

Strategic Community and Economic Development Plan of The City of Macon, Georgia

TRINITY/BROOKWOOD
IN ASSOCIATION WITH EDWW



Plan Review Summary Report September 13, 2000

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1.0. Introduction

The first phase of the Macon Strategic Community and Economic Development Plan includes the tasks of plan consolidation and community consensus building. The goals of this phase are to:

- review and analyze the variety of neighborhood and functional plans that currently exist for the city, and
- establish a public and stakeholder vision

The following section provides a summary of the process and findings related to the plan review and analysis task.

1.1 Purpose of Plan Review & Analysis

The City of Macon has completed numerous plans, studies and other reports that affect its citizens. In addition, there are several other decision-making authorities that affect growth and development in the community, including:

- Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission
- Bibb County School Board
- Urban Development Authority
- Macon-Bibb Hospital Authority
- Macon Housing Authority (MHA)
- Coliseum Authority
- Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority
- Macon-Bibb County Water Authority
- Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority
- Economic and Community Development Department (ECDD)

With all these different agencies creating independent goals and actions for the community, Macon's leaders believe that there should be a single coherent vision that orchestrates all of these plans, coordinates their objectives and prioritizes their activities. By reviewing these plans and marking their overlapping points and gaps, the consultant team can guide the more extensive planning effort found in Phase II.

1.2 Overview of the Process

Based on discussions with city representatives and our initial research, the consultant team developed a list of documents to be reviewed. These documents were recognized as having influence in the economic and community planning arena for the City of Macon. In addition to the planning documents listed below, the consultant team also reviewed the Mayor's Transition Task Force Report, which was prepared after Mayor Ellis' election but prior to his taking office.

The documents requested and received are identified in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 List of Documents Requested and Received

DOCUMENT REQUESTED	RECEIVED
1. Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing	✱
2. Capital Improvement Budget (CIP)	✱
3. COM Consolidated Plan: Program Years 2000-2005	✱
4. Development Trends and Land Demand Analysis	✱
5. Education Board Capital Outlay Report	✱
6. HOPE VI Application	✱
7. Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025 (Vol. 1 & 2)	✱
8. Macon-Bibb County Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Plan	✱
9. Mercer Master Plan	✱
10. NewTown Macon Downtown Plan	✱
11. 1990 Sector Reports - reviewed received	✱
12. Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan	✱
13. Street Cents – Highway Quarterly Review	✱
14. Macon Economic Development Service Areas	✱
15. Transit Management Systems	✱
16. Six Years Facilities Plan – Transit	✱
17. Route Analysis and Onboard Survey	✱
18. Parking Inventory	✱
19. Unified Planning Work Program	✱
20. Macon Housing Authority Comprehensive Grant Plan	✱
21. Short Term Work Program – General (includes Water Authority Plan)	✱
22. Water and Sewer Fees for Bibb County	✱
23. MATS 2015 Transportation Plan	✱
24. Comprehensive Study of Downtown Industrial Area	✱
25. Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan	✱
26. City of Macon Economic and Community Development Service Areas – Maps	✱

The consultant team received most of the documents requested. Through our ensuing review and analysis, we were able to gain valuable insight into the existing conditions, goals and direction of Macon. Through the stakeholder interviews, missing information and insight should come to the surface and be adequately addressed.

The consultant team thoroughly reviewed each document and prepared a summary that contained the following information:

- Author
- Date of Publication
- Contact Name Within Agency
- Geographic Area Covered
- Legislative Status of Document
- Planning Categories Affected (see table 1.2)
- Data
 - ◆ Historic Conditions and Time Frame
 - ◆ Existing Conditions and Current Year
 - ◆ Forecast Conditions and Time Horizon
- Plan Recommendations
 - ◆ Policies
 - ◆ Public Improvements
 - ◆ Programs
 - ◆ Funding/Grants
 - ◆ Implementation Responsibilities
 - ◆ Schedule
- Identification of Major Issues

Each summary was placed in the plan review folder (provided as a supplement to this report) along with copies of significant pages from each document. The documents were also reviewed in light of the planning categories that they address. Table 1.2 below summarizes these findings.

Table 1.2 Matrix of Existing Documents and their Relationship to Planning Categories

	Plan Title	Planning Categories																	
		Population	Economic Development	Land Use	Housing	Historic Resources	Natural & Cultural resources	Transportation	Parks & Rec/Open Space	Water & Sewer	Stormwater Mgt/Drainage	Solid Waste Mgt	Public Safety	Social Services	Urban Design	CIP/Finance	Employment	GIS	General Admin. / Courts
1	Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing	✓			✓									✓			✓		
2	Capital Improvements Budget			✓			✓	✓	✓				✓			✓			✓
3	COM Consolidated Plan: Program Years 2000-2005				✓									✓					
4	Development Trends and Land Demand Analysis	✓		✓	✓												✓		
5	Education Board Capital Outlay Report+B23				✓														
6	Oglethorpe HOPE VI Application	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			
7	Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025 (Vol 1 & 2)			✓				✓	✓										
8	Macon/Bibb Parks, Open Space & Recreation Master Plan						✓	✓	✓										
9	Mercer Master Plan			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓						
10	New Town Macon Downtown Plan	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓		
11	1990 Sector Reports	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓									
12	Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan			✓								✓							
13	Street Cents - Highway Quarterly review							✓											
14	Macon Economic Development Service Areas		✓																
15	Transit Management Systems							✓											
16	Six Year Facilities Plan - Transit							✓											
17	Route Analysis and Onboard Survey	✓						✓											
18	Parking Inventory			✓				✓											
19	Unified Planning Work Program	✓		✓				✓	✓						✓			✓	
20	Macon Housing Authority Comprehensive Grant Plan				✓														
21	Short Term Work Program - General (includes water authority plan)															✓			
22	Water and Sewer Fees for Bibb County									✓									
23	MATS 2015 Transportation Plan	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓									✓		
24	Comprehensive Study of Downtown Industrial Area		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓			
25	Macon-Bibb 2015 Comprehensive Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		
26	City of Macon Economic and Community Development Service Areas - Maps		✓																
	Total	9	5	12	10	4	8	15	9	5	2	2	4	2	3	5	5	1	1

A primary focus of the plan review was determining how plans related to the eight elements that will be prepared in Phase II (as identified in the RFP). In addition to the eight elements, we also considered the plans' relationship to Land Use, for a total of the following nine elements:

1. Natural and Cultural Resources
2. Parks and Open Space
3. Public Facilities
4. Transportation
5. Housing
6. Economic Development
7. Public Safety
8. Social Services
9. Land Use

A narrative was written for each of the nine elements, detailing which plans relate to each element and where gaps may exist within the plans (found in Section 2.0). In addition, conflicts between the plans were highlighted. The narrative for each element also identified opportunities and concerns for the City of Macon that are evident from the plans we reviewed.

After reviewing and documenting common themes, gaps, and conflicts, strategic issues were documented to guide the planning process and lead to recommendations (found in Section 3.0). The review concludes with a discussion of the priorities and next steps in the planning process (found in Section 4.0).

2.0 Plan Summary by Functional Element

2.1 Natural and Cultural Resources

2.11 Desirable Characteristics of a Natural and Cultural Resources Plan

The natural and cultural resources available to Macon residents, including the rich historic character of the area, are extensive. An effective plan should recognize the natural and cultural resources that are integral to community identity, and formulate strategies to enhance and protect sensitive areas. Plans must also be fiscally sound and reflect the vision and assets of the larger community.

2.12 Overview of Plans Reviewed

We reviewed ten plans for their natural and cultural resource impacts:

- Capital Improvements Budget
- Downtown Macon Urban Design Plan and Economic Development Study (NewTown Macon Plan)
- Comprehensive Study of Downtown Industrial Area
- Mercer University Master Plan (Map only)
- NewTown Macon Plan
- MATS 2015 Transportation Plan
- Macon-Bibb County Parks, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan
- Unified Planning Work Program – FY 2001
- Cherokee Heights Sector Year 2005 Land Development Plan
- Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan

While many of the plans briefly cited cultural, historic, and natural resources, the Macon-Bibb County Comprehensive Plan contained the most information about existing facilities, archaeological sites, and cultural districts. The Downtown Industrial District (DID) Plan identified as many as 50 sites having historic significance, including four officially recognized. NewTown Macon Plan identified two redevelopment areas linked to natural and cultural resources, the Ocmulgee Riverfront and Terminal Station. These areas are significant to the future revitalization of Macon. With the exception of the NewTown Macon document, no other plans noted significant action steps or recommendations for the enhancement or protection of natural and cultural resources.

