

COMMUNITY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

This section provides an updated list of issues and opportunities for Unincorporated Whitfield County that was identified in the *Community Assessment* portion of the Comprehensive Plan. This updated version reflects public comments gained from the community participation activities as well as other input gathered during the review of the *Community Assessment*. The following information is organized by the major topics defined in the DCA Local Planning Requirements:

- Population
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities & Services
- Natural & Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Transportation
- Intergovernmental Coordination

POPULATION

Issues

Aging population – Whitfield County’s aging population will increasingly have special needs in terms of residential choices and community services and facilities.

Poverty rates increased – In 2004 it was estimated that 11.9% of the County’s residents lived at or below the Federal poverty level, which represented a significant increase from 2000. Persons living at or below the poverty level included 16.8% of all children 17 and under and 16.2% of children between the ages of 5 and 17.

Growing Hispanic community – The persons of Hispanic origin population increased significantly from 1990 to 2006. Hispanics made up 29.3% of the County population in 2006. The net increase of this population was almost three times that of adjacent counties. This population is projected to increase from 29.3% of the population in 2006 to 41.4% of the population in 2030. There will be a growing need in the County for education and other services to assist non-English speaking residents.

Opportunities

Young population – While segments of Whitfield County’s population age, as expressed above, the County’s median age is increasingly younger than that of its neighbors due to the growing Hispanic population.



Schools are impacted by the growing population of school-age children. Whitfield County’s median age is increasingly younger than that of its neighbors.

Steady income levels – Whitfield County’s per capita personal income (PCPI) level ranked 16th in the state and was 96% of the state average and 86% of the national average.

Strategies

- ☞ Update comprehensive plan frequently to insure planned growth and enact appropriate growth management ordinances

HOUSING

Issues

Aging in place – As large segments of the population age, the need continues to grow and demand will be created to address residential needs of the Baby Boomers and empty nesters, including providing for “aging in place” with associated services and reasonable accommodation for those that are handicapped or disabled.

Limited housing mix outside of Dalton – Most of Whitfield County’s multi-family housing is located in Dalton. Large-acre lot, single-family residential products dominate the housing market outside of Dalton. Few multi-family products have come on line to meet the growing demand for housing to support the workforce in areas outside of Dalton.

Affordable workforce housing – Many employees of Whitfield County businesses have limited affordable housing choices within the County at their income levels. Mobile homes/trailers and manufactured housing are currently providing many with affordable housing in Whitfield and adjacent counties.

Additional housing need relative to employment - The 2006 employment-to-housing ratio of 1.85 fell well above the standard target of 1.5. The 2006 employment-to-labor force ratio of 1.36 fell well above the standard target of 1.0. These ratios show the continued strength of the Whitfield County employment base, but outline the need for additional housing within the County for local employees.

High foreclosure rate – Foreclosures require alternative housing options for property owners, and resulting vacant homes contribute to declining neighborhood property values and local tax revenue.

Deteriorating housing – Poor housing conditions can be found throughout the County, and in some cases entire neighborhoods are in need of repair.

Opportunities

High rate of home ownership in the county – Home ownership rates in unincorporated Whitfield County remained higher than the state averages.

Affordable County housing – Housing in unincorporated Whitfield County is affordable relative to larger metropolitan areas.

Steady home value increases - Both the number of sales and the value of homes in Whitfield County showed a steady increase from



Attached housing provides housing choice and is encouraged.

1997 to 2004. Average home sale prices increased 23.7% from 1997 to 2004, and 15.7% from 2000 to 2004. The average home sales price was \$124,430 in 2004.

Large lot residential options – There is adequate land in unincorporated Whitfield County to provide the option for large lot, rural character residential environments for many residents.

Local assistance - The Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation offers comprehensive services for residents, helping to increase home ownership, improve the physical condition of housing and the quality of affordable housing, decreasing the foreclosure rate and decreasing the number of homeless and unstably housed residents.

Infill housing - Infill housing opportunities can contribute to affordable housing stock and help stabilize and enhance established neighborhoods. Implementation of infill-related studies, guidelines and recommendations can facilitate the addition of infill housing.

