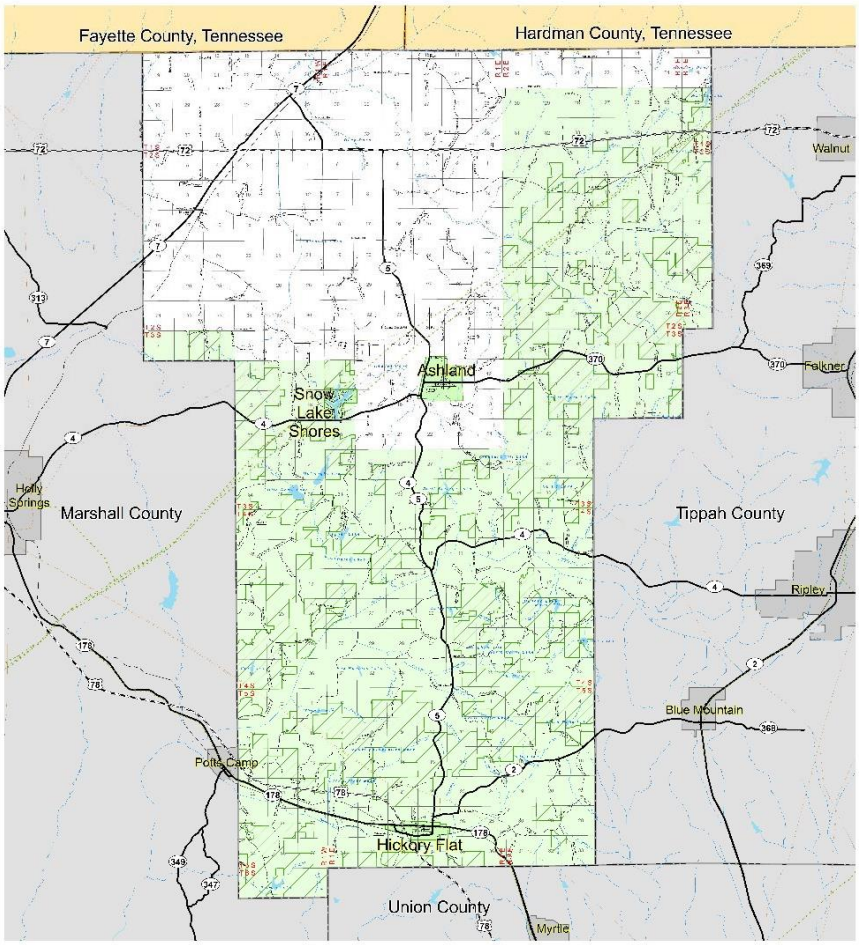
Comprehensive Plan (2019-2039)

Benton County, Mississippi



Board of Supervisors:
Chris Shoup, District 1
Alonzo Tucker, District 2
James Lowry, District 3
Tommy Fortner, District 4
Craig Briscoe, District 5

Marlene McKenzie, Chancery Clerk
John S. Farese, County Attorney

Adopted June 3, 2019

Prepared by:

SLAUGHTER &ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A Comprehensive Plan is used by cities and counties to establish a vision for the community. Communities are constantly evolving; economic conditions and consumer development patterns have the means to transform communities, sometimes so fast the communities do not realize it is happening. This document, if adopted and put into action, can be a proactive measure that clearly defines where and how a community progresses.

Comprehensive planning is also a tool used to anticipate future growth and development and to strategize for future decisions and resources in response to this growth. This document can serve as a reference for zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and any maps or official amendments that accompany these ordinances. When major changes are occurring or are requested within a community, the Comprehensive Plan should assist elected officials in a direction they are prepared and excited to move towards.

COMPONENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The State of Mississippi Legislature defines minimum requirements for a Comprehensive Plan (Mississippi Code § 17-1-1). The Benton County's Comprehensive Plan addresses each of the following and elaborates further in the chapters to come.

- *Goals and Objectives* are prepared for a long range planning period of 20 to 25 years. They should include but are not limited to matters regarding residential, commercial and industrial development; open space and recreation; street or road improvements; and community facilities.

- *Land Use Plan*, either in map or policy form, outlines the proposed distribution of land uses for residences, commerce, industry, recreation, and public/quasi-public facilities. Further information should be included to clearly define each proposed land use.

- *Transportation Plan* should be represented in map form and identify the proposed functional classifications for existing and proposed roadways. This plan should cover the same land area as defined by the *Land Use Plan* and cover the same planning period as the *Goals and Objectives*. Functional classifications for roadways include arterial, collector, and local.

- *Community Facilities Plan* addresses issues such as the following: housing, schools, public safety, parks and recreation, public buildings and facilities, utilities, and drainage.

FINDINGS AND ASSESSMENTS

1) Significant Finding – The County should adopt and be consistent and diligent in enforcing land use controls.
   Recommendations:
   - Adopt and enforce an appropriate Zoning Ordinance and Official Zoning Map.
   - Adopt and enforce an appropriate Subdivision Regulations.
   - Adopt and enforce an appropriate Junk Automobile and Unkempt Property Ordinance.
   - Adopt and enforce building, construction, fire and other development codes, as appropriate.
   - Adopt and enforce other land use controls; examples include Sign Ordinance, Architectural Design Standard, and Landscape Ordinance, et cetera.

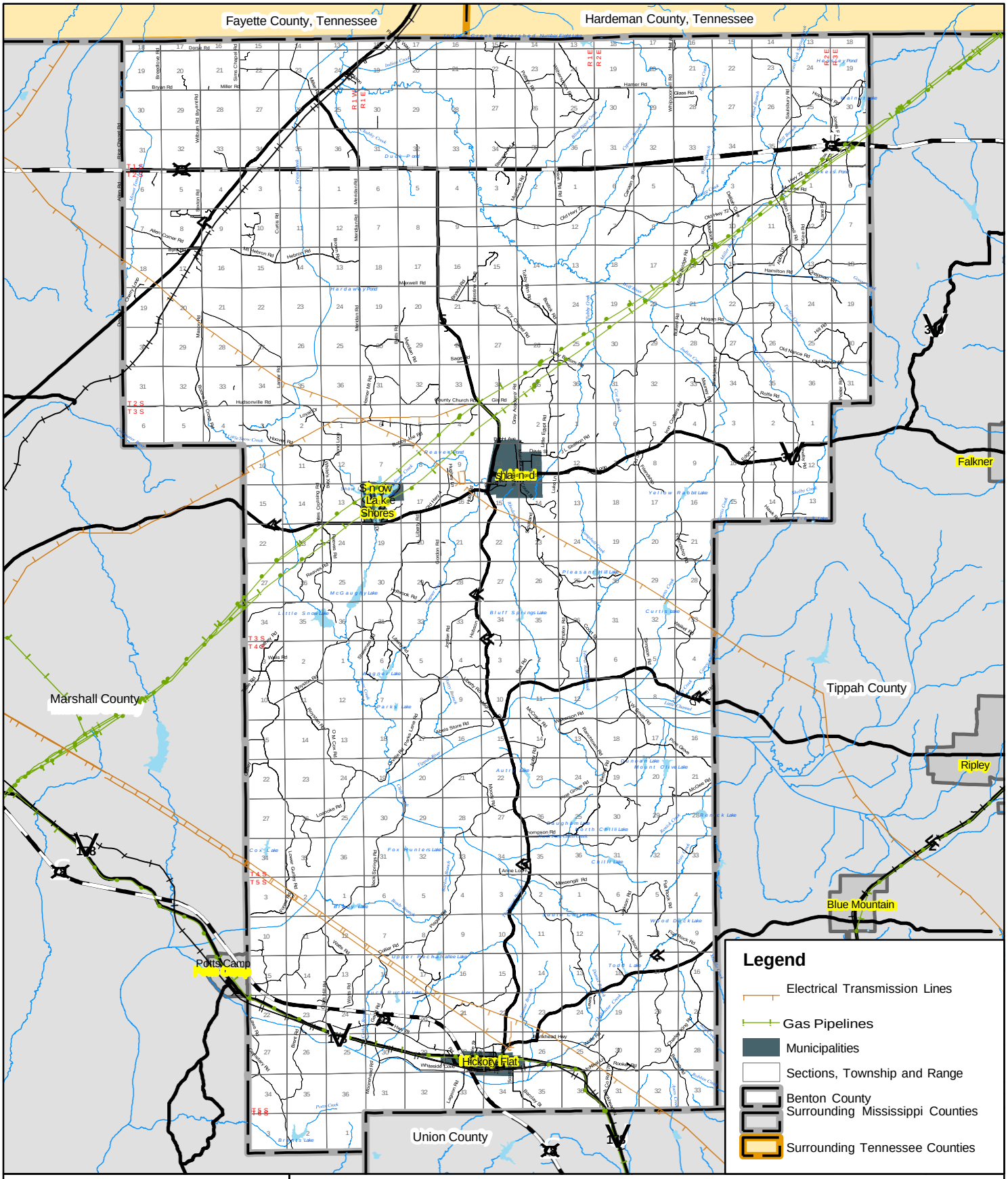
- Establish a Planning Commission to provide the Board of Supervisors with recommendations in regards to land use control ordinances.
- Establish a planning and code enforcement staff, as county employees or consultants, to work with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisions.

2) Significant Finding – Promote economic development through improvements and development.
   Recommendations:
   - Identify lands suitable for industrial development and assemble land into a industrial park.
   - Work with the appropriate utility companies to expand gas, water and three-phase electric to the United States Highway 72 corridor.
   - Research and apply for funding to establish an industrial park and spec buildings in the industrial park.
   - Work with school district to offer vocational training in high school that will attract employers to Benton County.
   - Work with school district to ensure the education system is of the highest quality possible.

3) Significant Finding – Public facilities improvements are needed.
   Recommendations:
   - Adopt and enforce a minimum road cross section.
   - Work to acquire right-of-way and improve the current county road network.
   - Establish a volunteer committee to research and seek out improvements in recreational opportunities in the county with a emphasis on the utilization of the Holly Springs National Forest.
   - Work with citizens, stakeholders and others to improve county infrastructure; examples include road improvements, land donations for parks, establishment of rural water associations, et cetera.

4) Significant Finding – The County needs to encourage the expansion of utilities.
   Recommendations:
   - Work with established utility companies to expand their service area.
   - Work with stakeholders to establish new utility certificated areas where extensions of services are not possible.
   - Work with water utilities to provide fire hydrants for fire protection in heavily populated areas.
   - Work with municipalities to extend city services to development on their fringe.

5) Significant Finding – Get results through effective administration.
   Recommendations:
   - Establish an overall County image.
   - Insure the development fees offset the cost of Planning and Code Enforcement.
   - Work with city to ensure development around cities is connected to city utilities.
   - Require developers to construct at least one lane of projected improvements for collectors and arterials when their developments front a collector or arterial.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

SLAUGHTER & ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Map ES.1: Base Map

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*
Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*
Date: *March 5, 2019*

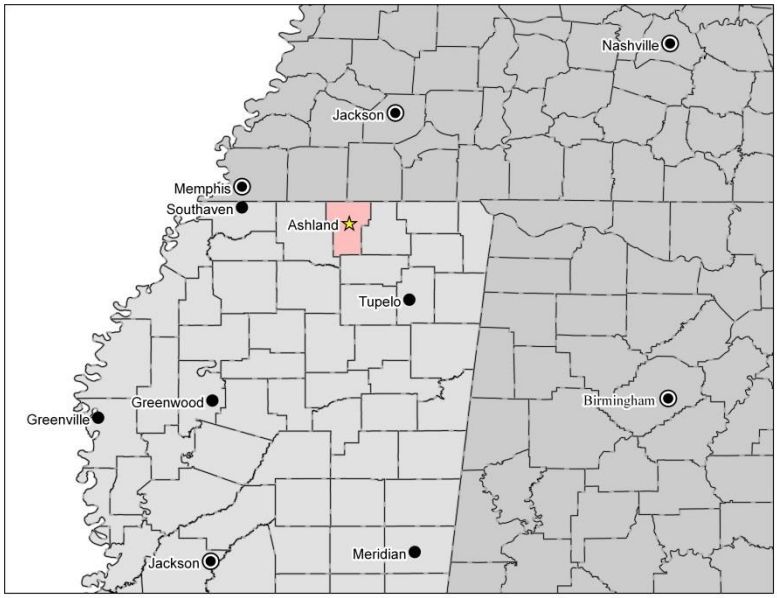
Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

LOCATION

Benton County is located in Northern Mississippi on the Tennessee state line. Ashland is the Benton County seat of government. Benton County is home two other municipalities; Hickory Flat and Snow Lake Shores, as well as the unincorporated communities of Canaan, Hopewell, Lamar, Michigan City and Winborn. Benton County is 74 miles southeast of Memphis, Tennessee; 75 miles south of Jackson, Tennessee; 182 miles northwest of Birmingham, Alabama; 218 miles northeast of Jackson, Mississippi; and 361 miles north of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

FIGURE 1. 1: BENTON COUNTY'S LOCATION



Benton County is surrounded by five other counties; two of which are in Tennessee. Fayette and Hardeman Counties, Tennessee, border Benton County to the north. Marshal County borders Benton County to the west, Union County to the south and Tippah County the east. The Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division places Benton County in "The Hills" Region of Mississippi. The Hills Region is the beginning of the Appalachian foothills and known for its rolling topography, dense woodlands, and streams.

NATURAL FEATURES

Benton County has a total area of 408.6 square miles with 406.8 square miles land and the remaining 1.86 square miles water. The Wolf River meanders from its source in Holly Springs National Forest through Northern Benton County into Fayette County, Tennessee. The 155,661 acre Holly Springs National Forest Covers about 64.4% of Benton County. This leaves much of the county unpopulated or sparsely populated and intended for agricultural uses.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Benton County's transportation network is made up of highways and railways only. The county does not have an airport of any kind. The Mississippi Central Railroad generally follows Mississippi Highway 7 and the BNSF Railroad generally follows United States Highway 78 (Future Interstate Highway 22). The county is transverse by two United States highways. United States Highway 72 runs east to west through the northern portion of the county from Chattanooga, Tennessee, to Memphis, Tennessee. United Sates Highway 78 (Future Interstate Highway 22) runs east to west through the extreme southwest corner of the county from Charleston, South Carolina, to Memphis, Tennessee. Upon completion of limited access upgrades, Interstate 22 will run from

Birmingham, Alabama, to Byhalia, Mississippi. Completion is currently slated for the Fall of 2015 pending completion of Interstate 269 and the Interstate 65 interchange in Birmingham.

Most of Benton County's transportation network is composed of Mississippi highways. Mississippi Highway 2 terminates in Hickory Flats while running west from Corinth, Mississippi. Mississippi Highway 4 bisects Benton County and runs west from Dennis, Mississippi, to Tunica, Mississippi. On its way through Benton County, Highway 4 passes through Ashland and Snow Lake Shores. Mississippi Highway 5 bisects Benton County north to south and is completely within Benton County originating on Unites States Highway 72 near Michigan City and terminating on Mississippi Highway 178 in Hickory Flats. Mississippi Highway 7 passes through the northeast corner of the county, originating at the Tennessee state line, where it transitions from Tennessee Highway 18 and, runs south to Belzoni, Mississippi. Mississippi Highway 178 runs through the southern part of the county and Hickory Flats. The route serves as a auxiliary route to United States Highway 78 from the Tennessee line near Memphis, Tennessee to the Alabama state line near Hamilton, Alabama. Mississippi Highway 370 runs east from Mississippi Highway 5 in Ashland to Mississippi Highway 15 just south of Falkner, Mississippi.

HISTORY

Benton County was formed in 1870 from portions of Marshal and Tippah Counties. Prior to settlement Benton County lands belonged to the Chickasaw Indian Nation before being relinquished in the 1834 Treaty of Pontotoc. According to local legend, the county's residents convinced the post-Civil War Reconstruction government that they were naming the county after United States Senator Thomas Hart Benton, a Senator from Missouri and champion of Manifest Destiny. In reality, the residents were naming the county in honor of Confederate Brigadier General Samuel Benton, a native of nearby Holly Springs, Mississippi, and a pre-Civil War Mississippi State Legislator.

BENTON COUNTY CULTURE

MEDIA & NEWSPAPERS

- The Clarion-Ledger (Statewide)
- Sothern Sentinel (Ripley, Mississippi)
- Southern Reporter (Holly Springs)

EDUCATION

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTION

- Benton County Career Technical Center
- Northwest Mississippi Community College Technical Center

BENTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Ashland Elementary School
- Ashland Middle School
- Ashland High School
- Hickory Flats Attendance Center

CHAPTER TWO: BENTON COUNTY PROFILE

This chapter compiles information, such as population, race, age, housing, and economics, to establish a community profile of Benton County. The majority of this information is recorded by the United States Census Bureau every ten years or is included in the American Communities Survey five-year estimates. The five-year estimates use data gathered from a portion of the population over the previous five years to estimate community statistics. Establishing a current community profile is useful in order to understand how the county has evolved over time and how it might continue to evolve into the future.

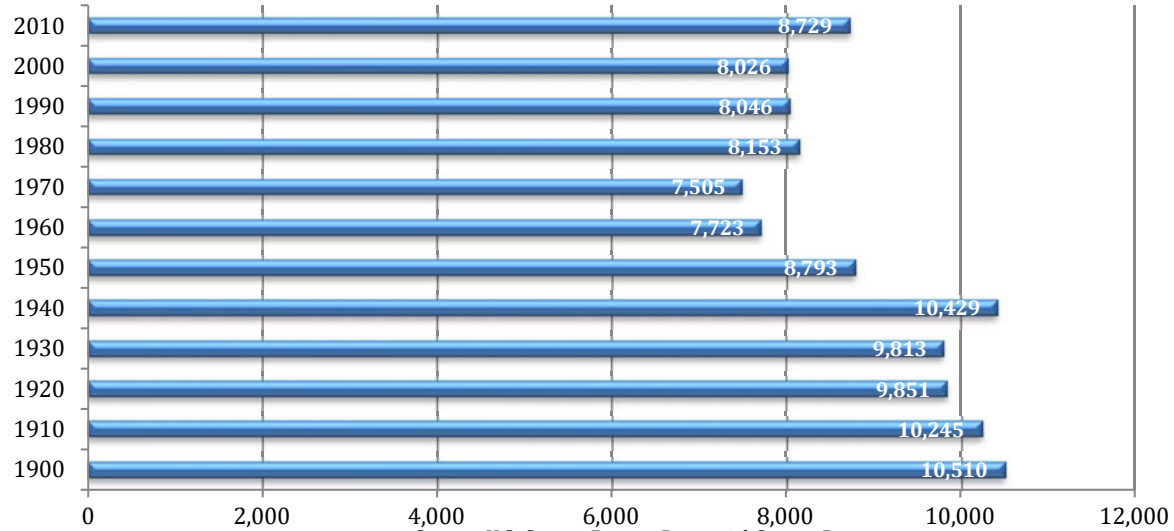
POPULATION ANALYSIS

BENTON COUNTY

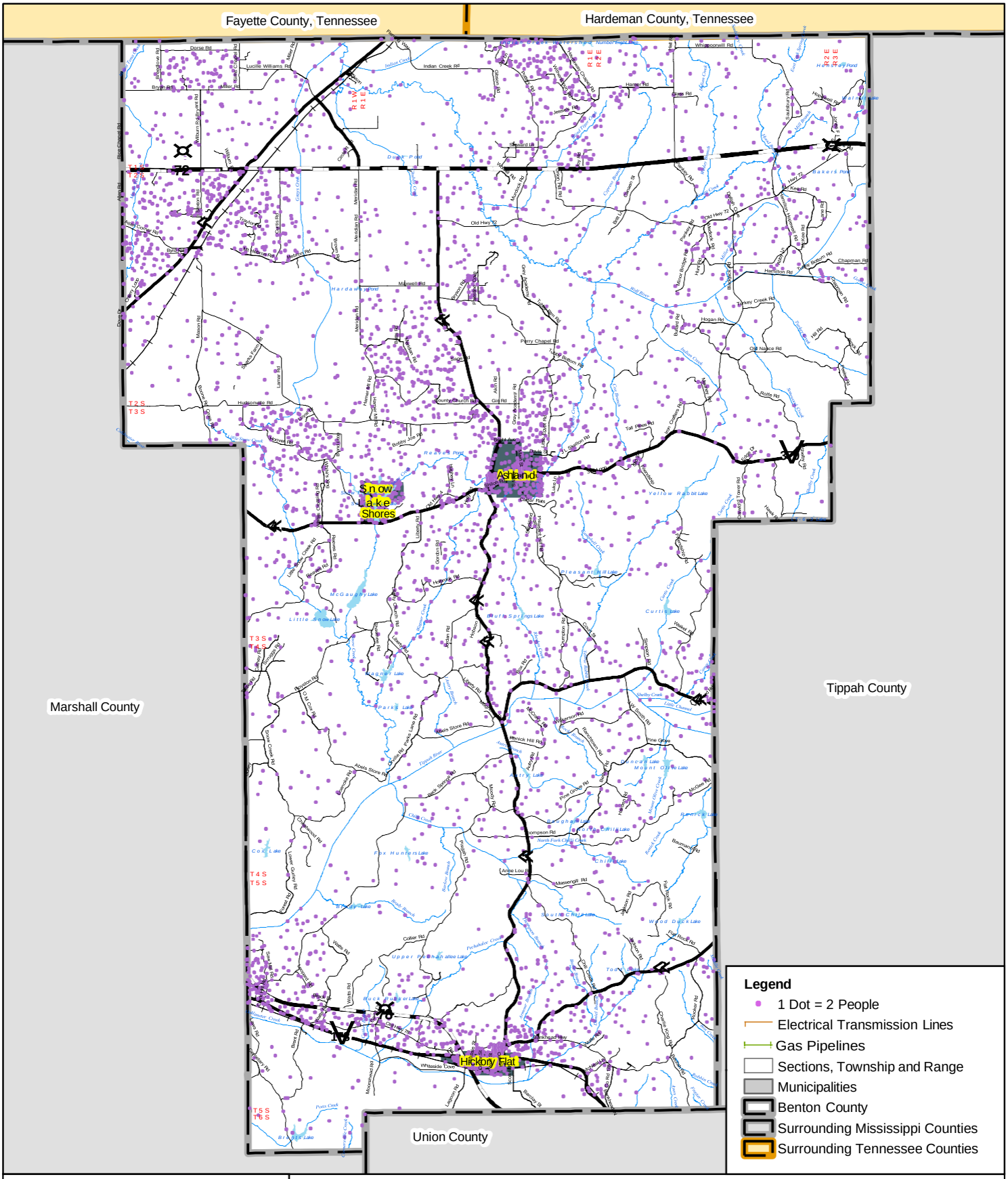
Benton County's peak population occurred in 1900 with about 10,500 residents. The population remained around the 10,000 until after 1940 when the population experienced a lasting decline. Only three times in the last 110 years has Benton County experienced a positive growth rate. From 1930 to 1940 the county experienced a population growth of 6.3%, from 1970 to 1980 the county grew 8.6%, and from 2000 to 2010 the county grew 8.8%. From 1910 to 2010 the population of Benton County contracted 14.8%, or loss 1,781 residents. From 1940 to 1970 the population of Benton County decreased by about 3,000 residents. Since 1970 the county has gained about 1,200 residents back. This trend looks to continue and will be explored later on in this chapter.

The following maps illustrate how Benton County's population is distributed according to the 2010 United States Census Blocks. The map uses dots to represent people, with two people being represented by one dot. As would be expected in a rural county, the population per square mile is evenly distributed throughout the county with the concentrations occurring in the county's three towns. Map 2.1 shows how the population is distributed throughout the county. The Northern half of the county is the most heavily populated. This area is outside of the National Forest which relieves it of some development constraints. The southern population of the county is distributed along United States Highway 78 between Potts Camp and Hickory Flat.

CHART 2.1: BENTON COUNTY'S HISTORIC POPULATION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census Data



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

SLAUGHTER & ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Map 2.1: Population Concentration

Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*
Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*
Date: *March 5, 2019*

COMPARATIVE POPULATION GROWTH

When it comes to county population growth, Benton County provides a large contrast to its five neighboring counties. With the exception of Hardeman County, all the counties have grown since 1970. Fayette and Marshall Counties growth can most likely attributed to growth occurring in Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Explaining the growth of Tippah and Union Counties over the last fifty years is harder to pin point. Some growth in last ten years could be attributed to addition of the Toyota Motor Manufacturing facility in Union County. Hardeman County has experienced overall growth in the last fifty years but did experience loses in population in 1990 and 2010.

On the other hand, when comparing Benton County to the five counties of comparable population size in 2010 you see that all have experienced population decreases since 2000. All five counties have experienced a loss in population in the last 100 years as well. The counties of comparable size have lost between 29.1% and 51.2% of their population since 1910. Benton County has only lost 14.8% of its population, in the same period. None of the five counties have experienced an increase in population the last ten years.

TABLE 2.2: COMPARATIVE POPULATION GROWTH

	Decennial Census Counts											
	1900	**1910**	**1920**	**1930**	**1940**	**1950**	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**
Benton County	10,510	10,245	9,851	9,813	10,429	8,793	7,723	7,505	8,153	8,046	8,026	8,729
County's change overtime		*-265*	*-394*	*-38*	*616*	*-1,636*	*-1,070*	*-218*	*648*	*-107*	*-20*	*703*
	Border County											
Fayette County, TN	29,701	30,257	31,499	28,891	30,322	27,535	24,577	22,692	25,305	25,559	28,806	38,413
Hardeman County, TN	22,976	23,011	22,278	22,193	23,590	23,311	21,517	22,435	23,873	23,377	28,105	27,253
Tippah County	12,983	14,631	15,419	18,658	19,680	17,522	15,093	15,852	18,739	19,523	20,826	22,232
Marshall County	27,674	26,796	26,105	24,869	25,522	25,106	24,503	24,027	29,296	30,361	34,993	37,144
Union County	16,522	18,997	20,044	21,268	21,867	20,262	18,904	19,096	21,741	22,085	25,362	27,134
	County of Comparable Population Size in 2010											
Franklin County	13,678	15,193	14,156	12,268	12,504	10,929	9,286	8,011	8,208	8,377	8,448	8,118
Quitman County	5,435	11,593	19,861	25,304	27,191	25,885	21,019	15,888	12,636	10,490	10,117	8,223
Choctaw County	13,036	14,357	12,491	12,339	13,548	11,009	8,423	8,440	8,996	9,071	9,758	8,547
Humphreys County	N/A	N/A	19,192	24,729	26,257	23,115	19,093	14,601	13,931	12,134	11,206	9,375
Claiborne County	20,787	17,403	13,019	12,152	12,810	11,944	10,845	10,086	12,279	11,370	11,831	9,604
Wilkinson County	21,453	18,075	15,319	13,957	15,955	14,116	13,235	11,099	10,021	9,678	10,314	9,878

Sources: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census Data

NATURAL INCREASE AND MIGRATION

Over the last ten years, Benton County's population increase can be contributed to both a natural increase and in-migration of residents to the county. The in-migration contributes most prominently to this increase, as 449 new residents moved to Benton County. Natural increase contributed 254 new residents in Benton County.

