

MEAG POWER **current** COMMUNITIES

COVINGTON, GEORGIA

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COVINGTON

Perfect Place for Life Science Enterprises & More

*Location, Resources
and Opportunity*

The announcement in April 2012 that Baxter International would move its state-of-the-art manufacturing campus into the Stanton Springs Technology Park was a huge boon to Covington and the surrounding counties.

The mega deal, Baxter's largest-ever expansion, represents a \$1.3 billion investment with 1,500 jobs and one million square feet of facilities. The new plasma fractionation facility will provide therapy for critical care, trauma and burn patients.

To attract more such business to the area, the state has created the Georgia Bioscience Training Center in Covington, which offers companies customized training in life science and health IT careers.

Plus, Covington has so much more to offer a diversity of manufacturing and service companies – the latest telecommunications capabilities; abundant supplies of electricity, natural gas and water; proximity to all the amenities of Atlanta; direct access to the I-20 corridor as well as CSX and Norfolk Southern rail lines; and a 1.3 million labor pool within 30 minutes. Put it all together, and you can see why Covington is the perfect place.



FAST FACTS

COVINGTON

POPULATION: 14,000; Newton County 100,000

UTILITIES: Electricity, gas/water/sewer, solid waste, storm water

TRANSPORTATION: Situated on I-20 with availability of multiple state routes, 35 minutes to Atlanta, Covington airport with 5,500-foot runway

NOTABLE EMPLOYERS:

- Baxter International, Inc. – medical products
- CR Bard, Inc. – medical equipment
- Pactiv LLC – food service packaging
- General Mills, Inc. – breakfast foods
- SRG Global, Inc. – plastic fabrication

“Covington is a city full of opportunity, and we welcome businesses large and small, as well as new residents looking for a great place to live.”

– Mayor Ronnie Johnston

- Covington was founded and incorporated in 1822, and it was seemingly named for United States Congressman and Army Brigadier General Leonard Covington, a hero of the War of 1812. The city grew with the advent of the railroad in 1845.
- In 1864, General Sherman’s troops marched through Covington during the “March to the Sea” campaign. Although the city was looted, several antebellum homes were spared.
- The first project filmed in Covington, *A Man Called Peter*, was nominated for the 1956 Academy Award for cinematography. It depicted the life of Peter Marshall, a former Presbyterian pastor.
- Trademarked as “Hollywood of the South,” Covington and Newton County have been home to the *Dukes of Hazzard* and *In the Heat of the Night*, as well as over 60 film productions. Tours are available to visit the various locations where the cameras rolled.
- The community’s Miracle League Ball Complex sports venue is completely outfitted for special needs teams, including wheelchair-accessible dugouts and a custom-designed field with cushioned rubberized surfaces to help prevent injuries.

A *Love* STORY

You know the standard love story. Boy meets girl. Girl meets boy's brother. Girl torn between the brothers, who also happen to be vampires. Not a classic Hollywood romance but one that garnered 4,000,000 viewers in Season 5 and is very much at home in Georgia. It is the hit series, *The Vampire Diaries*, and Covington is home to the production crew.

Yet, the love story in Covington doesn't end on the movie set. Passion runs deep for growing the downtown area, building successful neighborhoods, and cultivating an environment that is business-friendly.

Small-business owner, Susan Kirk, has been a merchant on the downtown square for 10 years. "There is huge support for shopping local here in Covington," explains Kirk, owner of Scoops Ice Cream store. "The robust event calendar drives pedestrian traffic into our shops. Some of our newest merchants include a wine store and the Mystic Grill."

For the uninitiated, the Mystic Grill is a central location in the fictional *Vampire Diaries* storyline, so a local entrepreneur capitalized on its notoriety to launch a new Covington eatery. For a year now, tourists, literally from around the world, join the locals for food and lore that can only be had at the Mystic Grill.

Leadership in Covington looks to a comprehensive community strategic plan to manage growth and preserve the rural aspects of the county. Planning suggests compact communities with neighborhood schools and streets that are safe for biking and walking. The city has infused substantial investment in Walker's Bend subdivision, less than one mile from the town square. The development is a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood.

Covington leaders are unabashed about their desire to promote their community to homebuyers and businesses, small or large, with an aggressive incentive program. Utility costs at start-up are discounted for all

those meeting the criteria. There is a focus on making it easy to do business in Covington. An example is the approach to the film industry. "We don't seek permitting fees for film crews to simply work here. If a production needs city services, we charge fees for those, but there is not a fee to just be here," explains City Manager Leigh Anne Knight.

"Our proximity to Atlanta and the city's international airport gives us access to the world. How can that not be a good thing for developing business?" says Mayor Ronnie Johnston.

The recent \$1.3 billion agreement with pharmaceutical giant, Baxter, the presence of so many other companies along with the county-wide \$100 million tourism business might be proof that the mayor is exactly right. It certainly has the makings of happily ever after.



The Mystic Grill is becoming a downtown landmark.





Turner Lake has a recreation complex with trails and athletic venues catering to residents of all ages.



Mayor Johnston opens the first city-owned Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) station in Georgia.

More About HOMETOWN COVINGTON

- Home to a certified Georgia College and Career Academy.
- Designated the county seat of Newton County and a City of Ethics; part of the state's Innovation Crescent.
- The Center for Community Preservation and Planning is a unique community organization that facilitates collaboration. A key product of the Center is a plan that charts a vision for the future of the city and county.
- Residents enjoy friendly neighborhoods, local parades, frequent concerts in the park, and "Christmas in Covington," which includes holiday shopping downtown.
- SKC Inc., a South Korea-based company, has expanded in Covington every two years since it arrived in the mid-1990s. The latest expansion represents \$100 million and 120 jobs over five years. In addition to its core plant making polyester film, SKC expanded product lines to include film encapsulant for solar panels and polyurethane foam used in car seats and home appliance insulation.