Strategies

- ☞ Increase code enforcement throughout the County (incorporated and unincorporated areas) to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")
- ☞ Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas concentrating new higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services
- ☞ Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments and also encourage a variety of housing types
- ☞ Complete a detailed housing market study and continually track housing market data; recruit residential developers who build affordable housing as well as higher value housing
- ☞ Adopt/amend zoning districts that prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development and also encourage a variety of housing types
- ☞ Promote a range in housing options, including affordable housing, senior housing, and higher value housing development based on a large population of homeowners who may "trade up" in upcoming years



Whitfield County's housing stock is made up primarily of large-lot suburban single-family development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues

Lagging wages in County— Average weekly wage and annual pay for most industries trailed the state and nation. Whitfield County residents who were part of the labor force were less likely than residents of the state as a whole to hold management, professional

and related occupations and more likely to hold positions in production, transportation and material moving occupations.

Dependence on few industries – The County is largely dependent on a few industry super-sectors – Manufacturing, which is supported by chemicals and plastics firms; Trade, Transportation & Utilities; and Professional & Business. These three sectors account for 80% of all jobs in the County. One in 10 textile product mill jobs in the United States is located within Whitfield County.

Employing educated young workers – College educated young residents often seek job opportunities outside of Whitfield County. New, diverse industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

Educational Attainment – The County is not as competitive with other nearby Metropolitan Statistical Areas with respect to current educational attainment levels.

Limited entertainment and shopping options – Compared to nearby areas, the community suffers from a proportional lack of entertainment establishments as well as big box and upscale retailers.

Projected manufacturing sector declines – The manufacturing supersector grew modestly from 1990 to 2006 and maintained the largest share of employment in Whitfield County at 38.1% (down from 41.2% in 2000 and 51.4% in 1990). However, textile mills in the Northwest Georgia Region are projected by the Georgia Department of Labor to see employment losses in their respective sectors of 1,580 jobs between 2004 and 2014.

Attracting young professionals to County neighborhoods – Many young professional employees in Whitfield County choose to live in areas outside of the County, in spite of longer commutes. It has proven difficult for the County to attract these young professionals to neighborhoods within Whitfield County.



As the manufacturing sector declines, the county has focused efforts on attracting a more diverse economic base.

Opportunities

Strong Manufacturing base – Manufacturing accounts for nearly one in two jobs in Whitfield County. Manufacturing's share of employment in Whitfield County is more than three times the national average.

Local employment available for local residents - Approximately 87% of the Whitfield County labor force worked inside the County in 2000, leaving only 13% commuting to jobs outside of the County. Whitfield County residents held 60% of the jobs available in the county.

Carpet Capital of the World – Dalton-Whitfield County produces the majority of the world's carpeting, in addition to many other types of floor covering. The County is headquarters for the world's carpet industry. The importance of the floor covering industry in the County extends beyond direct employment. Several other important clusters in the area are largely supported by the floor covering industry (e.g. chemicals and plastics firms and wholesaling firms).

Major corporate economic influences – Dalton/Whitfield County has maintained its status as home of the world's carpet mill industry, including the headquarters of a Fortune 500 company (Shaw), which has a major positive impact on the local economy. In recent years, industry leaders have progressively improved their technology, innovation and sustainability to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Access to transportation – Whitfield County businesses have ready access to a major interstate corridor, state highways, rail corridors and airports in Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Local education and job training resources – Whitfield County has strong local institutions that provide higher education and job training, including Dalton State College which has a large student population and generous diversity of degree programs.

Strategies

- ☞ Enhance coordination of economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks to facilitate efforts to diversify the County's economic base
- ☞ Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas
- ☞ Continue business/industrial retention efforts
- ☞ Coordinate completion of implementation of sewer master plan to expand infrastructure to strategic opportunity areas shown on the Future Development Map
- ☞ Aggressively promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in historic town centers as well as existing and emerging community and regional activity centers
- ☞ Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare the County workers for expanded opportunities available in a more diversified local economy
- ☞ Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County, the Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports, and the 2008 branding prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority
- ☞ Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life
- ☞ Continue to support and promote efforts of Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority



Dalton State College provides higher education opportunities in North Georgia.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Issues

Restricted sewer service area – Growth in Whitfield County is restricted due to lack of sewer infrastructure. Planned sewer expansion should be coordinated with land use planning.

Opportunities

Sewer expansion - Restricted sewer creates the need for large residential lots. As planned sewer services expand, the opportunity exists to use the expansion as a way to direct growth to locations the county outlines in the land use plan and to manage the timing of new growth.

High-tech infrastructure – Dalton and Whitfield County have adequate high-tech infrastructure in place to support business recruitment and expansion.

Future water needs – Substantial water resources are available in Whitfield County that can support long term growth with proactive planning and resource management.