The following is a brief assessment of these documents.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- Increased awareness of the benefits of cultural resources within Macon

- Ocmulgee River and the related riverfront is a recreational asset and redevelopment opportunity
- Downtown Farmers' Market can focus culture and commerce
- Multi-generational scope of natural and cultural resources benefits entire population
- Many cultural assets tie to Macon's musical theme
- Cherry Street Plaza
- Terminal Station redevelopment
- Downtown Industrial District assets and possible renovation
- Greenspace Program – funding and protection of greenspace

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Lack of nighttime activities in the city
- Participation of multiple boards may inhibit a cohesive vision
- Fiscal impacts of acquisition and development of parks and open space
- Partnerships needed to fulfill many of the plan elements

Gaps in Existing Plans

- Many plans make no recommendations
- Funding is not explicit from plan documents
- Commitment to planning efforts tied to uncommitted state and federal dollars
- Prioritization of tasks is unknown
- No maintenance endowment tied to proposed improvements
- No coordination with Governor's Greenspace Program objectives

Conflicts in Existing Plans

- Cost of improvements and/or restoration of facilities are inconsistent among various plans reviewed
- Limited discussion of the value of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources in some plans

2.2 Parks and Open Space

2.2.1 Desirable Characteristics of a Parks and Open Space Plan

The creation of a parks and open space plan should be comprehensive in scope, integrating all elements of leisure services: operations, facilities, management, and improvements. Furthermore, input from the community, staff, stakeholders, users and non-users of the system, leads to a balanced plan and provides a perspective on what the entire community would like to have in its parks and recreation system.

2.2.2 Overview of Plans Reviewed

We reviewed nine documents related to Macon's parks and open space needs:

- Macon-Bibb County Parks, Open Space, and Recreational Master Plan
- Mercer University Master Plan (map only)
- Capital Improvement Budget
- Oglethorpe Homes Hope VI application
- MATS Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025
- Downtown Macon Urban Design Plan and Economic Development Study
- MATS 2015 Transportation Plan
- Comprehensive Study of Downtown Industrial Area
- Cherokee Heights Sector Year 2005 Land Development Plan

Many of the plans were consistent in the promotion of certain parks and recreation opportunities. One project, the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway, received almost unanimous inclusion and support as a needed improvement within the system. However, the estimated price on this improvement varied in the respective plans from \$3.325 million to over \$8 million.

Another improvement receiving consistent support was the upgrade and enhancement of Central City Park in the Downtown Improvement District (DID). If renovation of the district occurs, the park could be a cornerstone of the revitalization of the district, lending to both active and passive recreation experiences.

The following is a brief assessment of these documents.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- Well-maintained, well-attended public facilities
- Good maintenance program proposed for existing and future parks
- Central City Park – the “crown jewel” of community parks in the area
- Ocmulgee River and Heritage Greenway development
- Future school sites developed to contain publicly used park lands
- NewTown Macon Plan for new streetscapes, trails, and plazas
- Cherry Street Plaza to be used as a town gathering place
- Governor's Greenspace Program and funding for preservation

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Funding plans are not explicit
- Many plans have no recommendations
- Fiscal impacts of acquisition and development of parks and open space
- Safety in existing urban parks

- Commitment to existing Parks and Open Space Plan needs substantial funding from local and state sources
- Partnerships needed to fulfill many of the plan elements

Gaps in Existing Plans

- Corporate commitment to the parks and open space plan is unknown
- No maintenance endowment or commitment to operations after improvements are made; tax fund impacts could total over \$1.8 million
- Future park locations are not always site specific especially in the City of Macon; general locations suggested within areas where substandard levels of service exist

Conflicts in Existing Plans

- Funding amounts for certain improvements vary

2.3 Public Facilities

2.3.1 Desirable Characteristics of Public Facilities Plans

Public facility plans should encompass solid waste, stormwater, water/sewer, libraries education, general government administration, and healthcare. Since public facilities and infrastructure typically involve massive physical and financial resources, their plans usually remain separate. In addition, funding sources and implementing agencies for these plans may be different. Like other plans, public facility plans should provide local government the opportunity to inventory public facilities and services and to assess their adequacy for serving current and future population and economic needs. Furthermore, plans should determine future needs and identify goals and outline a strategy for providing the desired level of public facilities and services in the future.

Assessment of Existing Conditions – Plans should include an inventory of existing sewage and wastewater treatment systems, including the location and useful life of existing collection and treatment systems; an inventory of water supply and treatment facilities, including the location and useful life of existing distribution and treatment systems; the location and useful life of existing disposal facilities and the adequacy of the waste collection system; an inventory of local hospitals and public health facilities; an inventory of government buildings, educational facilities, and libraries.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies – Public facility policies should include appropriate levels of service for each function, including physical plant operations, programs/services, personnel, and equipment. Close attention should be paid to federal and state regulatory issues and grant requirements.

Analysis of Needs -This section should include a projection of future public facility demand (level of service and physical distribution) based on projected changes in population, employment, and building trends.

Plan Implementation - Plan recommendations should present a list and map of recommended projects, services, equipment, and personnel in a phased implementation plan. It should identify the related costs, agency responsible for implementation, sources of funding, and a time frame for implementation. Facility locations should be well coordinated and recommendations should include intergovernmental coordination.

2.3.2 Overview of Public Facility Plans Reviewed

We reviewed four documents related to Macon's public facility needs and plans:

- Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan
- Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (1997)
- City of Macon Solid Waste Management Plan Short Term Work Program Update
- Water and Sewer Fees for Bibb County
- Board of Education Bond Capital Outlay Program Progress Report

The following is a brief assessment of the documents reviewed:

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- As of 1997, public and private solid waste collection facilities were sufficient and there was no immediate need for an additional land fill
- The waste management plan includes a plan for curb side recycling and various educational programs with support from Keep Macon Beautiful Commission
- The Solid Waste Management Plan clearly states goals and objectives
- Both water and solid waste plans consider appropriate land use and environmental regulations
- Four major hospitals in the county are nationally ranked health care providers
- Water main installation, with fire protection service, is 95 percent complete within the water authority jurisdiction
- Most of the city and county is served by public water and wastewater treatment system
- The Board of Education report shows 14 schools are receiving capital improvements within Bibb County.

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Development of new water reservoir in Jones County solidifies a long-term relationship with Jones County as a wholesale customer of the Macon Water Authority; Water Authority is considering additional service relationships with adjacent counties
- New water and sewer lines are being constructed on demand in outlying areas of the county
- Existing customers of Water Authority subsidize sewer connection extension costs

- Proposal to re-structure water impact fees to “pay for service” is resisted by Water Authority
- 1994 flood affected current and future water and sewer projections
- No current plan for Bibb County Schools within the city of Macon; only a capital outlay plan for all schools in the county.

Gaps in Existing Plans

- Water Authority Plan does not mention community input
- Improvements tied to scheduled growth in the area; previous plans overestimated growth patterns
- Unclear documentation of projected growth tied to future north and south water distribution and sewer collection
- Funding mechanisms are not shown
- No funding mechanisms or implementation strategies for solid waste goals and objectives shown in the documents
- Some plans needed for review were not available at this time

Conflicts in Existing Plans

- Consistency among future population estimates and growth patterns assumed for planning public facilities

2.4 Transportation

2.4.1 Desirable Characteristics of a Transportation Plan

A good long-range transportation plan addresses all modes of transportation, including highways, parking, urban goods movement, public transportation, railroads, airports, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation needs. The plan should include a four-step process:

Assessment of Existing Conditions - An inventory of facilities in the current system and their condition; current use and levels of service on major facilities; summary of trip characteristics, major trip generators and travel patterns; and an assessment of problems and deficiencies in the existing system.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies - Transportation policies should include appropriate levels of service for each type of transportation facility and evaluation criteria for comparing transportation alternatives.

