

**JACKSON COUNTY, GEORGIA**  
**PARTIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**UPDATE REPORT**

## **Introduction**

Jackson County lies in the Georgia Piedmont and contains 9 incorporated municipalities (Arcade, Braselton, Commerce, Hoschton, Jefferson, Maysville, Nicholson, Pendergrass, and Talmo). It lies approximately 50 miles east of Atlanta with the I-85 corridor running through the county. The area encompasses 343 square miles and has a population estimated at 55,778 in 2006, according to the census. Most of the area is transitioning from a rural environment to a suburban environment, similar to the transition occurring in other exurban areas on the transportation network extending out of metro Atlanta. The population density is approximately 121.6 persons per square mile, being slightly less than the state average of 141.4.

This Partial Update to the comprehensive plan was developed pursuant to the requirements identified by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in a March 2007 memo. The purpose of the Partial Update to the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan is to provide a document for use as a policy guide for the Board of Commissioners in the interim period between the adoption of revisions to the current Comprehensive Plan, adopted June 2003, and the required full update due in October 4 2010. Individual municipalities such as Jefferson and Braselton have already begun their own individual complete updates as the state due dates have changed multiple times and the communities are experiencing growth beyond their expectation since the adoption of the last Comprehensive Plan in 1998. The County staff sent letters and made inquiries of each municipal government as part of completing the Partial Update. The amount of participation varied from city to city, but all comments and inputs were accepted. Each community understands that they will be required to have an updated plan approved and in place by October 2010 as they prepare their own partial updates to be submitted individually to the RDC for review. As such this document only represents the County's assessment of the community. Municipalities have submitted their own partial updates.

## **Quality Community Objectives (QCO)**

Staff reviewed and evaluated the community's current policies, activities, and development patterns for consistency with the QCO identified in Section 110-12-1-06(3) of the Local Planning Requirements. The review included inputs from the municipalities, chamber of commerce, industrial development authority, planning commission, and board of commissioners. The following chart is the consolidated view of where Jackson County assesses itself to be at this moment in time based on the QCO assessment.

## **Quality Community Objectives: Local Assessment Planning Commission & Planning Staff**

<b><i>Development Patterns</i></b>					
<b>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.</b>					
		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.	X			Our zoning generally segregates uses. However, it does provide by right the ability to do a mixed use development of commercial and residential in both the CRC and HRC zoning district. To date no one has proposed this type of use within unincorporated county. Our master planned development (MPD) subdivision, a special use permit, can also make use of this type of development style, but to date we have had few developers to pursue this type of mix, relying instead on the traditional separation of residential and commercial components. There is a desire to incorporate more performance based zoning measures into the code.
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.	X			The county has an approved Master Planned Development section in the UDC; however the entire section is in need of revision to more clearly allow for neo-traditional development. Typically, large lot subdivisions have been the preference for the rural areas of Jackson County. The closest our UDC comes to permitting neo-traditional development by right is for a developer to assemble several pieces of property and rezone them to meet his vision or to develop an MPD, both of which requires BOC approval.
3.	We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.		X		While the UDC has a tree ordinance element there are revisions that need to be made. The ordinance does not require any streetscape requirements in residential subdivisions. In commercial and industrial developments it does require some street frontage elements but permits developments to provide very small trees in a linear fashion that does not aid aesthetics or shade requirements, as many of these trees could be under-story trees rather than shade trees. There is need to rewrite the landscaping, tree and buffer requirements in the UDC.
4.	Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		X		The county does not have a tree planting initiative in public areas, but the cities of Jefferson and Commerce are "Tree City USA" members and are involved in the planting of trees on public property and right-of-ways.
5.	We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	X			Keep Jackson County Beautiful is an award winning program dedicated to improving the aesthetic and environmental qualities of the county and includes litter control and abatement.