Strategies

- ☞ Help to foster expansions of sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.
- ☞ Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into rural character areas where growth is not envisioned
- ☞ Support completion and implementation of a long range water resources master plan
- ☞ Continue to promote SPLOST as successful local funding source
- ☞ Implement impact fees as a supplemental funding source for some community facilities
- ☞ Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure. Septic tanks will remain appropriate for areas designated to remain rural during the planning period.
- ☞ Help to promote updated infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive land use plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with land use plan
- ☞ Promote coordination between school planning and community planning efforts; help establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments
- ☞ Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations
- ☞ Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas
- ☞ Continue to actively pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails



Dalton-Whitfield Landfill off of Old Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County



Whitfield County fire station located near the intersection of Carbondale Road and U.S. 41/Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County

TRANSPORTATION

Issues

Limitations to local street network – It is easy to get to Dalton/Whitfield via I-75 and state highways, but limited connectivity in certain areas of the local street network and some

local points of congestion can make it difficult to move around the community.

Limited public transit – There are sizable numbers of low-income, elderly, disabled, and minority persons within the county who need non-automobile options to access jobs, medical care, and shopping needs.

Limited bicycle/pedestrian facilities – Though downtown Dalton has an adequate sidewalk network, connectivity between the downtown and residential uses is limited, and sidewalk/bicycle provisions outside of Dalton in general are not extensive.

Opportunities

Coordinated planning – As the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update is upcoming (per the MPO), there is a good current opportunity for coordination of land use and transportation planning.

Railroad access – Presence of rail provides additional opportunity to move goods to and from the County and attract new industry.

Atlanta and Chattanooga connections – Interstate 75 serves the community well currently, and longer term potential for high speed or commuter rail connections to Atlanta and Chattanooga would greatly benefit Dalton and Whitfield County.

Public transportation opportunities – There is the potential to enhance public transportation, especially for special needs population, building on the currently underutilized on-call bus system or implementing a fixed-route system.

Implementation of bike/pedestrian recommendations – Projects have already been identified in previous studies, including the 2005 Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan, that identify needed improvements. In addition, roadway improvement projects present an opportunity to incorporate pedestrian and/or bicycle provisions, and the County's waterways provide potential greenway/trail alignments.

Strategies

- ☞ Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update
- ☞ Coordinate with the MPO in the development of the street connectivity study that includes the adoption of a collector street plan that provides a long-range outline for developer-driven construction of a connected street system in areas where is anticipated
- ☞ Adopt street standards that prescribe Complete Streets with the construction of new roads, including those constructed by public agencies and developers, that provide room for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles, thus offering residents and those traveling through each community a variety of transportation choices.
- ☞ Adopt subdivision regulation and zoning ordinance amendments that promote alternative pedestrian path systems in all new developments



Railroad access is an important strength for Whitfield County



Limited pedestrian infrastructure creates a dangerous environment for pedestrians and discourages walking. Above a lone pedestrian seems out of place as a result of the built environment that surrounds the Westside Middle School, Elementary School and Park.



Public transportation options should be part of the long-range mix of transportation solutions in Whitfield County. Pictured above is a bus stop in Chattanooga.

- ☞ Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas that identify appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk.
- ☞ Develop a road improvement plan that supplements the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan by focusing on local streets and county roads
- ☞ Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access
- ☞ Coordinate with the MPO bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts in addition to implementing recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- ☞ Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail that includes a stop in Dalton
- ☞ Continue coordinated land use and transportation planning
- ☞ Coordinate with MPO and City of Dalton to implement the recommendations outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study



Sidewalks and alternative walking paths, such as the one shown above, are key pieces of the transportation infrastructure that should be part of all new urban and suburban development in Whitfield County.



Improvement of many County roads is needed in order to accommodate new development in Emerging Suburban areas.



Multi-use trails, such as the one shown above, can link neighborhoods and provide linear park space.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issues

Water quality – Stormwater runoff from developed and developing areas increases the pollution of the watershed and increases flooding as water moves more quickly.

Maintaining historic and rural character – Development in rural areas can contribute to the disappearance of farm land and the rural scenery of the county. As demand increases for suburban development, preservation planning and actions will be required to protect historic resources and rural character.

Protecting mountain and valley views – The views created by the topography of certain areas in Whitfield County are of great value. Protecting these assets is important in order to continue to attract quality development in addition to preserving the historic rural character of the County.

Protecting Civil War sites – Civil War sites/land areas are in need of protection. The National Park Service has identified Whitfield County as having the largest intact collection of Civil War defenses in the nation. Some are located on steep terrain (such as behind the State Patrol barracks where fortification remains need protection).