Analysis of Needs - This section should include a projection of future travel demand based on projected changes in population, employment, land use, and trip characteristics. The needs analysis should include a comparative analysis of feasible multi-modal transportation alternatives and strategies, including an evaluation of the levels of service, and the social, environmental, land use, and financial impacts of system alternatives.

Modern transportation plans require computerized transportation models that allow for the regional analysis of multi-modal alternatives.

Plan Implementation - Plan recommendations should present a list and map of recommended projects in a phased implementation plan that identifies the cost of projects, agency responsible for implementation, sources of funding, and a time frame for implementation. Project recommendations should be accompanied by implementation strategies that address transportation system management, travel demand management, funding strategies, intergovernmental coordination, coordination of transportation recommendations with land use and other public facilities, and a procedure for monitoring plan implementation.

2.4.2 Review of Transportation Plans Reviewed

We reviewed 15 documents related to Macon's transportation needs and plans. Three of these contained comprehensive, countywide, multi-modal transportation plans:

- Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan
- MATS 2015 Transportation Plan
- Draft Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025 (Volumes 1 and 2)

One document addressed highway improvements only:

- Street Cents - Highway Quarterly Review

One document addressed parking needs for a portion of the central business district:

- Downtown Parking Inventory

Four documents concerned only public transportation:

- Transit Management Systems
- Six Year Facilities Plan (Transit)
- Short Term Work Program (Transit)
- Route Analysis and Onboard Survey (Transit)

Two documents addressed needs for transportation funding and planning:

- City of Macon Capital Improvements Budget
- Macon-Bibb County Planning Commission Unified Planning Work Program

Four other special-purpose documents were reviewed because they contained transportation projects in their recommendations:

- Macon-Bibb Parks, Open Space & Recreation Master Plan
- NewTown Macon Plan
- Mercer University Master Plan
- Comprehensive Study of Downtown Industrial Area

By far the most recent and thorough of these documents is the *Draft Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025, Volume 1 and 2*. The majority of our analysis is based upon this document. However, this is a draft plan and does not include useful supportive documentation of the technical analysis and public participation process. Therefore, it is not possible to determine how the consultants arrived at their recommendations and what level of alternative analysis and impact assessment was performed.

The following is a brief assessment of these documents.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- Well-developed system of interstate routes providing excellent regional accessibility for the metropolitan area
- Relatively efficient and affordable public transportation system
- Extensive and up-to-date county-wide plan for \$1.1 billion in long-range highways, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements
- Local sales tax initiative would provide the opportunity to match state and federal funds and significantly improve, expand, and diversify the transportation system
- Federal operating and capital funds present the opportunity to make needed extensions of public transportation service areas and hours of service
- Georgia Passenger Rail Authority proposal to provide commuter rail passenger service to Macon presents the opportunity to improve Macon's regional and statewide multi-modal accessibility, transportation options, and economic development
- The Downtown Industrial District plans will be significantly enhanced by implementation of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The Transportation Plan would improve I-16 interchanges, introduce the Eisenhower Boulevard along the east boundary of the DID with a new interchange, and add two new major arterials (Forsyth/Poplar and South Downtown Connector) running east-west through the property from downtown and Mercer University.

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- The conformity of the Macon metropolitan area to federal Clean Air Act (CAA) standards is pending. The conformity determination may require transportation control measures, including travel demand management as well as re-direction of transportation alternatives away from single occupancy vehicle travel.
- Long term emphasis on major radial highway improvements may increase urban sprawl and hinder downtown redevelopment
- The value of transportation projects will have to be balanced with offsetting impacts on the natural environment and neighborhood quality of life. Several major transportation projects may result in unwanted commercial strip development and other impacts to certain city neighborhoods if not properly addressed and mitigated.

The specifically identified “controversial projects” in the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan include:

- ◆ I-75/Hardeman/Forsyth/Georgia interchange
- ◆ Pio Nono widening
- ◆ Edgewood Avenue widening
- ◆ Forest Hill widening
- ◆ South Downtown Connector Extension, and
- ◆ Vineville Avenue widening
- The local share of capital costs of the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan is \$254 million, but the majority (\$191,240,000) is for safety and maintenance projects, which are not documented in the plan. Local costs are not divided among participants, so it is hard to determine if the city’s share is equitable or feasible. This plan could prove difficult for the city to finance, and the city should carefully review project cost estimates, cost control measures, and revenue projections. Currently, the city’s one percent sales tax generates \$22 million per year.

Gaps in Existing Plans

Overall, the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan seems to be the best developed, researched, and analyzed of the functional plans that we received. However, there are several concerns that remain:

- The plan is predominately a highway funding plan. Since the issue of CAA Conformity is pending, it is very likely that Macon-Bibb County will need to re-tool its transportation plan and provide full multi-modal analysis of public transportation, paratransit, ridesharing, bicycling, and pedestrian options. It will also be necessary to consider land use strategies that coordinate transportation with land use patterns to improve system efficiency and reduce vehicle miles of travel. In addition, there was little evidence of intermodal coordination in the analysis or projects.
- The financial commitment of the planned improvements is very large. The mayor’s office should review documentation of the cost projections, local revenue sources, financial capabilities of the revenue sources, sources of risk to the partners, cash flows, and contingencies that was not available to us.
- Volumes 1 and 2 did not provide an analysis of need, alternatives, or justification for projects
- The phasing and priorities of the plan were not adequately explained in the documents we received
- Several road improvements appear to end at the county line, and intergovernmental coordination may be needed to create logical terminus for these projects
- The long range transportation plan made no reference to coordination with the NewTown Macon proposal to consider increased traffic, access needs, and design features implied by NewTown’s plans
- The transit plans we reviewed do not include needed documentation of the performance of routes or anticipated changes in demand for services

- The parking study covers only a small portion of the downtown area

Conflicts in Existing Plans

We checked for inconsistencies between the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan and the Parks, Open Space & Recreation Master Plan, Mercer University Master Plan, NewTown, Downtown Industrial Development, and CIP. Some examples for further consideration include:

- The Forsyth/Poplar Connector project in the transportation plan would require Poplar Street to be widened to five lanes throughout its length and extended to the proposed Eisenhower Parkway. It would provide a connector from US 41 to the Eisenhower Parkway. This would offer better local access to the Terminal Station area, but may also increase through traffic into downtown. It is unclear how this relates to the NewTown Macon Plan to make Poplar Street a more pedestrian friendly environment for shopping. The median envisioned by the NewTown Macon Plan is inconsistent with the transportation plan's concept of a five-lane highway with a continuous center turn lane. The project is programmed to use \$8.4 million in local funds, but no such funding is indicated in the city's CIP.
- The NewTown Macon Plan includes landscape and pedestrian improvements on MLK, Cherry, Poplar, and Mulberry Streets. In the transportation plan, no landscaping is mentioned, but there would be turning lanes added to MLK at intersections between Cherry and Edgewood. The NewTown Macon plan calls for a landscaped median to be constructed on Riverside Drive. These concepts need to be coordinated with the Long Range Transportation Plan.
- The Mercer University Master Plan calls for closure of College Avenue, a major north-south thoroughfare, as it passes through the campus. We have not seen any traffic study to examine the impact on north-south traffic in the area.

2.5 Housing

2.5.1 Desirable Characteristics of a Housing Plan

A good housing plan addresses the housing stock, its adequacy and suitability for serving the current and future population, and formulates a strategy for the adequate provision of housing for all sectors of the population. The plan should include a four-step process:

Assessment of Existing Conditions - An inventory of the existing housing stock, including number, type, size, age and condition of public and private housing, along with a breakdown of the owner and renter occupied housing with vacancy rates and the costs of housing. The current building trends for type, costs, and locations of new housing should also be reviewed. In addition, the future demand for both publicly assisted and market rate housing should be considered based on population and economic development trends.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies - Policies should include appropriate housing quantity and quality issues, neighborhood preservation, revitalization and supporting amenities, housing structural conditions, and fair housing practices.

