

Oglethorpe County Quality Growth Resource Team

What is a Resource Team?

The Resource Team concept was born of the realization that Georgia's communities often requested intense design and development assistance, and that the width and breadth of community need often exceeded that of the expertise of the Office of Planning and Quality Growth staff. Since 2000, the Department of Community Affairs, in conjunction with a variety of state, regional, local and private industry partners, has provided an opportunity for Georgia's governments to receive intense, targeted recommendations for managing growth and development in a sustainable, orderly fashion. Based on the charrette concept used by planning and architecture schools (which requires a team to create a product in a short, specified period), a Resource Team brings together experts from a variety of fields, most often:

- Architecture
- Landscape architecture and streetscape design
- Urban design
- Transportation design
- Natural preservation
- Historic preservation
- Legal professionals
- Finance professionals
- Government and administration professionals

Working together, these varied disciplines spend five days in the host community studying the physical space, the local government's ordinances and policies, and interviewing elected and appointed officials to determine options for change. The resource team creates a report for the host community that focuses on strategies for future community development and redevelopment; and presents it to all interested parties in the community on the final day of the team visit. The Department of Community Affairs, acting as the project organizer, provides core staff and equipment to the team, and is responsible for the final report as well. The Department makes the draft report available to the public for comment after the team visit. Finally, members of the Resource Team return to the community to present the final report and assist community leaders in creating and prioritizing an implementation schedule.

Georgia's Quality Community Objectives

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. These objectives are grouped around the broader concepts of:

- Community Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation
- Social and Economic Development
- Government Relations

Because The Constitution of the State of Georgia embraces the ideals of Home Rule, each of our local governments has the power and responsibility to make land use and planning decisions within its jurisdictional boundaries. The Department's Quality Community Objectives may serve as guiding

principles for elected and appointed leaders in our communities, as they strive to foster and create communities that Georgians are proud to call home.

Community Development Patterns

- Traditional Neighborhoods: Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity
- Infill Development: Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.
- Sense of Place: Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community, or for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.
- Transportation Alternatives: Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.
- Regional Identity: Each region should promote and preserve a regional “identity,” or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

Resource Conservation

- Heritage Preservation: The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.
- Open Space Preservation: New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.
- Environmental Protection: Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or the quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

Social and Economic Development

- Growth Preparedness: Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the types of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.
- Appropriate Businesses: The businesses and industry encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skilled job opportunities.

- Employment Options: A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.
- Housing Choices: A range of housing size, cost and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age-groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.
- Educational Opportunities: Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

Governmental Relations

- Regional Solutions: Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.
- Regional Cooperation: Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to the success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.

Each of these Quality Community Objectives frames the work of the Resource Team in West Point. It is our sincere belief that communities that build with the future in mind, with the principle of sustainability at the forefront, are those that will flourish in the 21st century and beyond.



Oglethorpe County Resource Team Report

April, 2008

In 2007, Oglethorpe County requested a Quality Growth Resource Team (QGRT) to develop growth management solutions in the face of change, and specifically to help:

1. Maintain and enhance the rural quality of life.
2. Encourage high quality development, both master-planned and commercial.
3. Guide future expansion of community facilities and infrastructure.
4. Preserve the integrity of the community's historic resources.
5. Expand commercial and retail opportunities to increase sales tax revenues.
6. Create more jobs within the county for local citizens.

There are a number of factors that are affecting Oglethorpe County's future: the county recently was included in the Athens MSA due to its changing role as a bedroom community for Athens; residential development has increased rapidly over the last ten years with very little commercial development; a multi-use master plan development (Oglethorpe Crossing) of nearly 150 acres has been proposed near the core of the county; two GDOT projects will increase traffic capacity, widening of Highway 78 and a bypass which will define the southern edge of the Crawford-Lexington Employment Center.

Geographically, the county asked the QGRT to focus on the "Employment Center Character Area". This area comprises a wide swath that engulfs the highway 78 corridor throughout the county. Oglethorpe County and its cities identified this character area in their comprehensive plan.

DCA defines character areas as: "A specific geographic area within the community that:

- Has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced (such as downtown, a historic district, a neighborhood, or a transportation corridor);
- Has potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance of future development through adequate planning and implementation (such as strip commercial corridor that could be revitalized into more attractive village development pattern); or
- Requires special attention due to unique development issues (rapid change of development patterns, economic decline, etc.)

Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more detailed, small-area planning and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the community vision.

Character Areas are a primary tool for developing sound planning strategy.

The Comprehensive Plan for Oglethorpe County and its municipalities also defines the citizens' vision for the future:

Oglethorpe County is a dynamic community transforming under the influence of the expanding Athens Metropolitan Area. The county's location and rural qualities offer an attractive destination and a rich quality of life. The community vision addresses the desire to balance the county's rural qualities with continued residential development and an expanding local economy.

The following statements outline Oglethorpe's desired future:

- *Oglethorpe County and its cities will preserve their rural qualities and agricultural characteristics through growth management balancing the rural, historic, and natural areas that provide the community's unique identities.*
- *Oglethorpe County and its cities will preserve the small-town feel enhancing community cohesiveness and striving to remain responsive to the needs of residents and businesses.*
- *Oglethorpe County and its cities will invest in the means to enhance and diversify economic activity balancing local growth and providing increased employment and shopping opportunities for all residents.*

The Quality Growth Resource Team used the vision and guiding principles from the comprehensive plan as well as the input from the Town Hall Meeting to develop the recommendations in this report.

