the Future Land Use maps. Categories also reference the types of activities associated with each land use.

Multi-Family Residential: *(Illustrated only on the Bowman and Elberton Future Land Use Maps)*

Characteristically urban environment typically containing attached residential development, whether rental or owner-occupied units, of one to three stories. Typical densities are 8 units per acre, or greater. The provision of public sewerage is required for any development of this nature and its location is limited to areas within the municipal sewer service areas.

Residential: Defined as those areas within the county capable of accommodating the expected growth throughout the planning horizon. Density is not differentiated in the county because of the lack of infrastructure networks required to support higher density developments. The areas designated for residential development are immediately adjacent to the cities of Bowman and Elberton, clustered within proximity to community facilities and services. Extension of water service outside of Elberton's existing service area should allow residential densities to increase in the unincorporated area, likely developing at a gross density of 1 dwelling unit per acre. The municipalities have density categories based on zoning classifications in Elberton and the locations of infrastructure in Bowman. These categories are defined in the section on Future Land Use Acreages.

Other uses may include, but are not limited too, elementary, middle, and/or high schools, community and/or neighborhood parks, or any other use that is compatible with the surrounding residential community. Residential development is not prohibited in other areas but it is the county's intent to promote and encourage development to occur within this district to take full advantage of existing and planned infrastructure. Residential areas designated within proximity to recreation areas, located along the eastern border of the county and designated Park/Recreation/Conservation, reflect the potential for increased development provided regulations are changed governing land use adjacent to the lake.

Agricultural/Forestry: Defined as lands retaining their rural character throughout the planning horizon. Generally refer to areas lacking the infrastructure necessary to accommodate growth. Actual uses may include, but are not limited too, farming, raising of livestock, timber production and harvesting, or any other use compatible with the rural environment.

Residential development is neither prohibited nor encouraged within this area. These districts represent rural areas of the county and more intense development may be more suitable in the residential district or within the municipal boundaries.

Commercial: Includes all retail and commercial service activities ranging from convenience stores to shopping malls. Businesses may be stand alone or clustered into commercial nodes. Actual uses may include, but are not limited too, hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities, repair shops, churches, or any other use that is compatible with a commercial/retail district. These uses require proximity to not only the necessary supportive infrastructure, but also higher population densities. These uses are concentrated along major transportation corridors and within proximity to the municipalities, and residential clusters in the county. Designated areas within proximity to recreation areas, located along the eastern border of the county and designated Park/Recreation/Conservation, reflect the potential for increased development provided regulations are changed governing land use adjacent to the lake.

Office/Professional: *(Illustrated only on the Elberton Future Land Use Map)* Accommodates businesses that do not directly provide products to consumers on-site, nor manufacture, store or distribute products. Businesses may be small, single offices or function as a part of a multi-tenant office park. Occupants may include doctors, lawyers, or accountants or any other professional service provider compatible with this style of development.

Industrial: Includes both light and heavy industrial uses. Light industrial includes, but is not limited too, warehousing and distribution, trucking, and small-scale manufacturing. Heavy industrial is generally defined as manufacturing uses that convert raw materials to finished products, storage of bulk materials, natural resource extraction, or any other process that could produce high levels of noise, dust, smoke, odors, or other emissions. Heavy industrial uses would have adverse impacts on surrounding areas and should be isolated as much as possible within proximity to the required community facilities. The majority of the industrial land use in the county is related to the Granite Industry.

Public/Institutional: Includes certain state, federal or local institutional land uses, including but not limited too, colleges, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals. Areas designated as public/institutional reflect the current use. Future such developments are likely to occur within proximity to highly populated areas and should be accommodated within residential districts where appropriate.

Government: Includes certain, state, federal or local government land uses, including but not limited too, city halls and government building complexes, police, fire and emergency medical services stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, and military installations. Future development patterns will largely determine the location of these uses. The expected population increases within the residential districts will require additional government services and will likely house the majority of increased government property.

Parks/Recreation/Conservation: This category is for land dedicated to passive or active recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and include, but are not limited too, playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, and recreation centers.