Protecting Trail of Tears sites – Trail of Tears and other sites important to the County's Native American history are in need of protection.

Protecting Old Federal Road sites – The Old Federal road is in need of protection.

Protecting of County economic and cultural history artifacts –

Efforts to promote the preservation of artifacts of the County's textile roots and culture currently receive limited funding. More funding is needed to ensure preservation of these connections to the County's past.

Out-of-date historic resource inventory – The last historic resources survey in Whitfield County was performed in 1994. At that time, many structures, sites and/or districts were not identified as being eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore having historic significance, due to their age (less than 50 years old). Based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, a rule of thumb for identifying a potential "historic" resource is that it be at least 50 years old, among other criteria.

Lacking environmental regulations – Whitfield County needs regulations for protection of steep slopes; protection of areas of prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance; protection of federal and state endangered and threatened species; and protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands and protected rivers.

Greenspace and parks – There is a need for more land for active and passive parks and greenspace in Whitfield County. Existing and future parks should provide for outdoor recreation opportunities for all age groups of the population, including many more trails.

Environmental planning with future land use and development – Environmental considerations are needed in the context of future land use planning and development to protect and preserve ecosystems and watersheds.

Opportunities

Abundance of resources – The County has an abundance of hydrologic natural resources.

Promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations – Civil War, Trail of Tears and Old Federal Road sites could be promoted more directly as tourist destinations. Interpretive trails, for example, could be developed to educate and preserve, attracting among others, visitors to Chickamauga.

County museum of cultural and economic history – A County museum of history and culture funded by a public-private partnership of local, state and federal government agencies in cooperation with local private and non-profit organizations could serve as a center for storage and preservation of the County's historic artifacts and provide a venue to promote the County's rise as the world's leading producer of carpet and floor coverings.

Appreciation of history – County's residents and elected officials have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the County and understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs.

Conasauga River – The County's rivers and streams (e.g. Conasauga River, and multiple creeks and streams) are "hidden resources" with potential for enhanced access to provide passive,



Historic preservation will play an important role in the future development of Whitfield County.



Preserving farmland is an important component of long-range planning in Whitfield County.



Conasauga River in Whitfield County

low-impact recreation and educational opportunities to Whitfield County residents.

Environmental leadership – Local industries are interested in environmental innovation and can help lead the way to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

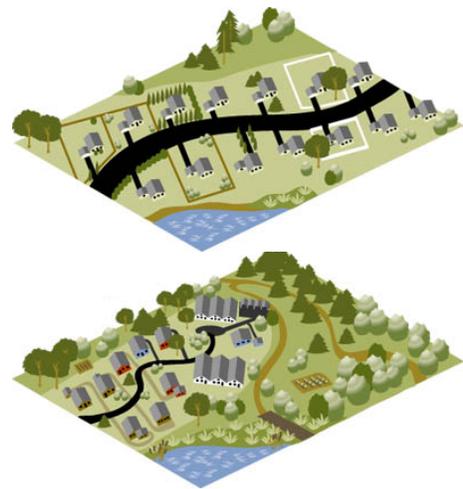
Farmland protection – Protection of farmland can also help protect historic or natural areas. Tools to this end include federal Farmland Protection Program funds, Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), recognition by the Georgia Centennial Farm Program, and conservation easements and tax credits.

Available preservation tools - Tools exist that can assist with protection and acquisition of historic buildings and sites, including revolving funds for repair and acquisition of properties, façade or conservation easement negotiation, utilization of federal funds, promotion of conservation tax credits, the DCA Regionally Important Resource (RIR) Program for historic and natural resources, and designation of Whitfield County as a Certified Local Government (CLG).

Available environmental protection tools - Part V of the 1989 Georgia Planning Act, Chapter 391-3-16, identifies environmental planning criteria for significant natural resource areas that can be used by the County to create ordinances to protect groundwater recharge areas, river corridors, water supply watersheds and wetlands.

Strategies

- ☞ Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance
- ☞ Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the review process.
- ☞ Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- ☞ Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, addresses greenway trail crossings at all roads, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and addresses recommendations of the Conasauga River Alliance
- ☞ Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources
- ☞ Prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan
- ☞ Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements
- ☞ Adopt "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, water supply watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria



Conservation subdivision design (bottom image) preserves open space while providing for development.