The challenge in Oglethorpe County, as in most communities in Georgia, is balancing growth with small-town, rural character. Growth and preservation, without forethought and determination, can be mutually exclusive: those communities that grow economically see loss of farm land and historic resources, and increased traffic and congestion. The solution is to concentrate growth through land use regulation, economic incentives, and targeted investment in infrastructure. Citizens typically resist regulations because they don't want anyone telling them what they can do with their land, or are cool to economic incentives because they do not want to pay with higher taxes, but with education and public discourse, local elected officials and citizens can come to consensus about level of regulations and level of services necessary to maintain the quality of life and achieve the community's vision for the future. The comprehensive plan for Oglethorpe County and its municipalities defines this vision as well as sets sound guiding principles for achieving that vision. All community leaders should use these guiding principles as guidance in all day-to-day decision making.

The report is arranged into the following sections:

1. Physical Infrastructure
2. Downtown Revitalization
3. Corridor Management
4. Bypass Options
5. Development Authority
6. Industrial Development
7. Heritage Tourism
8. Information Infrastructure
9. Appendices

Physical Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a very effective tool that communities can and should use to guide growth. Water, sewer, roads, etc. are essential components to development. It is often said that development follows the roads and the sewers. This does not necessarily have to be the case in Oglethorpe County. Other tools that communities may use to guide growth are zoning and other development standards that include design guidelines and environmental protections.

The Cities of Crawford and Lexington have the beginnings of the appropriate infrastructure to concentrate growth within the study area (which is a recommendation noted below). Although the water and sewer systems may need improvements, the foundation of the infrastructure is there. The system of streets and roads is another key infrastructure component that can determine the location and quality of growth in a community. Crawford and Lexington both have traditional street networks that can be expanded and emulated in other areas to create a traditional development pattern similar to that which has always existed.

Recommendation #1: Expand municipal water and sewer lines within the study area to guide and encourage residential and commercial development within and close to Crawford and Lexington.

This will help revitalize the downtown areas and control costs associated with service provision.

Recommendation #2: Limit the extension of municipal water and sewer lines outside of the study area to prevent sprawl-type development.

Sprawl development eats up agricultural lands and therefore the rural character of a community and costs local governments more (and therefore, costs tax payers more) in service delivery. See [The Fiscal Impacts of Land Uses on Local Government](#) report by Jeffrey H. Dorfman, Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, University of Georgia.

Recommendation #3: Revise zoning and future development map to increase the minimum acreage required within areas designated for residential growth.

Current minimum acreage is 1 ½ acres. Increasing this to 25+ acres will protect existing agricultural land use; protect rural character of the county; prevent sprawling subdivisions; and keep service delivery costs low.

Recommendation #4: Create nodal development centers along transportation corridors where more dense residential development may take place.

This allows surrounding agricultural lands to remain undeveloped, and service provision can be extended to these areas as the population increases.

Recommendation #5: Expand the transportation network/historic grid patterns within Crawford and Lexington to allow for a traditional development pattern and encourage walkability.

Recommendation #6: Expand the existing sidewalk network to continue along existing streets in Crawford and Lexington and include sidewalks on all new streets either through zoning requirements, a community sidewalk program, or other method.

Recommendation #7: Expand the information technology capabilities efficiently by installing conduits along with new water and sewer lines.

Recommendation #8: Encourage the location of industry close to existing/planned sewage treatment facilities.

Downtown Revitalization

Downtown revitalization improves the shared sense of place, a psychological sense of community, and community identity. Both downtown Crawford and Lexington have appealing downtowns with historic resources and sense of rural community activity centers. Both downtowns have buildings that are not used to their full commercial potential (Jefferson Mill and shops used as storage). These downtowns need to take advantage of these assets to both preserve the historic town centers, but also as economic development opportunities.

Recommendation #9: Concentrate as much future development as possible around existing downtown cores of Crawford and Lexington.

This promotes continued development of those cities as the centers of activity for the surrounding county and protects the rural character of the county. This concentration of development also maximizes investment in existing infrastructure and services (it's much less expensive to serve water, sewer, fire, and police to a location within or immediately adjacent to current service boundaries than a location far from them). Where development would not be suitable for a downtown environment (i.e. industrial development, large-scale retail, et al.) such development should be located as close to already developed areas as possible to protect rural areas and to provide ready access to existing infrastructure and services as well as existing retail and commercial activities.

Recommendation #10: Provide adequate sewer service in downtown Lexington.

Adequate sewer service in downtown Lexington provides an incentive to revitalization of downtown. Redevelopment Fund (RDF) (up to \$500,000) grant dollars could help fund the project if the area were designated by city ordinance as "slum and blight." The remaining funding gap could be filled possibly by a combination of local resources (SPLOST revenue?)

and/or low interest loans from the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA). The Development Authority could even issue development bonds in order to generate the necessary revenue, the debt from which could be amortized by the higher property tax revenues anticipated from a revitalized downtown area. Local government investment in an area serves as incentive for private investment.