Analysis of Needs - Description of actions to address current deficiencies and alternatives for providing for future needs. This section should include a projection of future housing demand (number, type, and cost) based on projected changes in population, employment, and building trends. Discrimination in sales, lending and the rental market should be reviewed.

Plan Implementation - Plan recommendations should present a list and map of recommended projects in a phased implementation plan that identifies the cost of projects, agency responsible for implementation, sources of funding, and a time frame for implementation. Project recommendations should be accompanied by implementation strategies that address at a minimum: funding strategies, intergovernmental coordination, and a procedure for monitoring plan implementation.

2.5.2 Overview of Housing Plans Reviewed

We reviewed ten documents related to Macon's housing needs and plans. Of these plans, two documents addressed housing issues in general for Macon, including:

- Development Trends and Land Demand Analysis
- Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan
- Education Board Capital Outlay Report

Four plans addressed housing issues for specific geographic areas, including:

- Mercer Master Plan
- Sector Report – Cherokee Heights
- Comprehensive Study of Downtown Industrial Area
- Oglethorpe Homes' HOPE VI Application

Three plans addressed affordable/fair housing issues specifically, including:

- Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing
- COM Consolidated Plan: Program Year 2000-2005
- Macon Housing Authority Comprehensive Grant Program

The following is a brief assessment of these documents.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- New student housing and renovations proposed as part of the Mercer Master Plan
- Oglethorpe Homes proposed HOPE VI grant provides aggressive, comprehensive improvement activities, including housing rehabilitation, neighborhood amenities and supporting social services; intended to spur community-wide improvement activities

- Success of single minority female heads of household in the housing market was no different when compared to married couples
- HOME (\$1,023,000) and CDBG (\$3,110,474) funds requested
- Several infill and redevelopment projects planned
- Several neighborhood associations are active in Macon
- The Macon Housing Authority has an excellent record of Comprehensive Grant expenditure

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Public perception of wide-spread substandard/deteriorating housing; nine percent of owner-occupied and 23 percent of renter-occupied homes need repair
- Possible temporary student housing needs during Mercer renovations
- Redevelopment of the Downtown Industrial District may displace residences and/or pose land use conflicts
- New housing trends are moving away from downtown Macon (to the north and west); may increase infrastructure and operating costs to provide services to more dispersed locations
- Racial discrimination in housing market needs attention
- Affordable housing shortage exists and will continue with current trends, especially for low and very low income families
- We were unable to see any planning efforts linking housing and educational facilities.

Gaps in Existing Plans

- Mercer Master Plan (map) did not provide supporting documentation (housing demand figures) related to the new housing construction and renovation
- No provision for housing in the NewTown Macon Plan (opportunity for mixed use developments, live-work units, housing in proximity to employment, affordable housing, increased activity in “after-hours” downtown)

Conflicts in Existing Plans

- Downtown Industrial District may eliminate affordable housing convenient to employment
- Sector Plans allow for more housing units in 2005 than projected by MATS 2015 document
- Household forecasts inconsistent between 2015 Comprehensive Plan and Development Trends and Land Development Analysis reports

2.6 Economic Development

2.6.1 Desirable Characteristics of an Economic Development Plan

A good economic development plan determines both the need and direction of the course of action. Analysis should be thorough enough to provide a community with a realistic action plan rather than a wish list.

According to Georgia Department of Community Affairs, an economic plan should provide local government with the opportunity to inventory and assess the community's economic base, labor force characteristics, and local economic development opportunities and resources; to determine economic needs and goals; and to merge this with information about population trends and characteristics, natural resources, community facilities and services, housing and land use so that a strategy for the economic well-being of the community can be developed.

The development of an economic plan should take a holistic approach and include all aspects of the community, including physical traits, leadership structures, and citizen attitudes.

Assessment of Existing Conditions -

- Area Demographics
- Labor Market Conditions
 - ◆ workforce supply and demand
 - ◆ skills vs. labor needs and wages paid by industry
- Economic Characteristics/Economic Base
- Physical/Locational Conditions/Infrastructure
- Community Services and Quality of Life
- Current Economic Development Programs and Priorities

Goals, Objectives and Policies - It is imperative to document the goals and objectives of the economic development plan. The goals and objectives should reflect the knowledge gained through the assessment of existing conditions and take into account future needs. Economic development policies must be derived from these goals to ensure validity and consistency.

Assessment of Needs - Various statistical methods are appropriate in helping to determine the economic character of the study area. A thorough analysis of study results is necessary to understand the appropriate mix of public and/or private projects that will address community needs. Lack of attention to historical data and future models can lead to gross miscalculations of financial feasibility and ultimately unsuccessful projects. Links to education/job training, quality of life and infrastructure and housing are essential. Additionally, the plan should address the local economy in a regional context.

Plan Implementation - The economic development plan should summarize the assessment of existing conditions and justify the assessment of needs. Policies, goals, and objectives, which are derived from the assessment of needs, should be clearly stated. Project recommendations should be accompanied by implementation strategies that address at a minimum: funding strategies, intergovernmental coordination, and a procedure for monitoring plan implementation. Projects should include a phased implementation plan that identifies the costs, agency responsible for implementation, sources of funding, and a time frame for implementation.

2.6.2 Overview of Economic Development Plans Reviewed

We reviewed five documents related to Macon's economic development. Two of these documents incorporate a small, well-defined physical location, while the other three take a comprehensive view of Bibb County. The plans reviewed were:

- Downtown Macon Urban Design and Economic Development Strategy (NewTown Macon Plan)
- Downtown Industrial District Comprehensive Plan (DID)
- Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan
- City of Macon Economic and Community Development Service Areas
- City of Macon Economic and Community Development Service Areas - Maps

The most recent Comprehensive Plan, the 2025 Draft, was not available for our review. The following is a brief assessment of these documents.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- Interstate access and two airports; possible commuter rail to Atlanta
- Organized and dedicated leadership in downtown
- Strong public/private alliance
- Opportunity for synergies between NewTown Macon, Business Improvement District, and Downtown Industrial District Plans
- Opportunity for adaptive reuse of DID land through a mixed-use project
- High employment/population ratio in Bibb County
- Bibb County is distinguished in the FIRE (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate) industry; main source of local employment
- GEICO Corporate Headquarters, YKK, GE Capital and various other expanding industries:
 - ◆ Paper products
 - ◆ Hardwood flooring
 - ◆ Textiles
 - ◆ Airplane parts and assembly
 - ◆ Packaging

- ◆ Plastics
- ◆ Air conditioning
- Unemployment consistently less than national and state average
- Continued employment diversification
- Steady job growth (2.92% annually from 1979-1993)
- \$784,000,000 annual impact of higher education institutions
- \$252,270,000 Macon hospitality industry
- Strong urban design attributes and historic character
- Retail sales per capita consistently higher than state average

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Capacity and condition of existing infrastructure in downtown to support various projects
- Brownfield liability with DID
- Possible negative impacts of projects on adjacent neighborhoods
- Outdated zoning may not support mixed use development type
- Land use issues relating to massive railroad right-of-ways in Industrial District need to be addressed
- At least seven separate development agencies and authorities make it difficult to coordinate planning efforts
- Possible concern over financial feasibility of DID and NewTown Macon Plan

Gaps in Existing Plans

- Lack of in-depth market research for NewTown Macon Plan
- Projects in NewTown Macon Plan not fully justified by preliminary market research
- Citizen input not apparent in NewTown Macon Plan
- NewTown Macon and DID Plans do not address each other yet plan boundaries are adjacent
- Tax Allocation District does not offer funding for operation and maintenance costs
- Projects in downtown are scattered and need more attention to linkages
- Reliance on downtown tourism revenue needs review
- Comprehensive plan does not differentiate City of Macon from Bibb County
- Comprehensive plan provides analysis of data but does not provide any goals, objectives or policies – no vision presented
- Appropriate housing mix relative to skill level of work force and economic development initiatives not addressed

Conflicts in Existing Plans

None were identified

2.7 Public Safety

2.7.1 Desirable Characteristics of a Public Safety Plan

Public Safety plans typically focus on crime prevention and law enforcement actions. However, a good public safety plan should also address fire/rescue and emergency management. Fire/rescue includes equipment, services, and the response of fire/rescue personnel to emergencies. Emergency management is seldom actually used, but preparation and response plans are needed in the event of a disaster such as a tornado, hurricane, or hazardous materials spill. The plan should include a four-step process:

Assessment of Existing Conditions - An inventory of existing equipment and services should be completed for the law enforcement, fire/rescue and emergency management areas. An inventory of the crime rate by geographic area and by types of crimes is a typical measure for law enforcement. Law enforcement and fire/rescue, more specifically, also use the response time from call for service to arrival on the scene as a service indicator. Fire/rescue service is also measured by the ISO rating. Since emergency management plans are seldom used, the presence of a preparation and response plan can be used as an assessment of existing conditions, as well as the response to previous emergency management cases.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies – Public safety policies should include appropriate levels of service for each area of public safety, including response time, programs/services, personnel and equipment.