- ☞ Continue to follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities, including tree harvesting and utility construction
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality
- ☞ Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation zoning district to apply to non-developable properties, including publicly-owned parks/recreation/open space/environmentally sensitive areas, as well as private property that divest development rights
- ☞ Adopt zoning ordinance amendments that provide incentives to encourage landscaping with native vegetation that requires limited (or none at all) irrigation
- ☞ Adopt planning and development regulations that protect riparian buffers for water quality preservation, planned transportation improvements to enhance efficiency and reduce negative air quality impacts



Commercial development in the Five Springs community

LAND USE

Issues

Agricultural/residential conflicts – Agricultural-residential land use conflicts can emerge when new residents move to areas with intensive farming.

Industrial and commercial encroachment – Encroachment of industrial and commercial development into established residential areas contributes to neighborhood decline.

“Greyfield” sites and strip commercial development – Some older commercial centers are on the verge of becoming greyfield conditions (old Kroger site). These areas and other strip commercial areas will require special attention to prevent underutilization and blight as market and economic conditions change.

Commercial services imbalance – There is a lack of commercial services and providers of goods in the northern part of the county where there is a growing population. The southern end of the county is also lacking in business and shopping opportunities. Almost all commercial activity is concentrated in Dalton.

Scenic Corridors – New development along scenic rural routes could alter the character of the county dramatically if development occurs without an emphasis on protecting scenic views



Shown above is an example from Cobb County of a three-story mixed use development appropriate for providing increased housing choice and retail/services in Whitfield County.

Preservation of agricultural property – As new development increases property values throughout the County, pressure to convert from agricultural uses to residential and commercial uses increases. Preservation of agricultural property is considered important for the long-term sustainability of the County.

Intensive agricultural uses – While it is not necessary to encourage more intensive agricultural uses in all areas of the county, it will be important for this to be accommodated in order for agriculture to be sustainable in the long term.

Code enforcement and maintenance standards – There is a need to better protect the image and attractiveness of the community by requiring more consistent property maintenance and design standards.

Limited entertainment – Local ordinances contribute to the lack of local entertainment and dining options.

Property access for emergency services – Private access easements that exist in certain areas may not permit fire truck access due to lack of width, obstructions and inadequate development standards.

Opportunities

Mixed use development – Most development in the County is suburban residential development that separates residential from commercial. Mixed use developments that are clustered or in nodes could provide the County with the opportunity to provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences and also preserve open space.

Traditional Neighborhood Development – Traditional neighborhood development can provide a wide range of housing types in newly developing areas with a connected pedestrian-friendly street system and ample open space. The cities and county can encourage clustering of community facilities including schools, fire stations, libraries and parks in order to create a sense of place.

Greenspace preservation – In addition to public purchase of land for greenspace and parks, greenspace can be permanently protected through private initiatives such as new residential development where incentives are provided for greenspace preservation (i.e. conservation subdivision practices).

Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Rural/Agricultural zoning district or adopt amendments to existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural/Agricultural Reserve Character Area
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Rural Crossroads Zoning District



Infill development, greyfield redevelopment and new Greenfield development should include a mix of housing types within walking distance of services, parks and retail such as those shown above on Cherry Street in Chattanooga.

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Whitfield County
- ☞ Prepare and adopt “Big Box” ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- ☞ Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites, and consider creation of a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- ☞ Prepare and adopt Rural Corridor Overlay District
- ☞ Prepare and adopt sign ordinance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- ☞ Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Develop zoning districts, overlay or amendment to existing districts that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing, ranging from senior-oriented housing developments to attached or detached “granny flats” in neighborhoods
- ☞ Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along the gateway corridors and other throughway roads in the County to lessen the effects of linear sprawl
- ☞ Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use development
- ☞ Maintain up-to-date ordinances that adequately preserve the rights of local farmers and that provide for adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses
- ☞ Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible.



Tree canopies are an important element of the Whitfield County character

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Issues

Coordination with schools – Coordination between the school systems, city councils and the BOC ensures that new facilities keep up with growth.

Unincorporated islands and municipal boundaries – Whitfield County’s cities include multiple areas of unincorporated islands. In addition, municipal boundaries have been expanded over time in

such a way as to create confusing service delivery areas surrounding each municipality.

Opportunities

Municipal boundaries coordination – Whitfield County and its municipalities should coordinate to correct the annexation islands and other city boundary-related issues.

Strategies

-  *Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation*
-  *Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment*
-  *Establish quarterly meeting of mayors of the County's municipalities and the Board of Commissioners Chairman to discuss issues and develop opportunities to work together*
-  *Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services*
-  *Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO*