

**Gordon County  
Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026**

***COMMUNITY  
ASSESSMENT***

Prepared for:  
**Gordon County**

By:



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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose

The *Community Assessment* provides a factual and conceptual foundation for the remaining work involved in preparing the Gordon County Comprehensive Plan update. The Comprehensive Plan that is being used by the County today was adopted in 1992. It is a joint plan that includes unincorporated Gordon County and local municipalities. The 2006 Gordon County Comprehensive Plan update is again being prepared in conjunction with surrounding municipalities; however, the City of Calhoun is preparing a stand-alone document during this plan update.

The *Gordon County Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026* will primarily focus on the County area surrounding the City of Calhoun city limits. However, the inclusion of Calhoun data in some instances is necessary to explain conditions, trends, issues or opportunities. Detailed information involving the City of Calhoun may be found in the *City of Calhoun Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026*.

Production of the *Community Assessment* involved the collection and analysis of community data and information. This report represents the final product of that analysis and provides a concise, informative report that stakeholders will use to guide their decision making during the development of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

The *Community Assessment* also serves the purpose of meeting the intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as established on May 1, 2005. Preparation in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining the County's status as a Qualified Local Government.

## 1.2 Scope

The Community Assessment includes the following information, as required by the DCA Standards:

- Listing of issues and opportunities that the community wants to address
- Analysis of existing development patterns
- Analysis of consistency with the Quality Community Objectives
- Analysis of supporting data and information

The Community Assessment provides an executive summary of community analyses in order to provide an easy reference for stakeholders who will need to refer to the information throughout the planning process. Information referenced in Sections 2 and 3 of this report can be found in its entirety in the *Analysis of Supporting Data*. Figure 1-1 shows the County location in relation to the State of Georgia.



### Figure 1-1: Location Map



## 2 Issues and Opportunities

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### 2.1 Introduction

The issues and opportunities described below have been identified from a review of the *Analysis of Supporting Data for the Community Assessment*. This analysis included an examination of the Quality Community Objectives. The *Analysis of Supporting Data* can be found as an addendum to this report. This section organizes the issues and opportunities by the major topics defined in the State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Local Planning Requirements. The assessment topics are:

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

### 2.2 Population

#### 2.2.1 Issues

##### 1. Sustained Population Growth

The 2005 estimate of population for the County is 50,279, a 14% increase from 2000. The population is projected to increase at an average annual rate of between 1.5 and 4.7% between 2000 and 2025. By 2025 the population is projected to increase by 94% to 97,317 (DCA). A range of 64,988 to 97,317 has been projected. Future population growth in Gordon County is somewhat unpredictable due to uncertainties regarding the county's future land use and growth management policies. Other factors influencing future growth include the land-use and growth management coordination between the County and its cities, local housing market conditions, and local, regional and national economic conditions.