Transportation/Communication/Utility: This category may include, but is not limited too, such uses as power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, public transit stations, telephone switching stations, airports, and port facilities.

There are development concepts that are difficult to illustrate on a map, including clustered residential development and mixed-use development. The clustered developments are encouraged to minimize impervious surfaces and preserve greenspace. These are promoted within all residential areas where supportive infrastructure and suitable environmental conditions exist.

Mixed-use development is not reflected on the maps but generally refers to the combination of 2 or more land use categories, often found in master-planned communities, reflecting compact community concepts minimizing the reliance on the automobile for transportation. The City of Elberton's central business district is the most appropriate area in the county for this type of development because of the existing infrastructure, available buildings, and economic activity.

Future Land Use Acreages

Table 4 displays the total acreage figures for each land use category on the 2024 Elbert County Future Land Use map. Table 5 displays the municipal acreage totals.

The County does not use density parameters, as previously discussed. Residential development occurring in areas serviced with public water will likely occur at gross densities of 1 dwelling unit per acre.

The City of Bowman uses the following density parameters:

H/D (High-Density): 4 or more dwelling units per acre.

M/D (Medium-Density): 1 to less than 4 dwelling units per acre.

L/D (Low-Density): Less than 1 dwelling unit per acre.

M/F (Multi-Family): Includes duplexes, apartments, and public housing.

The City of Elberton uses the following density parameters:

H/D (High-Density): 10 dwelling units per acre.

M/D (Medium-Density): 4 to 7 dwelling units per acre.

L/D (Low-Density): 3 dwelling units per acre.

M/F (Multi-Family): Includes duplexes, apartments, and public housing.

Table 4
2024 Future Land Use Acreage – Unincorporated County

Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Total Residential	37,469	16.27
Agriculture/Forestry	155,249	67.41
Commercial	6,186	2.69
Industrial	2,403	1.04
Government	640	0.28
Public/Institutional (P/I)	541	0.23
Parks/Recreation/Conservation (P/R/C)	27,642	12.00
Transportation/Communication/Utilities (T/C/U)	176	0.08
Totals	230,306	100.0

Table 5
2024 Future Land Use Acreage – Municipal Total

Land Use	Bowman		Elberton	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Residential	1,029	54.10	1,219	45.15
H/D	196	10.29	225	8.33
M/D	292	15.34	72	2.67
L/D	536	28.15	895	33.15
M/F	6	0.32	27	1.00
Commercial	44	2.31	717	26.56
O/P	NA	-	5	0.19
Industrial	0	-	242	8.96
Government	28	1.47	284	10.52
P/I	25	1.31	154	5.70

Land Use	Bowman		Elberton	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
P/R/C	56	2.94	72	2.67
T/C/U	0	-	7	0.26
Agriculture	721	37.87	0	-
Totals	1,905	100.00	2,700	100.00

Future Land Use Narrative

Elbert County

The county has experienced very little growth over the past decade, and future forecasts predict relatively slow growth patterns in the foreseeable future. Despite the slow growth forecasts the county does intend to work closely with the cities to preemptively manage future growth.

The main areas of the county considered adequate for growth are those areas adjacent to Bowman and Elberton. The majority of planned commercial, industrial and residential expansion is appropriate for these areas because of their proximity to the cities and the community facilities and services that they provide, as well as their access to major thoroughfares.

Areas along the eastern border of Elbert County, adjacent to the Park/Recreation/Conservation land have been designated either residential or commercial based on the potential these areas hold for tourism related development and the increased residential demand expected if federal regulations are changed to allow development adjacent to Lake Russell. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, and in the Economic Development chapter, these areas of the county represent local assets for the county provided that they are properly managed. These designations are not representative of any proposed change in the regulations and merely illustrate forecasts of potential future development. If these regulations are, in fact, changed at some point in the future these designations need to be revisited to ensure that they are in accordance with the revised regulations and that they minimize development impacts on the natural environment.