6.	Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.		X		Currently, sidewalks are limited to within new subdivisions, with relatively few other places connected via sidewalks outside of current municipal limits. Maintenance of sidewalks and vegetation is generally left to the individual property owner adjacent to the existing sidewalk. Public Works activities focus on mowing along the right-of-way in the more rural portions of the County with little or no maintenance activities within subdivisions.
7.	In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.		X		Currently this is true only within some of the municipal limits. In the unincorporated areas it is inconvenient at best to conduct any errands on foot since there are no sidewalks on the main roads outside of subdivisions and individuals would either have to walk on the road or in the adjacent drainage swales, to stay out of traffic.
8.	Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.		X		Very few children walk to school since schools are not generally located adjacent to existing subdivisions. The schools are generally located along rural roads and are not easily accessible via sidewalks or bike paths/lanes, thereby limiting the safety of children. Even if a school is close to a subdivision there generally is no sidewalk connectivity that would permit a safe walkable area adjacent to a road.
9.	Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.		X		Again, the incorporation of bikeways and pedestrian ways need to be included in long range planning and in comprehensive project approval. Few children ride bikes to school since schools are not generally located adjacent to existing subdivisions and even if a school is close to a residential area there generally are no bike trails or sidewalks to provide a safe route between home and the school, forcing kids onto the active road surface.
10.	Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.		X		While the older schools, in the County, were built near residential areas the new schools are being designed and located in such a way to accept kids from a larger geographic area of the County and are not focused on being near existing neighborhoods. The focus on the location of new schools is based upon land availability, pricing, minimum acreage requirements, which tend to encourage school boards to search in developing residential area.

**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.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	X			The Jackson County Chamber of Commerce maintains an inventory of vacant sites and buildings available for redevelopment and infill development.

2.	Our community is actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment. (Brownfields are abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contaminations. In planning a brownfield is land previously used for industrial purposes, or certain commercial uses, and that may be contaminated by low concentrations of hazardous waste or pollution and has the potential to be reused once it is cleaned up. )		X		There are a few sites within the unincorporated area of the County that would meet the standards of a brownfield site but we are not actively promoting the redevelopment of these sites, rather we are leaving it up to the market to address this.
3.	Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment. (Greyfields are economically obsolete, outdated, failing, and/or underutilized real estate assets or land. The term is used to describe the sea of empty asphalt that often accompanies these sites. The term has been applied to formerly viable retail and commercial shopping sites (such as regional malls and strip centers) that suffer from lack of reinvestment and have been "outclassed" by larger, better designed, better anchored malls or shopping sites. Greyfields typically do not require remediation in order to unlock value to an investor.)		X		There are a number of sites within the County that would qualify as greyfields and like brownfields we are not actively promoting there redevelopment. However, as there numbers increase it will become economically viable to promote the redevelopment of these sites.
4.	We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).	X			Nodal development was previously recognized as desirable on the original 1998 Future Land Use map, however subsequent map amendments have tended to strip commercial activities along transportation corridors and the County has not realized the true benefits associated with neighborhood and commercial activity centers. Even as recent as the last major future land use amendment adopted by the BOC in November 2006 the emphasis was on stripping our main roads with commercial property rather than focusing commercial development in clusters. This will continue to impact the ultimate usability of the road system as traffic conflicts will exist along segments of our main roads rather than at specific locations near intersections.
5.	Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses.		X		Generally there are no provisions in the UDC for lots under 5,000 sq. ft. with the exception of townhouses when public water and sewer is provided in the R-3 zoning district. However, a recent amendment to the MPD section of the UDC may allow some lots under 5,000 sq.ft., because the minimum lot sizes will be determined thru the special use process and approval by the BOC.

**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.**

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
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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.		X		Our community looks very much like any other developing suburban community in the state. Jackson County is transitioning from a rural area to a more urbanized area. Design guidelines and better incentives for mixed use development and activity centers are needed. We offer many of the same fast food places located at main intersections as found across the state. We also have many of the same land use conflicts as more residential developments spring up adjacent to farms, gerrymandered annexations, public service boundary overlaps, etc. Developments tend to be bland cul-de-sac subdivisions with no desire for interconnectivity or the ability to walk anywhere. Schools crop up where land is relatively cheap as opposed to where kids actually live.
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.	X			We have delineated areas in our community that have historic importance. There are some efforts to keep some of the sites preserved by individual groups but there are no specific ordinances or codes that would require preservation.
3.	We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.		X		General design guidelines are clearly needed for the entire county as well as improved ordinances for landscaping and buffers. The only aesthetic requirements within the UDC focus on open space and master planned developments. Existing landscaping requirements add some buffer from less visually appealing uses while exterior material for housing is also addressed.
4.	We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	X			The sign ordinance is in place. However, some additional refinements are needed.
5.	We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.		X		No, this is another activity related to developing a set of general design guidelines for the county that the Planning Division needs to take on as time and manning permit.
6.	If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.	X			Protection of farmland and the agrarian way of life are important issues in the county. The future land use map designates specific areas the county desires to remain rural/agricultural with low density - large lot over the next 20 years. Since adoption of the revised land use element of the Comprehensive Plan in 2003 there have only been a few map amendments approved that affected the agricultural areas (that being the Diamond C properties area). Farms within other character areas have not been protected with in the rezoning process. Development requirements have placed additional buffers between adjacent residential/commercial projects and also require separation from existing agricultural structures. There are also tax incentives available to keep land agricultural.