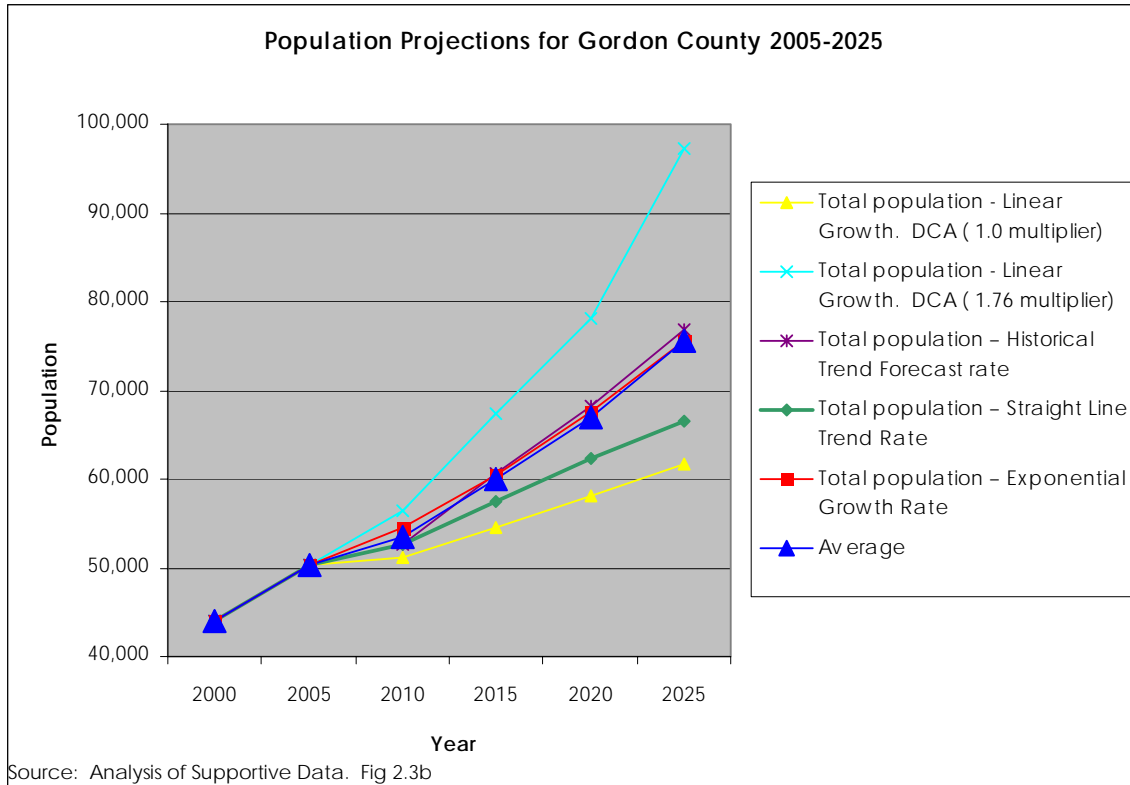
##### 2. Growth in the Senior Population

Between 2000 and 2025 Gordon County's senior population (65 and over) is expected to increase from 10.6% to 11.5% of the total population. This equates to 11,219 seniors in 2025 based on the DCA population projections, a 140% increase over the 2005 estimate. This is consistent with the national trend of growth in older age groups due to aging "Baby Boomers."

##### 3. Changing Demographics

The population of persons of Hispanic origin continued to grow between 2000 and 2005 based on Census estimates. The Hispanic population made up 12% of the County's population in 2005, up from 7.4% in 2000, and it is projected to grow at a rate of 111% between 2005 and 2025. The growth rate between 1980 and 2000 was 1,623%. A projected 15,174 people of Hispanic origin will reside in Gordon County in 2025. This number represents 16% of the 2025 projected

population. This growing segment of the population will have an effect on public services such as education.



## 2.3 Housing

### 2.3.1 Issues

#### 1. Demographic Factors Affect Housing Demand

Demographic factors help to shape the local housing market for Gordon County. The market is dominated by family households. Nearly half of family households have children that will likely desire a more conventional single-family neighborhood.

Householders are middle-class with a 2003 median household income of \$39,449 annually. All households earning more than \$40,000 annually have increased significantly since 1990. Households earning more than \$75,000 have grown more than 300% in the same 10 year period. Households earning less than \$40,000 have diminished, suggesting that more households are earning more income and may be looking for housing options.

With a projected increase in the senior population that doubles this segment's population between 2000 and 2025, special housing needs will need to be considered. These include monthly cost, amenities, access, security, recreation and proximity to healthcare and activity centers. In addition, more housing choices will be needed in order to meet demand, such as assisted living facilities, senior-oriented housing developments, and mixed-use opportunities.

## **2. Need for Workforce Housing**

Local industry is located primarily inside the Calhoun city limits, with approximately 40% of the working age population in Calhoun living in unincorporated Gordon County. Expansion of Calhoun's industrial base, in addition to the future job growth elsewhere in the County, will require additional housing. Much of this housing will likely be located in unincorporated Gordon County due to the limited amount of undeveloped land in Calhoun.