Recommendation #11: Make streetscape improvements in downtown areas.

Apply for Transportation Enhancement grant from the Department of Transportation to complete streetscape beautification work in the downtown area. Work could include the addition of street trees, benches, planters, and crosswalks, as well as improvements to sidewalks and lighting. Local government investment in an area serves as incentive for private investment.



Recommendation #12: Amend Lexington’s zoning code to include other sections of the Model Code dealing with downtown design.

Recommendation #13: Crawford should adopt sections of the Model Code dealing with downtown design.

These [DCA Model Code](#) sections may include the following:

§9-1-8.2 Building Orientation. If an entry is oriented to a parking lot, it diminishes activity from the street and implies that auto access takes precedence.

Building presence should be reinforced through the observation of the following criteria:

- (a) The minimum and maximum setback standards are met.
- (b) Buildings have their primary entrance(s) oriented to the street. Building entrances may include entrances to individual units, lobby entrances, entrances oriented to pedestrian plazas, or breezeway/courtyard entrances to a cluster of spaces.
- (c) Corner building entrances should be designed in cases where the building is located on a corner lot. Alternatively, a building entrance may be located away from the corner when the building corner is beveled or incorporates other detailing to reduce the angular appearance of the building at the street corner.
- (d) A building may have an entrance facing a side yard when a direct pedestrian walkway is provided between the building entrance and the street right-of-way.
- (e) Off street parking, driveways and other vehicular access shall not be placed between a building and the street. On corner lots, buildings and their entrances shall be oriented to the street corner as feasible.
- (f) At least 50 percent of the width of the lot is occupied by a building at the front setback.

§9-1-8.3 Storefront Design. All buildings shall contribute toward the storefront character and visual relationships of buildings existing in the Downtown Specific Plan area. The following architectural features should be used along the street frontage building elevations, as applicable.

- (a) Buildings should have consistent spacing of similar shaped windows with trim or other decorative molding on all building stories.
- (b) Large display windows should be employed on ground floor storefronts. Display windows should be framed to visually separate the ground floor from the second floor.
- (c) All buildings with a flat roof should have a decorative cornice at the top of the building; or eaves, when the building is designed with a pitched roof.
- (d) Cornices or changes in material can be used to differentiate the ground floor of buildings that have commercial uses from the upper floor(s) that may have offices or residential uses. Ground floor facades should utilize cornices, signs, awnings, exterior lighting, display windows and entry insets.

§9-1-8.4 Building Materials. Building materials shall be similar to the materials used on the existing buildings in the Downtown Specific Plan area. Brick and stone masonry are considered compatible with wood siding.

(a) In circumstances where similar materials are not proposed, such as a stucco building in a row of brick structures, other characteristics such as scale and proportion, form, architectural detailing, height, and color and texture shall be utilized to ensure that adequate similarity exists for the building to be considered compatible.

(b) Building materials shall not create glare. Highly reflective materials such as aluminum, unpainted metal, and reflective glass shall not be permitted.

(c) Clear glass windows shall be used for commercial storefront display windows and doors.

(d) Buildings shall be consistently detailed on all sides. Windows and doors shall be defined with detail elements such as frames, sills, and lintels, and placed to visually establish and define the building stories and establish human scale and proportion.

(e) Exposed rough or re-sawn siding and exposed, untreated concrete shall not be permitted as a finished exterior.

§9-1-8.5 Building Color. Recommended color shades shall draw from the range of color shades of structures that already exist in the Downtown Specific Plan area. No more than one accent color should be used per building.

§9-1-8.6 Pedestrian Amenities. Pedestrian amenities serve as informal gathering places for socializing, resting and enjoyment of the downtown area, and contribute to a walkable environment. Pedestrian amenities may be provided within the public right-of-way when approved by the local jurisdiction. The following amenities should be incorporated into the building design whenever feasible:

(a) A plaza, courtyard, or extra-wide sidewalk next to the building entrance.

(b) Sitting space (i.e. dining area, benches, or ledges) between the building entrance and the sidewalk. Recommended dimensions are a minimum of 16 inches in height and 30 inches in width.

(c) A building canopy, awning, or similar weather protection, with a minimum four-foot projection over the sidewalk or other pedestrian space.

(d) Public art which incorporates seating (e.g., fountain, raised planter, sculpture).

Crawford Downtown

Recommendation #14: Convert the old Coile mobile home park into a public park.

Recommendation #15: Protect downtown historic resources.

A. Adopt a local historic preservation ordinance. [University of Georgia's Certified Local Government Program](#) can provide a model ordinance and assistance in its adoption.

B. Appoint a historic preservation commission.

C. Designate a local historic district in the area north of the Crawford Depot along the old rail bed to Jefferson Mills, incorporating historic structures located on either side of the historic rail bed.

D. Tweak Lexington’s “Design Guidelines for Historic Preservation and New Construction” to fit local context and apply to this district.



Recommendation #16: Rehabilitate the historic Crawford School.

A. Initially, make improvements to the unappealing rear façade of this historic school, which faces the much-traveled Highway 78. Add more landscaping, repoint the brick with appropriately-colored mortar, and camouflaging of the modern roll-up garage door. The school is an important historic resource and community landmark building; however the view from Highway 78 makes the building appear vacant and not properly maintained.