TABLE 2.3: NATURAL INCREASE AND MIGRATION COMPONENTS

2010 Population		8,729
2000 Population		8,026
Difference		703
Growth due to natural increase (Births minus deaths)		254
Total Births (2000-2010)	1251	
Total Deaths (2000-2010)	997	
Gain due to in-migration (2000-2010)		449

Sources: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census Data and Mississippi Department of Health - Statistics

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections determine the future population of Benton County at some point in the future. There are numerous methods for calculating these projections. This analysis briefly compares three alternative projection methods and forecasts Benton County's population into 2035, twenty years down the road.

The first method is the population projection published by the Mississippi Institute of Higher Learning (IHL), which provides projections for all counties in the state. The most recent report was published in 2012 and is based on the 2010 Census. This report only extends projections into the year 2025 which is too short for the full planning period of this Comprehensive Plan, but is helpful for shorter term planning projects like Land Use.

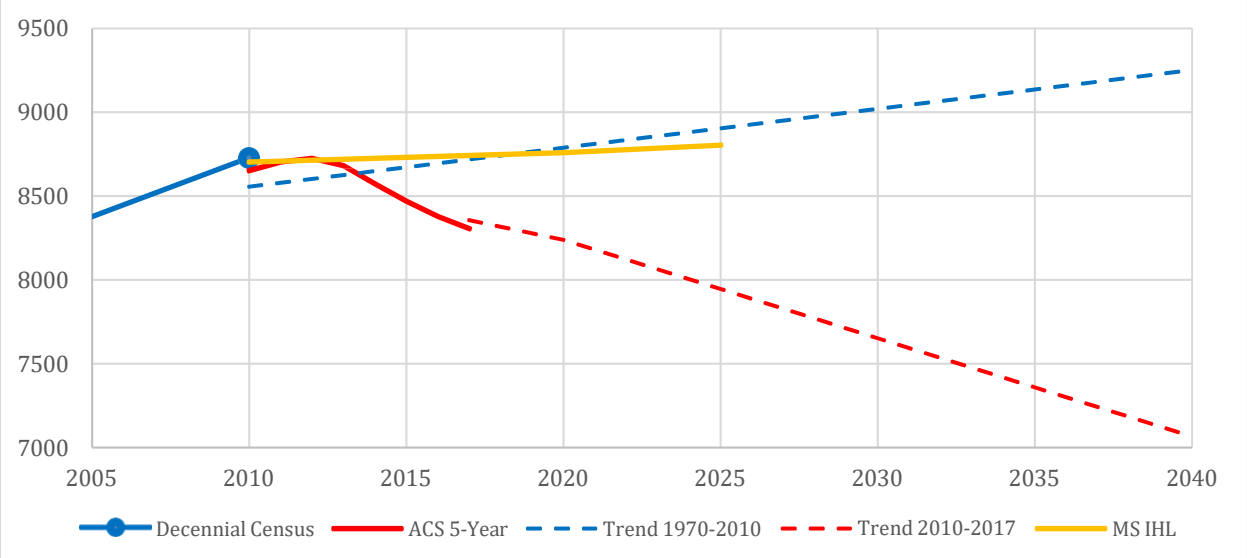
The Mississippi Institute of Higher Learning shows Benton County growing slowly. From 2010 to 2015, the population is estimated to increase by 2 residents. The IHL projects the population to continue to increase in 2020 and 2025, by 28 and 45 residents respectively. The IHL shows a steady yet slow increase in population for the next ten years.

The second method is a "linear least-squared" method that projects a future population based on trends established by the past 40 years of Census counts. This projection method shows a greater increase in population over the next thirty years than does the IHL projection. By 2025 the County is expected to gain 175 residents with the County population surpassing 9,000 by 2030.

The third method is based off of Census Bureau yearly estimates conducted in the American Community Survey. Census estimates have shown a decrease in population since 2012. This is reflected in the linear trend which shows a loss of population over the next 30 years. By 2025, the County will have fallen to 7,945 residents.

It should be remembered that these estimates are exactly that, estimates. The actual population growth over the next few decades will likely be somewhere in the predicted range, either of moderate gain or moderate loss. There are many potential factors that could alter the real growth of population that are beyond the ability of this plan to predict. Continued planning and preparation will allow the County to be adaptive to the needs of future growth patterns.

CHART 2.4: POPULATION PROJECTION COMPARISON



Source: Slaughter & Associates Calculations; US Census Bureau; MS Institute of Higher Learning

Racial Composition

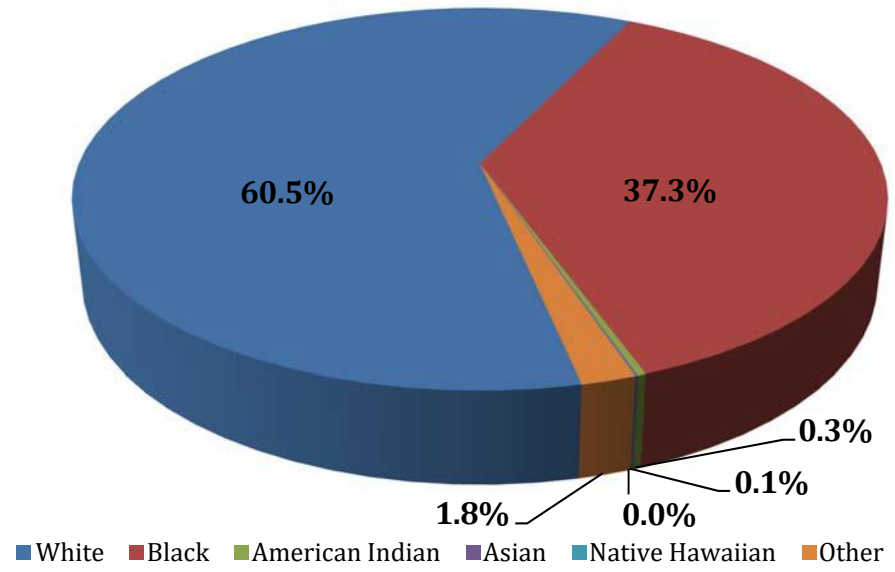
The racial composition of Benton County has remained rather constant for the last ten years. In 2000, the Census reported the racial breakdown as follows: 61.7% White, 36.8% Black, 0.6% Native American and 0.9% Other Races. In 2010 the racial breakdown only changed slightly to 60.5% White, 37.3% Black, 0.3% Native American and 1.8% other races. The largest decrease in racial make-up occurred in the Native American population. Benton County lost nearly half of the Native American population that it had in 2000. The largest increase, percentage wise, occurred in the Other Races category, which includes anyone of one or more races and any race not listed in Table 2.5. The Other Races group increased by 128.6% in ten years. Both the White and Black population increased by over 300 residents but percentage wise grew at a slower rate.

TABLE 2. 5: BENTON COUNTY RACIAL COMPOSTION IN 2000 & 2010

Benton County	2000		2010		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	**8,026**		**8,729**		**703**	**8.8%**
White	4,954	61.7%	5,284	60.5%	330	6.7%
Black	2,950	36.8%	3,252	37.3%	302	10.2%
American Indian	47	0.6%	25	0.3%	-22	-46.8%
Asian	4	0.0%	6	0.1%	2	50.0%
Native Hawaiian	1	0.0%	2	0.0%	1	100.0%
Other	70	0.9%	160	1.8%	90	128.6%

Soruce: United States Census Bureau Decennial Census Data

CHART 2.6: BENTON COUNTY RACIAL COMPOSTION IN 2010



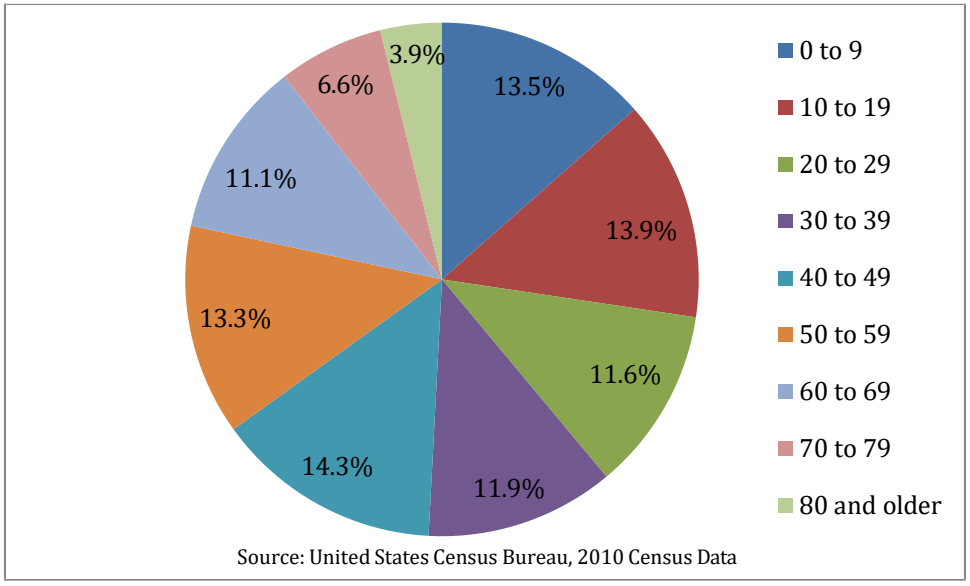
Source: United States Bureau Decennial Census Data

Age Characteristics

Benton County's median age in 2010 was 39.4 years old; this is just over 3 years more than the State of Mississippi's median age (36.0 years old). Nearly fifty percent of Benton County's population is over the age of

forty; this is reflected in the median age. Only 27.4% of the population of Benton County is school age children (0 to 19 years old).

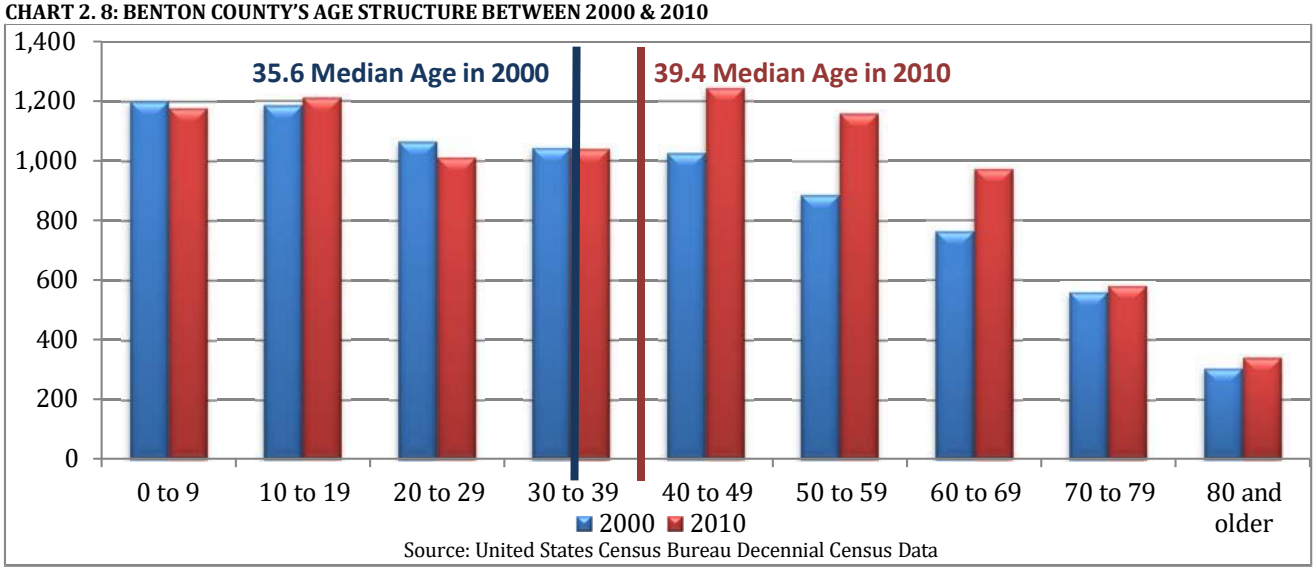
CHART 2. 7: BENTON COUNTY 2010 AGE DISTRIBUTION



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data

Chart 2.8 shows that from 2000 to 2010 the age group from 0 to 9 saw a decrease in population as did the 20 to 29 and 30 to 39. This tells us that families with small children left Benton County between 2000 and 2010. The 10 to 19, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 to 69, 70 to 79 and 80 & older age groups all saw increases in population during the ten year period. The 40 to 49 and 50 to 59 age range growth is particularly interesting as this group is in, or nearing, their peak earning potential. This can help an area attract new amenities since these individuals have more discretionary income than other age groups. The growth in the 60 to 69, 70 to 79 and 80 and older age groups can be of concern to communities. The 60 to 69 age group is retirement age, or nearing it, and the 70 to 79 and 80 and older age groups are in retirement. If this increase continues over the next thirty years providing health care and amenities for an ageing population will be essential for Benton County.

CHART 2. 8: BENTON COUNTY'S AGE STRUCTURE BETWEEN 2000 & 2010



Source: United States Census Bureau Decennial Census Data

Composition by Sex

Table 2.4 indicates that Benton County is comprised of a slightly smaller percentage of females than the State of Mississippi. The percentage of females in Benton County decreased from 51.4% in 2000 to 50.9% in 2010. Typically having a greater percentage of females than males would mean there are more children born in the community. That being said it is possible that the birth rate could start decreasing in Benton County. This would make the growth of population even more dependent on in-migration than shown in the Natural Decrease and Migration Study discussed earlier in this chapter.

TABLE 2.9: COMPOSITION OF POPULATION BY SEX, 2000-2010

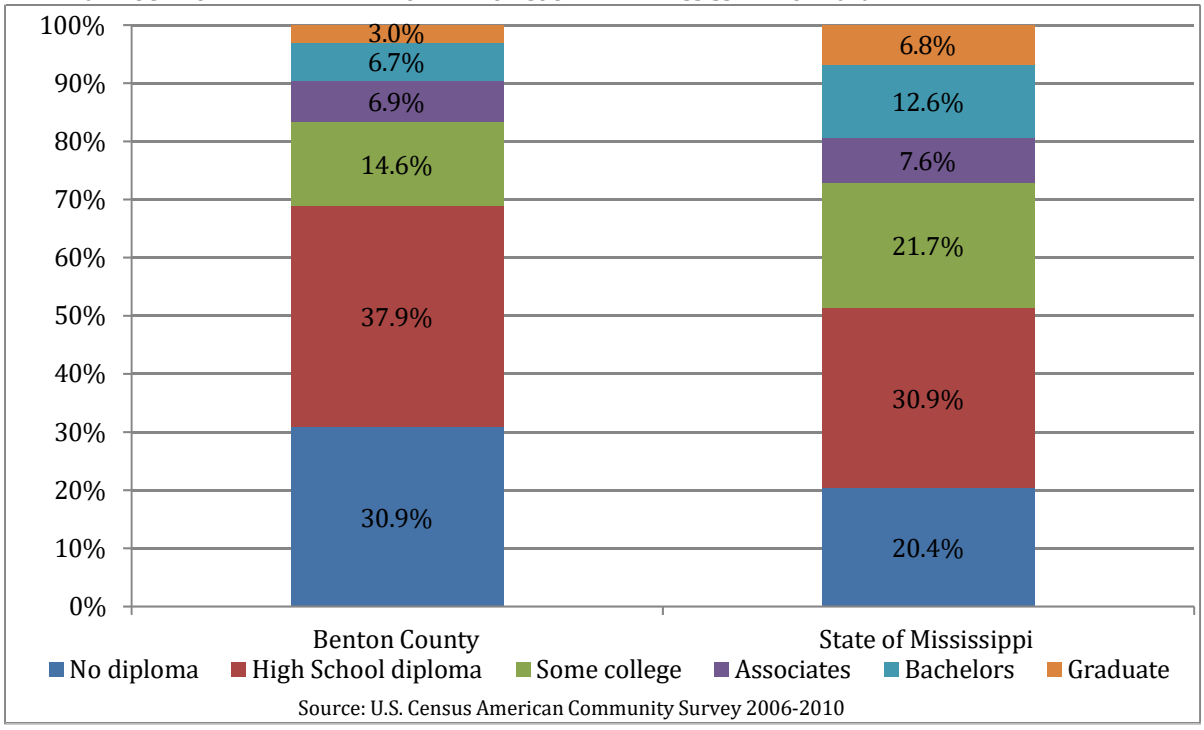
	Benton County							State of Mississippi					
	2000		2010		Change			2000		2010		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	**8,026**		**8,729**		**703**	**8.8%**	**Total**	**2,844,658**		**2,967,297**		**122,639**	**4.3%**
Male	3,902	48.6%	4,287	49.1%	385	9.9%	Male	1,373,554	48.3%	1,441,240	48.6%	67,686	4.9%
Female	4,124	51.4%	4,442	50.9%	318	7.7%	Female	1,471,104	51.7%	1,526,057	51.4%	54,953	3.7%

Source: United States Census Bureau Decennial Census Data

Educational Attainment

Benton County lags behind the State in most levels of educational attainment. Only 69.1% of Benton County residents over twenty-five years of age have at least a high school diploma, compared to 79.6% in the State of Mississippi. Nearly one third of Benton County residents do not have a high school diploma, in comparison to about 20% of Mississippians do not have a high school diploma. A larger percentage of Benton County residents (30.9%) claim high school diplomas as their highest educational attainment, highlighting the smaller percentage of Benton County residents with at least some college. Benton County has a smaller percentage of residents with at least some college than the State. Only 9.6% of Benton County residents have at least a bachelor's degree, by comparison 19.5% of Mississippians have at least bachelors degree.

CHART 2.10: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR BENTON COUNTY AND MISSISSIPPI FOR 2010



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2006-2010

While in comparison to the State of Mississippi, Benton County's educational attainment lags behind in most areas the comparison of 2010 to 2000 census data shows that the county is making strides in the right direction. In 2000 41.2% of the county did not have a high school diploma but in 2010 that decreased to 30.9%. This was is visible in the increase of those with a high school diploma from 32.2% in 2000 to 37.9% in 2010. 69.1 % of county residents had at least a high school diploma that is up from 58.8% in 2000. The number of residents with at least a bachelors degree increased by nearly two percentage points, from 7.8% in 2000 to 9.6% in 2010. The number of residents holding graduate degrees doubled in between 2000 and 2010. Benton County has shown positive signs in improving the education of its residents and should continue to work toward creating a more educated community.

TABLE 2. 11: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR BENTON COUNTY, 2000-2010

	Benton County					
	2000		2010		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population over 25	**5,073**		**5,843**			
No diploma	2,089	41.2%	1,806	30.9%	-283	-13.5%
High School diploma	1,632	32.2%	2,214	37.9%	582	35.7%
Some college	738	14.5%	854	14.6%	116	15.7%
Associates	218	4.3%	406	6.9%	188	86.2%
Bachelors	310	6.1%	389	6.7%	79	25.5%
Graduate	86	1.7%	174	3.0%	88	102.3%
At least HS graduate		58.8%		69.1%		
At least bachelors		7.8%		9.6%		

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2006-2010

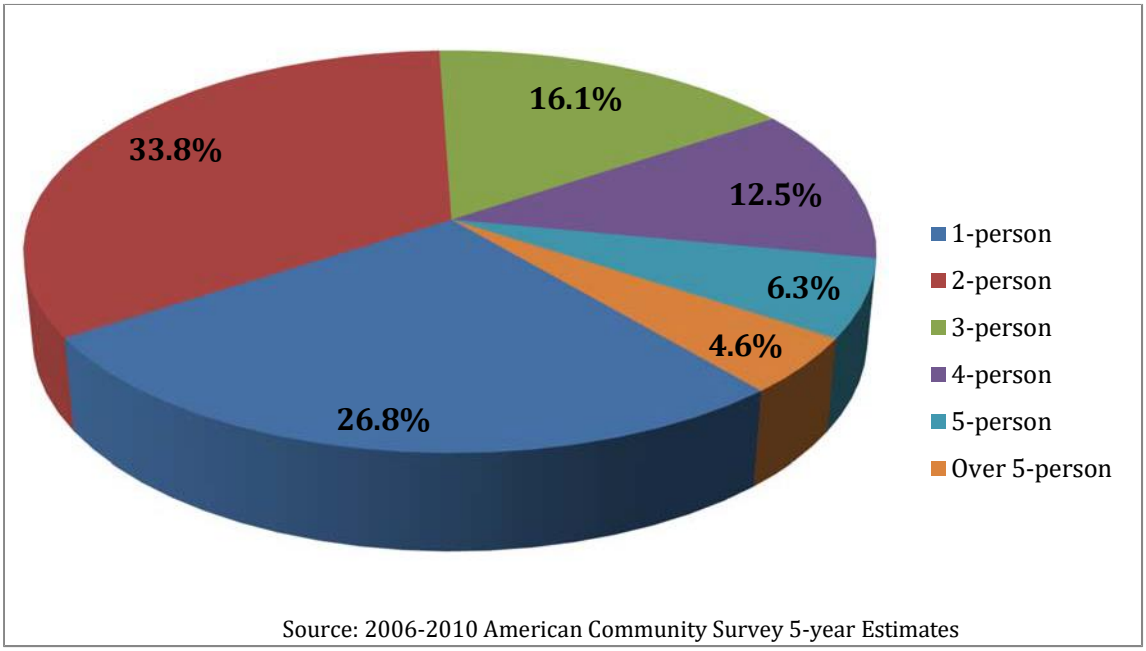
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

The Census Bureau documents numerous housing characteristics that provide insight into the distribution of owner versus renter occupied units, the vacancy rate of units, the types of units, the year units were built, etc. While the land use analysis in Chapter 4 presents general information regarding the types of units, the Census information is more detailed.

HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

Benton County has only experienced marginal changes in the size of its families and households. First, we will take a look at the census definitions for a family and a household; this will give a better idea of what the census data says. The United States Bureau of the Census defines a household as follows, "A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit." A family is defined as follows: "A family is a group of two people or more related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together." The average household size for Benton County in 2000 was 2.64 and 2.54 in 2010, essential remaining the same. The average family size for Benton County in 2000 was 3.12 and 3.08 in 2010, again essentially remaining the same. The largest increase in household size occurred for one, two and over five-person households, all increased by at least twenty percent. The nearly 28% increase in one-person and nearly 20% increase in two-person households is likely the reason that the average household and family size slight decreases.

CHART 2. 12: NUMBER OF PERSONS IN BENTON COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

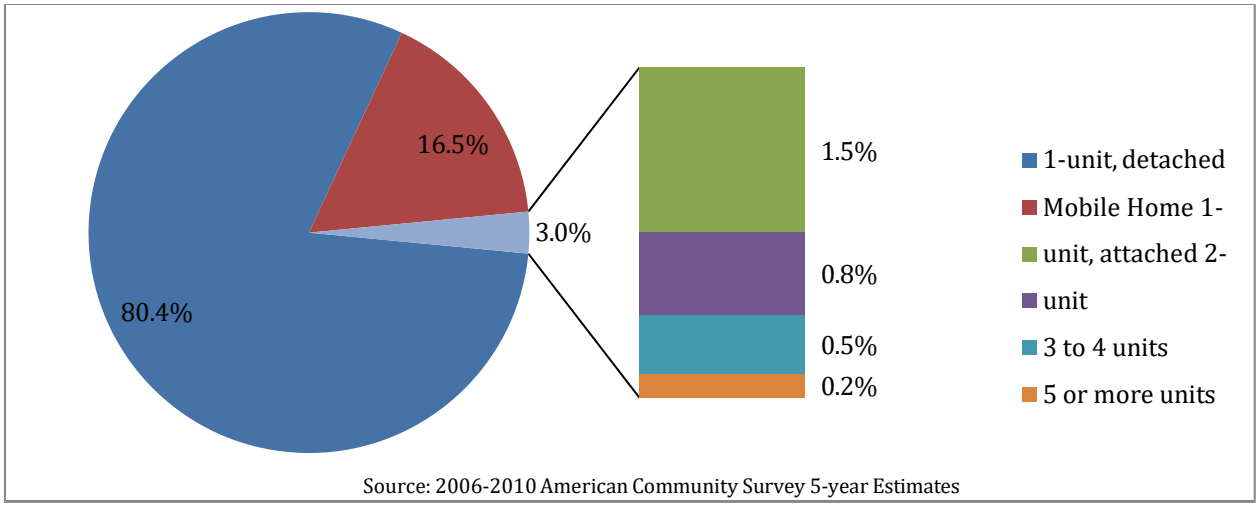
In the last 10 years, Benton County has added over 700 housing units, an increase of nearly one forth. In 2010, the Census reported 4,186 housing units in Benton County. Nearly 19% of the housing units in the County are vacant. Thus the census shows that many new houses were build to replace houses that now sit vacant. In Benton County the trends appears to be transitioning to rental units. In 2010, 79.3% of housing was occupied by its owner that is down from 84.3% in 2000. The 5% rise in renter occupied housing units is likely due to the economic issues that United States faced in 2001 and 2008. This has become a national trend as the nation began recovering from the bust of the housing bubble. The percentage of renters in Benton County (20.7%) is still nearly ten percentage points less than the State of Mississippi rental rate (30.4%).

The vacancy rate for owner occupied housing in Benton County has essentially remained constant from 2.2% in 2000 to 2.0% in 2010. The vacancy rate for rental occupied housing in Benton County rose one percentage point from 10.1% in 2000 to 11.1% in 2010. The census does show some good news when it comes to owner occupied housing. In 2010, 47.9% of owner occupied housing is paid for that is up from 41.8% in 2000. That decreased the percentage of owner occupied units with a mortgage from 58.2% in 2000 to 52.1% in 2010.