**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 alternative transportation should be encouraged.**

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
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1.	We have public transportation in our community.	X			The County has a basic public transit system that operates with vans on a call basis. However, there is need to develop a long term public transit plan.
2.	We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.	X			There are requirements for interconnectivity in the UDC, however, often there are only single entrances approved for subdivisions without interconnectivity to adjoining subdivisions or street networks.
3.	We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.		X		As previously mentioned sidewalks are sporadic within the municipalities, and are only required within new subdivisions in the county. There is a need to reevaluate the interconnectivity issue.
4.	We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.	X			The UDC has moved the county forward in the building of sidewalks, however there is no master plan to interconnect residential, office, and commercial areas with a sidewalk network at this time.
5.	We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.		X		The UDC does not require sidewalk interconnectivity at this time. An amendment to the UDC is needed to ensure connectivity.
6.	We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.		X		Currently there is no master plan for multimodal transportation in Jackson County. However, there is a desire to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the municipalities and county to address bicycle, pedestrian, mass transit and the road systems integration into a single plan.
7.	We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	X			The UDC permits shared parking within guidelines established in the Parking Chapter that considers the peak use periods for each entity.

**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.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	X			Our community looks like many of the other communities in the region in terms of the hodgepodge of architectural styles that exist. Many of these styles are side by side and have occurred as each building was built over the past 150 plus years. Our heritage disappears into the ever present need to develop property at the lowest cost rather than to a community standard.
2.	Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.	X			While the community is transitioning from rural to suburban we still have many agricultural interests that support agricultural businesses to include Wayne Farms.
3.	Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, etc.)		X		Our community does not have an active vision that encourages businesses to draw on our regional heritage (streams and conservation, motor sports, or agricultural exhibitions).
4.	Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	X			This is accomplished via the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce.

5.	Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.		X		For the most part individual attractions are on their own to promote tourism. While the chamber(s) may advertise the area it does not appear to create a broad effort to promote tourism.
6.	Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.	X			We actively provide commercial opportunities at Tanger Outlets and adjacent commercial activities, Chateau Elan and its adjacent businesses. We also offer a variety of warehousing/distribution facilities to service the regional market. We currently send our citizens to Athens or Gainesville for higher education opportunities due to the closeness of the existing University's, Colleges, and Technical Schools.

## ***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.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	We have designated historic districts in our community	X			Currently there are no designated historic districts in Jackson County, but there are a few within the municipalities.
2.	We have active historic preservation commission.	X			The main thrust of the historic preservation commission is the historic Courthouse in Jefferson and its reuse. Other places such as the Crawford Long Museum seem to be lacking support and are increasingly in need of delayed maintenance.
3.	We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.		X		There are currently no historic preservation overlay districts in Jackson County.

### **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.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	Our community has a greenspace plan.	X			We have a greenspace program but it is not active.
2.	Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	X			There are certain elements within the UDC to encourage preservation of agricultural land and there is requirements to have 20% open space dedication in Master Planned developments and within open space subdivisions. We will be requesting a change to the UDC that requires the 20% open space dedication to be "useable" land as opposed to the undevelopable land that we generally receive today. Currently, there are no plans for the direct purchase of green space set aside for purchasing additional land for the County park system.



3.	We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve important areas in our community.		X		While we encourage property developers to join up with a conservation entity most of these entities are not interested in the small parcels of land being offered for preservation.
4.	We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.		X		Our open space and MPD subdivision are the closest we come to having a conservation protection. These 20% preserved areas are only protected by plat and occasionally by conservation easement approved by the BOC.