B. Apply for a Georgia Heritage Grant from the Historic Preservation Division of DNR to implement the rehabilitation recommendations found in the Historic Structure Report completed in December 2003 by students of the MHP Program at UGA.



Recommendation #17: Address dilapidated manufactured housing within the city limits. Many of the manufactured housing appears to be eligible for condemnation. These blighted properties are especially detrimental to the local character along the historic Highway 78 corridor near the cinder block Laundromat and on Old Lexington Road near the historic Crawford School.

Corridor Management

The primary purpose of a highway is to move vehicles. When the primary activity of the highway is encumbered by overdevelopment (primarily by excessive curb-cuts for new residential and commercial developments) the secondary economic benefits to the community are sacrificed. The most basic set of solutions to the problems that can arise from development of rural arterial corridors is provided below:

Recommendation #18: Concentrate development to ensure good stewardship of infrastructure and to preserve the rural character.

A. Concentrate future development around key intersections or nodes preserves the rural character of the spaces between them. Concentration of retail activities generally improves economic success for all co-located business as consumers are frequently more willing to buy products they may otherwise have done without if they are located conveniently next to other places they are already going.

B. The areas between those identified intersections should be preserved as rural open space and development should only be permitted so far as it maintains the rural character of the corridor. This is best accomplished in either of two ways: 1) very large lot residential requirements (25-50 acres), or 2) conservation subdivisions (small building lots surrounded by permanently protected open space). Within Oglethorpe County's current regulatory framework, the most effective way to accomplish this is most likely to be to extend the "Conservation Design Development District" protections in section 714 of the local zoning ordinance the swath of land on both sides of Highway 78 along the entirety of the corridor's length in the county (with the exception of the focus areas at key intersections and areas within current city limits).

C. Any intensive industrial or commercial activity (factory, manufacturing plant, big-box retail, etc) must be completely screened from the corridor by an earthen berm landscaped with hardwood trees and other permanent, natural landscaping materials. The only visible indication of the facility should be an appropriately designed, discretely sized, monument-style sign located near the highway access point. Additional off-site impacts (excess light, noise, odor, etc) must also be mitigated--see [DCA Model Code §5-1](#) Performance Standards for Off-Site Impacts.

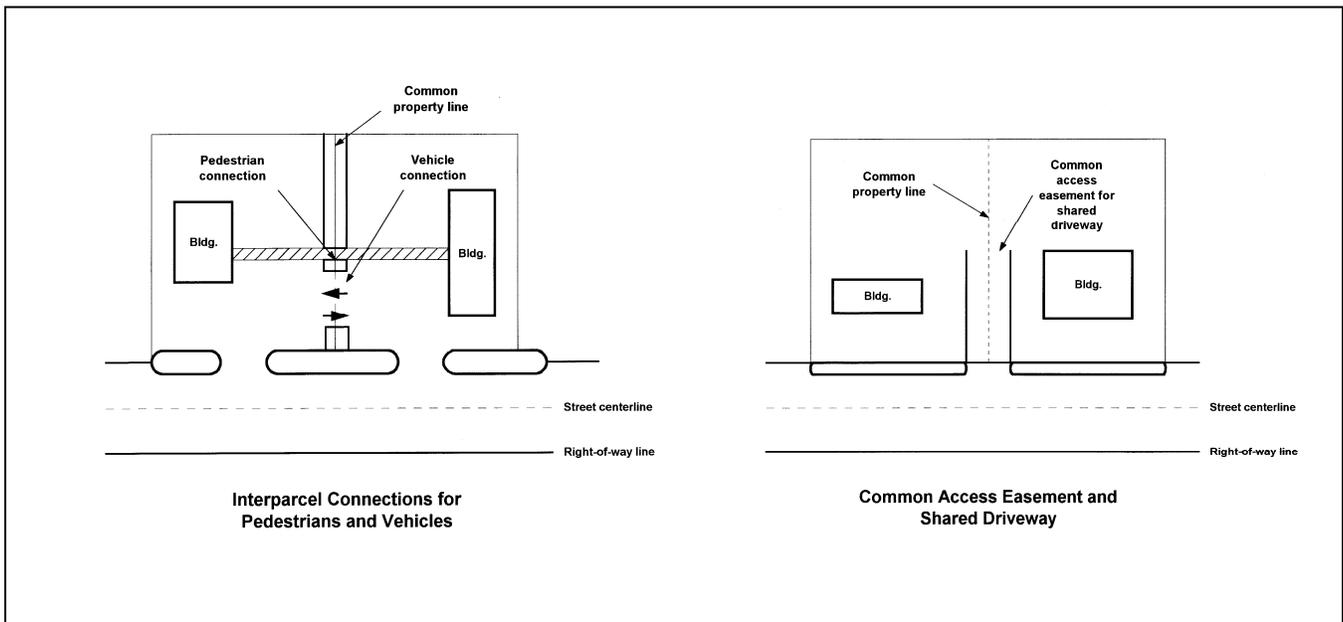
Recommendation #19: Control access to help preserve the scenic, rural character and encourage connectivity between parcels.