HOUSING UNIT TYPE AND AGE

From 2000 to 2010 Benton County housing unit type changed marginally. The most notable change occurred in the reduction of the number of mobile homes. This was the only housing unit type to see a reduction in the number of units in the county. Nearly 600 new single family detached housing units were added to the housing stock. This is a positive sign for the county as new single family detached housing shows investment in the community. The number of single family attached units more than doubled from 2000 to 2010. Multi-family units increased by 90%, but this increase only accounts for 58 units.

CHART 2. 13: BENTON COUNTY 2010 HOUSING UNIT TYPE



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

The age of the housing stock in Benton County is probably reflective of most other rural communities in Mississippi. 60.8% of the housing stock was built prior to 1980. 15.1% of the housing was built from 1980-1989, 15.0% was built from 1990-1999, and 9.1% was built after 1999. This shows that Benton County's housing stock leans heavily toward older housing units. Older housing usually does require a higher level of maintenance to remain in good condition. Benton County should consider housing ordinances or maintenance ordinances in order to ensure properties are well maintained.

Economic Analysis

Income Characteristics

The American Community Survey 5-year estimates that 26.1% of the families and 26.0% of all people in Benton County are living below the poverty level, in 2010. This means that a family of three (Benton County's average family size is 3.12) lives on less than $18,310 a year. The median income for 2010 is $29,202 approximately half of Benton County earns less than the median income. Over one-quarter of households have an income over $50,000. The following table shows a complete breakdown of household income in Benton County.

TABLE 2. 14: BENTON COUNTY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

	Benton County					
	2000		2010		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Household Income	**3,017**		**3,303**			
Less than $10,000	636	21.1%	673	20.4%	37	5.8%
$10 - $14,999	326	10.8%	382	11.6%	56	17.2%
$15 - $24,999	586	19.4%	418	12.7%	-168	-28.7%
$25 - 34,999	445	14.7%	339	10.3%	-106	-23.8%
$35 - 49,999	475	15.7%	558	16.9%	83	17.5%
$50 - 74,999	365	12.1%	626	19.0%	261	71.5%
Over $75,000	184	6.1%	307	9.3%	123	66.8%
Median Income	$24,149		$29,202		$5,053	20.9%
Mean Income	$33,405		$36,958		$3,553	10.6%
Per Capita Income	$12,212		$14,998		$2,786	22.8%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2006-2010

The following statistics represent the percentage of income homeowners, or renters, spend on monthly housing costs. A generally accepted standard is those that spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs are cost-burdened. Since 2000, those residents that own their residences have seen their mortgage become a greater percent of their income. The number of homeowners that pay over 35% of their income toward their mortgage has increased from 17.9% in 2000 to 37.2% in 2010. Homeowners that pay from 30% to 34.9% of their income toward their mortgage have increased from 5.3% in 2000 to 5.8% in 2010. Homeowners that pay from 25% to 29.9% of their income toward their mortgage have increased from 7.8% in 2000 to 17.0% in 2010. Homeowners that pay from 20% to 24.9% of their income toward their mortgage have decreased from 9.9% in 2000 to 4.8% in 2010. Homeowners that pay less than 20% of their income toward their mortgage have decreased from 59.0% in 2000 to 35.1% in 2010.

Since 2000 those residents that rent their residences have not fared much better than homeowners. Renters have seen their rent increase as a percentage of their income. The number of renters that pay over 35% of their income toward their rent has increased from 29.1% in 2000 to 40.4% in 2010. Renters that pay from 30% to 34.9% of their income toward their rent have remained virtually unchanged from 3.3% in 2000 to 3.2% in 2010. Renters that pay from 25% to 29.9% of their income toward their rent have decreased from 10.5% in 2000 to 9.3% in 2010. Renters that pay from 20% to 24.9% of their income toward their rent have decreased from 9.9% in 2000 to 4.8% in 2010. Renters that pay less than 20% of their income toward their rent have decreased from 45.7% in 2000 to 42.7% in 2010.

As Table 2.15 shows, in Benton County the median income for some educational attainment levels lags behind the median income based on education for Mississippi. As would be expected, the median income of a person improves as there level of education improves. Benton County's median income for the population over 25 years of age is about $4,000 less than the median income for the same group in Mississippi. Benton County's median income based on education level is greater than Mississippi in two categories: less than a high school graduate and graduate or professional degree. Those that have less than a high school diploma in Benton County have a median income approximately $6,000 more than the like educated person in Mississippi. Having a graduate or professional degree in Benton County leads to median income that is about $15,000 more that the like educated person in Mississippi.

TABLE 2. 15: MEDIAN INCOME AND EDUCATION RELATIONSHIP

	Benton County	Mississippi
Population 25 years and over with earnings	$ 24,635	$ 28,413
Less than a high school graduate	$ 23,542	$ 17,728
High school graduated (includes equivalency	$ 21,010	$ 24,067
Some college or associate's degree	$ 22,303	$ 28,619
Bachelor's degree	$ 34,250	$ 40,054
Graduate or professional degree	$ 66,213	$ 50,923

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2006-2010

EMPLOYMENT BASE

Benton County's labor force (those over 16 years of age and below retirement age) has increased by 9.8% since 2000. In 2000, 50.5% of those over 16 years of age were in the labor force and that increased to 55.3% in 2010. The increase in labor force is not the result of an employer moving to the area. This is evident in the unemployment rate of 14% in 2010, this is almost double the unemployment rate reported by the Census Bureau in 2000. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the 2017 unemployment rate as 5.5 and the December 2018 13-month average (most current at time of writing) unemployment rate is 5.1%.

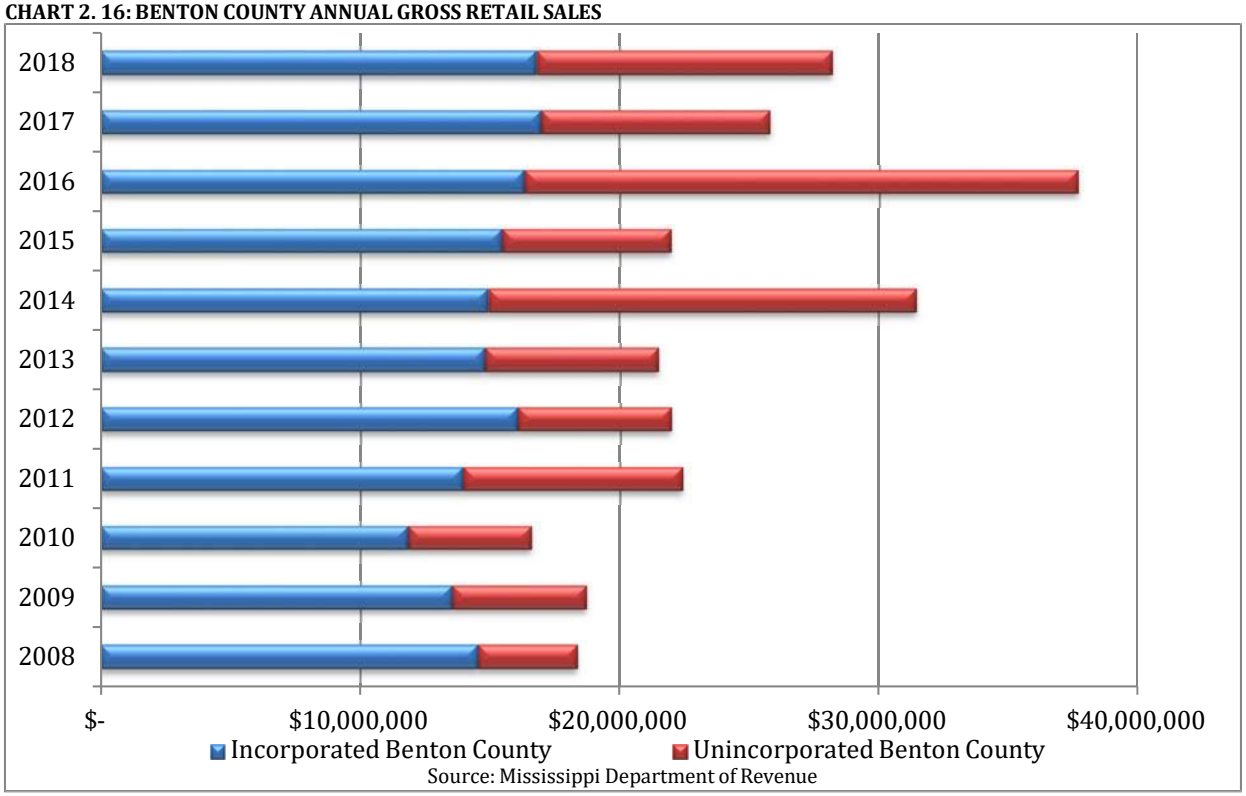
In 2010, the five top employment industries for Benton County labor force are manufacturing (30.0%), retail (15.6%), transportation (14.2%), educational (13.1%) and construction (9.3%). These top five industries were the top employers in 2000. These five industries account for 82.2% of Benton County's employment.

The Mississippi Development Authority documents the three leading employers in Benton County: TCI Automotive, LLC with 108 employees, Iron Crafters Security Door Company with 16 employees, and Mid-South Ornamental Concrete, Incorporated with 16 employees.

Retail Sales

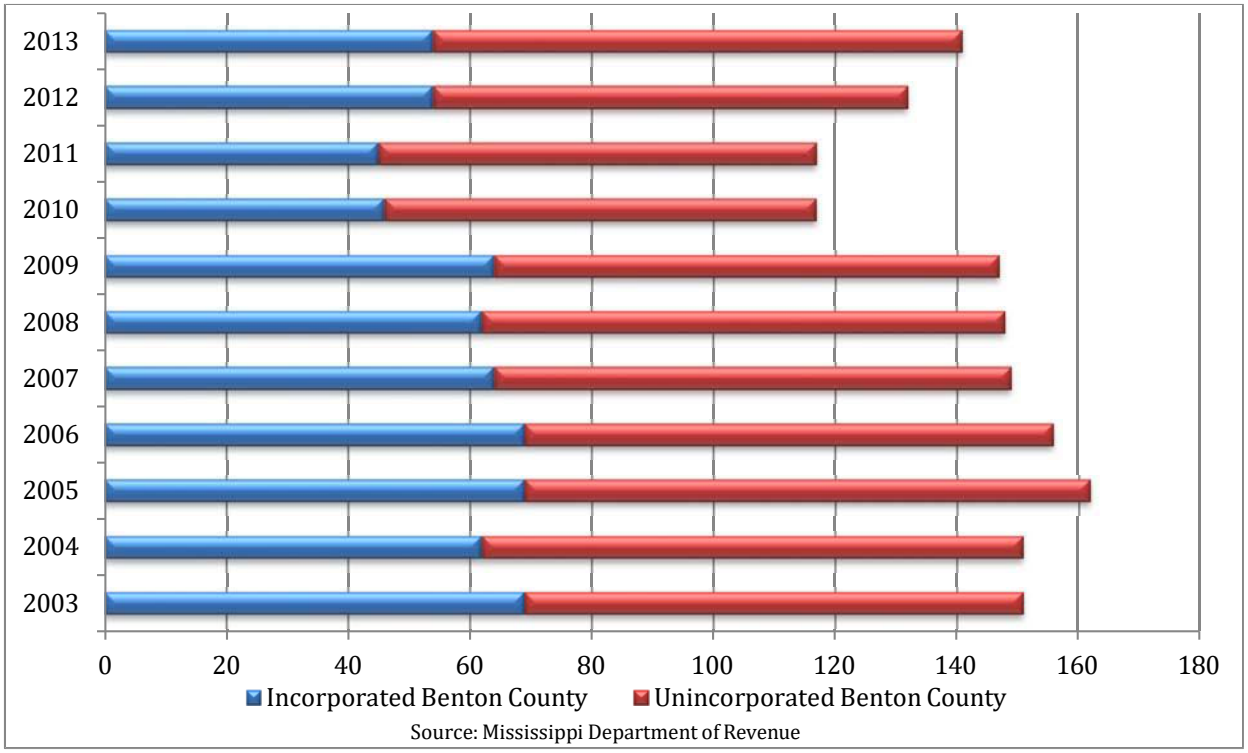
The Mississippi Department of Revenue tracks all retail sales for counties and cities. Chart 2.9 represents the gross retail sales for Benton County. The chart is broken into two bar graphs that represent the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the county. This chart illustrates the importance of the economy and business in the incorporated area of Benton County. Since 2008, incorporated areas of Benton County have accounted for between 43.4% and 79.1% of the gross retail sales occurring in the county. Incorporated areas of Benton County account for between 38.3% and 44.1% of the County's retail establishments. As this data shows, incorporated areas are very influential in retail sales in Benton County, with Ashland being the most influential town. Gross retail sales were at their highest in 2016 after rebounding from the lows of the Recession. The county has not managed more than one year of growth at a time since 2008, though there has been a steady growth trend over the last ten years. Gross sales were at their lowest in 2010 at $16.6 million and were more than doubled in 2016. Gross retail sales growth has generally outpaced inflation in the last decade.

CHART 2. 16: BENTON COUNTY ANNUAL GROSS RETAIL SALES



Source: Mississippi Department of Revenue

CHART 2. 17: BENTON COUNTY RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS



Source: Mississippi Department of Revenue

CHAPTER THREE: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This is an important portion of the Comprehensive that identifies a variety of future goals for residential, commercial, and industrial development; parks and recreation; transportation improvements; and schools and other community facilities. Information within this Chapter was gathered from one-on-one meetings with County Supervisors and County Departments as well as from a public meeting including a wide range of community representatives and county residents.

Benton County is thinking progressively in terms of their future, whether it is in terms of land development, population growth, resident amenities, or public safety. County leadership and residents have direct concern for quality of life and how their actions today affect the future of their home and their children's home. Every comment, concern, or goal expressed throughout this process was based on the desire to change today's actions in order to better Benton County. This Chapter further documents each of these desires in detail.

VISUAL PERCEPTION AND IMAGE

OVERALL VISUAL PERCEPTION AND IMAGE FINDINGS

The visual perception of a community varies depending on status of resident versus visitor. A visitor's perception greatly influences future trips to and investments in the community. A perception begins not within the heart of the city or center of development or core of activity. It begins before one approaches any of these locations; it can begin on the highways. It is that reason that this plan recommends the county adopt several ordnances to help regulate that perception in some way.

GOAL 1: Protect and promote Benton County's unique character.

> **OBJECTIVE 1A:** Establish a sense of arrival along the interchanges of the major thoroughfares in the County.
> **OBJECTIVE 1B:** Establish an overall County image outside of the core.
> **OBJECTIVE 1C:** Create and promote a community image unique to and supportive of Benton County's assets through adoption of proper ordinances and regulations.

GOAL 2: Create and promote a community image unique to and supportive of Benton County's assets through adoption of proper ordinances and regulations.

> **OBJECTIVE 2A:** Adopt and strictly enforce Zoning Ordinance.
> **OBJECTIVE 2B:** Adopt and strictly enforce Subdivision Regulations.
> **OBJECTIVE 2C:** Adopt and strictly enforce an Unkempt Property and Junk Auto Ordinance.
> **OBJECTIVE 2D:** Consider adopting and strictly enforcing a proper Construction, Building, and Fire Codes.
> **OBJECTIVE 2E:** Consider adopting and strictly enforcing a Sign Ordinance.
> **OBJECTIVE 2F:** Consider adopting and strictly enforcing Architectural Design Standard.
> **OBJECTIVE 2G:** Consider adopting and strictly enforcing Landscape Ordinance.

Tax Revenue and Assessed Valuation

Overall Tax Revenue and Assessed Value Findings

Benton County residents, like many other Mississippians feel they are overburden by taxes. Taxes are an important revenue source to fund essential services such as roads, schools, fire and police protection, and other nonessential governmental functions like parks. However, it is an important and vital function of local government to explore alternative funding options before raising taxes. This is especially important in areas of high poverty since many families are struggling to put food on the table.

Goal 1: Protect Benton County's tax revenue.

> **Objective 1a:** Conduct a regular evaluation of historical and current revenue gains and losses before adjusting the millage rate.
> **Objective 1b:** Provide a positive influence on assessed values by promoting and encouraging quality development and by promoting the County as an economic engine.
> **Objective 1c:** Consider and evaluate additional revenue opportunities from comparable counties in Mississippi or surrounding States.

Land Use Goals

Overall Land Use and Development Findings

Benton County is a relatively rural county with a large amount of vacant land; however, the Cities of Ashland and Hickory Flat and the Town of Snow Lake Shores directly influence the more urban development at their borders. The outlying areas around these municipalities and the unincorporated community of Lamar contain the densest residential development for the unincorporated portions of the County and are in need of more regulation and urban services. Commercial and industrial developments in the unincorporated areas of the County are less urban in nature, and the County desires to expand these options and create more economic development.

Residential Goals

Goal 1: Be a community for all people.

> **Objective 1a:** Encourage affordable housing opportunities that will also address the County's high poverty rate and housing cost burden.
> **Objective 1b:** Promote a variety of housing types that will attract a wide range of household incomes.
> **Objective 1c:** Evaluate options and alternatives for various development ordinances and codes that standardize construction and also protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.
> **Objective 1d:** Publicize and endorse development standards as a united administration to ensure the County's best interest is advanced.
> **Objective 1e:** Form cooperative and collaborative relationships with developers to further promote positive growth.

Goal 2: Protect residential property values for future growth and assessed values for tax revenue.

> **Objective 2a:** Identify and determine a distribution of land uses that provides different areas for various types of residential development.

Commercial Goals

GOAL 1: Encourage quality commercial construction and development.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Evaluate options and alternatives for various development ordinances and codes that standardize construction and also protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.
OBJECTIVE 1B: Publicize and endorse development standards as a united administration to ensure the County's best interest is advanced.
OBJECTIVE 1C: Form cooperative and collaborative relationships with developers to further promote positive growth.

GOALS 2: Protect property values for future growth and assessed values for tax revenue.

OBJECTIVE 2A: Identify and determine a distribution of land uses that provides different areas for various types of development.
OBJECTIVE 2B: Identify prime commercial areas based on transportation networks and access, public utility availability, and concentration of supporting land uses.

INDUSTRIAL GOALS

GOAL 1: Attract various types and sizes of industrial development to locate in Benton County.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Identify lands suitable for development into an industrial park.
OBJECTIVE 1B: Work with citizens, stakeholders and utilities to acquire lands for an industrial park.
OBJECTIVE 1C: Explore funding mechanisms for funding industrial park land acquisition and spec building for the industrial park.
OBJECTIVE 1D: Work with municipalities to establish an economic development authority to help cities and county attract both commercial and industrial development opportunities.
OBJECTIVE 1B: Provide potential industrial areas with the needed electrical, water and gas resources.
OBJECTIVE 1C: Evaluate options and alternatives for various development ordinances and codes that standardize construction and also protect the public health, safety and general welfare.
OBJECTIVE 1D: Publicize and endorse development standards as a united administration to ensure the County's best interest is advanced.

GOAL 2: Encourage quality industrial construction and development.

OBJECTIVE 2A: Evaluate options and alternatives for various development ordinances and codes that standardize construction and also protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.
OBJECTIVE 2B: Publicize and endorse development standards as a united administration to ensure the County's best interest is advanced.
OBJECTIVE 2C: Form cooperative and collaborative relationships with developers to further promote positive growth.

GOAL 3: Protect property values for future growth and assessed values for tax revenue.
OBJECTIVE 3A: Identify and determine a distribution of land uses that provides different areas for various types of development.
OBJECTIVE 3B: Identify prime industrial areas based on transportation networks and access, public utility availability, and concentration of supporting land uses.
OBJECTIVE 3C: Present Benton County as an integral part of a regional economic engine.

OBJECTIVE 3D: Evaluate the impact of tax exemptions for industrial developments versus the positive influence of growth in the County.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

OVERALL PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FINDINGS

Benton County has never had a parks and recreation department under the leadership of the County Supervisors nor provided direct recreations opportunities to residents on a county-wide basis. However, the county does have one park located in District 2 near the Lamar Community. The District 2 Park has a ball field, playground equipment and a pavilion. The Holly Springs National Forest also provides some recreational opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, hunting and fishing in the county.

GOAL 1: Encourage countywide recreational activity.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Identify sub-communities of Benton County that would support recreational opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Identify recreational needs and interests by Supervisor districts.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Provide pavilions and/or enclosed buildings that could serve as community gathering places.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Provide recreational sport facilities that require minimal upkeep and maintenance in conjunction with other recreational opportunities.

GOAL 2: Take advantage of and support recreational opportunities within the Holly Springs National Forest.

OBJECTIVE 2A: Maintain a positive and collaborative relationship with the National Forest.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS

OVERALL TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS

Benton County is still a rural county by all means, and the Holly Springs National Forest exacerbates the county's rural personality. The Memphis Metropolitan Area is already beginning to influence the County. In the next twenty years plus, this influence will only magnify as Memphis's urban sprawl continues to creep toward Benton County. This creep will bring more residents to the area and increase wear and tear on roads in the County. Currently, the county has many dirt/gravel roads that could stand, need, and should be paved at some point to help attract new residents in the future. The first step toward paving should be to acquire an appropriate right-of-way for all roads and then upgrade them to a standard cross section. This will lay the foundation for road improvements in the years to come. Benton County should focus its road way improvements to local streets as the County is lucky, to be served by two major transportation corridors in United States Highways 72 and 78. Highway 78 is due to be co-designated with Interstate 22 once limited access improvements are complete in northern Mississippi and central Alabama.

GOAL 1: Maintain and construct Benton County roadways to the highest quality possible.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Prepare and adopt a minimum road cross section and road design standards.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Improve all county roads to meet the minimum cross section and road design standards within the next fifteen years.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Hire an engineer to rate each county road and place it on a road paving priority list.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Explore alternative funding methods for paving county roads once all roads meet minimum cross section standard.

OBJECTIVE 1E: Encourage quality future road construction through the adoption of subdivision regulations.

GOAL 2: Encourage and promote quality road and bridge construction.

OBJECTIVE 2A: Evaluate options and alternatives for roadway design, sub-grade, and paving regulations that standardize construction and also protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

OBJECTIVE 2B: Publicize and endorse roadway standards as a united administration to ensure the County's best interest in advance.

OBJECTIVE 2C: Form cooperative and collaborative relationships with developers to further promote quality private constriction.

OBJECTIVE 2D: Build county roads with an adequate sub-grade to address soil conditions, vehicle loads and traffic intensity.

OBJECTIVE 2E: Ensure developers build new roads to appropriate standards before the County approves the final plat and takes over maintenance.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS

OVERALL COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES FINDINGS

Benton County's most pressing and common concerns were regarding public safety improvements and public utility opportunities. Public safety concerns not only included specifics for the Sheriff's department, fire services, and emergency management but also included the need for zoning and unkempt property ordinances. The County also expressed an overwhelming concern with the expansion and improvement of public utilities in the county. Lack of proper public utilities is hindering both industrial and commercial development and residential development.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION GOALS

GOAL 1: Continue to provide for residents of Benton County at the highest service level possible.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Periodically assess all County administration facilities to determine needed growth or expansion.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Periodically assess all County administration equipment to determine needed improvements, repairs, or replacements.

BUILDING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT GOALS

GOAL 1: Provide the citizen of Benton County with the most relevant list of code and ordinances that project a positive image of the county, encourage growth, development and a better quality of life for county residents.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Create a Building and Zoning Department to oversee enforcement of building codes, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and other development regulations or retain the proper experts to enforce said development regulations.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Prepare, adopt, and strictly enforce a properly tailored zoning ordinance for developing areas.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Prepare, adopt and strictly enforce a properly tailored subdivision regulation.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Prepare, adopt and strictly enforce a properly tailored unkempt properly and junk auto ordinance.

OBJECTIVE 1E: Consider adopting a proper Construction, Building and Fire Codes.

OBJECTIVE 1F: Consider adopting a Sign Ordinance.

PUBLIC SAFETY GOALS

GOAL 1: Provide and serve Benton County with the highest level of public police protection as possible.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Replace two patrol cars per year.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Update generator at current jail.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Construct a new jail to house detainees and Sheriff's offices.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Conduct an annual assessment of deputy personnel and equipment within the Sheriff's Department and the need for additional man power and equipment.

OBJECTIVE 1E: Promote and encourage regular deputy training and certifications.

OBJECTIVE 1F: Seek state, federal, and private grant mechanisms to help fund various training, equipment or facility needs.

GOAL 2: Provide and serve Benton County with the highest level of fire protection as possible.

OBJECTIVE 2A: Support and encourage citizen involvement and service through the volunteer fire department.

OBJECTIVE 2B: Promote and encourage training and certification for volunteer fire fighters.

OBJECTIVE 2C: Conduct periodic assessments of vehicles and equipment within the fire departments and the need for upgrades or replacements.

OBJECTIVE 2D: Plan for the replacement of fire trucks according to the Mississippi State Ratings Bureau certifications.

OBJECTIVE 2E: Hire a consultation to help county fire departments become rated departments.

OBJECTIVE 2F: Establish three county fire protection districts, then expand and improve those districts based on recommendations from the Mississippi State Ratings Bureau.

OBJECTIVE 2G: Encourage and advocate for various ordinances and codes that promote fire prevention, standardize construction, and protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

OBJECTIVE 2H: Endorse and adopt construction standards as a united administration to ensure the County's best interest is advanced.

OBJECTIVE 2I: Continue to identify and improve response times within each fire department.

Goal 3: Provide Benton County with the highest level of emergency management protection possible.

Objective 3a: Install three (3) initial emergency sirens.

Objective 3b: Work with the school system or other partner to establish a community storm shelter.

Objective 3c: Evaluate the need for additional sirens as Benton County grows.

PUBLIC AMENITY AND CULTURAL GOALS

GOAL 1: Support the Benton County Library System in all ways that best serve the citizens of Benton County.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Continue to provide the library with the space and utilities needed to operate.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Continue to support library monetarily with increases in funds, when available.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Support the library by finding and helping match grant funds when possible.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Encourage use of the library system through educational programming and activities.

PUBLIC EDUCATION GOALS

GOAL 1: Support the Benton County school system in all ways that best serve the citizens of Benton County.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Work with the school system to centralize the county schools.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Improve county roads to help lessen the need for maintenance on school buses.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Work with the school system to obtain technology grants to provide students with the most pertinent technology education.