Analysis of Needs - Description of actions to address current deficiencies and alternatives for providing for future needs. This section should include a projection of future public safety demand (level of service and physical distribution) based on projected changes in population, employment, and building trends.

Plan Implementation - Plan recommendations should present a list and map of recommended projects, services, equipment and personnel in a phased implementation plan that identifies the related costs, agency responsible for implementation, sources of funding, and a time frame for implementation. Recommendations should also include intergovernmental coordination with the county sheriff and a procedure for monitoring plan implementation.

2.7.2 Overview of Public Safety Plans Reviewed

We reviewed four documents related to Macon's public safety needs and plans.

- Capital Improvements Budget
- Oglethorpe Homes HOPE VI application
- Mercer Master Plan
- Macon-Bibb County 2015 Comprehensive Plan

The following is a brief assessment of these documents.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- \$2.057 million planned for law enforcement capital improvements, \$1.002 million planned for fire department improvements, and \$53,725 in emergency management in 2000 and 2001
- The Oglethorpe Homes HOPE VI plan proposes revitalization efforts that will in turn help reduce crime in the community
- A new police station is planned on the Mercer University campus master plan
- Police Department offers preventative educational programs in neighborhoods and schools

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Significant capital improvement plans will produce corresponding operating costs and planning needs
- NewTown Macon Plan relies on private security and does not plan for improved capacity of police or fire/rescue services to address the increased exposure
- Public perception of lack of police presence downtown and in neighborhoods
- Downtown crime and substance abuse is a threat to development and downtown revitalization

Gaps in Existing Plans

- 2015 Comprehensive Plan does not address future needs or facility improvements related to public safety
- Police calls for service and response times not provided
- Crimes by physical location not identified
- Emergency management preparation and response plans for disasters not mentioned

Conflicts in Existing Plans

- Mercer University police station is not identified in the city CIP. It is unclear whether this is intended to be a campus police station or city police substation

Please note that Public Safety in Macon has been identified as a high priority for future planning efforts. To this end, a public safety expert, Dr. Robert Friedmann of Georgia State University has been retained as part of this larger planning effort to study the existing state of affairs and recommend public safety improvements for the City of Macon.

2.8. Human Services

2.8.1 Desirable Characteristics of a Social Services Plan

A good social services plan presents opportunities to improve the effectiveness of programs sponsored by both public and private agencies who serve an array of needs of members of society who are most likely to be at-risk or socially dependent:

- Homeless persons
- Persons and families in poverty
- At-risk children, especially children living in impoverished households
- At-risk teens, especially pregnant girls, unwed mothers, and delinquents
- Single parents
- Aging people
- Persons with physical or mental handicaps
- Other groups who are vulnerable to discrimination

The primary components of social service plans vary with the locality and the situation. For purposes of this report, social services do not include physical health, crime prevention, job training and unemployment services, and education. Typical components of social service plans may include:

- Nutrition
- Socialization and recreation
- Day care
- Mental health and mental retardation assistance
- Prevention and treatment of alcohol and drug abuse
- Prevention and treatment of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Transportation for special needs population to jobs, health care, and other services
- Pre-natal care
- Emergency financial aid
- Temporary and transitional housing
- Shelter and counseling for battered and abused women and children.

Social service plans should follow a process like other plans, including the steps of:
Assessment of Existing Conditions - Inventories of current programs and services, profiles of the agencies that operate the programs and clients served, and the spatial distribution of the at-risk populations of various at-risk groups. The assessment of existing conditions also examines the accessibility of the services in terms of spatial distribution, cost, and eligibility.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies - Social service plans often stress the need for greater accessibility and more coordination of the service delivery system through holistic treatment and case management.

Analysis of Needs - Evaluation of current service delivery and projections of the changes in demographic profiles of the population and resources available that will influence the type and demand for various services.

Plan Implementation - Lists of program changes, changes in services, service providers or partnerships needed to meet future needs and strategies for improving the accessibility and effectiveness of current programs. Strategies usually address both prevention and treatment.

2.8.2 Overview of Social Services Plans Reviewed

We reviewed the following documents related to Macon's social services needs and plans:

- Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing
- City of Macon Consolidated Plan: Program Years 2000-2005
- Oglethorpe Homes HOPE VI application
- Long-Range Transportation Plan for 2025
- Six Year Facilities Plan (Transit)
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Macon Housing Authority Comprehensive Grant Plan
- Short Term Work Program - Transit

By far, the most information was found in The Consolidated Plan: Program Years 2000-2005, where social service needs were discussed and a list of supportive services and social service agencies was provided. A list of strategies, a program priority list, and a budget were included in the Consolidated Plan. The most extreme social needs were identified as substance abuse treatment, transitional housing, and case management.

The following eleven target areas were identified for Economic and Community Development Department programs:

Bellevue	Cherokee Heights	West Macon
Intown	Lynmore Estates	Montpelier
Pleasant Hill	South Macon	Tindale Heights
Unionville	Village Green	

The following is a brief assessment of these documents as a whole.

Strengths and Opportunities Identified in Plans

- Hope VI grant application provides opportunity for more holistic service environment for persons living in publicly-assisted housing
- Federal operating assistance grants for public transportation provide opportunity for expanded transit and paratransit services and containment of fare increases

Issues and Concerns for the City of Macon

- Racial discrimination in housing, lending, insurance, and employment opportunity
- Concentrations of poor, aged, and disabled persons in the city's housing and neighborhoods. Of 106,612 persons in the City of Macon in 1990, approximately

33,090 (30 percent) were living below the poverty line, and 9,262 were children. Concentration of poverty increases the number of at-risk persons and undermines the local resources to assist the needy

- Concentration of drug abusers in city
- Growing perceptions of crime and drug abuse in city neighborhoods
- Low quality of education
- Inadequate public awareness
- Inadequate inter-agency coordination and cooperation
- Inadequate funding

Gaps in Existing Plans

- Among the plans we reviewed there is clear indication that poverty, race discrimination, homelessness, and drug abuse are recognized problems in the City of Macon. However, none of these plans offered a comprehensive scope, analytical approach, or coordinated means for addressing social service issues in Macon and Bibb County. The Consolidated Plan indicated that there had been neighborhood meetings to discuss social service needs such as drug treatment, youth programs, and day care of public housing tenants. The CIP shows that the city gives financial support to the Middle Georgia Community Food Bank, the ECD-Housing Partnership, ECD-Minimum Housing Program, Macon-Bibb County Drug Program, and the Transit Authority. However, the level of funding for non-housing forms of social programs and services appears to be very low given the apparent need. It is not clear from the plans we reviewed who has accountability for preparing and implementing plans for coordinated delivery of social service programs in Bibb County.

Conflicts in Existing Plans

- We are not aware of any conflicts among the existing plans.

3.0 Strategic Issues to Guide Macon's Planning Process

The review of the plans presented thus far brings us to three general issues. The first pertains to the City of Macon as a geographic locale. The second involves the planning process and the plans themselves, and the third considers the city government as a player in the planning process. These findings are based only on a review of the planning documents listed earlier. Our analysis, therefore, should be considered with appropriate reservation as yet there has been no public input or review by city officials. That input will be garnered in upcoming phases.

3.1 Strategic Position of the City of Macon

The location of the City of Macon gives it a comparative advantage over most of the mid-sized cities in central and south Georgia. It is centrally located near the middle of the state and at the convergence of major interstate highways, railroads, and waterways. It also has a major convention center, two civil airfields and is the nearest major city to Warner Robins Air Force Base. Economically, the City of Macon has more jobs than households and employment continues to grow faster than households do. Consequently, Macon is the center of a relatively large commuting shed. Employment is particularly strong in the professional areas of finance, insurance, and real estate.

The city has strong political and business leadership and is a regional center of art, history, culture, higher education, and medical care. All of these assets should give Macon a firm foundation for economic health and quality of life.

This is also an important time for Macon. The city has new mayoral leadership and is on the brink of new opportunities and challenges. These include: the consideration of a new, aggressive transportation plan funded by a special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST), the likely designation as a major destination in the state's new commuter rail program, and the proposition to create a new Tax Allocation District (TAD) and Business Improvement District (BID) for the downtown business district. The downtown plan associated with these initiatives would be anchored by real estate development and public improvements proposed by the NewTown Macon Board of Directors. Their vision offers to provide a missing theme to unify downtown. If successful, it could create a more vibrant downtown and attract middle-class suburbanites and tourists, thus creating a new source of economic activity for downtown. It would do this by connecting the three major anchors downtown—the riverfront, the future commuter rail terminal, and downtown retail and entertainment—with attractive pedestrian-oriented streetscape and landscape improvements. The downtown plan is similar in concept to other successful proposals that have been advanced in places like Chattanooga, TN, Augusta, Columbus, and Decatur, GA.

Despite this exciting potential, the city is faced with some obstacles to improving itself. From the plans we have reviewed, the region's concentration of poverty, dependency, homelessness, substandard housing, and crime appears to be centered in several sectors within the City of Macon. Forecasts prepared for the Macon-Bibb County area show relatively slow growth in households and jobs for the next 25 years. The plans we reviewed suggest a likely continuation of historic trends of dispersed suburban development oriented to major highways and away from downtown.

Figure 1 maps the forecast growth in households and employment in each planning sector for the period 1998-2025 according to the Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission. The map includes the City of Macon, Bibb County, and the southern portion of Jones County. The map was prepared in stages: First, the city limits were colored pink. Then we applied the color yellow to all sectors that would add at least 1,000 new households by 2025. Next we applied the color blue to all sectors that were projected to add at least 1,000 new jobs by 2025. The overlapping areas that were projected to receive rapid growth in both households and employment appear as green (yellow over blue). Purple areas (blue over pink) are areas inside the city with employment growth.

The patterns of this map paint a future of vigorous growth in the suburbs of Bibb County. The largest growth is occurring north and west of the city in the sectors of North Macon and Jones County. There are, however, other growing sectors south of the city in the direction of Warner Robins. All told, of the 7,500 new households expected to locate in Bibb County by 2025, about 6,500 are to be absorbed in the five suburban sectors of North Macon, Wildwood, Tobesofkee, Hartley Bridge, and Airport. Meanwhile, household growth in the city is forecast to be virtually stagnant. Out of the 15 planning sectors in the city, none show any significant household growth.

Likewise, the vast majority of employment growth is unbalanced and skewed to the suburbs. The principal job growth areas are projected to be the suburban sectors on the north, south, and east of the City of Macon. While 6 out of the 10 suburban planning sectors are showing strong employment growth, only the east side of the city is projected to receive significant employment growth. Figure 1 shows these trends graphically. The vast majority of the City of Macon appears pink—meaning no significant growth in jobs or households in the next 25 years. Only 5 of Macon's 15 planning sectors are colored purple (blue over red). Those are sectors that are projected to have significant employment growth over the next 25 years, but very few new households.

If the forecast trends prevail, the City of Macon will find itself losing ground in very significant ways to the spiraling growth in the suburban ring around the city. The area's households, jobs, tax base, and prosperity appear to be becoming more and more concentrated in the suburbs. Unless action is taken, development will continue to sprawl outside of Macon.

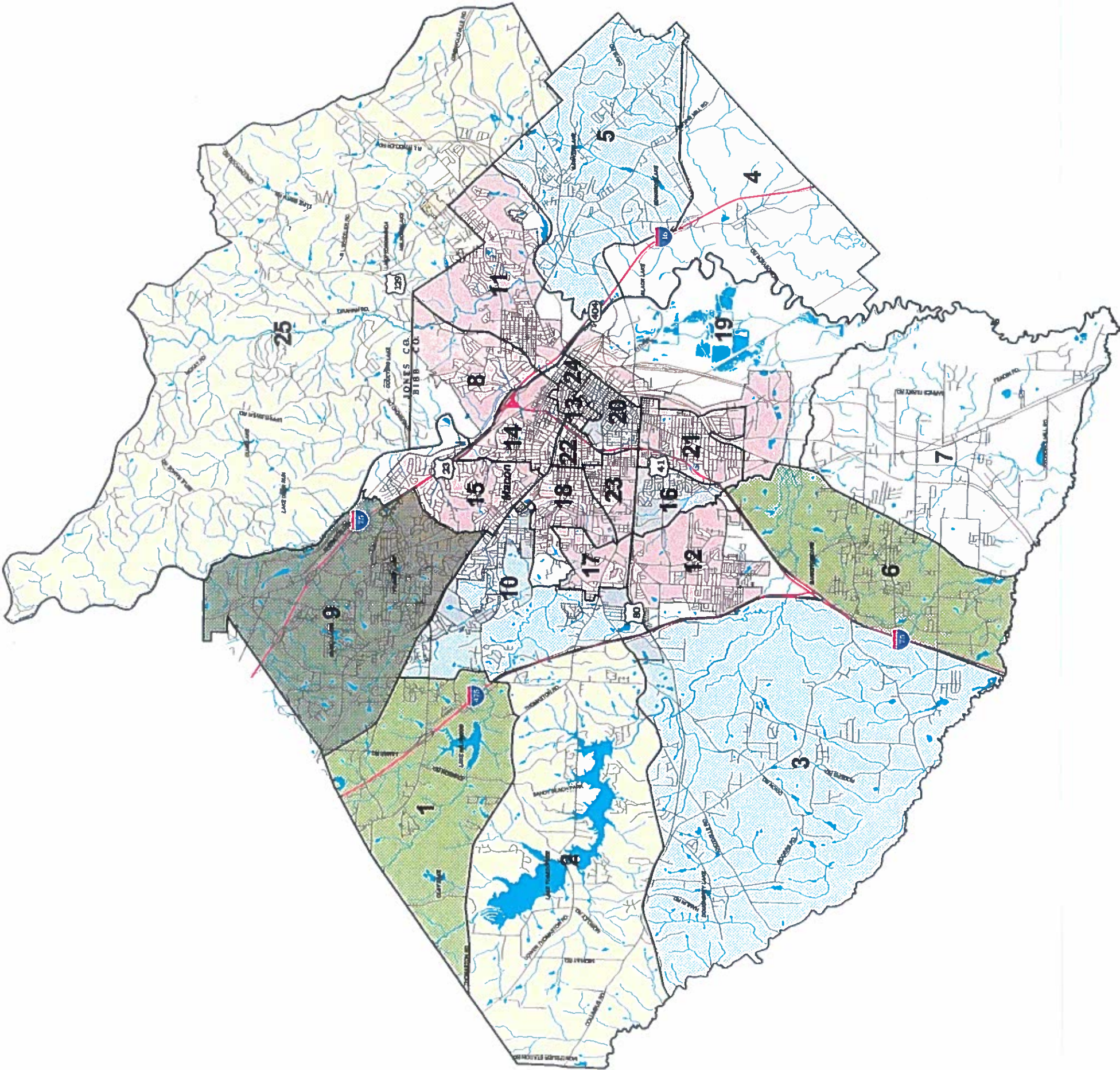
Macon-Bibb County Growth Areas 1998-2025

Legend:

- Macon City Boundary
- Roads
- Interstates
- Rail Lines
- Rivers
- Planning Sector Boundary
- Lakes
- Macon City Limits
- Growth Areas
 - 1000+ Households
 - 1000+ Jobs
 - 1000+ Households/1000+ Jobs
 - Largest Employment Change

Planning Sectors

1. Wildwood
2. Tobesofkee
3. Lizella/Fulton Mill
4. Cochran Short Rt.
5. Ocmulgee east
6. Hartley Bridge
7. Airport
8. North Highlands
9. North Macon
10. Idle Hour
11. East Macon
12. Bloomfield
13. Historic district
14. Pleasant Hill/Riverside
15. Pierce/Vineville
16. Westgate
17. West Macon
18. Cherokee Heights
19. Industrial
20. Edgewood
21. South Macon
22. Montpelier
23. Unionville
24. CBD
25. South Jones Co.