A. Reduce the number of curb-cuts allowed and increase minimum footage allowed between them.

B. Require inter-parcel connectivity between all new developments. New construction must dedicate land and space to provide for future connectivity. This connectivity should be illustrated site plans; the access path to be dedicated for inter-parcel movement should be constructed along with all other site preparations, up to the property line.

C. Allow access to the adjacent parcels only by turning off of Highway 78 onto the intersecting road and then from that road onto the developing parcel. This provides increased safety, consistency, predictability, and clarity to the driver: if someone is getting on or off the highway, it only occurs at the intersection.

D. Require new residential developments to have access only on collector and local roadways. NOTE: It's important to remember that although a community is must allow access to the street/road network, it is not required that that access be the easiest access or the most convenient access. As long as a property can be granted access to the network in some way the community has fulfilled its responsibility. The "easiest" access points are most often those that would also cause the greatest impediment to the free flow of traffic.



Recommendation #20: Implement new design guidelines along all parcels that can be seen from the corridor. Amend or adopt zoning code to:

A. Prohibit metal and vinyl siding as exterior materials and allow native indigenous stone, granite, brick, or wood. The use of metal is inconsistent with the traditional building materials found in the throughout the county (brick, stone and wood) that help define the local architectural and rural character.

B. Prohibit chain link fences.

C. Reduce onsite parking requirement to 1 space per every 250-300 square feet of floor area (or less, where appropriate).

D. Reduce amount of impervious surface (asphalt) allowed in all new development.

E. Mandate tree sizes of at least 4-inch diameter trees where tree requirements are made. Require shrubbery in addition to trees within parking lot islands.

F. Require use of stealth design (imitation trees) in cell tower construction.

G. Consider alternative site designs for gas stations. See [DCA Model Code §7-8-11-5](#).

H. Explore use of landscaped berms to hide commercial and industrial developments and their associated parking areas.



Recommendation #21: Improve signage to eliminate visual clutter.

A. Enforce sign ordinance in the county and adopt sign regulations in Crawford and Lexington.

B. Amend sign ordinance to prohibit billboards along the Highway 78 Corridor. See "[Sign Control on Rural Corridors: Model Provisions and Guidance](#)".

C. Strengthen the existing sign ordinance to deal with the proliferation of dilapidated portable signs along Highway 78.

D. Amend sign ordinance to require monument signs on Highway 78 as opposed to pole signs.



Recommendation #22: Reduce the speed limit further outside of city limits.

Some inhabitants of the City of Lexington complained that truck traffic coming into town is very disturbing at night as tractor-trailers down-shift to reduce speed upon coming into the city limits. We'd suggest reducing the speed limit further outside of town so that down-shifting would be complete before entering the community—using annexation, if necessary, to acquire control. A police officer or sheriff should very frequently be stationed right after the sign to catch violators. Word will eventually spread through the communicative trucking community to avoid speeding in that area.

Crawford and Lexington Bypass

Perhaps no other issue brought up as much heated discussion and varying ideas during our time in Oglethorpe County as did the possibility of construction of a bypass along Highway 78 around the cities of Crawford and Lexington. Responding to the variety of strong feelings about this topic we have found it wise to offer a series of options that the community could choose to guide development along the potential, future corridor.

Option 1: The No-Build Scenario

Based upon traffic counts, the desire for increased economic development and preservation of the rural character, the QGRT recommends the No-Build Scenario as the best option for Oglethorpe County. However, the Georgia Department of Transportation has already started the process of acquiring the anticipated right-of-way; so, unless the public mounts a campaign against the bypass, it is exceedingly unlikely that GDOT would decide not to construct the highway. The only serious impediment to the bypass is construction funding, a resource that has been increasingly lacking over recent years.

During our visit, the level of congestion at several key areas did not seem to warrant the need for a bypass. Occasionally light to moderate traffic was observed that required light to moderate breaking but the movement of vehicles was never severely impeded. This minor congestion could easily be remedied with effective access management and signalization at a few problematic access points.

Proper access management and effective signalization would likely improve UGA football game day traffic dramatically as well. Most communities with this same situation view it, instead, as an economic development opportunity—a chance to bring money into community. Marketing Lexington and Crawford as scenic, relaxed, rural alternatives just outside Athens to overnight travelers going to games could provide the opportunity for greater downtown retail, restaurant, and lodging establishments, as well as bed-and-breakfasts and boutique hotels. Diverting these travelers away from downtown is essentially giving-up on capturing and retaining them as economic development assets.

Building the bypass will not only divert truck traffic and game day traffic from town—it will end up diverting virtually all through-traffic. Highway 78 is the single largest economic asset that Oglethorpe County has. In the end, providing through-travelers with a gas station and a chain hotel out on a bypass will do little to improve your local economy. The idea of diverting them

from the bypass by calling it a “truck route” and using effective way-finding signage to draw interested people into town only puts a band-aid on the situation—in reality, if they don’t have to go through town, most travelers won’t. A truck route—even if it’s circuitous—typically provides the traveler with the better option for travel-time when respective speed limits are considered.

A truck route is not an essential component for industrial development. While truck routes may sometimes make industrial development slightly more likely in a given area, communities that provide a well-managed, well-maintained, principle transportation artery have nearly as much success recruiting appropriate industry as those with bypasses. Additionally, locating new industry close to already developed areas allows employees to readily take advantage of nearby commercial/retail services: convenient places to take their lunch break and to shop on the way home. Quality, community-oriented industry wants its employees to be part of the community, not isolated out on a strip of highway. Some individuals in the traditional economic development community would dispute this as would many developers—but it is true.

The traditional economic development community likes to quote statistics and dollar figures and example communities to impress communities. They will state over and over again that communities without bypasses don’t prosper and plenty examples of successful communities with attractively developed bypasses. But, for every healthy community they cite, one can easily find ten shriveled and hollow historic communities that have been killed by their shiny new bypasses lined with strip-malls and big-box stores floating like islands in their seas of asphalt.

A bypass is difficult to successfully integrate into a community. Only those had thriving, vibrant, effective downtown cores and very well-structured regulatory frameworks to start before the bypass was ever conceived have done it successfully—and even many of them have failed.

Option 2: Scenic Highway 78 / Truck Route

Given the probability that the bypass will be constructed despite the QGRT’s ardent recommendation against it, we recommend that it be viewed solely as a tool for moving traffic.

Recommendation #23: Preserve scenic, rural character of the corridor and county.

A. Given that the vast majority of people we spoke with viewed the need for the bypass simply as a technique for reducing the traffic load on Highway 78 through the towns, we suggest that it be treated as such. Zoning should be amended/adopted to permit only agricultural or very large lot residential uses.

B. Do not extend water and sewer infrastructure to any areas along the bypass. Where this infrastructure is installed, development invariably follows.

C. Future development should only be permitted close to or within existing municipal boundaries and near the existing Highway 78 corridor.

D. No new curb-cuts should be permitted after initial construction (it is understood that existing intersections and driveways would be included in the original construction of the highway)—if access is required for a parcel that has no pre-existing access point that developer will need to purchase an access easement through to an existing intersecting highway or driveway.¹ This will maintain the speedy flow of traffic and eliminate the dangers of traffic moving across the highway.

E. The bypass should be constructed to require a physical turn from the historic route of U.S. 78 onto the truck route in order to funnel through traffic to the bypass and maintain the flow of general motorists through the community cores.

F. Official, legal signage should distinguish between the U.S. 78 Truck Route and the U.S. 78 Business Route in order to effectively capture the passing driver. Local signage—of an attractive, monument style should provide direction and differentiation between the “U.S. 78 Scenic Drive” and “Historic U.S. 78” to put a positive “spin” on both routes while being direct with the driver about what to expect.

(Please refer also to corridor management recommendations in Corridor Management chapter).

Option 3: Nodal Development

While the QGRT strongly discourages development along the bypass, the following recommendations should be considered if the county is going to permit development along the route. The lands adjacent to the bypass could be a place to put industrial development—provided appropriate siting and screening are required.

The construction recommendations (requiring a physical turn from the historic route of U.S. 78 onto the truck route) and signage recommendations from Option 2 would also apply to Option 3. Development should occur following the same basic nodal concept and access management provisions we outlined for the existing rural portions of Highway 78.

Recommendation #24: Identify and establish nodes of development along bypass.
Establish limited commercial nodes along the corridor at intersections with important intersections (Highway 77, Highway 22, and Highway 316) for highway-oriented commercial-retail.

¹ Though some citizens we spoke to indicated that GDOT had informed them that the new bypass would be controlled/limited access, no one we spoke to at GDOT would confirm such and stated that—until it was actually constructed—construction specifications could change at any time.

Recommendation #25: Preserve scenic, rural character of the corridor and county.

The areas between these nodes should be preserved in their current conditions though, if development were to occur there, again, construction of conservation subdivisions or very large lot residential development would be most appropriate.

Recommendation #26: Require appropriate screening and site design to hide development from view.

Appropriately screened (landscaped berms and hardwood trees) and sited (in the swales between hilltops as to protect the expansive view shed) industrial development may also be acceptable in certain locations along the route. This will make use of the truck-moving capacity of the highway with minimal impact on the communities.

Access management provisions discussed for existing areas of Highway 78 would apply to the bypass, as well, with the additional option of permitting curb-cuts and access for industrial sites at inter-nodal points.



Recommendation #27: Use infrastructure placement as indicator of locations for desired development.

Strategically extend water and sewer infrastructure to areas along the bypass WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE HIGHWAY WHICH PARALLELS CUNNINGHAM ROAD. The expansive view-shed from this ridge top is an incredible natural asset to the county and a potential economic development resource in its natural state. Unsightly development along this ridge top will not only interfere with the highly advantageous view but will create an irremediable, persistent visual blight upon all of the surrounding areas from which the ridge top is visible (the entirety of the Cities of Crawford and Lexington as well as an incredibly large swath of

rural Oglethorpe County—possible even neighboring counties). By intentionally *not* putting water and wastewater infrastructure in that area you will at least impede development there.

Recommendation #28: Use DCA Model Code Sections as basis for regulations to achieve above recommendations.

The basic language in the following [DCA Model Code](#) Sections will be useful. Modification will be necessary to create the specific regulatory environment you choose based upon our recommendations.