PUBLIC UTILITY GOALS

GOAL 1: Serve Benton County with the highest level of public utilities available in order to sustain and promote future growth and denser developments.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Encourage collaboration between local governments, water associations and developers to provide adequate water supply to residential development.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Encourage collaboration between local governments, water associations and developers to provide adequate water supply along the United States Highway 72 corridor with industrial development in mind.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Encourage collaboration between local governments, electrical companies and developers to provide 3-phase electricity along the United States Highway 72 corridor with industrial development in mind.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Encourage collaboration between local governments, gas companies and developers to provide gas along the United States Highway 72 corridor with industrial development in mind.

OBJECTIVE 1E: Encourage sewer companies and developers to provide sewer service to areas where density demands such.

PUBLIC WORKS GOALS

GOAL 1: Maintain and construct Benton County roadways to the highest quality possible.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Prepare and adopt a minimum road cross section and road design standards.

OBJECTIVE 1B: Improve all county roads to meet the minimum cross section and road design standards within the next fifteen years.

OBJECTIVE 1C: Hire an engineer to rate each county road and place it on a road paving priority list.

OBJECTIVE 1D: Explore alternative funding methods for paving county roads once all roads meet minimum cross section standard.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING GOALS

GOAL 1: Continue to provide the citizens of Benton County with the best and most dependable solid waste disposal method possible.

OBJECTIVE 1A: Periodically assess the adequacy of the current waste disposal method and make improvements if necessary.

Plan Implementation Goals

Overall Plan Implementation Findings

Benton County has made strides just by adopting its first Comprehensive Plan. Now the county should find a way to track its process in implementing the Plan moving forward. The County should also from time to time assess the need to update said Comprehensive Plan as portions become outdated due to time, development or other changes taking place in the County.

Goal 1: Create a forum in which the County receives comment and feedback regarding the implications of this plan.

Objective 1a: Following the adoption of this plan, the County will establish a means by which the effectiveness and implementation of this plan is measured. This task may be accomplished by the planning commission or some other established committee.

Objective 1b: Benton County will utilize this plan as a guide when making land use and development decisions.

Goal 2: Facilitate future revisions and updates to this comprehensive plan as needed and increase the comprehensiveness of this plan, as activity in Benton Count increases.

Objective 2a: Benton County should implement a permitting system to enable the tracking and quantifying of development activity. This system should not only be for the purpose of determining compliance with regulations, but also to gather statistical information regarding development activity.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

The goal of this chapter is to provide an inventory of existing land uses in order to establish locational trends across Benton County. The existing land use survey is parcel-based with the actual data being collected using Google Earth Imagery as well as Google Street View Imagery. Taking inventory of all existing land uses and potential land constraints is an important step in the planning process and directly relates to the future development of Benton County. Further analysis of this inventory will identify growth patterns and opportunities and constraints which will form the basis for a future land use plan for the County.

County parcel data was available via the Benton County Tax Assessor and was used for survey and mapping purposes. Google Maps, Google Street View, and Imagery from the 2012 United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Imagery Program were used to map land use the development in Benton County. Collecting data by parcel allows further analysis opportunities to study land use patterns by acreage and comparable percentages.

In addition to existing land uses, development constraints are also associated to future development. A number of constraints are documented and discussed within this chapter in order to provide a true picture of the development potential of vacant land. Development constraints include the 100 year floodplain, wetlands and soil conditions, not to mention the National Forest. The Holly Springs National Forest is by far the biggest area of developmental constraints.

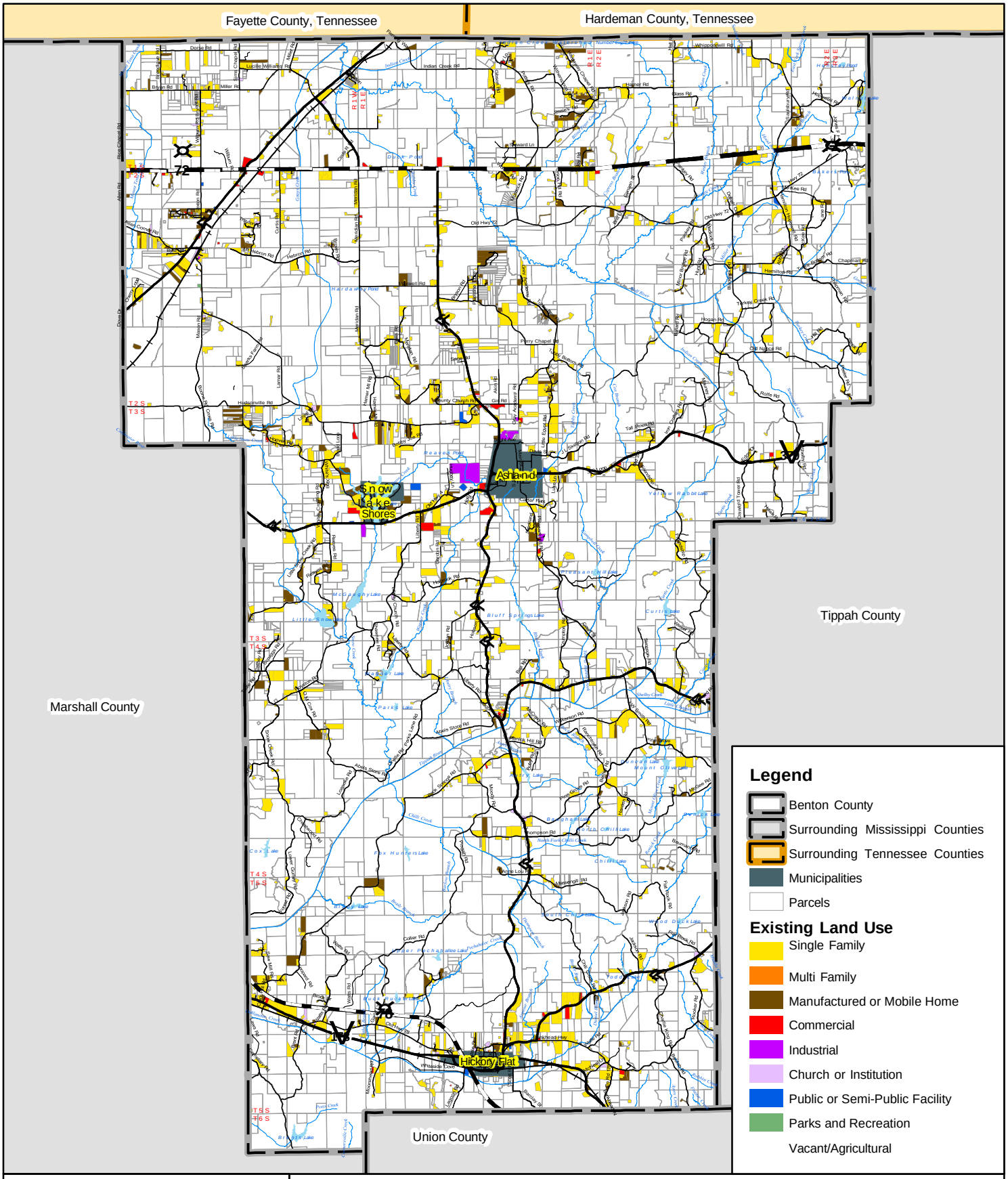
EXISTING LAND USE CATEGORIES AND INVENTORY [SEE MAP 4.1]

The existing land uses determined during a Google Earth and Google Street View survey are divided into the following categories: residential, commercial, church & institution, industrial, parks & recreation, public & semi-public, and vacant. Along with determining the land use in Benton County, a detailed analysis of how the land uses are distributed in Benton County was also produced.

Benton County encompasses 408.65 square miles; 3.82 square miles of that are within municipalities. Only the area outside of the three municipalities boundaries are considered for analysis. This analysis will look at the acres, square miles, and percentage of land used.

TABLE 4.1: EXISTING LAND USE DISTRIBUTION

Land Use Type	Acres	Square Miles	% Total
Residential	13,751.12	21.48	5.26%
Single Family	11,073.10	17.3	4.23%
Manufactured or Mobile Home	2,678.02	4.18	1.02%
Multi-Family	0	0	0.00%
Commercial	339.54	0.53	0.13%
Industrial	293.91	0.46	0.11%
Church or Institution	183.57	0.29	0.07%
Parks and Recreation	5.15	0.01	0.00%
Public or Semi-Public Facility	107.69	0.17	0.04%
Vacant	239,361.89	374	91.52%
Right-of-way	5,052.91	7.9	1.93%
Municipalities	2,440.22	3.82	0.93%
Total	261,536.00	408.65	100.00%
Source: Slaughter & Associates Land Use Survey and Calculations			



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map 4.1: Existing Land Use

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OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): *Google Earth and Street View Imagery; Mississippi Automated Resource InformationSystem (MARIS); USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program; Slaughter & Associates Land Use Survey; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*
Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*
Date: *March 5, 2019*

Residential Land Use

Residential land uses, which includes single family and manufactured or mobile homes, uses account for approximately 5%of land use in Benton County, or 21.48 square miles. The majority of residential land use in Benton County is single family residential, which accounts for 17.30 of the 21.48 square miles. Manufactured or mobile homes account for the remainder of the residential land use. Currently, no multi-family housing exists in Benton County.

Commercial Land Use

Commercial land uses account for about a half square mile (or 0.13%) of land in Benton County. The majority of the businesses in Benton County are located within a mile of one of the municipalities or on United States Highway 72. The types of rural businesses located in Benton County range from home improvement centers and antique shops to auto repair and body shops to mini storages and convenience stores.

Church or Institution Land use

Church or institution uses could include community buildings, school facilities, churches, cemeteries, etc. Approximately .3 square miles (less than 0.1%) of the County are classified as these types of uses. In Benton County the majority of this land use is churches and cemeteries.

Industrial Land Use

Industrial land uses account for about a half square mile (less than 0.11%) of land in Benton County. Most of the industrial uses are located in the vicinity of Ashland, the county seat. Magnolia Combined Cycle Gas Plant accounts for a large (nearly two thirds) portion of the industrial land in Benton County. This Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) facility could also be classified as a public/semi-public use but is more industrial due to its power generating use.

Parks and Recreations

Benton County has only one 5 acre parcel that is a parks and recreation land use. A softball field and pavilion is located on Lamar Road just outside of the unincorporated community of Lamar. This is the only land dedicated to recreational opportunity that exists within in the county, although a few do exist within the three municipalities. The Holly Springs National Forest also acts as recreational opportunity, but much of the land that is included in the Holly Springs National Forest is dual purpose land, acting as both recreation land and timber land.

Public/Semi-public Land Use

Public or semi-public uses could include government offices, utility towers, wells, community buildings, fire departments, etc. Approximately 0.2 square miles (less than 0.1%) of the County are classified as these types of uses.

Vacant/Agricultural Land Use

Over 90% of land in Benton County is undeveloped. Land classified as undeveloped does not mean that it is clear of human activity but clear of residential, commercial or industrial structures. Undeveloped land can be used for growing crops, pasture land, or even logging. Much of Benton County falls into this category due to its rural location, agricultural use, and much of the county being in the Holly Springs National Forrest.

Development Constraints and Restrictions

Outside of individual parcel land use, Benton County has two other attributes that influence land usage in the County. Flooding potential and federally identified flood zones have an impact on the land use distribution of Benton County. Also, the Holly Springs National Forest protects a large portion of land in Benton County.

Location Constraints

Location constraints consist of incorporated or unincorporated areas that may have certain rules or regulations impacting future development such as Indian Reservations, Historic Districts, or National or State Parks. Benton County is home to a large portion of the Holly Springs National Forest which does provide some constraints on development within its boundary.

Holly Springs National Forest [See Map 4.2]

National forests are different entities than national parks even though they provide many of the same amenities within their boundaries. National parks are concerned with preservation and protection of natural and historic resources. National forests, on the other hand, are concerned with the preservation of natural resources but do allow for the consumption of natural and mineral resources within its boundaries. The biggest difference in national forest and national parks occurs with the development of land within their boundaries. National forest land is not wholly owned by the federal government like national park land. Private property owners control much of the land in national forests, as is the case in Benton County. Thus, development of land for commercial or residential uses in a national forest is possible

Holly Springs National Forest covers 263.1 square miles of the 408.7 square miles, or 64.4%, which make up Benton County. Only 86.7 square miles, or 33.0%, of the National Forest is owned by the Federal Government. The United States Government owns approximately 21.2% of the land in Benton County. Thus, only 21.2% of the land in Benton County is constrained from future development due to its National Forest status.

Environmental Constraints

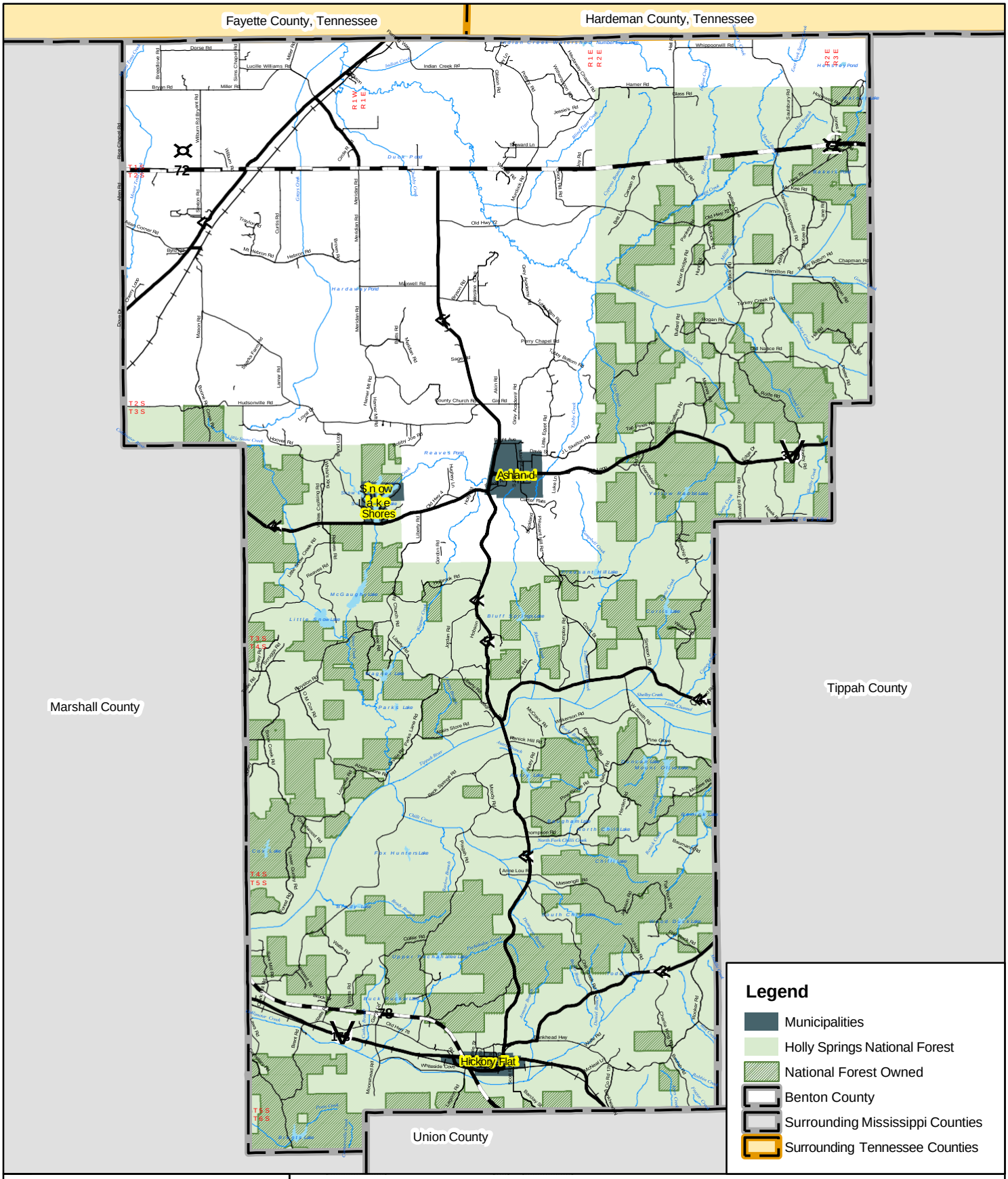
Environmental constraints represent specific land qualities that affect future building such as flood zones, steep slopes, wetlands, and soil suitability for sewage disposal. These constraints will be discussed in detail on the following pages.

100 Year Floodplain

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maintains digital flood maps (DFIRM) for the State of Mississippi. Map 4.3 portrays the most current mapping of flood potential areas for Benton County. Benton County is not affected by the floodway zone that consists of the stream channel and adjacent areas that actively carry flood water downstream.

The 100 year floodplain is the most common flood zone used for analysis purposes as opposed to the 500 year floodplain. The floodplain is defined as any land area susceptible to being inundated by flood waters. The 100 year floodplain area has a 1% chance of flooding in any given year; the 500 year floodplain area has a 0.2% chance of occurring in any given year.

Approximately 8.2% (33.6 square miles) of Benton County is within the 100 year floodplain or the floodway. The Wolf and Tippah Rivers and their tributaries account for most of the 100 year floodplain in Benton County. Oaklimeter Creek in the southern portion of the county accounts for only a small portion of the 100 year floodplain in Benton County. Only 2.1% of the parcels within these zones are currently developed as



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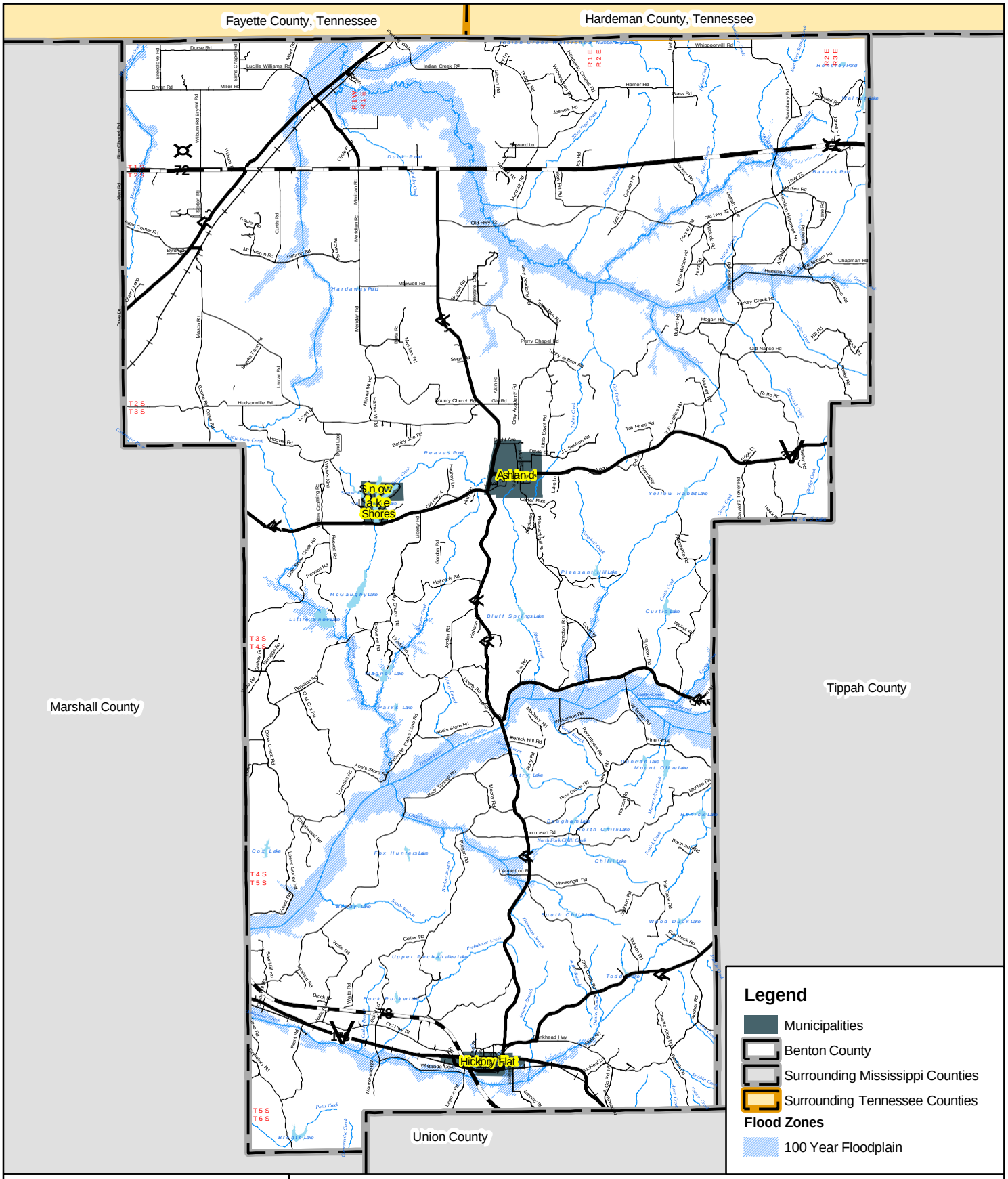
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POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

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Map 4.2: Holly Springs National Forest

Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan

Source(s): *Benton County, Mississippi; Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*
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0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map 4.3: 100 Year Floodplain

Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan

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OXFORD, MS 38655
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Source(s): *Federal Emergency Management Agency DFIRM; Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*

Date: *March 5, 2019*

commercial, industrial, public/semi-public, recreational and residential uses. 1.3% of the 100 year floodplain is public right-of-way and the remaining 96.6% is vacant land.

Septic Tank Suitability

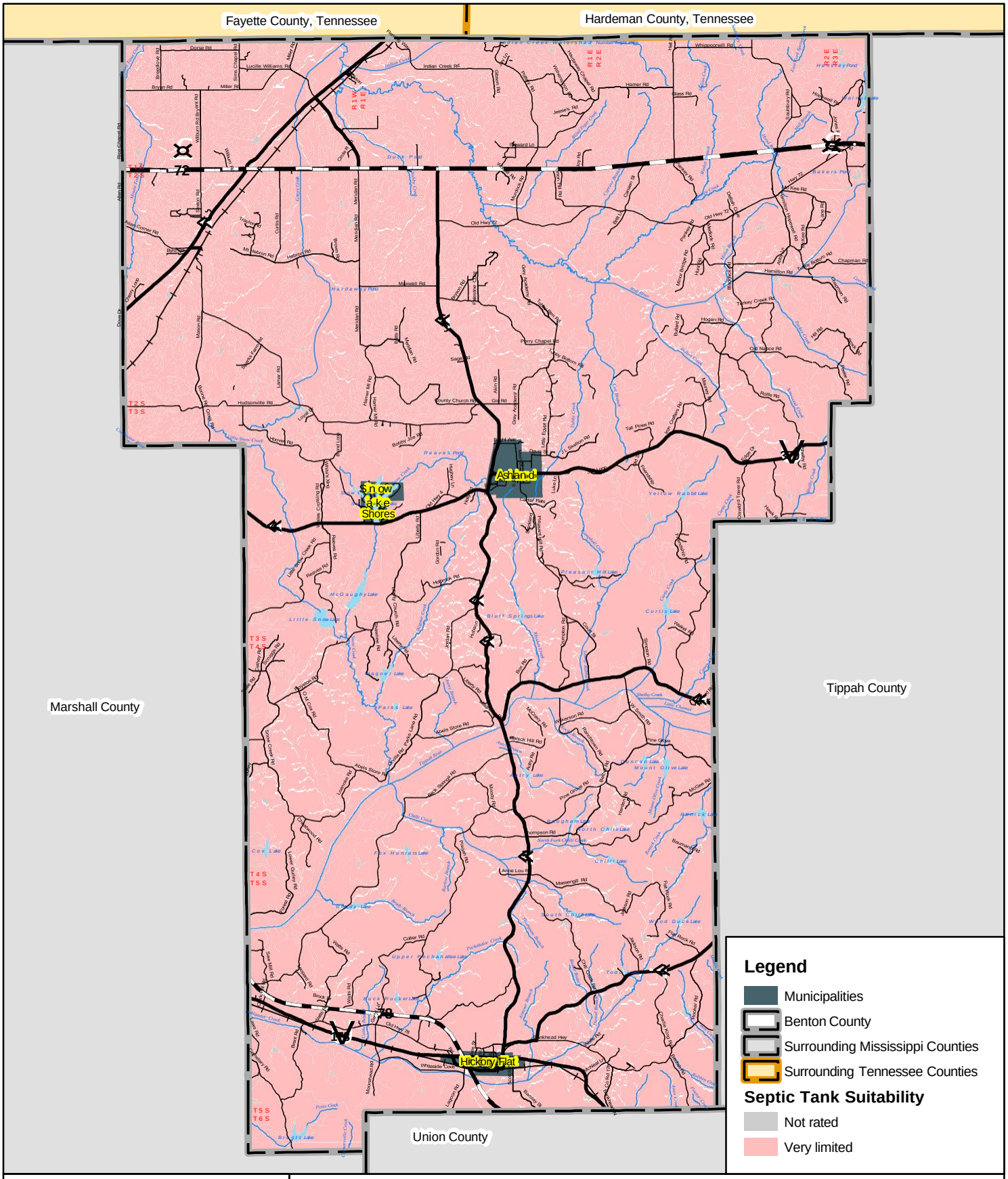
Benton County as a whole primarily consists of soil types where the use of septic tank absorption fields is very limited (Map 4.4). The soil survey produced NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) rates each soil type based on certain characteristics that are needed for adequate performance of alternative sewage disposal systems (septic tank). Some limitations may be overcome but can be costly. County Health Departments are typically the entities that inspect and regulate the construction of absorption fields. However, the best way to regulate sewage disposal is through a centralized sewer system and to overcome any future constraints is to require a connection to centralized sewer service. Development along cities fringe should be required to connect to centralized sewer moving forward.

Severe Slopes

Defining severe slopes can vary depending on the community and location. For Benton County, severe slopes have been defined as slopes above 15%. This is based on the soil category break down by NRCS. The map does not represent the exact slopes of land but representative soils with qualities that produce specific slope ranges. See Map 4.5. 256.0 square miles (62.6%) of Benton County is covered by soils that have slope characteristics that are greater than fifteen percent. These slope characteristics do not exclude development in over half the county, but they do make it extremely difficult and expensive.