### **2.3.2 Opportunities**

#### **1. Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments**

Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND) offer a mix of land uses, housing types and transportation modes that contribute to a sense of community. TNDs can also enhance the character of Gordon County by providing thoughtful and attractive new development that provides an alternative to less dense traditional single-family neighborhoods or large-lot residential areas.

The County's Planned Residential District (PRD) zoning district permits different housing types and allows higher densities and reduced setbacks to maximize open space; open space is characteristic of much of Gordon County, and the PRD district is a means of preserving the County's natural resources while accommodating new growth.

#### **2. Housing Choice**

With household incomes on the rise, housing above the \$200,000 price point may become more common. A household income of \$75,000 should support home prices ranging from \$250,000 to \$350,000 for non-cost burdened residents. Households earning more than \$75,000 in Gordon County increased 95% between 1990 and 2000. An increase in income provides opportunities for the development community to provide a broader range in housing type.

## ***2.4 Economic Development***

### **2.4.1 Issues**

#### **1. Job Growth Proportionate to Population Growth**

Based on commuting patterns in 2000, jobs appear to be growing consistently with the population. Of those eligible to work, almost 70% were employed in Gordon County. Likewise, almost 70% of the job positions in Gordon County were filled by Gordon County residents. As jobs continue to increase in the cities and in the County, unincorporated Gordon County may be the likely location for additional workforce housing.

Table 2-1: Gordon County Commuting Patterns

<i>Employed Residents of Gordon County</i>			<i>Persons Working in Gordon County</i>		
<i>County Where Employed</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>	<i>County of Residence</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
<b>Gordon Co. GA</b>	<b>15,172</b>	<b>68.9</b>	<b>Gordon Co. GA</b>	<b>15,172</b>	<b>70.9</b>
Whitfield Co. GA	2,909	13.2	Floyd Co. GA	1,813	8.5
Bartow Co. GA	1,034	4.7	Bartow Co. GA	1,203	5.6
Floyd Co. GA	966	4.4	Whitfield Co. GA	867	4.1
Murray Co. GA	499	2.3	Murray Co. GA	602	2.8
Cobb Co. GA	414	1.9	Cobb Co. GA	233	1.1
Cherokee Co. GA	177	0.8	Pickens Co. GA	202	0.9
Fulton Co. GA	177	0.8	Chattooga Co. GA	193	0.9
Other	669	3	Other	1,103	5.2
Total Residents:	22,017	100	Total Residents:	21,388	100

Source: US Census

## 2. Lack of a Strategic Economic Development Plan

The County lacks a strategic economic development plan. The Chamber of Commerce and the Gordon County Development Authority provide much of the economic development marketing and planning for Gordon County; however, the County lacks a dedicated staff person or department that represents and can pursue Gordon County's economic development interests. Providing a consistent proactive approach to business marketing, recruitment and retention is vitally important for developing new jobs in the County.

## 3. Providing Adequate Infrastructure to Support Future Development

While interstate and rail access make Gordon County attractive to new industrial and commercial development, potential challenges are ensuring there is land that can accommodate business growth and providing the appropriate infrastructure – roads, water and sewer – to support this type of development.

The City of Calhoun, which is the local water and sewer service provider, has planned for a mostly eastward expansion of water and sewer into unincorporated Gordon County through 2015.

### 2.4.2 Opportunities

#### 1. Growing Economic Base

Similar to population growth, future economic growth in Gordon County is partially based on policy decisions made today, particularly related to roads, water, and sewer improvements and the ability to use these tools to attract businesses to the area. With population increases come services and products to support growth. Much of the moderate to heavy industrial and retail development is occurring to the north and south of the Calhoun CBD along the Interstate 75 and U.S. 41 corridors.

The County has undeveloped property to accommodate growth as well as an extensive north/south transportation system.

## 2. Diversified Economy

In addition to an expanding base of individual and business consumers and a broad range of products and services, the County also supports a diversified economy through different or competitive industries, products, and services. Gordon County had a 2002 employment base of 20,208 jobs, according to the Georgia Department of Labor, and was dominated by the manufacturing sector with 9,127 jobs. The textile industries employed 7,500 workers of the 9,127 in the manufacturing sector. Other major industry sectors include government, healthcare and social services, retail trade, and accommodation and food services. Together, these industries comprise 73% of local jobs.