**Environmental Protection:**

**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	N/A	Comments
1.	Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.		X		We do not maintain a specific list of natural resources. There are the standard generalized maps of various resources, such as soil, , prime farm lands, flood hazard areas, wetlands, etc.
2.	We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.		X		We do not use a resource inventory to steer development.
3.	We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.		X		We do nothing special with our natural resources other than applying buffers and setbacks from such entities as streams and lakes.
4.	Our community has passed the necessary "Part V" environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.	X			Completed with the adoption of the UDC in 2003.
5.	Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.	X			The UDC has a landscaping, buffers, and tree conservation component. While it prevents clear cutting, except for agricultural and forestry activity prior to having a specific development project it does not do a good job of designing a tree buffer and provides very little tree coverage on individual residential lots.
6.	Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.		X		The UDC does require tree-replanting for specimen trees that are removed as part of infrastructure improvements in commercial and industrial developments but their impact is limited since these replacement trees can be used to serve buffer, parking, or frontage tree requirements. At this time the UDC does not require street yard trees to be planted within new residential or non-residential subdivisions and along all other streets, but this will be a proposed change to the UDC for 2007.
7.	We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	X			Jackson County actively inspects and requires BMPs 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.)	X			Our UDC defines natural resources to be protected and there will likely be additional amendments necessary to the code in order to reduce steep slopes and to ensure water quality is maintained. There are few FEMA defined flood plains in the County, with less than 10 flood policies in force in the County. Marshes are generally protected by the state greenway requirements supplemented by a County enforced 50 foot greenway buffer.

## ***Social and Economic Development***

### **Growth Preparedness:**

**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 work force, 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	N/A	Comments
1.	We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	X			However, infrastructure in regards to water and sewer availability needs to be better integrated into a long range planning scheme. Currently, there is little or no interaction between the Jackson County Water, Sewer Authority, the Jackson County Public Development office, and municipalities.
2.	Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	X			Yes, most entities use the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce projections. There has been little cooperation between the entities in these terms. One of the areas for much needed improvement will be on consensus building and mutual goal setting between the County and its municipalities and the 3 BOE's.
3.	Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.		X		There needs to be better cooperation, understanding and meetings between staff, municipalities and elected County Commissioners.
4.	We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	X			There are several areas in the UDC in need of revision in order to achieve the desired QCO goals, but the adoption of a new UDC in 2003 set the County in the right direction for achieving this. There is a need for a short and long range capital improvement plan.
5.	We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.		X		Capital improvements are mostly done sporadically based upon need rather than as part of a long range plan.
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.		X		We have designated areas of the community for development, as reflected on our Future Land Use Map. However, these areas were not defined by natural resources but rather by general consensus of community and the BOC on where development should occur.
7.	We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	X			Our UDC does give clear guidelines to a great extent. As with any code, new revisions are needed to clarify certain procedures.
8.	We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.		X		Currently, we are waiting to get a new web site. Much information about planning and community development will be distributed via this medium.
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.		X		Currently, the public must rely upon the newspaper for any information on these issues, and they tend to be controversy driven.

10.	We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	X			The County does go through great lengths to include and involve the public in any comprehensive planning process. Typically, all map amendment considerations are publicly noticed and advertised. Additionally, public comments are taken at all hearings. Beyond the comprehensive plan very little public awareness is incorporated into the planning process.
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**Appropriate Business:**

**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	N/A	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.	X			Jackson County Chamber of Commerce is tasked with doing this and they are focused on businesses and industry needs.
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.	X			
3.	We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	X			However, there is no specific focus to attract these types of businesses at this time.
4.	We have a diverse job base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.	X			Jackson County is well diversified in industrial, service, agricultural and trades industry.

**Employment Options:**

**A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.		X		This is available in surrounding counties with post high school educational development opportunities but we do not have a similar program at this time.
2.	Our community has jobs for skilled labor.		X		There are currently very limited job opportunities for skilled workers inside of Jackson County.
3.	Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	X			Jackson County is traditionally an agrarian economy that is beginning to transition to other sectors. Unskilled labor is focused on entry level positions in the service sector (such as retail sales, construction, food industry, and home/yard maintenance) and in the remaining agricultural business (such as Wayne Farms processing facility).
4.	Our community has professional and managerial jobs.		X		Professional jobs are limited to scattered government, and commercial management positions.