Wetlands

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has developed a National Wetlands Inventory mapping system. Benton County is not significantly impacted by wetlands. About 93.0% is considered non-wetlands and about 1.0% is lakes/ponds. However, about 5.7% of the county is documented by the National Wetlands Inventory as forest/shrub wetlands or emergent wetland. The wetlands are relatively evenly distributed throughout Benton County. The majority of forest/shrub wetlands and emergent wetland are contained along the banks of the Tippah and Wolf Rivers and Snow Creek. See Map 4.6. These areas are most likely included in the 100 year floodplain.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map 4.4: Septic Tank Suitability

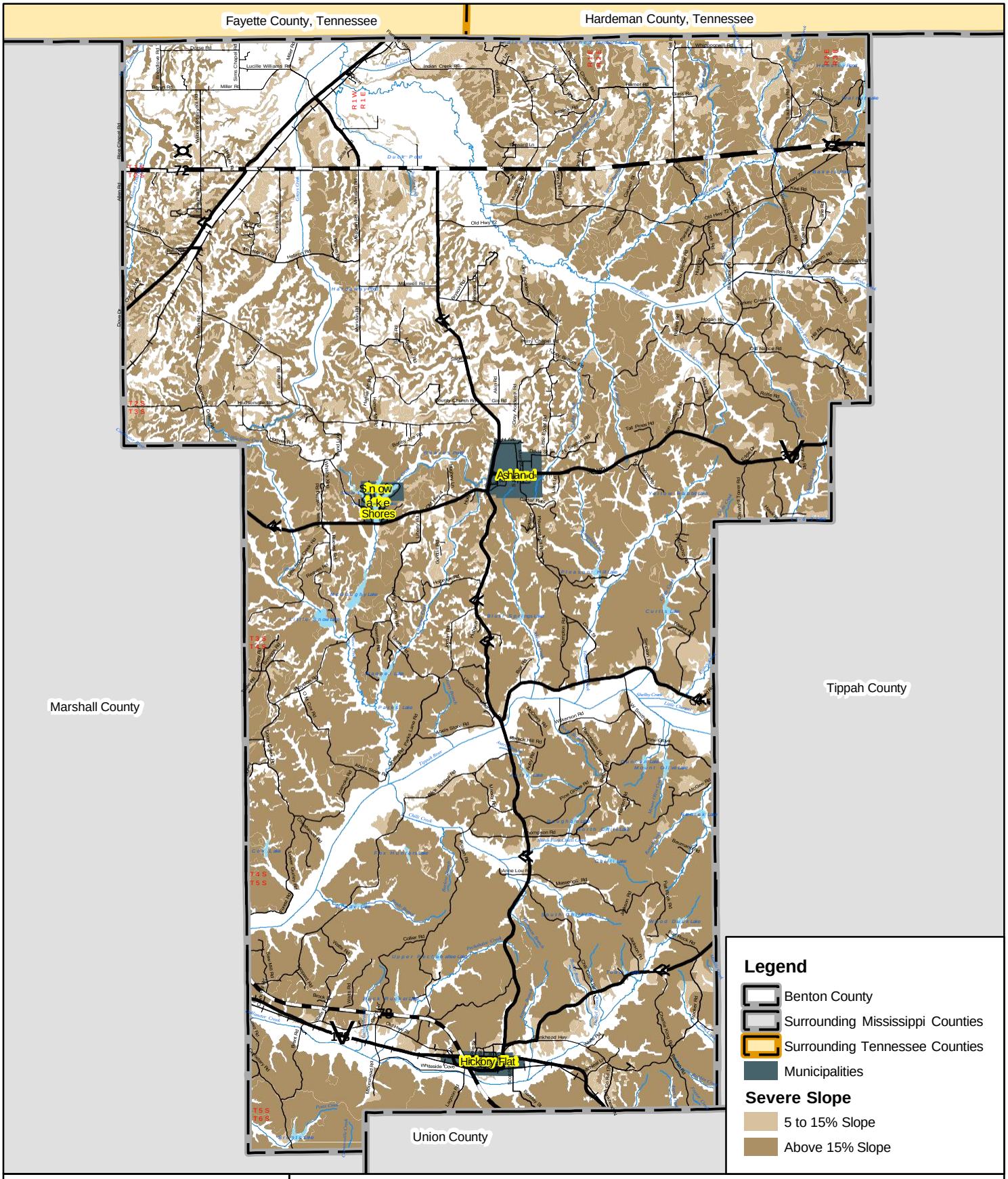
Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan

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POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
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Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); NRCS Web Soil Survey; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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0 1.5 3 6 Miles

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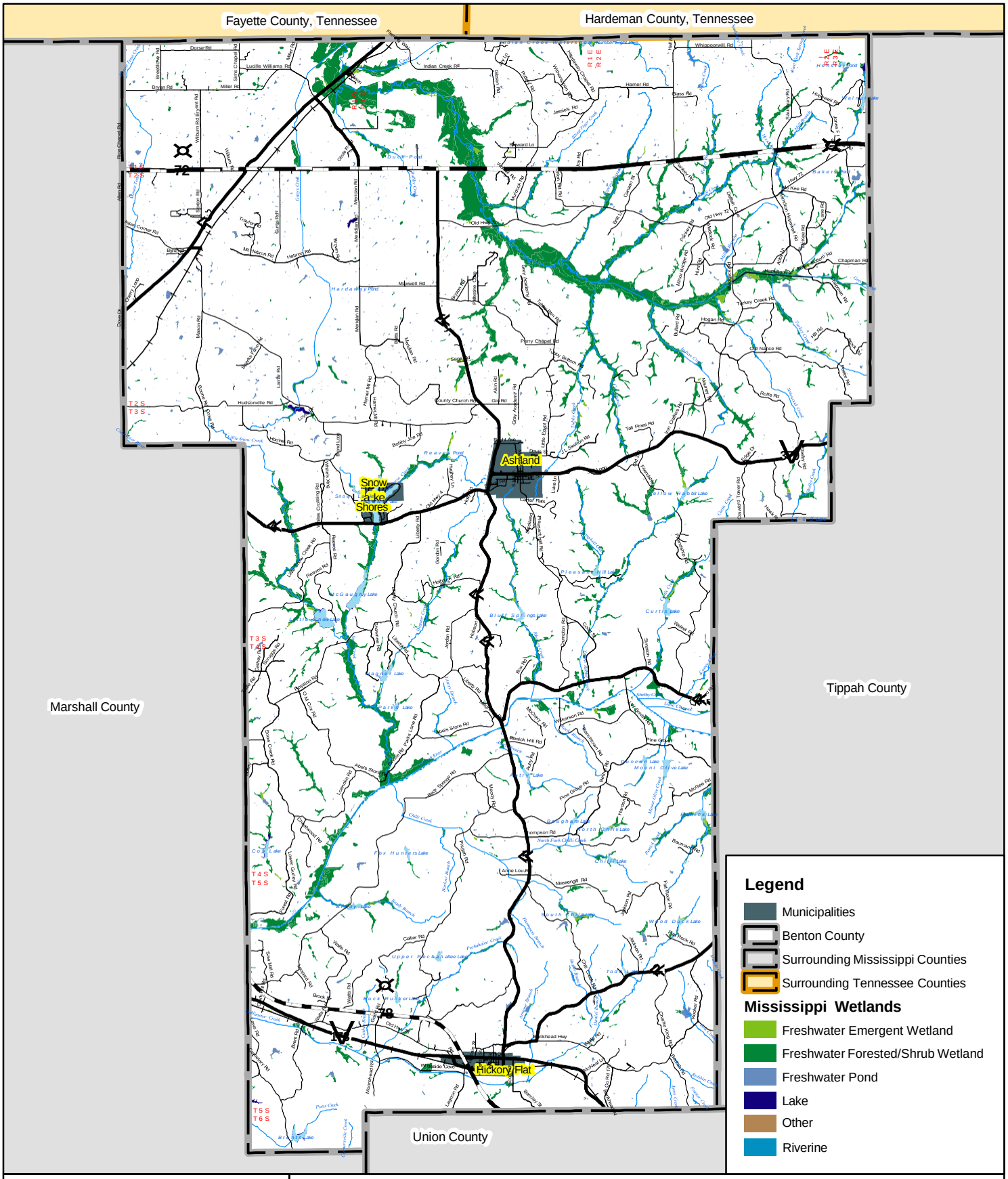
Map 4.5: Severe Slope

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); NRCS Web Soil Survey; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map 4.6: Wetlands

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Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*
Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*
Date: *March 5, 2019*

CHAPTER FIVE: FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In order to comply with Mississippi enabling legislation, the future land use plan must designate in map or policy form the proposed general distribution and extent of the proposed land uses. The future land use plan serves two purposes. First, it provides for the general physical location of expected future development. The second purpose is to create order among the existing land uses.

In preparing a Future Land Use Plan, a necessary and responsible step is that of considering environmentally sensitive areas. Some may see these areas as worthy of some degree of preservation, while other may see them as a constraint to development. Through the use of good design techniques, some of these environmentally constrained areas may be developed while preserving the sensitive areas at the same time. The existing land use chapter talks in detail about specific constraints, which assisted in the preparation of this future land use plan.

Without a land use plan for Benton County any kind of development would be allowed to happen anywhere with little to no regulation at all. This section establishes policies that will shape how and where future development occurs. These policies cannot prevent all negative things or incompatible uses from happening, but hopefully, they will introduce some control and guide future decisions. This section, along with the entire Comprehensive Plan, can promote these ideals even further. This Chapter focuses on the ideal location for certain land uses, the ideal mixture of land uses, and the ideal intensity of land uses by translating portions of the previous chapter into map form.

There are some general guiding statements that should be presented regarding some types of future land use no matter where it is located in Benton County:

- Intense development of any type needs central sewer and an adequate transportation system;
- Buildings located in rural areas should be built at least 100' from the centerline of a public road;
- All parcels should have at least 50' of frontage on a public road.

Even though Benton County is still a rural place with lots of agriculture and open space, there are a number of potentially undesirable or "obnoxious neighbor" land uses that need to be addressed by specific policies that define and control these uses. Some of these uses overburden the County resources such as heavy-haul trucking, and other uses inconvenience adjacent neighbors or cause potentially hazardous conditions, such as junkyards, gravel pits, or concrete plants. When activities on one property "spillover" and cause a burden and danger to adjacent property owners, then the government is authorized and required to regulate it. This is not "taking away" property rights, it is requiring accountability for land use activities. For example, defining a Junkyard as a place with 10 or more cars that are inoperable and requiring such places to build a fence and keep the property mowed if there are residences within 500 feet of the junkyard property, or junk cars, is protecting the safety and welfare of the citizens. Benton County must identify and regulate potentially hazardous land uses.

POTENTIAL LAND USE NEEDS

The population is used to create a base projection for the amount of land area that will be needed in each land use category to accommodate the expected growth within the next five to ten years. Since, population projection are the major controller in calculating land use needs, land use was calculated for each of the three population projections discussed in Chapter Two. This provides us with a range acreage needed in each of the land use categories. Table 5.1 shows future land use projections based on population projections.

TABLE 5. 1: FUTURE LAND USE PROJECTION

Source or Projection Method	U.S. Census Bureau			Institute of Higher Learning		1970-2010 Trend		2010-2017 Trend	
Year	2010			2025		2025		2025	
Population or Projected Population	8,729			8,804		8,904		7,945	
Land Use Type	Acres	% Total	Acres per person	Projected Acres	New Acres in Land Use	Projected Acres	New Acres in Land Use	Projected Acres	New Acres in Land Use
Residential	13,751.12	5.26%	1.58	13,869.27	118.15	14,026.80	275.68	12,516.06	-1,235.06
Single Family	11,073.10	4.23%	1.27	11,168.24	95.14	11,295.09	221.99	10,078.56	-994.54
Manufactured or Mobile Home	2,678.02	1.02%	0.31	2,701.03	23.01	2,731.71	53.69	2,437.49	-240.53
Multi-Family	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Commercial	339.54	0.13%	0.04	342.46	2.92	346.35	6.81	309.04	-30.50
Industrial	293.91	0.11%	0.03	296.44	2.53	299.80	5.89	267.51	-26.40
Church or Institution	183.57	0.07%	0.02	185.15	1.58	187.25	3.68	167.08	-16.49
Parks and Recreation	5.15	0.00%	0.00	5.19	0.04	5.25	0.10	4.69	-0.46
Public or Semi-Public Facility	107.69	0.04%	0.01	108.62	0.93	109.85	2.16	98.02	-9.67
Vacant	239,361.89	91.52%	27.42	239,192.34	-169.55	238,966.26	-395.63	240,680.47	1,318.58
Right-of-way	5,052.91	1.93%	0.58	5,096.32	43.41	5,154.21	101.30	5,052.91	0.00
Municipalities	2,440.22	0.93%	0.28	2,440.22	0.00	2,440.22	0.00	2,440.22	0.00
Total	**261,536.00**			**261,536.00**		**261,536.00**		**261,536.00**	

Source: Slaughter & Associates Land Use Survey and Calculations

Based upon population projections it is likely that there would be:

- a need for up to 276 acres more of residentially developed land than is currently being utilized within the unincorporated County.
- a need for up to 10 acres more of commercially developed land than is currently being utilized within the unincorporated County.
- a need for up to 10 acres more of industrially developed land than is currently being utilized within the unincorporated County.
- a need for up to 10 acres more of institutional developed land than is currently being utilized within the unincorporated County.
- a need for up to another 1 acre of parks and recreation land than is currently being utilized within the unincorporated County. The County, if it chooses to, should expand upon its current one park. To do so would ultimately exceed this projection and that would have a positive effect on the quality of life in Benton County.
- a need for up to 1 acre more of public or semi-public developed land than is currently being utilized within the unincorporated County.

These approximations are guides that planners utilized to determine if the proposed land uses could accommodate projected growth. These approximations should not be utilized as standards to restrict land uses. The approximations of future land use needs are subject to uncertainty. The assumptions that form the basis of these projections are historical trends, which may or may not be replicated within the future. From time to time these land use approximations should be reviewed and revised to reflect the changing circumstances within the community.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES [SEE MAP 5.1]

The Future Land Use Map illustrates different land use categories. These categories are color-coded according to the key on the map and as represented by the descriptions below.

The Benton County Land Use Plan categorizes future land uses in the following manner:

LAND USES

1. Rural Use
2. Agricultural Use

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ZONES

3. Residential Development Zone
4. Commercial Development Zone
5. Industrial Development Zone

OTHER

6. Holly Springs National Forest

The following is an explanation of the specific meaning of land use colors codes depicted on Map 5.1 contained in this chapter:

Rural Use

Maximum density of one single family detached residential unit per acre.

Located along the major transportation corridors of Benton County, the primary intended use of this land is agricultural, whether it involves crops, animals, pastureland or forests. Additional low density uses such as country stores and residences are an expected part of the rural community. However, this does not include intensive operations such as feedlots, scrapyards, major industrial developments or mining. There is room for residential clustering as a part of the rural use, though at low densities. The residential buildings should generally be single-family detached homes because they represent a more permanent and substantial investment in the community, but there are also allowances for both singlewide and doublewide manufactured housing. Manufactured housing is particular suitable for areas in the Holly Springs National Forest, as the homes are easily removable, if additional land is acquired by the National Forest. The housing mix in this area should always have more single-family detached units than manufactured housing. Care should be taken to allow for adequate access to public roads for all properties, and all types of use and development (other than farms and agriculture) should be monitored closely. These areas of the Land Use Plan are not expected to be served by municipal sewer service within the next 10 to 20 years, and beyond.

Agricultural Use

Maximum density of one single family detached residential unit per acre.

Located away from the major transportation corridors of Benton County, the primary intended use of this land is large-lot agricultural, whether it involves crops, animals, pastureland or forests. This may include intensive operations such as feedlots or mining. There is room for residential clustering as a part of the agricultural use though at low densities of less than one unit per acre. The residential buildings should be single-family detached homes because they represent a more permanent and substantial investment in the community, but there are also allowances for doublewide manufactured housing. The housing mix in this area should always have more single-family detached units than manufactured housing. Care should be taken to allow for adequate access to public roads for all properties, and all types of use and development (other than farms and agriculture) should be monitored closely. These areas of the Land Use Plan are not expected to be served by municipal sewer service within the next 10 to 20 years, and beyond.

Residential Development Zone


Maximum density of three dwelling units per acre

These areas in the County have been flagged as ideal for potential residential developments. They have access to both public water and sewer and are located on or near major transportation corridors in the County. The County should adopt Subdivision Regulations to regulate minimum development standards before allowing any major residential developments in the County.

(Because there are no sewer certificates currently in the County and the entirety of the County is poorly suited for Septic, there are no suitable places to have a Residential Development Zone, thus it does not appear on the Future Land Use Map.)

Commercial Development Zone


Suitable for larger scale retail and business.

These areas have been flagged as ideal for potential commercial development. These areas should be located at or near major transportation corridors, ideally at the intersection of said corridors. These areas are ideal for the clustering of multiple separate businesses in one location, allowing those businesses to efficiently use areas that have upgraded infrastructure to commercial specifications.

Industrial Development Zone

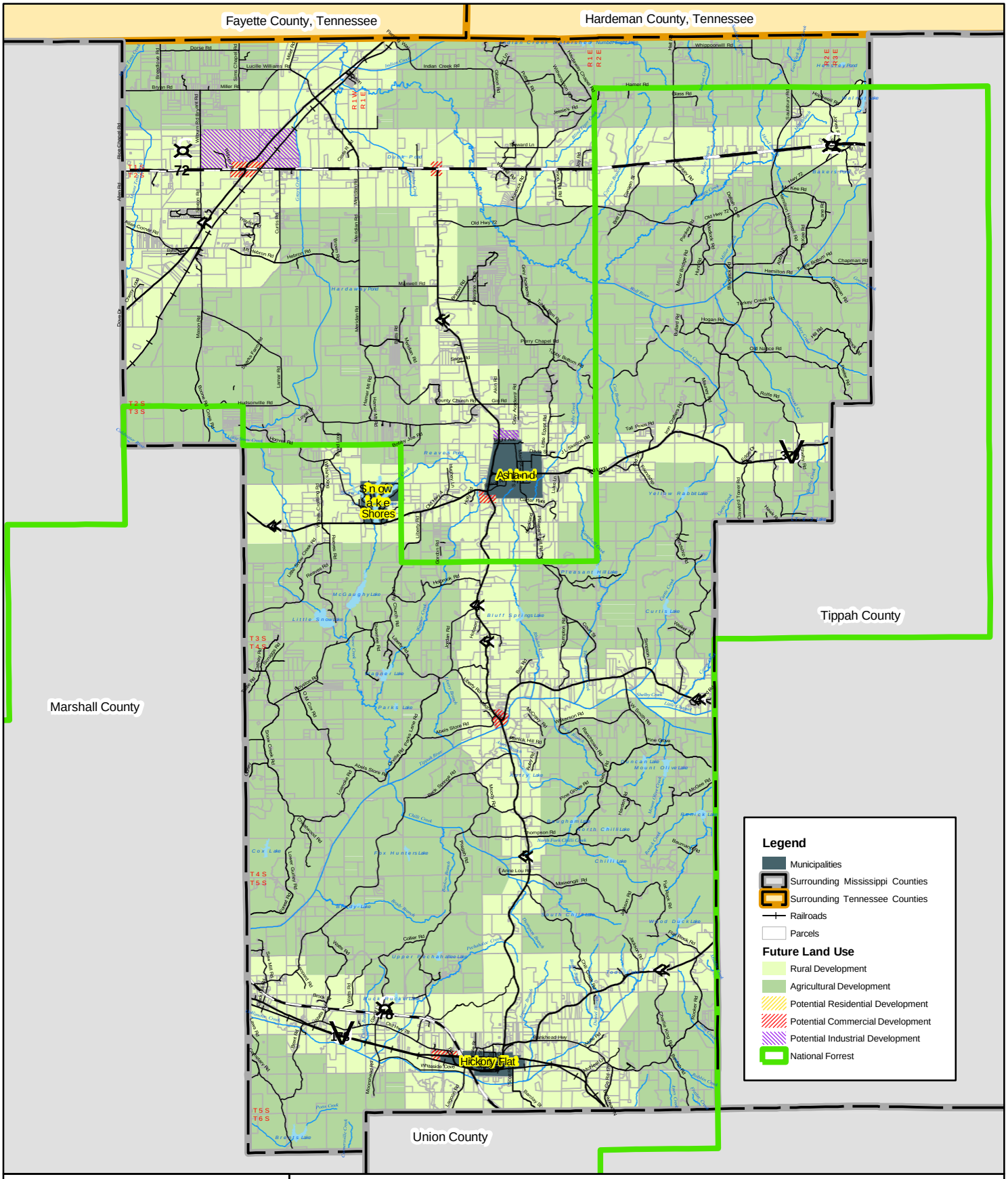

All industrial uses, including outdoor.

These areas have been flagged as ideal for potential industrial development. Factories, plants, and distribution centers should be located adjacent to the cities or in an established industrial park where they would have access to central water and sewer systems, railroad or interstate transportation networks, and higher levels of police and fire protection. There should be controls on these sites to make sure that they are buffered from adjacent uses such as residential.

National Forest


Holly Springs National Forest

The Holly Springs National Forrest is shown on the Future Land Use Map and does not have special development restrictions. Portions of this area is owned by the United States Government and operated by the United States Forest Service (a division of the United States Department of Agriculture). The primary function of the National Forest is to help conserve natural recourses. National Forest allow for timber harvesting, grazing, natural resource extraction and wildlife and wild lands conservation. National Forest also provide recreation opportunities such as hiking, camping, wildlife photography and many other activities. Much of National Forest land is not owned by the Federal Government so private development is allowed to take place with no additional restriction. Even without greater restrictions the county should help conserve these lands and encourage development at the Agricultural/Rural Residential density.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map 5.1: Future Land Use

SLAUGHTER & ASSOCIATES
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OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): *Google Earth and Street View Imagery; Mississippi Automated Resource InformationSystem (MARIS); USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program; Slaughter & Associates Land Use Survey; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*
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Date: *March 5, 2019*

CHAPTER SIX: TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Transportation is an important component of the comprehensive planning process because future development, economic growth, and quality of life are all tied to and influenced by the transportation system. Benton County has three main transportation corridors that divide the county. United States Highway 72 runs east and west through the Northern portion of the county. United States Highway 78 (Future Interstate 22) runs east and west through the extreme Southwestern portion of the county. Mississippi Highway 5 runs north and South through the heart of the county. Mississippi Highway 5 starts at United States Highway 72 and runs South exiting the county just of South of United States Highway 78.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION [SEE MAP 6.1]

According to the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) *Functional Classification Guidelines*, functional classification is a method used to group streets and roadways into categories based on the level of transportation service they provide. The assumption behind functional classification is that any roadway does not carry traffic independently, yet roadways work together to form a network of traffic flow. It is this overall network that helps assign classifications to roadways based on the portion of road used for the network traffic flow.

Transportation planners use three main classifications when determining the level of traffic on roadways: arterial, collector, and local. Any of those classifications can have a sub-classification (major and minor), as well, depending on the conditions and transportation networks within a city or county. Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) assigns these classifications for rural and urban areas. The roadway classifications in this Plan are based on the MDOT functional classifications for Benton County.

ARTERIAL

Arterials (principal and minor) serve a higher level of trips and travel density that is characteristic of statewide or countywide travel. Principal arterials typically serve and connect the major activity centers and also accommodate the highest volume of traffic. Benton County has three principal arterials: United States Highway 72, States Highway 78 and the portion of Mississippi Highway 7 south of U.S. Highway 72. The County also has four minor arterials. The portion of Mississippi Highway 7 North of U.S. Highway 72 to the state line is classified as a minor arterial. All of Mississippi Highway 4, Mississippi Highway 5 to is junction with Mississippi 178, and Mississippi Highway 178 from its junction with Mississippi Highway 5 to its junction with U.S. Highway 78, are all classified as minor arterials.

COLLECTOR

Where arterials function as statewide connections, collector roads (major and minor) serve the countywide traffic network. They collect and distribute the network of traffic from local roads to arterials. Benton County has major and minor collectors identified. Major collectors play a more significant role in the transportation network than do minor collectors.

Major collectors in Benton County include Mississippi Highway 178 east of the junction with Mississippi Highway 5, Mississippi Highway 178 west of the junction with U.S. Highway 78; the Mississippi Highway 2 corridor; the Black Springs Road and Clark Hill Road corridors; the Pine Grove Road, Bethel Road and J.W. Smith Road corridors; the Liberty Church Road corridor; the Court Street and Pleasant Hill Road corridors; the Mississippi Highway 370 corridor; the Allen Road and Lamar Road corridors; the Blackjack Road, Hamilton Hopewell Road, Hamilton Road, Saulsbury Road and Whippoorwill Road corridors; and the Bryan Road, Lucille Williams Road and Miller Road corridors.

Minor collectors in Benton County include the Bryant Road, Sexton Road and Wilburn Road corridor; the Harris Chapel Road corridor; the Old Highway 72 Corridor; the Mullins Road, Royston Road and Snow Creek Road corridors; the Pine Grove Corridor, east of its junction with J.W. Smith Road; the Cornersville Road, Lagoon Road and Spruce Street corridors; and the Cedar Street, Crum Street and Spruce Avenue corridors.

LOCAL

Local roadways connect and carry traffic from adjacent land uses to roadways of higher classification for dispersal of traffic flow. For Benton County, these would include all other county and city roadways with less traffic than the collectors.

ROAD, RIGHT-OF-WAY & PAVEMENT STANDARDS

Currently, Benton County has limited road standards. In conjunction with this plan the County is in the process of adopting a subdivision regulations. Subdivision regulations deal with a multitude of development issues, and, most importantly for this chapter, they deal with roads. A good set of subdivision regulations will include standards for right-of-way, pavement, grading, and drainage, as well as address future transportation needs. One of the most important portions of subdivision regulations requires developers to make upgrades to future collectors and arterials to ensure once further development occurs the roadway can handle increased traffic. A subdivision regulation will also set aside right-of-way and pavement width based on the functional classification of the roadway. For detailed information regarding these standards, refer to the Benton County Subdivision Regulations that have been adopted or are soon to be adopted.

In addition to the subdivision regulations, this plan recommends that the County adopt a minimum road cross-section. This minimum road cross-section will be the new standard for the construction of gravel roads in the county. It will also be a precursor to the county considering paving roads at a later date. Improving the road standards will also require acquiring more right-of-way.

TRAFFIC COUNTS

Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) conducts a series of traffic count surveys in order to produce statewide data for vehicle-miles-traveled. These surveys are conducted yearly, but specific survey points in cities or counties may only be updated every three years; MDOT cannot count each traffic survey point every year. MDOT uses the data collected at each survey point to calculate the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT). These are the numbers produced for public use.