Manufacturing is the most significant basic or export-oriented industry. Although manufacturing is an industry in decline nationally, it offers potential growth in Gordon County, particularly among firms requiring advanced technologies and a lower, as well as, highly-skilled labor force. Other high-growth employment sectors are professional and business services, education and health services, trade, transportation and utilities, and government. All of these sectors offer excellent future growth potential. Maintaining a diversified economic base, while expanding the local economy, is critical to the future of the County for several reasons. A broad-based economy mitigates downward turns in the national and local economies. In addition, a variety of employment opportunities and wages create opportunities for County residents to continue to work inside the County.

## 2.5 Natural and Cultural Resources

### 2.5.1 Issues

#### 1. Preservation of Prime Agricultural and Open Space Conservation

Gordon County contains expansive areas of undeveloped land, particularly in its eastern and western sections. It also retains thousands of acres of active, productive farms. Large expanses of open space are generally attractive to the development community, and development pressure on these valuable resources is growing. At this time the County lacks a comprehensive strategy for preservation and retention of these open spaces and farmlands.

#### 2. Preservation of Historic Resources

Several large, significant historic sites are located in Gordon County. These include the New Echota State Historic Site, the Resaca Battlefield, and areas throughout the County with that are either known or have the potential for yielding important archaeological finds. These historic resources may be jeopardized by future growth that either abuts an established site, such as New Echota, or destroys a site, such as areas along the County's riverbanks that contain evidence of Native American settlement.

#### 3. Water Quality Protection

The County is unique in that it is the location of a convergence of two regional waterways that provide the majority of the processed drinking water for the County and its municipalities. Erosion and sedimentation controls are in place; however, consistent enforcement is needed. Revisions to development standards that include limits on impervious surfaces and agricultural and industrial waste should be considered.

## 2.5.2 Opportunities

### 1. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

The County is currently updating its Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Originally adopted in 2001 as a tool to preserve open space, it focused on the Sonoraville Recreation Complex as well as potential park areas near Resaca and Plainville. The update is providing an opportunity for greater focus on greenspace/open space preservation and for coordination with the Comprehensive Plan update.

### 2. Formation of Historic Preservation Commission

The County recently adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance and appointed members to the Gordon County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC meets on a regular basis and is in the process of identifying potential historic districts to help protect local historic resources from inappropriate development. These districts will form a buffer around historic sites such as New Echota, within which new and existing development will be regulated by design guidelines. The HPC also coordinates with the Calhoun Historic Preservation Commission, which results in a comprehensive approach to historic preservation in the County.

## 2.6 Facilities and Services Issues

### 2.6.1 Issues

#### 1. Meeting the Service Demands of a Growing and Diverse Population

The County will need to expand its services as the population grows and rapidly becomes more diverse. Many County departments are in need of additional storage space and personnel. The City of Resaca established a new police department to serve a growing population, and the City of Fairmount provides police and fire protection services for its residents; additional growth may require expansion of these smaller departments.

The growing Hispanic population will require the creation of additional bilingual services and more extensive public outreach initiatives, and the projected increase in the senior population will require greater attention to meeting the needs of an aging population.

### 2.6.2 Opportunities

#### 1. New Municipal Complex

The new municipal complex near Resaca which will initially contain the new jail and a new fire house may provide opportunities for certain support staff function to be relocated thereby freeing up space and resources that maybe more suited to other functions.

#### 2. Impact Fees

A County impact fee feasibility study was completed in July, 2006. It focused on expanding the capacity of facilities for public safety, parks and recreation, and libraries. Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan update, the County will review recommended projects having the potential to be funded by impact fees.

## **2.7 Land Use**

### **2.7.1 Issues**

#### **1. Incompatibility between Land Use and Zoning**

Many of the requests for rezoning in the County are needed in order to develop property for a use that is permitted under existing zoning but is nonetheless prohibited due to restrictive lot size requirements. The primary example is the A-1 (Agricultural) zoning district, which permits a residential use as long as the property is at least five acre in size. This prohibits numerous property owners from building houses on undeveloped land that would otherwise be appropriate for a residential use, and results in rezoning of property to a residential classification.

#### **2. Commercializing Corridors**

Many of the east-west corridors east of Calhoun have developed as residential areas. Demand for commercial establishments along these corridors has followed the new population. It is important to locate appropriate neighborhood and community-scale mixed use activities to ensure that the long-range development along the corridors does not result in unattractive strip commercial development or encroachment of commercial uses into established residential areas.

### **2.7.2 Opportunities**

#### **1. Zoning Ordinance Update**

In 2006 The County authorized a major update to the zoning ordinance and the creation of a unified development code (UDC). Work will begin upon completion of the Comprehensive Plan Update to ensure that the UDC will be a useful tool for implementing the County's vision for future development.

## **2.8 Transportation**

### **2.8.1 Issues**

#### **1. Road Conditions**

Many of the local streets are substandard in width and have limited or no shoulders. The pavement on many of these is bituminous surface treatment in poor condition and in need of resurfacing.

#### **2. Connectivity**

There is little connectivity north-south through the predominantly residential areas east of the east-west routes of SR 225, Dews Pond Road, Boone Ford Road, and SR 53. With residential growth, these roads will continue to experience capacity issues as traffic approaches Interstate 75.

Few east-west routes currently cross the southern end of the county near Calhoun. As a result, local traffic must use the arterial streets of the busy commercial area along SR 53 from SR 53 Spur to I-75. The expanding industrial land uses further complicate the problem.

### 3. Alternative Modes of Travel

There is currently only one state designated bicycle route through Gordon County. It follows SR 136 from Walker County and then to SR 136 Connector to Calhoun where it runs along SR 3/US 41 to the Bartow County line. This route is not currently signed or marked on the existing roadways.

There are currently two statewide park and ride lots in Gordon County. One of these is at the Fairmount public square and has ten spaces. The other is on US 41 at SR 136 in Resaca and has space for six vehicles.

### 4. Few Opportunities to Walk

The County does not require sidewalks as part of new developments, and the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center noted that there are very few mapped sidewalks in Gordon County. While sidewalks are not always appropriate in rural areas, there are alternatives that can provide off-road connectivity: greenways, rural paths, and bike paths. Sidewalks may be appropriate along such streets as Dews Pond Road and Curtis Parkway to encourage pedestrian traffic by providing a safer place to walk.

### 5. Parking

Although downtown Calhoun is outside of Gordon County's jurisdiction, the location of County services in the CBD contributes to the perceived lack of parking. This is especially true when court is in session. If existing lots are being fully utilized, then consideration may need to be given to acquiring vacant industrial land in this area for additional parking. Any means of addressing the parking issue requires communication with the City of Calhoun.

### 6. Land Use Compatibility

Residential growth east of Calhoun and industrial growth to the south tax the roadway system near the Interstate 75 interchanges, particularly the SR 53 interchange. The primary traffic patterns will continue to flow toward Calhoun and toward Interstate 75. With this flow toward Interstate 75, the east west surface streets will continue to add vehicles and the need for added capacity will increase. North-south connectivity is needed to lessen the load on Lovers Lane.

## 2.8.2 Opportunities

### 1. Union Grove Interchange

The pending addition of the Union Grove Interchange should minimize many issues related to east-west connectivity from Interstate 75 to the residential developments east of Calhoun, the heavy truck traffic required for the industrial areas south of Calhoun, and friendlier pedestrian facilities as more traffic is routed from the SR 53 and U.S. 41 corridors to the new interchange.

### 2. Greenspace Used for Alternative Modes of Travel

With the increase in population and growing demands on housing and the need for new schools, bike paths or lanes may need to be established. Trails may be a viable alternative to the use of public streets. The 2006 update to the Gordon County Parks and Master Plan can provide an opportunity to examine these issues, in addition to providing tools for implementation.

### 3. Roadway and Sidewalk Improvements

The funding provided by the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program will benefit road and sidewalk repairs and improvements. The Gordon County Board of

Commissioners specifically earmarked \$17,500,000 in SPLOST funds for road, street and bridge projects throughout the County.

## **2.9 Intergovernmental Coordination**

### **2.9.1 Issues**

#### **1. Regional Transportation Planning**

To ensure that proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, County officials need to be actively involved in transportation planning activities with the CVRDC, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, and Georgia Department of Transportation. Growth that is occurring east of I-75 from Calhoun and South of Gordon County in Adairsville will impact the use of Highways 61/411 and 53 as well as I-75.

#### **2. Land Use Conflicts That Result From Annexation**

Gordon County and its cities have not established future annexation areas and service agreements that could serve as a basis for extraterritorial jurisdiction. The County should work closely with Calhoun to correct the "annexation islands" that exist within Calhoun's city limits as this is a burden to the emergency response departments in particular.

#### **3. Land Use Designations**

Potential land use conflicts are possible along jurisdictional boundaries due to zoning decisions and recommended future land uses adopted by the respective jurisdiction. Incompatible land uses detract from the character of the County and create costly issues with transportation and infrastructure planning. The County should work closely with its municipalities to create and enforce compatible land use at the jurisdictional boundaries.

### **2.9.2 Opportunities**

#### **1. Shared Services**

The County and City governments cooperate to provide or share services (parks and recreation, E911, Emergency Services, Police or Sheriff's Office, schools, water, sewer, other). This coordination could simplify the process of eliminating the islands of unincorporated Gordon County within Calhoun's city limits.

#### **2. Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax**

County officials need to continue to work closely with the cities to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is used effectively as transportation and infrastructure improvements will be required to keep pace with growth.

#### **3. Coordinated Comprehensive Plan Updates**

Calhoun and Gordon County are undertaking concurrent plan updates. This is being done to facilitate coordination on issues related to future growth and development.

### 3 Existing Development Patterns

#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this analysis is to understand the development conditions and growth patterns currently occurring on the ground in Gordon County. The analysis allows the further exploration of issues and opportunities related to the physical environment. The following analysis considers three aspects of the existing development patterns: existing land use, areas requiring special attention and recommended character areas.

#### 3.2 Existing Land Use

An existing land use map displays the development on the ground categorized into groups of similar types of development at a given point in time. For purposes of this analysis, the Gordon County Existing Land Use Map (Figure 3-1) shows current uses as of August 2006, based on tax digest information provided by the Gordon County Tax Assessor Office. Table 3-1 provides the acreage of existing land use by land use classification.

**Table 3-1: Existing Land Use**

<i>Land Use Classification</i>	<i>Gordon County</i>	
	<i>Acres</i>	<i>%</i>
Residential	44,504	20.08%
Commercial	3,244	1.46%
Industrial	3,915	1.77%
Public/Institutional	1,229	0.55%
Conservation/Parks/Recreation	96,368	43.48%
Agriculture/Forestry	71,454	32.24%
Transportation/Communication/Utility	919	0.41%
Total	221,634	100%

### Figure 3-1: Existing Land Use Map



### 3.3 Areas Requiring Special Attention

Growth inevitably impacts the natural and cultural environments as well as community facilities, services and infrastructure required to service an area. Table 3-2 outlines areas where the real estate market has and continues to produce development that is dominated by single-function land uses, where aging commercial areas are in need of functional and aesthetic revitalization, where growth should be well managed due to the environmentally-sensitive nature of the land, or where historical districts and elements should be maintained as they comprise much of the identity of the County.

**Table 3-2: Areas Requiring Special Attention Descriptions**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
Historic Areas	All significant or recognized historic areas and structures will likely be threatened by encroaching development or incompatible land uses at some point in time. Proper land use planning and guidelines are needed to protect viable cultural resources.
Natural Resources	Natural resources, particularly water resources, are of special concern as the County experiences population growth and associated housing and commercial development. Greenspace planning and preservation will also be important to preserving natural resources and providing recreation sources and transportation alternatives for residents.
Annexation Islands	Within the Calhoun city limits are parcels of land that are technically located in the County, essentially islands of unincorporated Gordon County within the City limits. To simplify logistics for EMS, Fire, Police and other public services, attention should be focused to correct these islands caused by annexation.
East-West Commercial Corridors	These are the corridors east of Calhoun along SR 53 and SR156, Dews Pond Road and Boone Ford Road. These corridors contain much of the recent housing development. As development intensifies, careful consideration should be given to the location and types of commercial development that complement residential land use as well as provide opportunities to shorten travel times and provide pedestrian or transportation alternatives.
Water and Sewer Development	Areas for water and sewer development have been identified and projects planned through 2015 by the City of Calhoun. It is important to encourage development in the planned areas or only allow water and sewer to new developments that will provide sufficient infrastructure that can be extended to later developments beyond the immediate project. Open communication with the City is imperative.
Steep Slopes	Limited primarily to the eastern and western borders, development planned on steep slopes greater than 25% should be carefully considered due to the potentially harmful environmental factors, such as erosion, and added costs to the developers, property owners and County.

### 3.4 Recommended Character Areas

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Applying development strategies to character areas in County can preserve existing areas and help other areas function better and become more attractive. They help guide future development through policies and implementation strategies that are tailored to each situation. The character areas recommended for Gordon County, described in Table 3-3 and mapped in Figure 3-2, define areas that:

- Presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved.
- Have the potential to evolve into unique areas.
- Require special attention because of unique development issues.

**Table 3-3: Recommended Character Area Descriptions**

<i>Character Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
Agricultural/Rural Reserve Area	Predominantly rural, undeveloped land likely to develop for rural and/or large-lot residential and agricultural; or land that is primarily rural/residential or residential and agriculture.
River Corridors/ Preserve Area	Primarily undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for urban or suburban development. These areas include steep slopes, flood plains, wetlands, protected river corridors, wildlife management areas and other environmentally sensitive areas. The Coosawatte, Conasauga and Oostanaula rivers are the primary water sources for Gordon County and converge to form regional water sources for Northwest Georgia and Northeast Alabama. The rivers and their tributaries serve as home to endangered animal species and wildlife passages. The lazy, winding rivers punctuate the rural feel of the County. Salacoa Creek Park presents numerous opportunities for active and passive recreation as well as educational opportunities. Encroaching development and potentially incompatible land uses may impact the associated activities involving the natural resources of the park.
Historic Preservation Area	Five recognized or significant historic sites are located in the County: New Echota State Park, the Resaca Confederate Cemetery, the Resaca Battlefield, the Freeman- Hurt House and the Taylor-William House. These areas preserve a part of history and will likely be threatened by encroaching development. These areas include these sites and the areas surrounding them that have the potential to develop in ways that would negatively impact the historic sites.
Emerging Suburban and Exurban Area	Large area to the east of Calhoun and a small area east of Fairmont where pressure for the typical types of suburban residential subdivision development and associated strip commercial development along arterials and major roads is greatest. Without intervention, these areas are likely to evolve with low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.
Town Center Area	Traditional central business district and immediately surrounding commercial, industrial or mixed use areas. Generally urban pedestrian-friendly, a mix of single and possibly multi-story buildings with on-street parking. Typically include public spaces and government buildings. Plainville and Fairmount have a well defined town centers. Plainville has several potentially historic buildings dating back to the early 1900's. Fairmount is experiencing positive growth and is strategically located along an increasingly viable north-south highway, SR 61/U.S. 411. Older buildings and homes located near the square offer opportunities for a unique experience with revitalization efforts.

### Figure 3-2: Recommended Character Areas



## 4 Consistency with Quality Community Objectives

This section is intended to meet the Minimum Standards for Local Comprehensive Planning requirement so that the Community Assessment includes an evaluation of the community's current policies, activities and development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives contained in the State Planning Goals and Objectives. The Department of Community Affairs' Office of Planning and Quality Growth created the Quality Community Objectives Local Assessment to assist local governments in evaluating their progress towards sustainable and livable communities. The assessment is meant to give the community an idea of how it is progressing toward reaching these objectives.

The following tables function as guide for assessing the current status of Quality Community Objectives in Gordon County.

<i>Traditional Neighborhoods</i>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.	✓		
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development "by right" so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process.	✓		
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.		✓	
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		✓	
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	✓		
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.	✓		
7. In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.	✓		
8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.	✓		
9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.	✓		
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.	✓		

<i>Infill Development</i>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.		✓	
2. Our community is actively working to promote Brownfield redevelopment.		✓	
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.		✓	
4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).		✓	
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses.		✓	

<i>Sense of Place</i>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics.	✓		
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have taken steps to protect those areas.	✓		The Gordon County Historic Preservation Commission is in the process of taking steps to protect historic areas via district designation/creation of design guidelines.
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.		✓	
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	✓		
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.		✓	
6. If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.		✓	

<b>Transportation Alternatives</b>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have public transportation in our community.	✓		It is limited to mini-buses for low-income residents.
2. We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.		✓	
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.		✓	Primarily limited to the city centers.
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.		✓	
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.		✓	
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.		✓	
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	✓		

<b>Regional Identity</b>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	✓		
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.	✓		
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc.).	✓		
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	✓		
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	✓		
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.	✓		

<i>Heritage Preservation</i>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.	✓		
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.	✓		
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.		✓	The Gordon County Historic Preservation Commission is in the process of designating overlay districts adjacent to significant historic sites that will regulate new development to ensure compatibility with historic development.

<i>Open Space Preservation</i>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.		✓	The 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan update will address greenspace planning.
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	✓		
3. We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.	✓		
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	✓		Planned Residential District (PRD) zoning is intended to maximize open space in residential developments.

<b>Environmental Protection</b>			
Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.	✓		
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.	✓		Resources are identified in the "Part V" environmental ordinances.
3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.	✓		
4. Our community has passed the necessary "Part V" environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.	✓		
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.		✓	
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.		✓	
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.		✓	
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.).	✓		Ordinances are being reviewed to ensure there is adequate protection.

<b>Growth Preparedness</b>			
Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type 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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	✓		
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	✓		
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.	✓		
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	✓		Gordon County Board of Commissioners voted in 2006 to authorize the preparation of a Unified Development Code.
5. We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	✓		
6. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.	✓		
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	✓		
8. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.		✓	
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.	✓		
10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	✓		

<i>Appropriate Businesses</i>			
The businesses and industries 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-skill job opportunities.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.	✓		No plan or County government organization exists, however the Gordon County Chamber of Commerce has adopted both long-range and strategic business plans.
2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.	✓		
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	✓		
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.	✓		

<i>Employment Options</i>			
A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.	✓		Support provided by the Gordon County Chamber of Commerce.
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	✓		
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	✓		
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	✓		

<b>Housing Choices</b>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.		✓	
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.	✓		
3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).	✓		
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.		✓	PRD zoning district permits TND design; however the pattern of development in the County is primarily low-density residential/rural.
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or "neo-traditional" development.		✓	
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	✓		
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	✓		
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.	✓		
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.		✓	Calhoun Housing Authority provides housing opportunities for those 62 and older, disabled, or families within certain income limits.
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.		✓	

<b>Educational Opportunities</b>			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.	✓		Coosa Valley Technical College and the Georgia Department of Labor provide these services.
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	✓		
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	✓		
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	✓		

<i>Regional Solutions</i>			
Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.	✓		
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	✓		
3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.	✓		
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.	✓		

<i>Regional Cooperation</i>			
Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive planning purposes.	✓		
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.	✓		
3. We initiate contact with other local governments and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft region-wide strategies.	✓		
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	✓		