3.2 Overview of the Existing Planning Process

Overall, it appears that Macon and Bibb County have a progressive and successful planning alliance that has resulted in a broad array of excellent plan documents. From what we have been given to review, it appears that the scope of the plans is generally adequate, with some important exceptions.

Among the very largest capital outlays and operating expenditures in Macon-Bibb County are those made by the Water Authority, the Board of Education, and the City Police Department and the Macon-Bibb County Fire Department. These are also agencies with plans that we have been unable to identify or review. Although there are short term capital and operating budgets for these agencies, we have not found any planning documents that analyze current deficiencies, project future needs, explore alternatives to providing improved service, and justify the expenditures that have been programmed. This is in contrast to the MATS planning process that is very analytical and detailed.

There are several shortcomings that appear among many of the documents that we have reviewed:

- Need for more spatial detail - Many of the plans, notably the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, are prepared with county-wide information that was too coarse to enable us to distinguish among needs in the city and needs in the county, or in any geographic sector. An exception is the housing conditions inventoried in the Comprehensive Plan and the household and employment projections presented in the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Need for more analysis and alternatives - Many of the plans, including most elements of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, recommended capital projects based on a review of current conditions. These plans should be based on analysis of future needs, taking into account projected changes in the number, location, and characteristics of users in the future. Recommendations should also be based on analysis of system and project alternatives. Consideration of alternatives means there has been discussion of differing points of view in the community and there are “back-up” plans available if the preferred plan proves to be not feasible in the implementation process.
- Lack of coordination of plans - Plans for different functions such as water, transportation, parks, and fire suppression should be coordinated with one another, and plans for specific areas should be coordinated with these system-level plans and with one another. Plan coordination addresses the following issues:
 - ◆ Conflicts - plan coordination helps to resolve differences over how, when, and where facilities or services are to be provided before these differences block implementation.
 - ◆ Interactions - there are often synergies between plans, such as the impact of building new roads on the location and timing of water lines, stormwater drainage, and fire stations, that affect the timing, location, or design of projects.

- ◆ Targeting - often plans benefit from strategic co-location of facilities to allow more economic construction, to provide increased convenience for users, and to guide private investment and development decisions for growth management.
- ◆ Implementation partnerships - coordination of plans across jurisdictions or agencies that provide related services is a good way to gain cooperation in funding and design that will pay benefits in building partnerships needed during plan implementation.
- Fragmented analysis of financial implications - Money is one of the most important resources to plan implementation. However, the financial aspects of plans require as much, or more, coordination as the technical aspects. It was not clear from our review of the plans for the various autonomous agencies in the region what the total financial impacts would be or whether plans were financially feasible. Some examples of such financial concerns would be:
 - ◆ whether the sales tax proposed by MATS will interact with the current Local Option Sales Tax Program
 - ◆ whether the NewTown Macon TAD will cause unfunded liabilities for the city's General Fund
 - ◆ whether the success of the NewTown Macon Plan depends on the approval of both the revenues from the TAD and the BID tax increase
- Accountability for action - comprehensive plans, sector plans, and system plans that are based on thorough technical analysis need to have the same thorough analysis for implementation. We noted many plans that lacked specific recommendations, lacked assignment to a specific agency that would be responsible for the plan, lacked necessary priorities or time frames for implementation, and lacked a feasible funding sources. These plans may become ineffective without making the appropriate implementing agents accountable for achieving the plan's recommendations.

NewTown Macon Plan

The development picture that the NewTown planners depict would be the needed antidote for stagnant downtown growth and suburban sprawl. However, in terms of public policy, the financing methods could have liabilities, if not handled with great care.

The implementation of NewTown Macon would hinge on a Tax Allocation District (TAD), a relatively new innovation in public finance that has had limited application in Georgia. It is designed to reserve all the yet unrealized additions to the tax digest to pay for development and public improvements that may, or may not, attract daytime visitors from the suburbs and out of town. The real estate development plan does not appear justified by the published statistics of market absorption, population, and the economic base in Macon-Bibb County.

NewTown Macon marketing and security would be financed by an additional special purpose tax levy on the downtown businesses through a second vehicle, a Business Improvement District (BID) that would have the dedicated use of additional tax millage on commercial property. However, it appears that the current General Fund budget would have to pay for the additional city services such as sanitation, drainage, maintenance, police and fire protection that may result after the NewTown improvements are constructed. This part of the financing plan is unstated and needs to be investigated to determine if it can be absorbed by the general fund.

3.3 Role of City Government in the Planning Process

The City of Macon is one of many agents in the planning process for the metropolitan area. The Unified Planning Work Program prepared by the Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission said this about the planning process:

Currently the growth and development of Macon-Bibb County are affected by at least ten separate decision-making authorities, each having its own independent growth plan or vision of development goals for our community.

<i>The City</i>	<i>The County</i>
<i>Urban Development Authority</i>	<i>Industrial Authority</i>
<i>Water Authority</i>	<i>Transit Authority</i>
<i>Hospital Authority</i>	<i>Board of Education</i>
<i>Housing Authority</i>	<i>Planning and Zoning Commission</i>
<i>Coliseum Authority</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission</i>

The city can and should play the lead role in the planning process in Macon. The city has a major stake in the outcome of these plans because, as explained above, it needs to both attract new growth and at the same time maintain a quality of life in both its neighborhoods and business districts. Right now the city has had relatively stagnant economic base, while the majority of growth is occurring north and west of the city in the suburbs. Besides the transportation plan, the plans for major public infrastructure, such as water, sewer fire, and police services, would be the most important in the decision to either reinforce or counter this trend. In addition, the Board of Education likely has the largest commitment of local tax dollars and has a great deal of impact on the quality of life that drives growth in an information economy.

The city can influence the outcome of these plans in four important ways:

First, the city needs to work with its constituent neighborhoods, institutions, and businesses to develop an overall vision that identifies the unique concerns of city residents. This vision should guide the city's priorities and actions with regard to the many plans with which it has been presented.

Second, the city can become more informed about the implications of these plans on the quality of life for city residents and let its views be known. The city can and should evaluate the neighborhood impacts of planned improvements in the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the NewTown Macon plan, and the plans of the Board of Education and the Water Authority. The city needs to seek necessary resolution of its concerns before these plans move forward.

Third, the city can seek more coordination and partnerships among the plans and the agencies that produce these plans. One way to do this might be for the city to work with the Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission to review and update the Comprehensive Plan, Short Term Work Program, Unified Planning Work Program, and the city's Capital Improvements Program to coordinate, consolidate, and prioritize the projects found in the many plans that already exist. New arrangements may be needed to address coordination issues in human services, economic development, and public safety.

Fourth, the city needs to review its financial capacity and financial commitments across the board. The Capital Improvements Program contains only those capital projects funded directly by the city. However, it appears that many other agencies have discretion over large capital outlays that influence the growth and development of the city. They also may contain capital projects that will ultimately depend on city funds for upkeep. The city and county may want to consider creating a comprehensive budgeting framework to evaluate the fiscal impacts of these projects, their impact on growth patterns, and an overall priority list for all these projects.

4.0 Next Steps and Strategies for the City of Macon

Based solely on the review of the plans submitted to us, we believe the City of Macon should consider the following actions:

4.1 Completion of Current Planning Process

The city should complete its current planning process with community consultations that will lead to the preparation of a unified vision for the City of Macon with input from the city's businesses, institutions, and community-based organizations. The vision should include an action plan that addresses the most important projects and partnerships needed in the next three years to take the initial steps needed to implement the vision.