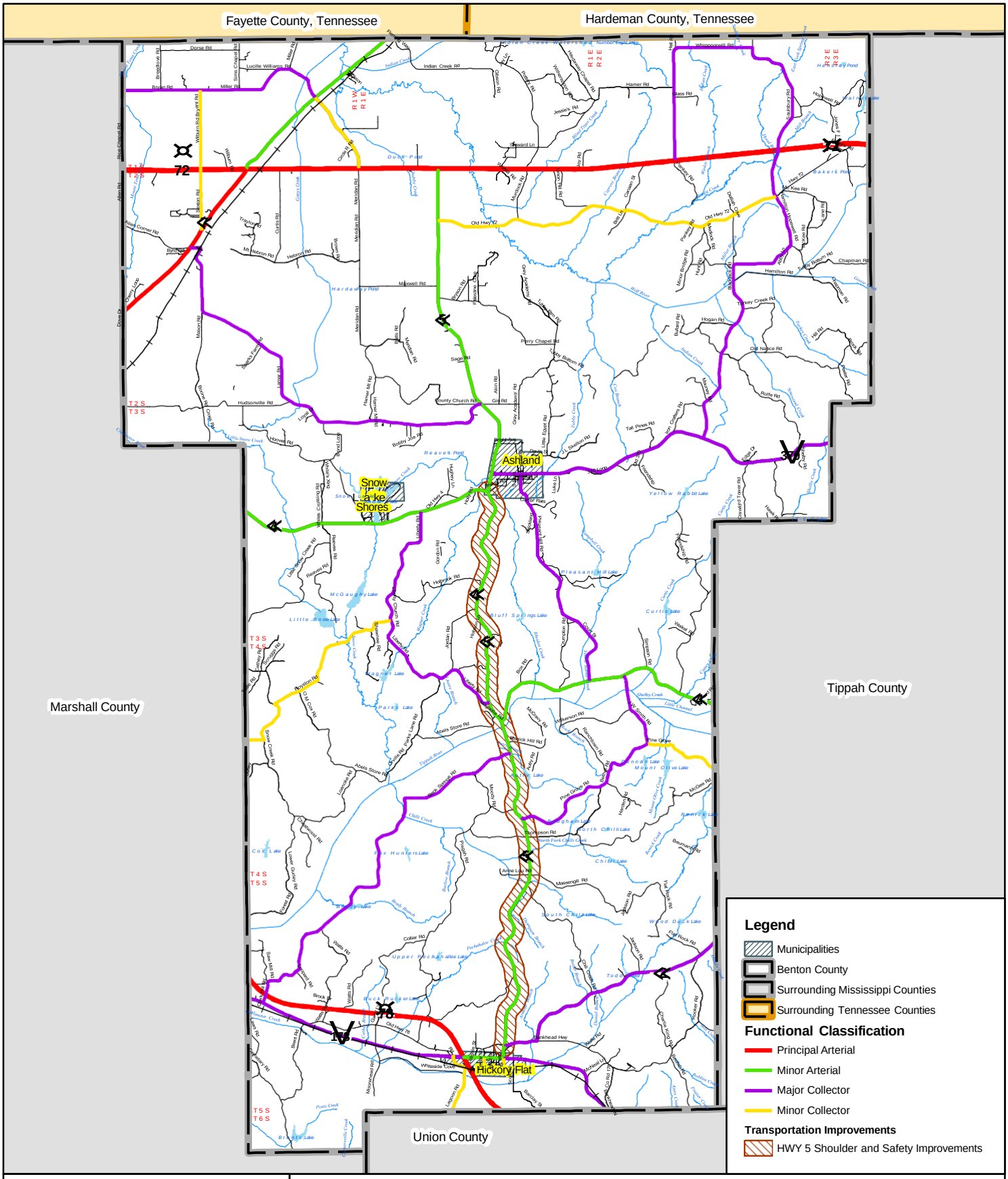
There are fifty-one survey points in Benton County along the main transportation corridors, which are identified in the Transportation Plan (Map 6.2). For this Comprehensive Plan, traffic counts were analyzed yearly from 2008 to 2017. The following table shows the actual and estimated AADT counts for these survey points.

Across the County there as a decrease in Traffic Counts between 2008 and 2013 and an increase of approximately the same size between 2013 and 2017. This pattern is consistent with other economic indicators for the County over the same time period, and is in keeping with national trends surrounding the Recession. Survey points along major arterials, highlighted in pink below, showed a similar trend.

TABLE 6.1: AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC COUNTS

Map #	Site ID	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Last ! Years # Change	Last ! Years % Change	Last 10 Years # Change	Last 10 Years % Change
1	050440	110	110	110	120	120	120	130	130	130	70	-5(	-41.7%	-40	-36.4%
2	050130	1,700	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,400	1,400	1,500	1,900	30(	18.8%	200	11.8%
3	050140	1,700	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,400	1,400	1,500	1,500	1,500	10(	7.1%	-200	-11.8%
4	050670	170	170	170	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	(	0.0%	-40	-23.5%
5	050660	140	140	140	130	130	130	150	150	150	180	5(	38.5%	40	28.6%
6	050110	7,700	6,800	7,000	7,000	6,300	6,400	6,500	7,000	7,100	7,200	80(	12.5%	-500	-6.5%
7	050650	360	360	320	320	290	290	300	260	270	270	-2(	-6.9%	-90	-25.0%
8	050640	150	150	80	80	80	90	90	90	90	90	(	0.0%	-60	-40.0%
9	050800	50	50	50	60	60	60	50	50	50	50	-1(	-16.7%	0	0.0%
10	050100	7,600	7,500	7,200	7,200	7,300	6,900	7,000	7,100	7,200	7,200	30(	4.3%	-400	-5.3%
11	050840	50	40	40	40	20	20	20	30	30	30	1(	50.0%	-20	-40.0%
12	050420	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,500	1,500	1,500	10(	7.1%	100	7.1%
13	050430	200	210	210	210	200	200	200	180	180	180	-2(	-10.0%	-20	-10.0%
14	050090	8,100	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,100	7,700	7,900	8,000	8,300	8,300	600	7.8%	200	2.5%
15	050080	9,000	8,900	9,100	7,500	7,500	7,600	8,700	8,800	9,000	9,300	1,700	22.4%	300	3.3%
16	050120	1,800	1,700	1,800	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,600	1,700	1,700	1,900	-100	-5.0%	100	5.6%
17	050590	1,300	1,100	1,100	1,100	910	910	920	920	940	950	40	4.4%	-350	-26.9%
18	050410	1,500	1,400	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,500	1,600	1,600	1,800	1,900	400	26.7%	400	26.7%
19	050810	210	210	210	160	160	160	180	180	190	200	40	25.0%	-10	-4.8%
20	050620	270	260	260	260	160	160	170	170	170	170	10	6.3%	-100	-37.0%
21	050540	720	790	800	790	800	800	810	720	730	740	-60	-7.5%	20	2.8%
22	050550	530	530	530	530	530	440	450	450	480	480	40	9.1%	-50	-9.4%
23	050150	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,700	200	13.3%	100	6.3%
24	050760	320	320	260	260	250	240	250	250	250	260	20	8.3%	-60	-18.8%
25	050160	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,100	2,100	2,200	1,900	-100	-5.0%	-100	-5.0%
26	050170	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,300	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,800	1,900	1,900	-100	-5.0%	-500	-20.8%
27	050230	1,600	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,200	1,200	1,300	1,100	1,200	1,200	0	0.0%	-400	-25.0%
28	050240	920	910	970	960	960	970	980	990	990	1,000	30	3.1%	80	8.7%
29	050260	970	960	890	880	880	920	930	940	1,000	1,100	180	19.6%	130	13.4%
30	050380	980	960	970	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,300	1,300	1,200	0	0.0%	220	22.4%
31	050690	810	790	800	790	730	730	740	730	750	760	30	4.1%	-50	-6.2%
32	050530	1,100	1,100	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,200	1,200	200	20.0%	100	9.1%
33	050820	130	130	140	140	140	110	120	120	130	130	20	18.2%	0	0.0%
34	050520	1,100	990	1,000	980	760	760	780	800	810	830	70	9.2%	-270	-24.5%
35	050510	480	450	450	440	370	370	380	370	380	390	20	5.4%	-90	-18.8%
36	050370	1,200	1,200	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	0	0.0%	100	8.3%
37	050750	220	240	240	240	140	140	140	190	200	200	60	42.9%	-20	-9.1%
38	050830	70	70	70	80	80	80	90	90	90	110	30	37.5%	40	57.1%
39	050350	930	910	800	780	780	980	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,100	120	12.2%	170	18.3%
40	050600	120	110	110	110	110	120	120	120	160	160	40	33.3%	40	33.3%
41	050610	80	80	40	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	100.0%	-40	-50.0%
42	050270	260	230	230	230	180	180	180	200	200	200	20	11.1%	-60	-23.1%
43	050330	960	940	1,100	1,000	1,000	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,200	1,200	100	9.1%	240	25.0%
44	050480	1,100	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	0	0.0%	100	9.1%
45	050500	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	960	970	990	1,200	100	9.1%	100	9.1%
46	050275	440	440	350	350	350	290	290	290	340	350	60	20.7%	-90	-20.5%
47	050041	15,000	15,000	14,000	14,000	14,000	14,000	15,000	15,000	18,000	18,000	4,000	28.6%	3,000	20.0%
48	050040	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,500	100	7.1%	0	0.0%
49	050450	330	540	550	540	500	500	510	510	520	530	30	6.0%	200	60.6%
50	050042	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	21,000	21,000	22,000	22,000	20,000	20,000	-1,000	-4.8%	-2,000	-9.1%
51	050070	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	880	-320	-26.7%	-420	-32.3%
TOTAL		106,890	105,300	104,400	102,290	99,460	98,820	102,320	102,970	105,920	106,950	8,130	8.2%	60	0.1%

Red numbers indicate actual daily traffic count, all others are estimates.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

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URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
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OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

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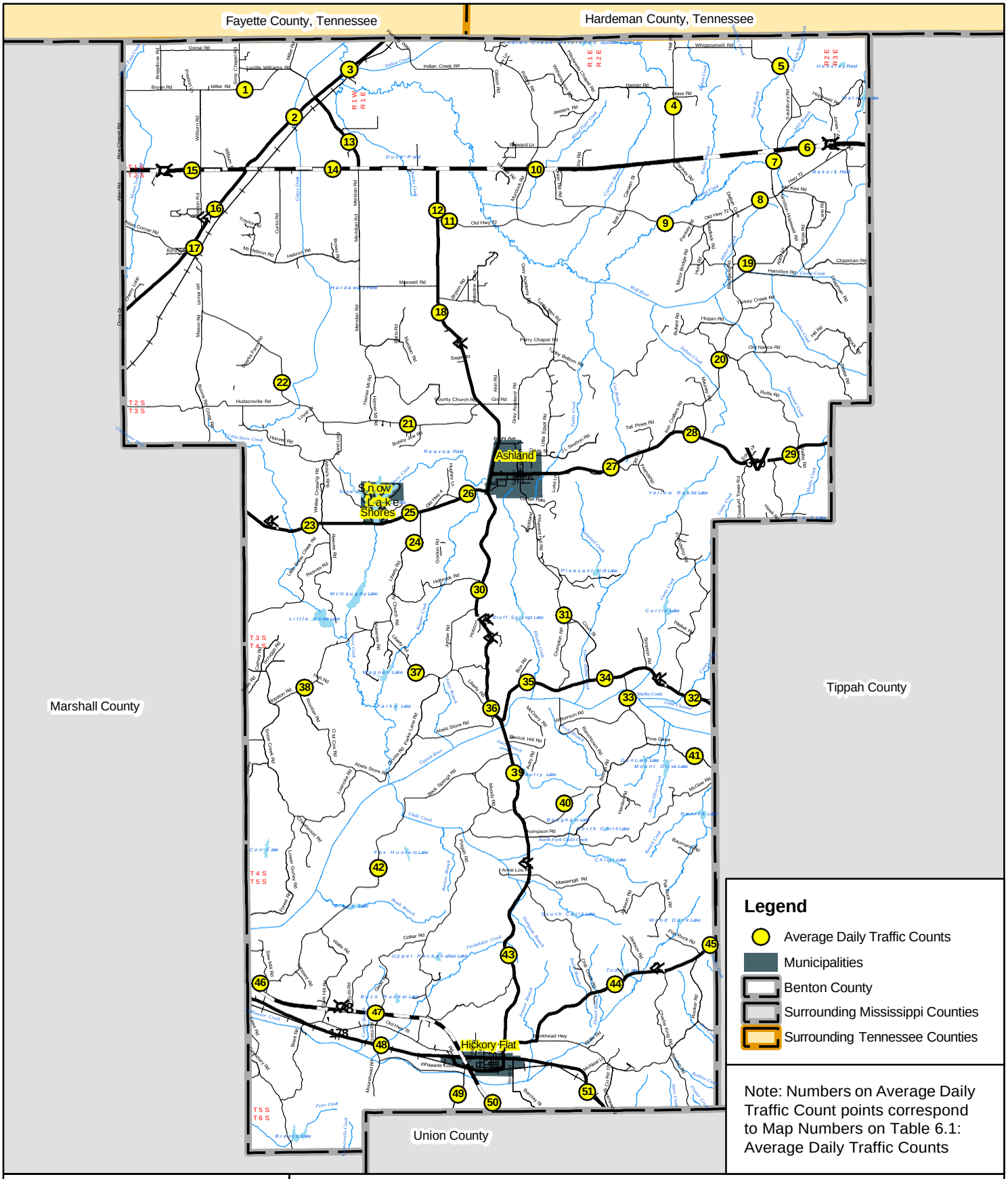
Map 6.1: Transportation Plan

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Department of Transporation (MDOT); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*

Date: *March 5, 2019*

Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan



Map 6.2: Average Daily Traffic Counts

Benton County, Mississippi 2019 Comprehensive Plan

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POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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Forms of Transportation

Airports

Benton County has no airports within its boundaries. Ripley and Holly Springs-Marshall County Airports are within a thirty minute drive of Ashland, the county seat of government. Both are public airports with asphalt runways of greater than 3,000 feet and in good condition according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Memphis International Airport is located about sixty miles or an hour away. Eleven airlines offer service out of Memphis International Airport to over thirty cities in the United States, Mexico, and the Bahamas. Memphis's top five routes are to Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, Chicago O'Hare, and Houston Intercontinental.

Automobile Travel

Much of this chapter has already been devoted to automobile travel as it is the most prevalent form of transportation in Benton County. However, improvements to the transportation network in Benton County have not been discussed.

This plan recommends that the County adopt a minimum road cross-section. This minimum road cross-section will be the new standard for construction of gravel roads in the county. It will also be a precursor to the county considering paving roads at a later date. Improving the road standards will also require acquiring more right-of-way. Acquiring right-of-way can be a costly and time consuming measure. To encourage right-of-way donation the county should prioritize road improvements and give some extra weight to roads where residents donate the needed right-of-way.

The minimum road cross section standard should include minimums on right-of-way, underlayment, drainage, shoulder width, and lane of travel width. The goal of said cross section is to provide the county with a base layer that is suitable for pavement at a later date. It should also be the goal of the county to improve roads to this standard. It is a goal of this plan to have all county roads to a paveable standard within ten years.

Once these right-of-way, drainage, and road standards have been met the county should begin exploring paving the county roads. Prior to this portion of the road improvements taking place the county should hire an engineer to rate the roads and create a paving priority list. This process should take into account the amount of traffic using the road and how the right-of-way was required.

Bicycle

Currently, Benton County offers no dedicated cycling facilities. Bike lanes are typically not marked outside of urbanized areas. However, the county could encourage recreational and commuter cycling by mapping some bicycle friendly routes and the installation of signage for motorist to share the road. These steps could improve safety for cyclist in Benton County. The Tanglefoot Trail is an example of a cycling project that could be carried out by a county. The Tanglefoot Trail is a 43.6 mile rails-to-trails project through Chickasaw, Pontotoc, and Union Counties. Although no abandon rail lines exist in Benton County for such a project, but a similar project could come to fruition in a different manner. The most important thing would be gauging public support and interest in such a project and finding funding for such a project. A more complex study, than can be completed in this plan, should be conducted before taking on a project that would require a large capital investment.

Pedestrian

Pedestrian travel is not a mode of transportation that is particularly in demand in counties. However, it should not be overlooked. Sidewalks should be required in subdivisions of specific densities and areas around the municipalities in Benton County. This will provide pedestrians with safe passage from house to house in the subdivisions and along roads if and when areas are annexed in the adjoining municipalities. Recreational

opportunities are another way that some counties have provided pedestrian transportation. The Tanglefoot Trail is an example of one such project. The Tanglefoot Trail is a 43.6 mile rails-to-trails project through Chickasaw, Pontotoc and Union Counties. Although no abandon rail lines exist in Benton County for such a project, a similar project could come to fruition in a different manner. The most important thing would be gauging public support and interest in such a project.

Railroad Corridors

Two railroad corridors cross though Benton County. Both follow major automobile transportation route thought the county. The Mississippi Central Railroad runs alongside Mississippi Highway 7 and is an active railway from Oxford, Mississippi, to Grand Junction, Tennessee. The railroad is owned by Pioneer Railcorp. It does not offer passenger service, primarily transporting wood products and fertilizers. The Mississippi Central connects to BNSF Railway in New Albany, Mississippi and Norfolk Southern Railway in Grand Junction, Tennessee. BNSF Railway runs alongside United States Highway 78 (Future Interstates Highway 22). BNSF Railway is a national rail operator. The rail line that runs through Benton County connects Memphis, Tennessee, and Birmingham, Alabama. BNSF Railway operated strictly as a freight railroad. The nearest passenger rail service is located in Memphis, Tennessee, via Amtrak.

CHAPTER SEVEN: COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

GENERAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Benton County's governmental and administration services operate out of the County Courthouse. General government and administration operations are in good overall health. The County Courthouse just received an upgrade to the phone system. Recent updates have also been made to the computer system, and the administrative staff is currently able to meet the County's current needs. However, the County should perform a regular assessment of the capacity and functionality of all administration facilities.

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AND BUILDING CODES

Benton County currently has no development regulations. As the Memphis Metropolitan Area grows closer to Benton County, the need becomes greater. The county needs to adopt zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, and a modern building code. **Development regulations are not to limit private property rights but to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Benton County.** Each development regulation protects a different aspects of public health, safety, and welfare. A zoning ordinance protects adjoining land owners from potentially noxious neighboring uses; for example, a home next to a chemical plant. It will also prohibit trailer parks from developing in rural areas that are not served by a sewer system (but does not prohibit all manufactured homes).

Subdivision regulations transfer the responsibility of developing infrastructure in a subdivision from the county to the developer. Subdivision regulation set a minimum standard for water and sewer lines and most importantly for a county road and right-of-way standards. Building codes can entail a number of things such as construction standards, fire codes, unkempt property and property maintenance. Construction standards ensure that buildings are of quality construction and made to withstand the environment in which they are constructed. Fire codes also cover some of the same points as the building code but often help reduce the fire rating and, in turn, home owners and rental insurance premiums. Unkempt property and property maintenance codes ensure that "junk yard" style conditions do not exist on property and in turn attract vermin and poor health conditions.

Adding any development regulations and building codes will require the county to add personnel. This could be one position or several depending on how the county decides to handle the position. With current growth patterns in mind, one employee would be able to administer zoning, enforce codes and enforce subdivision regulations with the help of the county engineer.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Benton County has an emergency management office that coordinates with surrounding counties and the State for preparing and carrying out a plan for dealing with man-made and natural disasters. In the wake of many severe weather events in Mississippi and across the nation, providing storm shelters to protect the public has become a priority of emergency management personnel. Currently, the County expects to receive three storm shelters that have been in use in Joplin, Missouri. These three storm shelters are ten feet by twenty feet and can hold about 40 people. Two of these shelters will be placed at the North Benton Fire Department and one will be placed at Northeast Benton Fire Department. The County wishes to provide more storm shelters in the future and FEMA has funding available to construct public storm shelters. FEMA is in the process of moving away from the smaller above mentioned shelters to larger multi-use facilities. The multi-use storm shelters can be utilized to protect the public but also as community centers, gymnasiums and other community facilities. These

facilities do require a substantial investment, of a million dollars or more, on the part of FEMA and local government or entities. Benton County should work with other public entities for locating shelters and even helping to fund such shelters. Working with the school system to build a new gymnasium that is also usable as a storm shelter is an example of one partnership opportunity, but other possibilities exist.

Investing in advanced warning systems will also help protect the public in an emergency situation. Benton County currently offers access to the CodeRED Weather Warning System. This system is available to all residents and automatically calls citizens who have signed up to notify them of severe weather. The addition of some strategically placed emergency sirens will strengthen this system of alerting citizens to severe weather. Sirens provide a redundancy for citizens that are not near a working phone or who many not have them. Map 7.1 shows the recommended placement of the initial three emergency sirens. As the county grows in the next twenty to twenty-five years, the County should add additional emergency sirens as county population concentrations show the need.

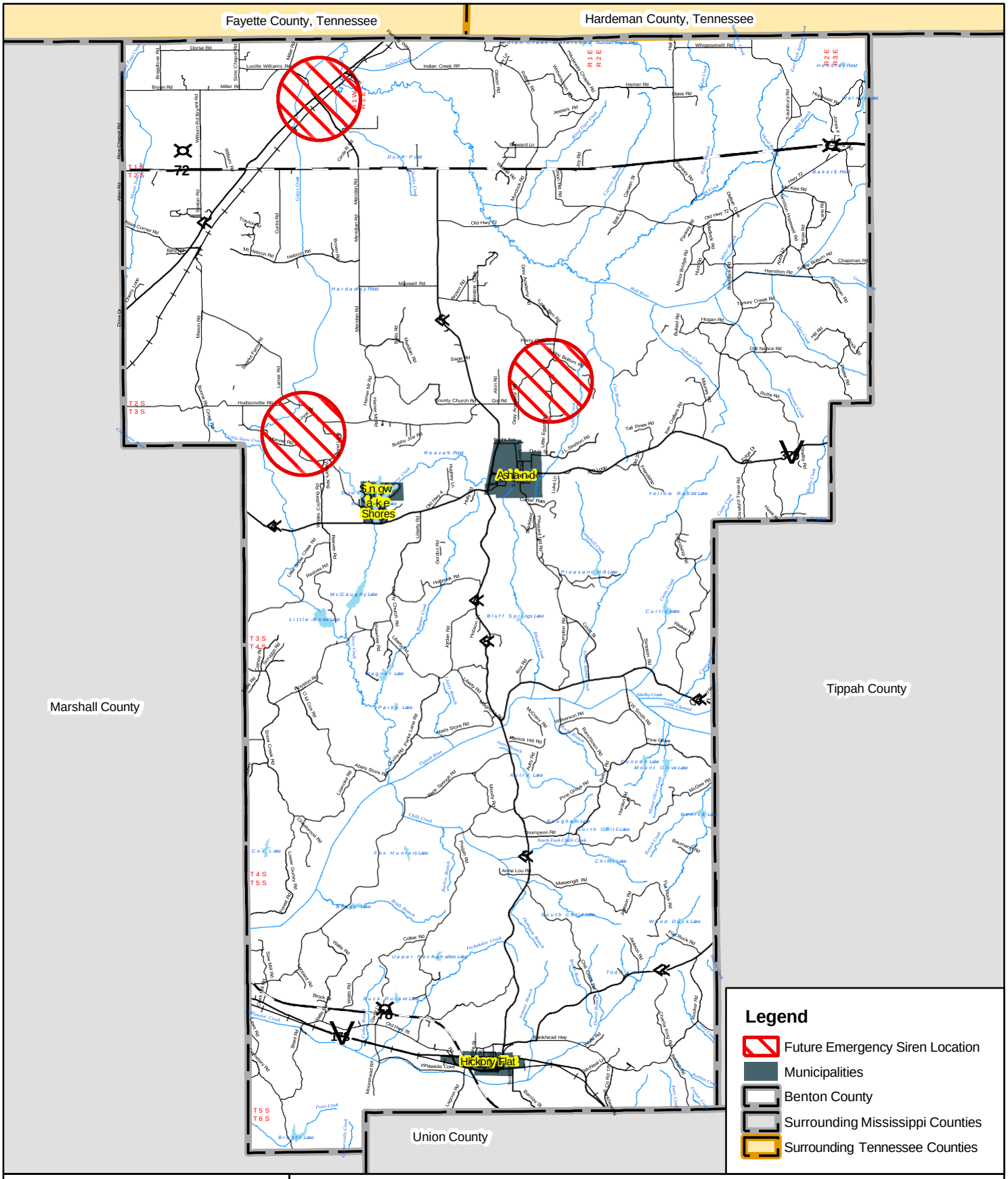
There is also a concern for flooding across the County and development within these areas. The Emergency Management Director serves as the administrator for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) which has regulations and guidelines for developing within flood prone areas. Benton County has notified all residents with homes in the floodplain and even bought out a few homeowners that chronically flood. The County should consider additional measures and options for regulating development in flood areas. One option is to require building permits for all construction so there is no confusion as to who should seek one.

Fire Department [See Map 7.2]

Benton County is served by volunteer fire fighters through six fire departments and six fire stations throughout the county. North Benton and Northeast Benton Fire Department serve the northern portion of the county. Able Store Fire Department serves the central portion of the county. Three municipal fire stations also serve a portion of the county surrounding those municipalities. The county has no fire protection districts protecting; the county; therefore, the unincorporated portions of the county are a Class 10. A Class 10 rating is the lowest rating that can be received and is given to an area no matter fire department conditions.

Creating fire grading districts around the North Benton, Northeast Benton and Able Store Fire Departments should be a goal of the county. Fire grading districts could potentially provide portions of Benton County with a Class 8 rated district that is comparable to the municipalities in the county. Fire grading districts do have some limitation as the Class 8 or 9 rating would only extend five road miles beyond the location of the fire station. In achieving this goal The County should hire a consultant to help the fire coordinator and fire chiefs set up their fire grading districts.