Growth adjacent to the City of Elberton must be done concurrently with the expansion of the water network planned for that area. As discussed in the Community Facilities chapter, the City of Elberton can extend water service at its discretion outside of its city boundary. The city intends to extend water service, initially northwest along Georgia Highway 17 to service industrial and residential areas of the unincorporated county. This infrastructure expansion is necessary to accommodate the growth designated for the area in order to promote compact development patterns. All development should be coordinated with the City of Elberton and its plans for infrastructure expansion.

Elbert County's rural character is further illustrated by its abundance of natural resources. The lack of development pressures in the county has contributed to the continued presence of these resources and projected development needs can be well managed without negatively impacting any environmentally sensitive area. Refer to the Natural Resources chapter (Chapter 5A) for further discussion on the location and assessment of existing natural areas. The intent of the Future Land Use map is to coordinate growth with the presence of natural resources and to minimize the impacts of development through designating appropriate areas to accommodate growth. All development within the designated areas on the map must adhere to all environmental regulations to minimize all impacts on the natural resources identified in Chapter 5A.

Similarly, the county has an abundance of cultural resources, discussed in Chapter 5B. These have also been discussed in the context of promoting economic development through promoting historic tourism opportunities. These are truly fragile resources that must be treated in the same fashion as natural features because of the local importance that they hold. Future development needs to incorporate the preservation of locally significant historic resources as identified in Chapter 5B.

Because of the lack of infrastructure in the unincorporated area and the lack of sewer expansion planned outside of Elberton there is little opportunity for alternative development patterns, such as Traditional Neighborhood Developments. The lack of development in the county illustrates few opportunities for infill or redevelopment. The majority of the planned growth illustrated on the Future Land Use map consists of new development and represents a transition from Agriculture to Residential land use.

Elbert County's relative isolation from major urban markets decreases outside influences on local development patterns. As commuting patterns shift and urbanized areas continue to expand Elbert County may develop a greater attraction to urban commuters as a suburban, "bedroom," community.

Despite the planned increase in development, Agricultural designated land dominates the Future Land Use map. Chapter 5A illustrates the occurrence of prime agricultural areas. The Economic Development section illustrates the continued role agriculture plays in the local economy and it is important that development decisions reflect the need for agricultural land to preserve not only the agricultural industry but also the rural character of the county.

The county does not have zoning and does not intend to implement zoning in the foreseeable future. There are currently no ordinances in place promoting no alternative development patterns or are any planned.

City of Bowman

Little has changed in Bowman over the past decade and population forecasts illustrate similar trends can be expected. The city has an abundance of available land within the city limits and does not foresee a need to annex any additional land. The majority of growth is planned in and around the existing and planned infrastructure networks. As discussed in the Community Facilities chapter, the city is in the process of examining its water and sewer networks and intends to implement the necessary upgrades to the respective systems to adequately serve existing and future populations.

Chapter 5A illustrates the occurrences of key natural resources within the city limits. The city owns a community park that houses its main well, which is the main source of drinking water. This acreage is dedicated to recreational uses, both passive and active, and ensures the preservation of natural areas surrounding the well.

The city has identified a number of significant historic resources and is exploring opportunities to develop a historic district, as discussed in the Historic Resources section of Chapter 5B. Many of the historic structures are within the downtown district, which represents a local asset for economic development. All future development needs to occur in a context sensitive fashion to ensure the continued preservation of the city's historic character.

Because of the relatively small size of the city, there is not expected to be a large demand for alternative development types. The city has expressed an interest in continuing the redevelopment of the downtown square through historic preservation efforts. This development is expected to increase local economic activities, the majority of which is expected to be locally serving.

There are no significant developments within or around the city that can be expected to influence Bowman's future land use. Bowman's distance from the cities of Elberton, and Royston minimizes the impacts of development in these two larger communities on the City of Bowman. Without major economic development initiatives in, or near the city, minimal development pressures can be expected.

The city has a high percentage of undeveloped land classified as Agriculture. This does not represent an active agricultural industry, rather an abundance of open space.

The city does not have zoning and does not intend to implement zoning in the foreseeable future. There are currently no ordinances in place promoting no alternative development patterns or are any planned.

City of Elberton

Elberton represents the largest concentration of development in the county. Elberton is the county seat and houses not only all of the city government offices, but also the majority of county facilities. Elberton's location at the intersection of the county's major thoroughfares contributes to Elberton being the economic capital of the county. The major thoroughfare corridors intersecting Elberton are designated for commercial or industrial development because of their access to the road network.

There are no readily identifiable areas suitable for future annexation; however, the extension of water service outside of the city boundary will increase development adjacent to the city. Increased commercial and residential expansion outside of the city limits requires the expansion of city infrastructure networks. Planned expansion is scheduled within the next five years northwest of the city along Georgia Highway 17, towards Bowman.

The Community Facilities chapter identified Fortson Creek as an environmentally impaired stream requiring mitigation to decrease its sediment load. Increased urban development is a contributing factor to the environmental integrity of the stream. Future development may decrease the stream's ability to fully function. The Natural resources section of Chapter 5A further identifies the locations of environmentally sensitive areas requiring preservation. In addition to the natural features within the city, there is also an abundance of historic resources. The city currently has three historic preservation districts, illustrated in Chapter 5B, encompassing the majority of the downtown district. Historic preservation is an important issue in the city and, like elsewhere in the county, provides opportunity for economic development through tourism initiatives.

The nature of the central business district provides opportunity for alternative land use development patterns. The downtown square and central business district houses a number of retail and public uses and represents one of the city's historic districts. The local government continues to revitalize and redevelop existing historic structures within the district and promotes the development of a mixed-use environment to developers. To date, there has not been a large demand for these types of development but as economic development initiatives continue within, and surrounding the city, this type of development may become more attractive.

Much of the city has already been built and there is little undeveloped space available within the city limits. Land use patterns are relatively established within the city and illustrate development patterns focusing economic activity along major transportation corridors and within the downtown with residential development radiating outwards from a central business district. This does not generate any significant transition between land uses.

One of the major factors influencing development in Elberton is the presence of the Granite Industry. The majority of land dedicated to granite production is located surrounding the city and the majority of its workforce resides in Elberton. As mentioned, Elberton is the economic center of the county and the majority of planned economic expansion is designated in or adjacent to the city. This not only requires the necessary infrastructure expansion to accommodate this growth but also an adequate supply of workforce housing. Whether or not development physically occurs within the city limits new development will impact the city.

Elberton is an urbanized area and has no rural or agricultural designated land within its boundary. The city utilizes a zoning ordinance that coordinates growth with the Future Land Use map. The ordinance allows mixed-use development within the downtown district as an alternative development pattern.

Goals and Policies

Vision Statement: *Promote the orderly development of land to accommodate the anticipated growth through the protection of environmental and historic resources and the coordination of available public facilities and services.*

Goal 1.1: Minimize negative impacts associated with new development on environmentally sensitive areas. *(Applicable to Elbert County and the municipalities of Bowman and Elberton)*

Policy 1.1.1: Maintain water quality through the protection of environmentally sensitive lands and the conservation of open space.

Goal 1.2: Coordinate new development with the presence of adequate public facilities. *(Applicable to Elbert County and the municipalities of Bowman and Elberton)*

Policy 1.2.1: Expend public resources on expansion and construction of facilities and services in areas designated for growth on the Future Land Use Map.

Policy 1.2.2: Base development approval process on the ability of the existing or planned public facilities to accommodate increased use.

Goal 1.3: Coordinate all new development with the Comprehensive Plan and ensure that land use and future land use information reflect current development patterns. *(Applicable to Elbert County and the municipalities of Bowman and Elberton)*

Policy 1.3.1: Ensure that sufficient acreage has been designated on the Future Land Use map to accommodate projected growth.

Policy 1.3.2: Promote the use of innovative development techniques, such as mixed-use development, to increase development densities and reduce the consumption of vacant land. *(Applicable to the municipality of Elberton)*

Policy 1.3.3: Maintain a cooperative relationship within, and among local governments to ensure the orderly development of the entire county.

Goal 1.4: Update Future Land Use map on a periodic basis to ensure it adequately reflects prevailing development patterns. *(Applicable to Elbert County and the municipalities of Bowman and Elberton)*