4.2 Comprehensive Plan Update

Following the development of the strategic plan, the city should support preparation of a new Comprehensive Plan that uses the goals, objectives, and policies developed by the strategic plan in a long-range framework for 2025 in a way that provides for more comprehensive coordination that exists today. The new Comprehensive Plan should include an update of the action plan created in the strategic plan, and establish clear timeframes, accountable implementation agents, feasible funding sources, cooperative partnerships, and a program for periodically monitoring plan implementation and scheduling plan updates.

4.3 Action Items for Functional Elements

Other action items are derived from a review of existing plans, identifying steps the city should take in response to our review:

4.3.1 Natural and Cultural Resources

- Pursue funding to implement the city portion of the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway
- Partner with others public/private agencies in the redevelopment of Terminal Station
- Work with the parks department in the redevelopment of Cherry Street Plaza
- Pursue strategies within the Downtown Industrial District plan using realistic and measurable objectives focused on leveraging partnerships with other public and private entities

4.3.2 Open Space and Recreation

- Explore creative financing tools to fund an Alternative Transportation System (ATS) plan and ultimately create a countywide bikeways, trails, sidewalks, and greenways system (appears funding is in FY 2000 budget)
- Fund and construct the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway
- Revitalize the city's historical properties such as Rose Hill (appears partial funding in FY 2000 budget)
- Review the feasibility of expanding Central City Park; partnering with the private sector and NewTown
- Implement Downtown streetscape plans, including Poplar Street Plaza, Cherry Street Plaza, and City Hall Civic Plaza.
- The city should move quickly to work with the county to prepare a Greenspace Program that is integrated with its current Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Master Plan and CIP, and ensure its eligibility to continue to receive the maximum available amount of state funds for the preservation of Greenspace in Macon.

4.3.3 Public Facilities and Services

- Review costs and subsidy levels related to water and sewer connection fees and determine whether subsidization at the current level should be maintained

4.3.4 Transportation

- Several major transportation projects have been designated "controversial projects" and may result in unwanted commercial strip development and other impacts to certain city neighborhoods if not properly addressed and mitigated. The specifically identified "controversial projects" in the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan include:

- ◆ I-75/Hardeman/Forsyth/Georgia interchange
- ◆ Pio Nono widening
- ◆ Edgewood Avenue widening
- ◆ Forest Hill widening
- ◆ South Downtown Connector Extension, and
- ◆ Vineville Avenue widening

The city should work proactively with the Macon-Bibb County Planning Commission to establish corridor plans with community input to review the land use implications of these projects, coordinate with the NewTown Macon Plan, and explore transportation alternatives and design mitigations to resolve community concerns.

- The local share of capital costs of the 2025 Long Range plan is \$254 million, and the majority (\$191,240,000) is for safety and maintenance projects that are not

documented in the plan. The city should carefully review project justifications, priorities, cost estimates, cost control measures, and revenue projections. This review will ensure that the city's expectations and funding obligations can be met.

- The 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan is predominately a highway funding plan. However, because of the proposed commuter rail terminal and the need for CAA Conformity is pending, the transit system needs to be re-directed to support commuter rail and clean air. The city should proactively seek federal funding to assist the Macon Transit Authority and Macon-Bibb County Planning Commission to plan a much more extensive system of bus routes designed to increase service to city neighborhoods and to form a timed-transfer node connecting most bus routes with Terminal Station. The same review should review parking policies and improve pedestrian facilities in areas along bus routes and re-tool land use and zoning to provide for overlay districts in transit service areas that encourage Transit Oriented Design measures.
- The city should work with the Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission to undertake a sector study around Mercer University to examine the traffic and safety impacts of closing College Street. The same study should review impacts on neighborhoods, such as traffic, housing and on-street parking.

4.3.5 Housing

- The city should work proactively with the Macon Housing Authority, neighborhood associations, and Mercer University to ensure adequate, affordable, and fair housing opportunities and promote the rehabilitation and redevelopment of substandard housing.
- The city should develop a fair housing public education campaign to provide information on housing rights and identify mechanisms for addressing potential fair housing law violations.
- The city should pursue innovative housing strategies, such as infill redevelopment in the central city and mixed use development in NewTown Macon, to reverse the current pattern of residential decentralization the north and west.

4.3.6 Economic Development

Without further analysis, it is inappropriate to suggest specific projects aimed at economic development. To understand the right combination of policies and projects for optimum economic growth, we will continue our scope of work by conducting stakeholder interviews and community consultations. After we have gathered this additional information and performed further analysis, it can be determined which combination of NewTown, Downtown Industrial District or other project solutions are appropriate for Macon. The culmination of this data will result in the economic development section of the strategic plan for Macon.

4.3.7 Public Safety

- Through its comprehensive planning process, the city should identify long term public safety capital improvements needs, as well as the corresponding operating costs and planning needs.
- The city should proactively plan for the needed expansion of public safety to ensure adequate levels of service in areas of proposed development or rapid growth.
- The city should collect additional data on the adequacy and effectiveness of public safety service delivery, including police service and response times and crimes by physical location.

4.3.8 Human Services

The city should create a Human Services Coalition to prepare a comprehensive human service plan to address the issues of increased funding, service coordination, racial discrimination, poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, and other related issues. The goal of the Human Services Coalition should be to form coordinated partnerships with local public and non-profit agencies, including United Way, to set out an Action Plan for each of the eleven target areas identified in the Consolidated Plan.

4.3.9 Land Use

Land use planning is not in the list of areas that we were to address in the Strategic Plan. However, we feel that the land use plan is the “playing field” in which the other system plans, such as water, wastewater, transportation, parks, etc., are coordinated. Therefore, the land use planning process needs attention to implement many of the recommendations that we have made.

- The land use plan should address the impacts of planned capital improvements on growth management objectives. The city and county need to refine land use policies and implementation strategies to manage growth and discourage sprawl in the county. In particular, the land use plan should be used to identify a series of growth and redevelopment target areas in which public improvements such as water, sewer, transportation, and parks are focused and land use policies are established to encourage growth in these locations and discourage it in other, less well served areas. In addition, the land use plan and zoning ordinance should be revised to encourage highway corridor management and Transit Oriented Design overlays in which zoning and land development design standards are coordinated with new, multi-modal transportation services.

- In addition, the land use plan needs to be refined and coordinated through updating the sector plans and coordinating land uses city-wide with the plan for NewTown Macon

4.3.10 Integrated Capital Improvements Program and Comprehensive Planning

Financial planning is not in the list of areas that we were to address in the Strategic Plan. However, we recommend that the city Finance Director work with the Macon-Bibb County Planning Commission, Water Authority, and other autonomous agencies and play an active part in the planning process.

- The Finance Director should take the lead in coordinating the Capital Improvements Program with the Comprehensive Plan, Short Term Work Program, MATS plan, water and sewer plans, Parks, Open Space and Recreation Plan, and others into a unified financial document for city capital projects. The Finance Director should budget related costs for maintenance and operations of capital improvements, regardless of funding sources. A unified Capital Improvements Program and Short Term Work Program should be designed together as the implementation mechanism for the Comprehensive Plan. This would mean that projects in the CIP emerge from the analysis of the Comprehensive Plan, not from department-by-department lists generated for the budget cycle and unconnected from a comprehensive planning process. Ideally, when such lists are made they should first be submitted, analyzed and approved in the Comprehensive Plan before they are placed in the CIP. The Macon-Bibb County Planning Department should :
 - ◆ examine alternatives at the system level and the project level before projects are placed in the CIP
 - ◆ establish target areas for coordinated funding of mutually supportive public improvements and land development or redevelopment
 - ◆ examine financial capacity of the city and county for funding both capital and maintenance and operating costs
- A specific financial concern from our review is the issue of the financial accounting of revenues and expenditures for NewTown Macon with the Tax Allocation District and Business Improvements District. We would expect the planned capital projects will also increase the city's costs of police, sanitation, drainage, and maintenance. The BID may be one way to fund these costs. However, it may not have sufficient resources to do this, as it is currently structured. We recommend that the city meet with these groups immediately to derive an estimate of the impacts of the NewTown Macon Plan on traffic, stormwater, maintenance, and city operating costs, and decide on an equitable allocation of all of the costs—not just the capital costs.