After setting up a graded fire district, updating the fire apparatus and equipment is the county fire departments most pressing concern. Replacing the fire apparatus will be the most expensive updates. The Mississippi State Ratings Bureau will rate a custom fire truck for twenty years with a recertification of five years for a usable life span of twenty-five years. A standard fire truck is rated for fifteen years with a recertification of five years for a usable life span of twenty years. That is to say, that many of the current county fire trucks will come due for a replacement during the life span of this plan. North Benton and Northeast Benton are both in immediate need of a tanker truck that will cost $250,000, and both departments will need a pumper in the next five years that will run about $200,000.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

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OXFORD, MS 38655
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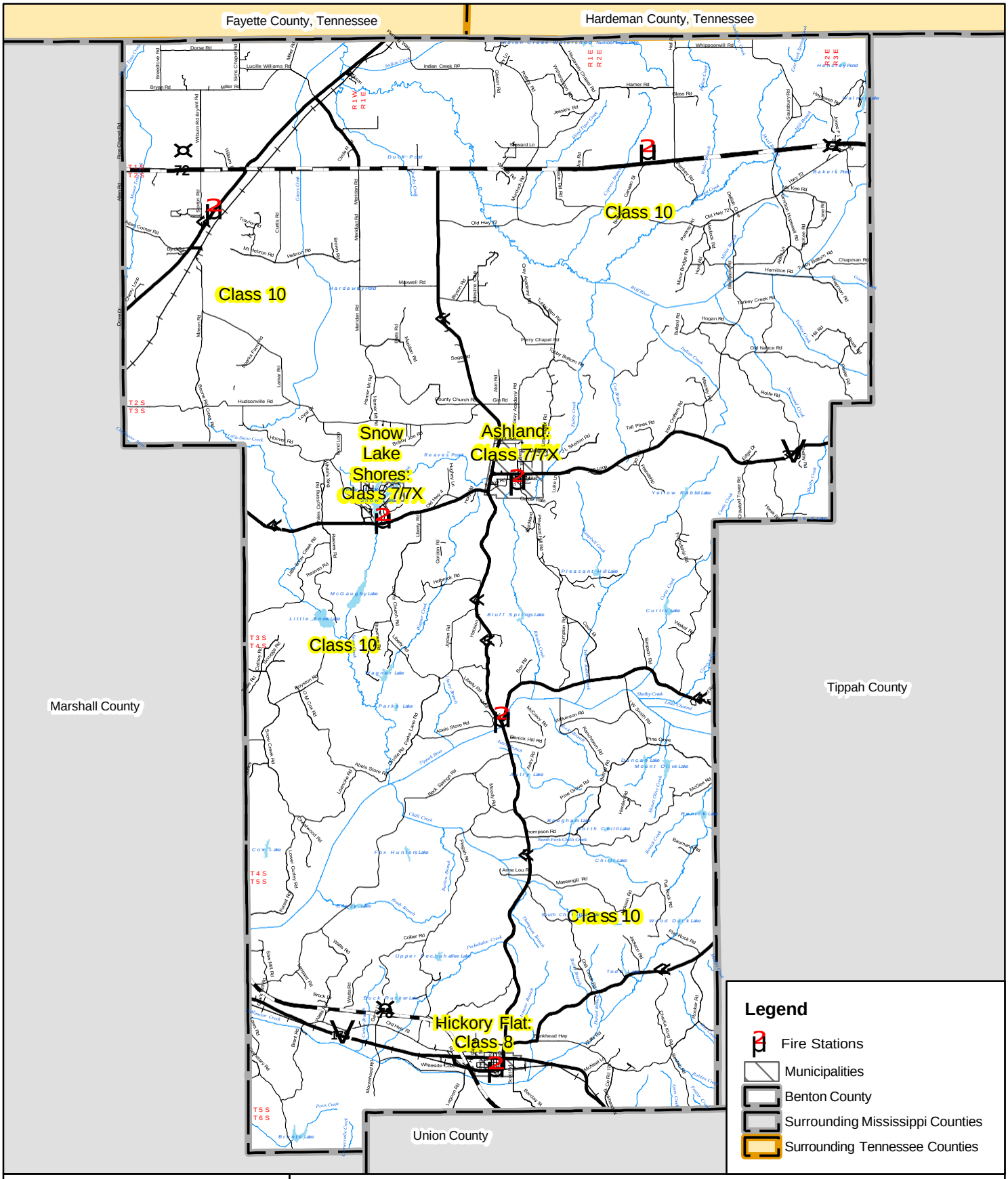
Map 7.1: Emergency Management Siren Locations

Benton County, Mississippi
2019 Comprehensive Plan

Source(s): *Benton County, Mississippi; Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

Disclaimer: *This map is accurate for planning purposes only.*

Date: *March 5, 2019*



Map 7.2: Fire Ratings and Stations

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URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): *Mississippi State Ratings Bureau; Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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In addition to the normal fire fighting duties, the county departments respond to all brush fires that occur in the Holly Springs National Forest. The departments could all be better prepared to respond to these needs with the addition of three brush trucks. In the past the departments have been able to purchase state surplus trucks and retrofit them to serve their brush fire fighting needs for about $100,000 a truck. However, the county fire stations are also currently experiencing a lack of space. All three county fire stations need to have an additional bay to store a truck. Currently, all the stations have at least one truck double stacked. This can require a truck to be moved out of the way before going on a fire call and wasting valuable response time.

Keeping fire trucks up-to-date and in good working order is a huge priority, but without reliable support equipment the fire trucks can be useless. The communications system is probably the most important need behind fire trucks. Conversion to the MsWin emergency communication system should be a priority of the County and the county fire departments. This system is utilized statewide by public safety entities including the Benton County Sheriff's department. Conversion to the MsWin system will cost the county about $200,000 but should meet the needs of the county for years to come. The MsWin system will also provide for better inter-jurisdictional cooperation between local and state agencies if the need arises.

The fire departments should assess the need for firefighting gear annually and make requests for replacement equipment as soon as possible. The County should also work with the fire departments to map and mark all fire hydrants in the county. Mapping the fire hydrants will help the fire truck find the nearest fire hydrant to refill at instead of making a run to the nearest know hydrant or searching for one. Marking the locations of fire hydrants in the roadway with a reflector will also help firefighters locate hydrants that may be obscured by tall grass, debris, et cetera.

Another small improvement that needs to be made at all fire stations is the installation of door openers. These would need to be installed in all nine current bays and the 3 additional bays that are needed for a cost of about $12,000 total. These door openers will not only help save time in leaving the station in response to a call but will also help secure the station once a truck leaves. At the present time all stations are left open during a call and in danger of having equipment taken while the station is empty.

The fire department is a vital asset to any community and its public safety. In the future the County should help the volunteer fire department in any way possible. This could include helping funding new equipment, paying for utilities at fire stations, to name a few examples. The County should also support and encourage volunteerism in the department, supplying the department with the most up-to-date training possible

Library System [See Map 7.3]

The Benton County Library System has two locations in Benton County. Bond Memorial Library is located in Ashland and operates as the main branch. Hickory Flat Library is located in Hickory Flat and housed in the same building as the Hickory Flat School Library. Both library buildings are in good repair with the only limitations being the ability of the libraries to expand. The library receives some funds from Benton County but is operated by its own Board of Trustees that set the budgets. The library receives around $75,000 annually from Benton County and supplements that funding with several grants for specific uses and programs. The County owns the Bond Memorial Library building and provides all utilities and upkeep to said building. The County splits the cost of operating the Hickory Flat Library with the Benton County School District.

The Library System provides residents with vital educational resource. The library system not only provides access to books and reading programs also a list of other activities. Libraries are becoming a vital community asset for people without internet access to apply for jobs, attend college via internet, and perform internet

research, to name a few. The Benton County Library system also provides computer tutorial services, access to VHS and DVDs, newspaper, magazines, audio books, Wi-Fi, meeting space and other services.

The library system's major weakness is financial. Grants pay for the majority of the libraries services. Grants fund employee insurance, professional development, the interlibrary loans program, telecommunications, and books and technology. This financial weakness affects the library system from top to bottom.

For the first time in eight years, the budget was increase enough to increase employee salaries although they are still nearly minimum wage. A long term goal is to increase salaries by one dollar to help with retention of reliable and educated employees. This would cost an additional $7,900 a year.

Technology upgrades are a serious concern of the library system. Upgrading the internet speed from T1 connection to a ten gigabyte connection will cost an additional $1,800 a year. The library would like to introduce e-books to its collection. This would take an initial start up cost of $3,500 plus yearly maintenance of $2,000. The e-book program would start with about twenty-five titles and includes yearly additions.

The library is one of the few places in Benton County that offers public copying and fax service. The current copier/fax is in need of replacement. In addition the library lacks the ability to scan documents for customers. The purchase of a multifunction machine would allow the library to continue offering fax and copy service with the addition of scan service. A multifunction copier would cost an estimated $5,500.

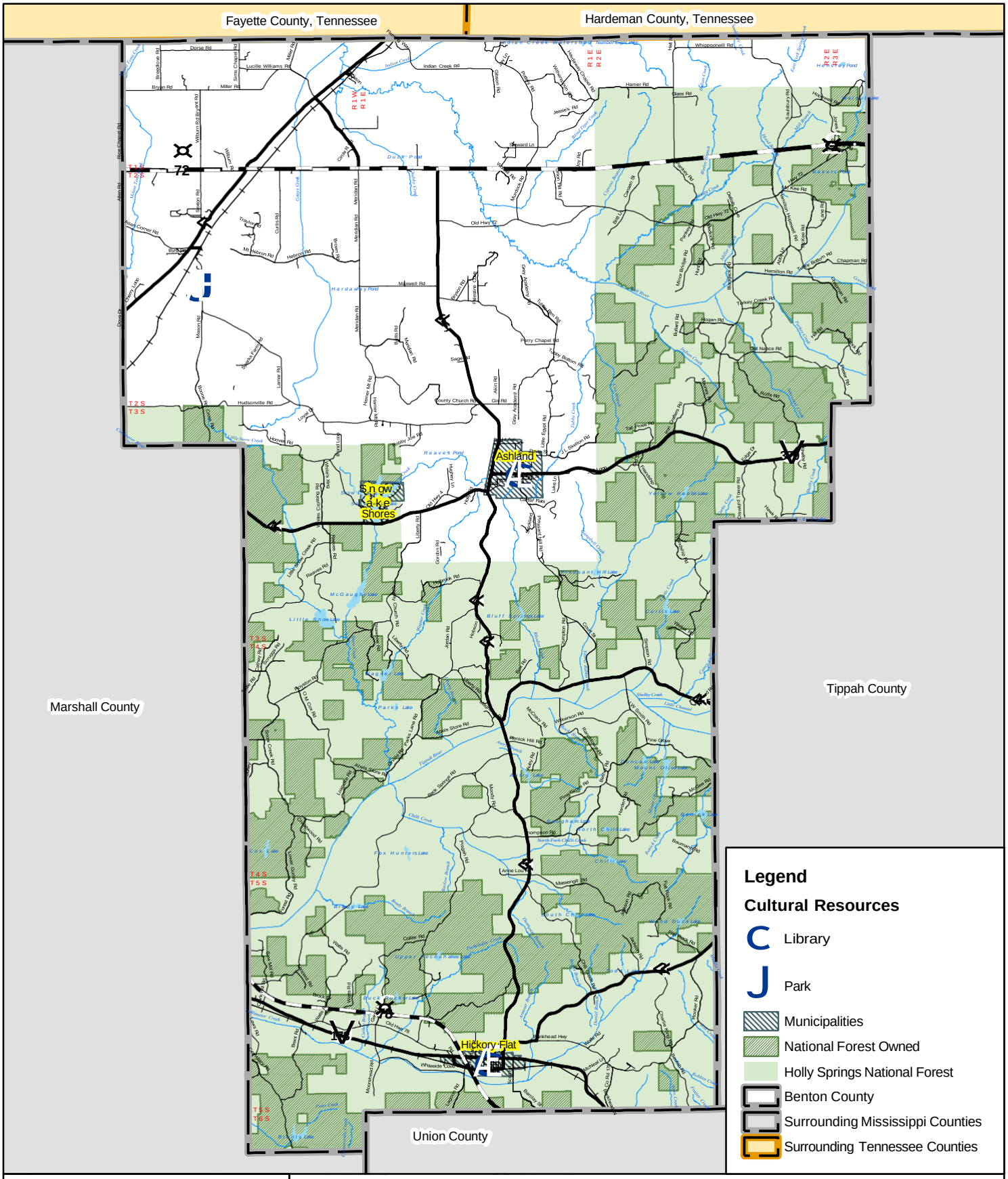
Revamping and adding some reading programs is also a goal of the library. Currently the library only offers a summer children's reading program and computer tutoring. The library would like to expand that to include adults and teens. This would require the addition of audio visual equipment and fees for speakers and activities, which together is estimated to cost about $4,000 per year.

Genealogy research has also become a popular hobby as individuals try to trace their roots. Currently, the library is unable to help with genealogy research and does not have the materials to perform the work either. The Historical Society manages those materials and is staffed by volunteer for only a few hours a week. The library would like to move these materials into the library, but that would require additional space, an additional employee and a dedicated copier/scanner. This project would require a startup cost of about $25,000 plus $23,000 annually to fund an additional employee with benefits.

Parks and Recreation Department [See Map 7.3]

Currently, Benton County only has one park, which is located in the Lamar Community. The one park has a ball field, playground equipment and a pavilion. The County should gauge interest in growing the current park offerings. Do the citizens have plenty of recreational opportunities in the County's municipalities? Or can the County leverage the Holly Springs National Forest to act as a de facto park? These are all question that are beyond the scope of this plan.

The County should establish a volunteer committee that seeks out community input on what park and recreation offerings the County could offer. This committee would ultimately have no authority to establish parks in each of the Supervisor's Districts but could recommend what type of amenities to offer. They could gauge interest on a walking and bike trails, as discussed in the Transportation Chapter. Forming his committee would be the best place to start measuring interest in adding new parks and recreational opportunities, as it will be able to advise the Board of Supervisors the most viable locations and types of parks for the county.



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Map 7.3: Cultural Resources

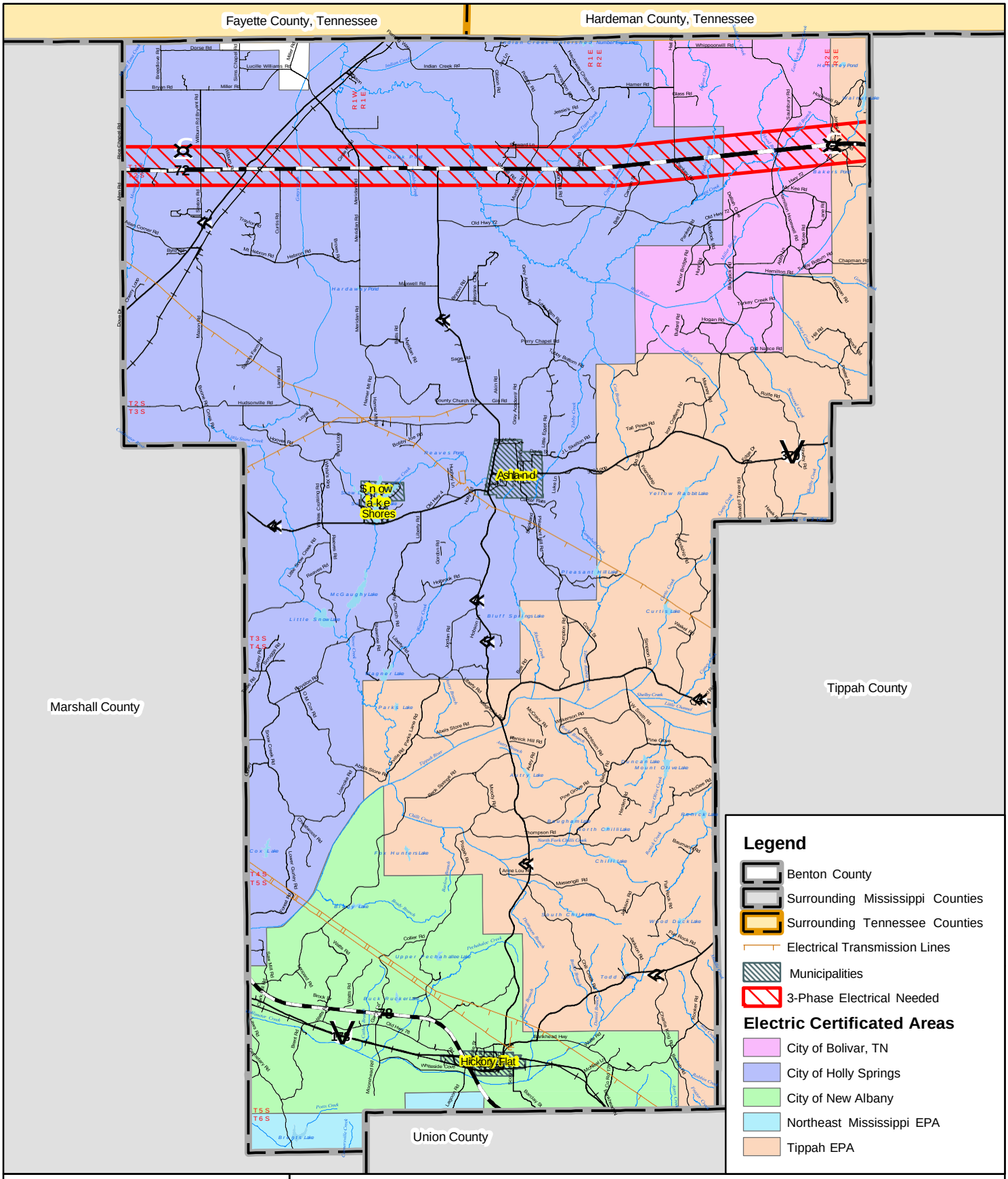
Benton County, Mississippi 2019 Comprehensive Plan

SLAUGHTER & ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): *Benton County, Mississippi; Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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0 1.5 3 6 Miles

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N W SA E S

Map 7.4: Electric Certificated Areas and Needed Improvements

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Public Service Commission (MPSC); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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PUBLIC UTILITIES

Like most counties nationwide, Benton County is not in the utility business. Instead the County relies on a number of entities to provide electric, gas, water, and sewer to its citizens. That being said, the County must negotiate and work with those entities to make improvements to utilities to attract industry and residents.

ELECTRIC

Benton County is covered by five electric certificated areas. Map 7.4 shows that almost the entire county, with the exception of a small area on the Tennessee boarder, is served with electricity. The majority of the county is served with two-phase electrical that is unable to run some industrial equipment. Currently, the County has three-phase electrical along the United States Highway 78 (future Interstate 22) corridor, but environmental constraints in the area make it unlikely to develop for industrial uses.

The United States Highway 72 corridor connects into the Memphis Metropolitan Area and is likely to see as much growth as the Highway 78 corridor, making it an area suited to industrial development. Unfortunately, the nearest three-phase electricity is at least eight miles from the Benton-Marshall County Line. Working with the Holly Springs Utility Department to extend three-phase electricity into Benton County is a priority to attract industries along the Highway 72 corridor. The County should work toward expanding three-phase electricity along the entire length of Highway 72 in Benton County with the goal of attracting industry in mind.

GAS

Benton County is covered by two gas certificated areas. Map 7.5 shows that the Ashland and Hickory Flat areas have gas service, leaving much of the county without gas service. Recently the Ashland has extended its gas service south of the city along Mississippi Highways 4 and 5 into Tippah County. This expansion of service is great for residents in those areas, but it again leaves the United States Highway 72 corridor without service. If Highway 72 is to become an industrial corridor for the county, gas service will need to be extended to any industrial park that is established. The County should work with the City of Ashland or anther Utility to provide gas to any industrial park established.

WATER

Benton County is covered by eight water certificated areas. Map 7.6 shows that large portion of the county does not have water service. Many county residents have wells that provide water. The northeast portion of the county is fairly heavily populated, and one would expect growth in that area to continue dues to its proximity to United States Highway 72. Adding a community water association in this area would provide future and current residents with safe drinking water. Extending an existing water association into the area is also an option.

Since United States Highway 72 has been highlighted for future industrial use, water will need to be extended to any industrial sites or parks established along the 72 corridor. Extending water to a industrial site will be different than to residences. Potential industries could need water with certain pressures and volumes before being able to locate in an area. A water system serving an industrial park needs to have the capacity to fight any fires that may occur at an industrial facility.

SEWER & WASTEWATER

Benton County is covered by no sewer certificated areas (indicated on Map 7.7), but both Ashland and Hickory Flat offer municipal sewer systems. Municipal sewer systems are allowed to supply sewer up to a mile beyond their corporate limits without a certificate. Establishing a county-wide system would be both costly and

unfeasible. The county should encourage cities within Benton County to extend their sewer systems into the growth areas on their fringe to protect the public health. Most of the county will be safe to remain on individual onsite treatment. Recommendation for the expansion and improvement of electric, gas and water utilities were given in the preceding sections, but that is not necessary for a sewer system. Industrial areas that develop along the Highway 72 corridor should be able to handle onsite treatment of sewer and wastewater.

Public Works & Street Department

Benton County utilizes the beat system to maintain the county roads. Cook Coggin Engineers, Inc. helps the County with state aid projects. Coggin Engineers provides engineering assistance and inspections for all state aid road and bridge projects in Benton County. County roads are maintained by district shops in each of the five Supervisor's Districts. Each district has its own road repair equipment with the exception of a few pieces that are shared county wide. The county's road budget is evenly divided among the five districts and used to make repairs. The beat system tends to make road repair more responsive. The citizens can call the supervisor representing their district to inform said supervisor about any road issue. Then, the supervisor can direct his crew to inspect and repair the road, if necessary.

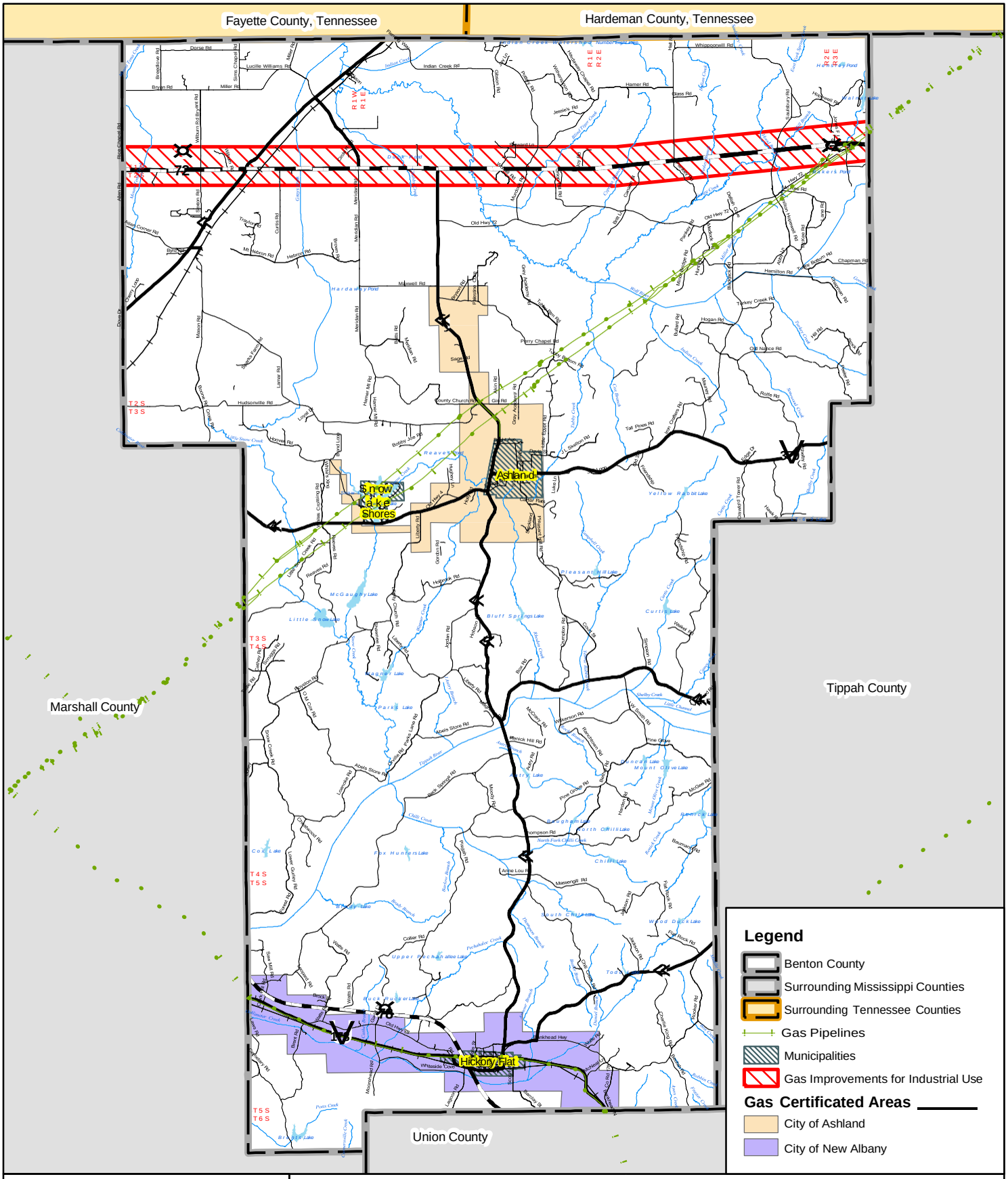
Benton County is a rural county by nature and due to large portions of the Holly Springs National Forest being included in the county. However, the Memphis Metropolitan region is spreading in the county's direction and currently includes Marshall County, Benton County's neighbor to the west. Its rural nature leaves the county with many unpaved or gravel roads. Over the years various standards and maintenance techniques have be used to construct even the dirt roads in the county. Moving forward the county should consider adopting a minimum road cross section for unpaved and gravel roads. The minimum road cross section standard should include minimums on right-of-way, underlayment, drainage, shoulder width, and lane of travel width. The goal of said cross section is to provide the county with a base layer that is suitable for pavement at a later date.

It should also be the goal of the county to improve roads to this standard. Much of the county may be without proper right-of-way to improve roads to such a standard. Obtaining right of way to complete such improvements can be costly. In an effort to accomplish said improvement, county residents should be asked to donate right-of-way to the county for road improvement. In turn, the residents that donate right-of-way land would receive additional consideration for pavement of their road. It is a goal of this plan to have all county roads to a paveable standard within ten years.

Once these right-of-way, drainage and road standards have been met the County should begin exploring paving the county roads. Prior to this portion of the road improvements taking place the county should hire an engineer to rate the roads and create a paving priority list. This process should take into account the amount of traffic using the road and how the right-of-way was required.