PART FIVE:	PERFORMANCE-BASED REGULATIONS THAT DO NOT USE A MAP
§5-1	PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR OFF-SITE IMPACTS
§5-2	DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE
§5-3	PUBLIC NUISANCE
§5-4	MAJOR PERMIT REQUIREMENT
§5-5	LAND USE GUIDANCE (POINT) SYSTEM
§5-6	TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES
PART SEVEN:	MAPPED APPROACHES TO LAND USE REGULATION
§7-7	SCENIC CORRIDOR OVERLAY DISTRICT
§7-8	RURAL/SUBURBAN ARTERIAL CORRIDOR OVERLAY

Development Authority

Recommendation #29: Activate Local Development Authority.

Activation of the Development Authority of Oglethorpe County provides the legal mechanism with which the county could negotiate and work alongside property owners and businesses in order to maximize local economic development opportunities (This development authority is constitutionally in place, but technically inactive). An active development authority is an essential part of an effective economic development program, providing legal and administrative flexibilities. A great majority of Georgia’s counties utilize their development authorities to accomplish legally a number of important goals:

- Long-term contract negotiations with developers (including: tax incentives, land-use restrictions, job creation goals and standards, and claw-back provisions ensuring that developers stick to their originally proposed plans and goals)
- Business recruitment and retention
- Bond issuances for important capital projects
- Economic development grant administration
- Property ownership

Recommendation #30: Launch a Public Education Campaign about Development Authorities.

A public awareness campaign is necessary to educate citizens on the proper functions of a local development authority before its activation. This will appease any potential opposition based on misconception. Some citizens may show resistance to adding on another layer of local government, while other citizens may fear a lack of accountability. If communicated

properly, however, the awareness campaign will publicly convey the development authority's relative structural simplicity, its minimal costs (it could be housed by the chamber and staffed by the same personnel), its appropriate checks and balances in relation to local government bodies, and most importantly, its optimal value. The UGA Fanning Institute publishes excellent information for and provides expert training to local governments on the use and administration of development authorities. The QGRT highly recommends consulting with the UGA Fanning Institute on moving forward with this important initiative.

Industrial Development

Recommendation #31: Develop a Sensible Industrial Recruitment Strategy.

Citizens at the QGRT Town Hall Meeting held on 9/24/07 expressed strong interest in having light and clean industry in the county for the purpose of local job creation. Industrial recruitment is a common activity among Georgia counties, as Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) and private power companies continuously help their industrial clients locate available sites for expansion throughout the state.

Recommendation #32: Determine where a newly recruited industry would locate.

A. During the QGRT's visit to Oglethorpe County, two potential industrial sites were identified: (1) the Lexington Professional Park and (2) the open acreage behind the recently constructed public safety complex.

B. If the county needs to purchase industrial property, one eligible criterion of the OneGeorgia Equity grant program is "capacity building." Many rural counties in the state have received Equity grant funds (max: \$500,000) to purchase industrial property and equip it with essential infrastructure. Any such acquired properties must remain under public ownership for many years after the award.

C. Citizens and leaders have also mentioned the proposed bypass as another location for light industry. If the bypass does become a reality, it would be necessary to weigh the costs and benefits of zoning bypass property for industrial development. Industries do favor locating along highways rather than back roads, but would this new industry offset the proposed traffic relief that the bypass will potentially create?

Recommendation #33: Market Potential Industrial Sites through GDEcD.

A. These and other potential sites should be marketed to GDEcD so that the properties can be listed on their public database of available sites and buildings.

Recommendation #34: Determine what types of industry to recruit.

While this is a determination that will require extensive analysis among local leadership, the QGRT does have some recommendations based on abundant local resources. The life and agricultural science industries are perfect fits for Oglethorpe County because of its strong agricultural economy and its close proximity to UGA. Furthermore, many citizens expressed a strong desire *not* to have "big box"-type developments that would compromise the county's rural setting. Science-based industries would encroach less, take advantage of local assets,

and create great jobs. Other local assets to build upon for the county's industrial recruitment strategy are the community's tremendous forest and granite resources, which could attract numerous industries that rely on these products as inputs.

Recommendation #35: Determine who will be responsible for carrying out industrial recruitment responsibilities.

Chambers of Commerce and Development Authorities (usually in tandem) are largely responsible for local industrial recruitment throughout the State of Georgia. Reactivation of the Development Authority of Oglethorpe County is essential to this process. The local chamber will be able to effectively market the county to potential clients, but if the county needs to enter into any long-term contracts with a client, it will need an active development authority to provide necessary legal flexibility.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism means traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes irreplaceable historic, cultural, and natural resources. The overall purpose is to gain an appreciation of the past. Cultural heritage tourism is important for various reasons: it has a positive economic and social impact; it establishes and reinforces identity; it helps preserve the cultural heritage; and helps renew tourism.

In Georgia, tourism is the second largest industry. Nevertheless, two significant travel trends will dominate the tourism market in the next decade.

- Mass marketing is giving way to one-to-one marketing with travel being tailored to the interests of the individual consumer.
- A growing number of visitors are becoming special interest travelers who rank the arts, heritage and/or other cultural activities as one of the top five reasons for traveling.

The combination of these two trends is being fueled by technology, through the proliferation of online services and tools, making it easier for the traveler to choose destinations and customize their itineraries based on their interests.