School Facilities [See Map 7.8]

All schools in Mississippi are run by independent school boards and have their own budgets. In Benton County there is only one school board serving the entire county. The school system includes four traditional schools: Ashland Elementary School, Ashland Middle School, Ashland High School and Hickory Flat Attendance Center. The school board also operates the Benton County Alternative School and Benton County Career and Technical Center.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

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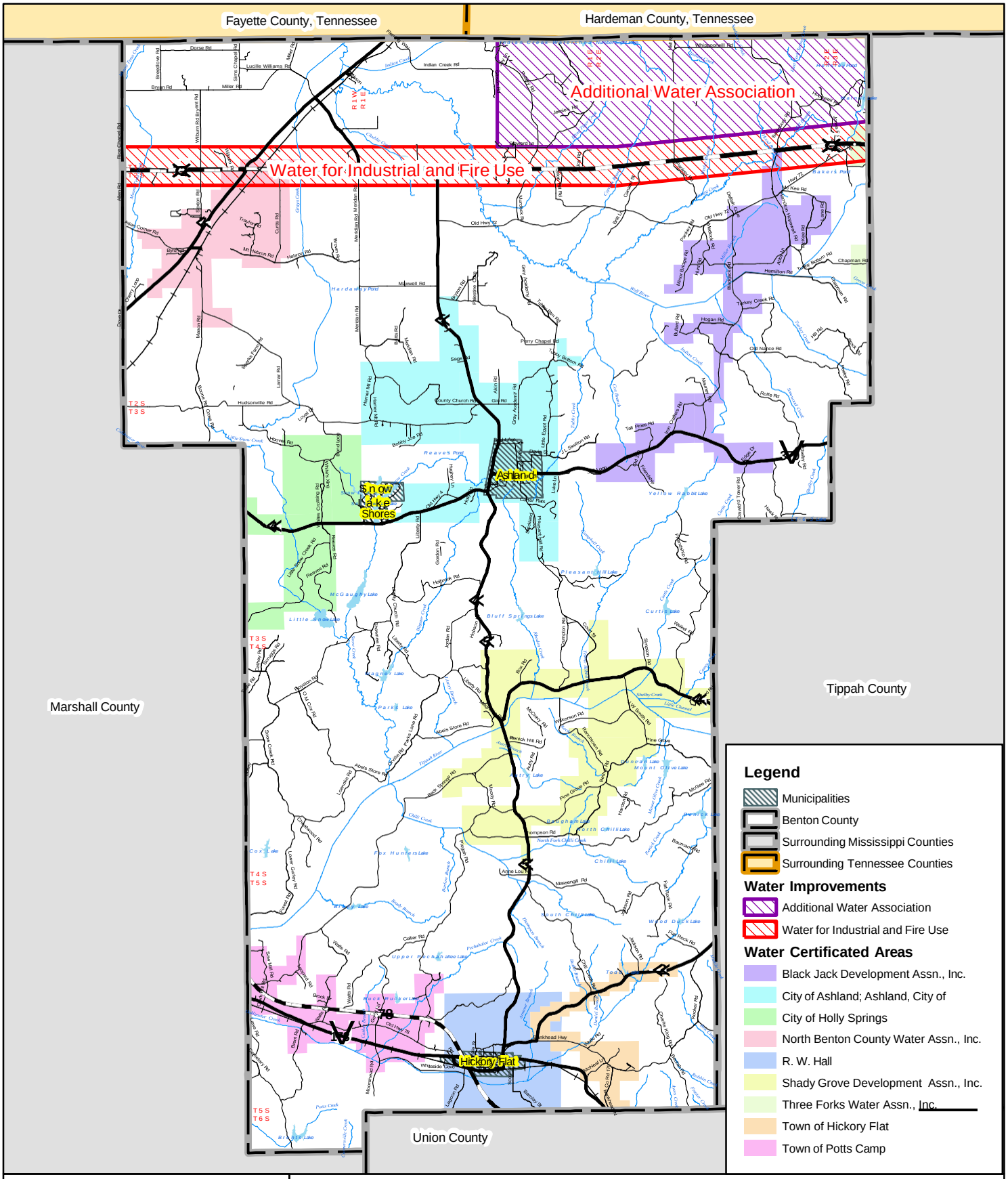
Map 7.5: Gas Certificated Areas and Needed Improvements

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Public Service Commission (MPSC); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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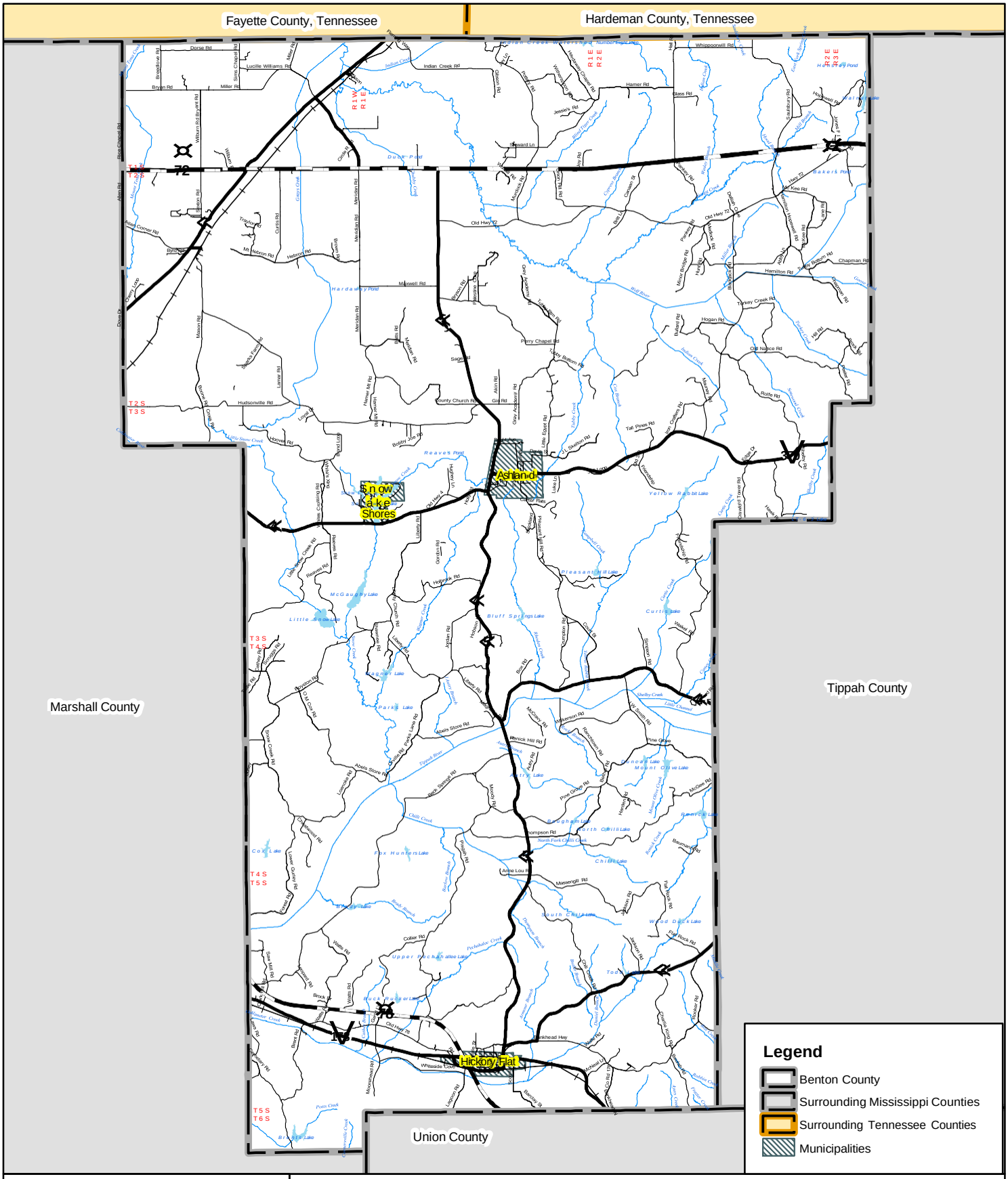
Map 7.6: Water Certificated Areas and Needed Improvements

Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Public Service Commission (MPSC); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map 7.7: Sewer Certificated Areas

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Source(s): *Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Public Service Commission (MPSC); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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Even with the school system being separated from county government, the Benton County Board of Supervisors should help and encourage the school system in any way possible. The school system is a direct reflection of what the community thinks of its children. The school system will also affect the county's ability to attract employers and retain those employers in the future. With this in mind, it is vital that the School Board and County Board work together when possible to improve the school system in the next twenty to twenty-five years.

Currently, the school system has three major needs facing it in the next twenty-five years: schools, transportation and technology. The schools are becoming more and more crowded and this will only continue as the Memphis Metro Area creeps closer and closer. Centralizing the schools would be a possibility with some hurdles to overcome. Ashland and Hickory Flat schools have traditionally been rivals. Hickory Flat has also performed better on standardized test, which might create resistance among residents to the centralizing plan. However, through professional development of the teachers at the Ashland schools test scores have been on the rise in those schools and should soon be on a level playing field test score wise.

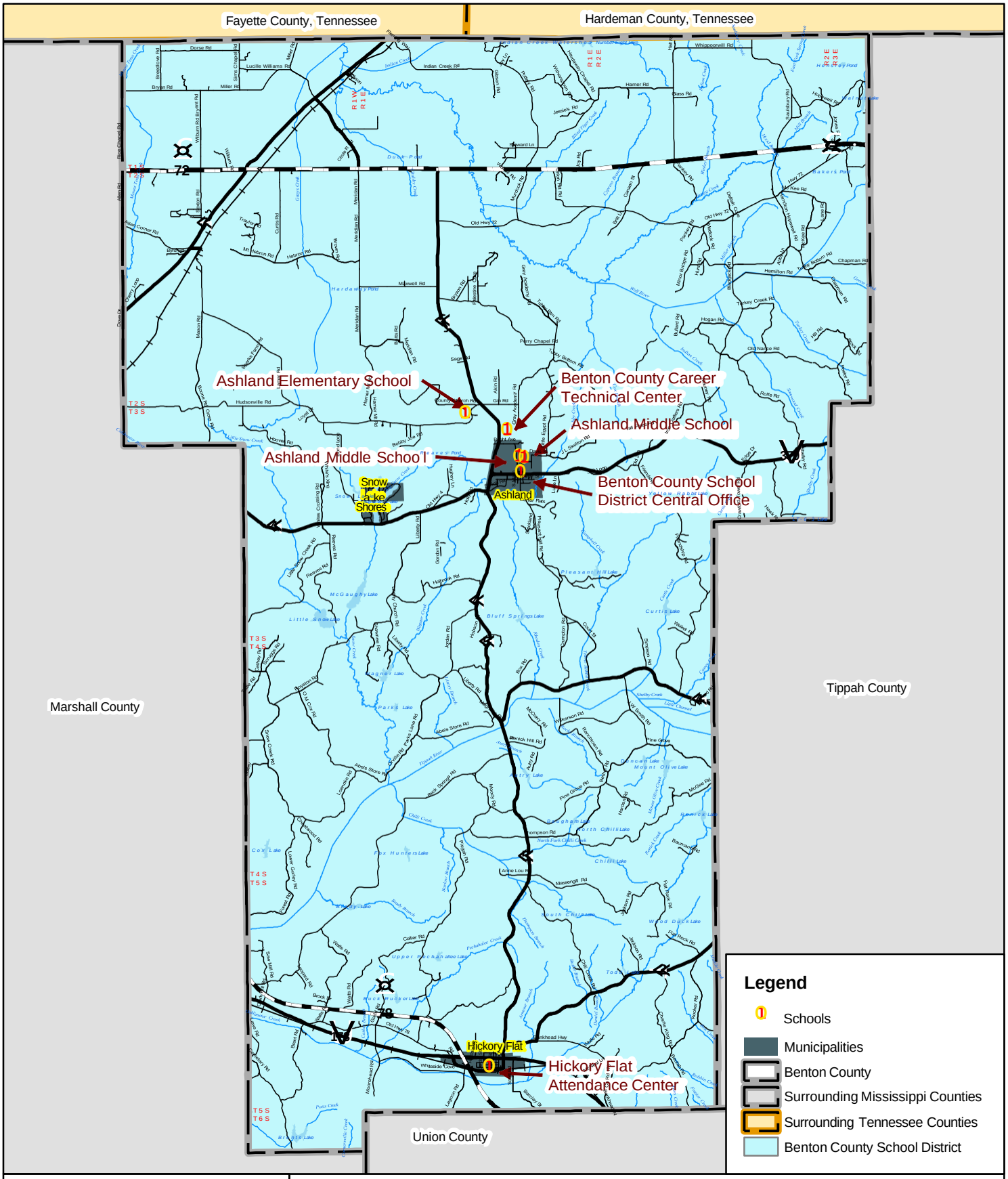
Transportation is a major concern for Benton County Schools. Benton County encompasses about 409 square miles with much of the land in the Holly Springs National Forest. This in turn means that school buses transverse many unpaved and gravel roads and take a beating picking up and returning students. In the last year the district has spent a $100,000 on school bus repairs alone and spent another $100,000 purchasing used buses. This plan recommends adopting a minimum standardized cross section for roads and making upgrades to roads to ensure they meet said minimum. If implemented, this should help with some of the beating that school buses receive. The district also wishes to upgrade some buses for use during out of town field trips. Obtaining buses with air condition in them are the goal of the school district. These will cost $50,000 for used buses as opposed to $80,000 for a new bus.

Technology is becoming an ever increasing part of the education of children. Expanding technology offerings is a goal of the district. This could include the addition of software, access to educational websites, textbooks on computer, et cetera. The key to using technology in education is to have the proper support systems in place. This means having reliable internet service, current computers and a knowledgeable technical staff. Currently the district is having trouble servicing all three of those items. The district is in constant contact with their internet service provider attempting to improve limited bandwidth and other issues. The district currently performs about $100,000 worth computer upgrades on an annually basis. That only allows them to keep the system manageable but does not allow for them to make upgrades to get ahead of the technology even briefly. An additional $25,000 year for technology would help achieve this goal. The district is also in need of another computer technician to keep up with routine maintenance and upgrades.

Sheriff's Department

The Sheriff's Department operates out of the Benton County Jail in Ashland. The county jail was built in 1978 and designed to house 16 detainees at a time. In 2004, an expansion of the jail increased the detainee capacity to 24. The replacement of the jail should be goal of the county in the time frame of this plan. The current jail not only lacks space on occasion to house Benton County detainees, but also the age of the facility presents maintenance issues. The repair and maintenance cost for the antiquated jail are continually on the rise and will only continue to rise as the facility ages more.

The Sheriff's Department would be in relatively good health with the addition of a new jail. The replacement of two sheriff patrol cars annually would further improve the Sheriff's Department. The department is currently able to replace one vehicle a year so this would only increase one additional vehicle a year. Current



Map 7.8: School District and Facilities

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URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): *Benton County School District Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi Department of Transporation (MDOT); U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Line Files*

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patrol vehicles take a beating on the unpaved county roads they patrol and have more maintenance concerns and issues as the miles add up. In the past the department has been able to obtain used police cursers with less than 40,000 miles from Missouri Highway Patrol. This may be an option to allow the department to obtain two cruisers per year.

An interim improvement to the jail would be the replacement of the current backup generator. The current generator must be manually cranked during an outage as opposed to automatic cranking when power is lost to the jail. This would help improve the current jail until a new facility is built.

The 911 system has recently been upgraded and should be in good condition for years to come. Communications systems are also in good condition, as well. Recently the Sheriff's Department upgraded to the MsWin radio system. The MsWin system is a statewide public safety communication system. However, the County should perform a regular assessment of the equipment and manpower needs of the department to ensure that the Sheriff's Department can maintain and improve its current services.

Solid Waste/Sanitation Department

Benton County does not provide sanitation services to residents but instead contracts them out to Benton County Waste, Inc., a private firm. The current contract runs through 2018 and cost the county about $7.25 per residence per week. The contract provides for trash collection once a week to all county residents. The contract does not include any businesses that exist in the county. Businesses may have their trash collected by Benton County Waste, Inc. but at a cost that is incurred by said business. The contractor takes all solid waste collected to Northeast Mississippi Solid Waste Management Authority Landfill in Walnut, MS. The contractor also help the county distribute garbage cans that the county purchased for each residence in the county. The contractor does pick up some garbage that is outside the scope of the contract, such as mattresses and furniture but does not collect yard waste. Overall, the contractor believes that trash collection once a week is sufficient, but this should be continually evaluated to determine if changes are needed.

Chapter Eight: Implementation and Plan Maintenance

Implementation tools

Annual Budget

Specific goals, actions, or decisions are usually discussed and recommended during the County's annual budget process. This is the time when elected officials determine if the County has the funds and budget to proceed implementing certain items. This can vary from funding for specific Plan elements or services to staff or man-power assistance in order to follow through with Plan goals. Incorporating the Comprehensive Plan into the annual budget process can ensure that needs and goals outlined here are at least being reviewed and considered for implementation by elected officials.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a budgeting tool that outlines proposed public investments or roadway improvements over a specific timeline. A CIP is usually established and projects costs for various investments over a five year period. This method or other similar methods are effective ways to plan for major capital investments. It clearly identifies the investment goals of the County and can alleviate monetary stresses if projects are spaced over a certain period of time.

Zoning Ordinances

Zoning is the regulation of land uses in certain locations; it is intended to guide development into compatible land use patterns. Zoning protects the individual land owners and preserves and establishes the character of a community. The adoption of a Zoning Ordinance in Benton County is one effective way to put specific elements of this Comprehensive Plan into action. In conjunction with this Plan the Board of Superiors is in the process of adopting a Zoning Ordinance.

The Future Land Use Map sets forth some general land use categories but lacks the complexity of a Zoning Code. A Zoning Code regulates items such as minimum lot size, setbacks, building heights, locations of manufactured housing, housing density, landscaping and parking. A Zoning Ordinance is being tailored to the County's specific objectives and goals. Once the Zoning Ordinance is adopted it will be imperative that the Board of Supervisors ensure adherence to the Zoning Ordinance and the Future Land Use Plan provided in this Plan.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision Regulations control both the process for the division of land and establish design standards for any improvements made to the divided parcels. These regulations ensure that new property owners of this subdivided land have adequate public services and that the subdividers pay their share of construction cost for these services so the County or existing residents are not burdened with the expense. The Board of Supervisors is also in the process of adopting a Subdivision Regulation, making proper enforcement of this regulation a necessity as well.

Unkempt Property and Junk Automobile Ordinance

An unkempt property ordinance enhances the visual quality of a community by controlling weed height, rubbish, junk and other public safety hazards caused by unsightly conditions on properties. The ordinance sets a community standard for maintenance of real property which enhances property values and ensure that the rights of all businesses and residents to privacy, safety and attractive environment are respected.

Building, Construction and Fire Codes

Construction, building and fire codes, including electrical, mechanical, plumbing, etc., provide a standard upon which to build safe structures. Adoption of up-to-date versions of the International Building Code and International Property Maintenance Code will greatly assist Benton County in efforts to ensure safe housing and safe buildings. However, with the adoption of such codes comes the responsibility to make inspections to assure that the codes are being complied with.

Architectural Design Standards

Architectural design standards help enhance the aesthetic character of the community and promote a more sustainable community, while protecting property values and preserving heritage. The standards provide the community with information on the quality of architectural design expected without advocating a particular architectural style.

Landscaping Ordinance

Landscape Ordinance preserve the visual environment of a community. They help improve the visual perception and image for both residents and visitors. Landscaping can visually screen undesirable features required in an urbanized landscape, protect privacy of residents and promote the community as one that cares about its appearance. It can also improve the physical environment of a community through using plants best suited to the climate, improving drainage and enhancing air quality.

Sign Ordinance

A sign ordinance helps promote a positive visual perception by reducing and managing the visual signage clutter that can result in a unregulated community. Sign ordinances control the number, size, height, type and placement of signs. The ordinance can also be tailored to control temporary signage, billboards and other signage issues. The overall goal of the ordinance is to help protect the existing character of a community, establish or enhance community identity.

Day –to-day Policy Enforcement

For Benton County many of the Goals and Strategies involve setting or updating policies and then enforcing the policy. This usually involves County staff processing the reports that have been given to, or identified by, the elected officials. Benton County will need to develop some capacity for day-to-day policy enforcement in order to raise the levels of service.

Plan Maintenance

Amendments

This Plan, along with all of its elements, is intended to be a guide for the long-term development of the County. Market conditions and major investments made by others both have the ability to shift growth patterns and influence land use in ways that was not anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan. In order to deal with these various changes, the County should setup up a process for any amendments to this Plan or elements/maps within this Plan. It should also be noted that multiple amendments can unintentionally alter the policies that this Plan was based on; amendments should be limited and well justified.

Plan Review and Future Updates

The Comprehensive Plan should be a dynamic document. Periodic review and update of the Comprehensive Plan is essential in order to accurately reflect the changes within the County. Yearly review is crucial to keep the Plan current of any special topics or influences that will affect the County. Every three to five years is an adequate time for review of major land use changes, but if drastic changes occur in the County, a Plan review

and update may be needed sooner than that. During review, the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, or Comprehensive Planning Committee should examine the success in implementing the current before making any changes. After all elements and goals and objectives have been updated as necessary, a draft of the revised Plan must be viewed at a public hearing before being adopted and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

SUMMARY OF NEEDS/PROJECTS BY DEPARTMENT

The following section includes a list of all projects recommended in this plan and an estimate of the cost of those projects. The list is intended to be a quick reference guide to the projects recommended by this plan not as a substitute for the text the preceding Chapters. The cost estimates provided are simply that -- an estimate of the cost of completion in 2014 -- and intend to only act as a guide to the project cost. The table that follows includes a list of projects by county department and the expected cost. If desired this summary list could be used to create the basic framework of a Capital Improvements Program for Benton County.

County Administration	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Conduct yearly review of county departments to determine needs for personnel.	Added to department head's normal duties.
Conduct yearly review of county departments to determine needs for equipment.	Added to department head's normal duties.

Public Safety	
Sheriff's Department	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Replace two (2) patrol cars per year.	$20,000 each
Update generator at current jail.	$10,000
Build jail and sheriff's office.	$5,000,000 dependent on final design
Promote and encourage proper training and certifications for Sheriff's Deputies.	Varies based on training provided.
Fire Department	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Support and encourage citizen involvement and service through the volunteer fire department.	Varies base on efforts to encourage involvement.
Conduct a periodic assessment of equipment.	Added to department head's normal duties.
Conduct a periodic assessment of personnel.	Added to department head's normal duties.
Plan for replacement of fire truck based on MSRB certification standards.	$200,000 each

Hire a consultant to set up rated fire districts with in the county.	Varies based on need of consultant.
Replace tanker trucks at North and Northeast Benton Fire Departments	$250,000 each
Replace pumper trucks at North and Northeast Benton Fire Departments	$200,000 each
Purchase three (3) brush trucks	$100,000 each
Add an additional bay at each station	Varies based on modifications to stations.
Convert department radios to MsWin System	$200,000
Mapping and marking of fire hydrants with reflectors in roadway	Varies based on need of consultant.
Automatic openers on fire engine bay doors	$12,000
Emergency Management	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Install three (3) emergency sirens.	$82,000
Construct multi-use storm shelter	Varies depending on partner and grant availability.

Public Works	
Building and Zoning Department (New Department or Division)	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Hire a part-time/contract zoning administrator.	Varies based on if this person is a county employee or contract employee.
Hire a part-time/contract building inspector at a minimum.	Varies based on if this person is a county employee or contract employee.
Hire a part-time/contract code enforcement officer at a minimum.	Varies based on if this person is a county employee or contract employee.
Hire a part-time/contract floodplain administrator at a minimum.	Varies based on if this person is a county employee or contract employee.
Evaluate annually the need for a full-time building inspector, code enforcement officer and floodplain administrator.	None, add this task to yearly review process or budget discussions.
Adopt and enforce a Zoning Code.	Currently in draft form. Pending Adoption.
Adopt and enforce a Subdivision Regulation.	Currently in draft form. Pending Adoption.

Adopt and enforce an Unkempt Property and Junk Auto Ordinance.	Currently in draft form. Pending Adoption.
Consider adopting a proper Construction, Building, and Fire Codes.	Varies based on need of consultant.
Consider adopting a proper Sign Ordinance.	Varies based on need of consultant.
Consider adopting a proper Architectural Design Standard.	Varies based on need of consultant.
Consider adopting a Landscape Ordinance.	Varies based on need of consultant.
Transportation	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Prepare and adopt a minimum road cross section and road design standards.	Varies based on need of consultant.
Improve all county roads to meet the minimum cross section and road design standards	Varies based on needed improvements.
Hire an engineer to rate each county road and place on paving priority list.	Varies based on engineering cost.
Garbage Department	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Periodically assess the adequacy of the current waste disposal method and make improvements if necessary.	None, add this task to yearly review process or budget discussions.

Public Utilities	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Work with stakeholders to expand or establish water associations.	Varies based on project goals and location.
Work with electric companies to provide three (3) phase power to the U.S. Highway 72 corridor.	Varies based on project goals and location.
Work with gas companies to provide gas to the U.S. Highway 72 corridor.	Varies based on project goals and location.

Public Education	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Work with school system to improve and centralize schools.	Varies based on needs.
Work with schools to obtain technology pertinent technology.	Varies based on grants applied for.

Cultural Resources	
Library System	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Continue to provide the library with needed space and utilities.	No additional cost.
Support the library monetarily with increased funds and in matching grants.	Varies based on ability and grant being pursued.
Encourage usage of library system.	Varies based on method chosen.
Increase in salaries to retain reliable and educated employees	$7,900 yearly
Upgrade current T1 internet connection to ten gigabyte connection	$1,800 yearly
Add e-books to collection	$3,500 one time cost and $2,000 annual maintenance
Add multifunction copier	$5,500
Revamp reading programs	$4,000
Expand collections to include Genealogy research resources	$25,000 one time cost and $23,000 annually
Parks and Recreation	
Project Summary	***Cost***
Form Parks Committee to support recreational opportunities.	Cost would be minimal with volunteer committee.
Identify recreational interest and needs.	None if part of Parks Committee duties unless a study is commissioned.
Work with Holly Springs National Forest to provide recreational opportunities.	Varies based on projects untaken.