Oglethorpe County has the rural character, the natural and historic resources for heritage tourism to be an engine for prosperity and economic growth in the county.

Recommendation # 36: Implement other recommendations that deal with protecting rural character of county.

In order to have something to promote for heritage and agri-tourism, the rural character and scenic landscapes must be preserved.

Recommendation #37: Expand heritage and agri-tourism marketing and coordination efforts.

Cultural heritage tourism has a number of objectives that must be met within the context of

sustainable development such as; the conservation of cultural resources, accurate interpretation of resources, authentic visitors experience, and the stimulation of the earned revenues of cultural resources.

Cultural heritage tourism is not only concerned with identification, management and protection of the heritage values but it must also be involved in understanding the impact of tourism on communities and regions, achieving economic and social benefits, providing financial resources for protection, as well as marketing and promotion.

Consequently, history and culture provide a key opportunity for travel promoters and planners. The educational experience from heritage tourism can be partnered with other tourist attractions. The National Trust for Historic Preservation identified five principles to guide the combining heritage and tourism:

- Collaborate
- Find the fit between a community or region and tourism
- Make sites and programs come alive
- Focus on authenticity and quality of experience
- Preserve and protect resources

Recommendation #38: Consider additional heritage tourism activities to create a bigger draw. In addition to the existing heritage tourism opportunities within Oglethorpe County (such as Goodness Grows, Heritage Art Loop, house tours, and Full Time Seed Swap), the following heritage tourism activities should be taken into consideration:

A. The Peddling Past: Designate a historic bike route in Oglethorpe County and start or join local/regional bike tours.

B. A Walking Past: Designate historic walking tour along the Athens-Augusta/Georgia Railroad.

C. The Cotton Coach: Revival of a train/trolley car along the Athens-Augusta/Georgia Railroad line. The Cotton Coach (a day train/trolley with historic stops along the route) and walking tour could be promoted via a “Stepping through Oglethorpe County” promotions plan.

D. Hands-on Farm: Designate special days throughout the year for hands-on demonstrations (i.e., milking a cow, churning butter) at the local Dairy and Berry farms in Oglethorpe County.

E. B & B – Boars and Breakfast: Since Oglethorpe County is known for its wild boar presence, a Boars & Breakfast package would lure hunters and their families.

F. The Great Antique Auction: Oglethorpe County has great potential for becoming an antique hub. An annual or biannual antique auction would bring collectors from near and far.

Recommendation #39: Aggressively market the rural character of the area.

The following ideas/recommendations can help with obtaining maximum exposure for the community:

- A. Advertise locally, regionally, and nationally in multiple formats: newspaper, television, and radio. Make sure that the community supports the economic development effort and that local businesses have a positive attitude towards growth.
- B. Use direct mail to reach a specific audience: targeted lists, master lists, and international lists.
- C. Attend trade shows – national and international – to market your product.
- D. Make speeches: have your best speakers out there educating firms about your community at economic development conventions, national/international trade shows and community events
- E. Launch public relations campaigns – as long as it fits within your budget. Sometimes the best PR comes at no cost. Battle Mountain, Nevada was named the “Armpit of America” by the Washington Post on December 2, 2001 and has creatively used that free advertising as a way to improve the community. They created an “Armpit” festival and have attracted attention from deodorant manufacturers. The town did not take the award personally, but saw it as an opportunity to promote the area. They made a potentially negative article into a full-blown public relations campaign.
- F. Use allies and resources available: railroads, power and gas companies, colleges and universities may already have an economic development marketing plans. Combine efforts and resources for additional impact.

Information Infrastructure

Information or technology infrastructure is another tool communities could take advantage of to guide growth as well as attract certain types of industries. Cellular service, internet access, cable television, etc. are types of services Oglethorpe County can expand and/or install in the Cities of Crawford and Lexington in order to concentrate growth and ensure clean industries locate within the study area.

Recommendation #40: Place the quality growth planning process online in a user controlled space, e.g., a “wiki” or community portal, to make it less labor- and resource-intensive to get community participation.

Recommendation #41: Place other key functions of community institutions online: Newspaper photos, high school classes, chamber of commerce committees, city and county government forms and meetings, etc., to make participation less labor- and resource-intensive.

Recommendation #42: Convene a planning process focused on connectivity for economic assets (e.g., businesses, etc.) within the “study area,” in planned developments (“Kenny Rogers farm”), and those associated with intensive agriculture or tourism. A starting point for this planning process might be:

- A. Fiber optic network connecting public and non-profit agencies within the study area.
- B. Wireless point-to-point and multi-point “tree and branch” network to rural areas.
- C. Backhaul (very high-speed connection to the internet) from two different sources, following different physical routes.
- D. Private partner to maintain and operate the networks and provide “retail” broadband to residences and for-profit firms.

Recommendation #43: Install conduit for fiber optic cable along with sewer improvements being planned for the City of Crawford, and with any such future project within the “study area” or the “employment district.”

Recommendation #44: Invest in—or provide a catalyst for investment in—the usable assets of CompuCom cable and internet.

Recommendation #45: Convene sector “focus groups” for agriculture, tourism, and other strategic industries, as well as general citizens, on applications, availability, and needs for broadband. Focus particularly on business and commercial applications.