**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.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	X			These types of units are permitted but they are restricted as to size and location by the UDC and are not intended to be used for rental income.
2.	People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.		X		Average housing costs have risen significantly in Jackson County over the last several years. Most of the homes are targeted to income earners from outside of Jackson County. There is need for a comprehensive housing analysis to be conducted in order to address the affordability issue.
3.	Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).		X		The lower level income brackets are not really being considered by most developers, because there is more money to be made in building homes above \$200 k. In other words absorbing the required infrastructure, environmental and engineering fees associated with development is easier when higher end homes are constructed. Low income housing is focusing in Commerce or in the more agricultural areas of the county where existing non conforming parcels exist.
4.	We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.			X	This is a municipal issue.
5.	We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or "neo-traditional" developments.			X	This is a municipal issue.
6.	We have vacant developable land available for multifamily housing.	X			Yes there are existing areas near the municipalities designated for higher density housing. Most of our municipalities also have areas designated for multifamily housing. However, there has been very little multifamily activity in recent years.
7.	We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	X			Consideration for multifamily housing requires public water and sewer services. There are only a few existing multifamily developments in the unincorporated areas to include a small apartment complex and a duplex development.
8.	We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.		X		Currently, the county is not involved in building low-income housing and has not actively addressed the issue.
9.	We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.		X		Currently, there is no county agency for this.
10	We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.		X		Small lot development has traditionally been frowned upon within unincorporated Jackson County. Small lots are focused on the municipalities with water and sewer. Under the MPD a developer could propose a development with both smaller homes (our minimum is 1,400 sq. ft. heated) on small lots, but would still be required to adhere to a density stipulation

**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.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.	Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.	X			Workforce training is provided via the technical college system located in Commerce and in adjacent counties.
2.	Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	X			Same as above.
3.	Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	X			There are no colleges or universities in Jackson County. However, the University of Georgia, Athens Tech, Gainesville College, Piedmont College, and Brenau University are only a few miles outside of the county.
4.	Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.		X		Abundant and high paying jobs are limited in Jackson County, and as housing prices continue to out pace wages, children will continue to leave Jackson County for better opportunities.

## ***Government Relations***

### **Regional Solutions:**

**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	N/A	Comments
1.	We participate in regional development organizations.	X			
2.	We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	X			
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.	X			Currently, there is a need for improvements in this area, but it has been identified as a very important issue and Public Development, as well as the County Commissioners, are moving forward with various studies and initiatives to address and improve the communication and infrastructure needs of the municipalities and county.
4.	Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.		X		There is currently limited communication or joint action planning between the county and other entities. This is being addressed and improvements to expanded communications are expected.

### **Regional Cooperation:**

**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	N/A	Comments
1.	We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive planning purposes.	X			Planning actions generally occur without formal interaction between the communities and the county, but efforts are underway to improve this issue.
2.	We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.		X		There is little communication between Public Development and other entities for both the County and the Cities. While most SDS issues have been resolved there is an ongoing dialog between the water and sewer providers to realign service areas that make better strategic sense.

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.	X			Although not extensive, the county has started reaching out to other municipalities to update information, implement GIS and to begin developing a comprehensive transportation plan. The BOC and City Council's have also begun an effort to dialog outside of formal meetings to address issues of community wide significance.
4.	We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	X			Through the Chamber of Commerce, Home Builders Association and others contact is made on issues of regional concern. At least an annual meeting with all elected officials and managers should be initiated to share information and requirements of importance to all the communities in the County.

## **Analysis of Areas Requiring Special Attention**

This review included an evaluation of the existing land use pattern, emerging land use trends, a review of the future land use amendment and rezoning requests to further identify trends and areas requiring special attention. Obviously, the item that stood out is the general fear of development and increased density from long time resident and new residents that have sought out Jackson County as a refuge from the explosive suburban growth that is growing out from metro Atlanta. They perceive any non-agricultural development as an assault on their life style and have little understanding of the adopted future land use plans and even less desire to accept change.

Areas of significant natural and cultural resources have been identified in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan and in the Environmental Sensitive Areas section of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan Update: Land Use Plan Amendment. As identified in these documents a cemetery inventory has also been completed by the Historical Society. These resources and sites are considered as a part of any map amendment/rezoning request and more specifically during the development review process prior to issuing development permits. As the County continues to develop in a suburban nature pressure will be put on individual sites. This includes the 4-W Farms site that has been annexed into the City of Arcade which has a proposed 1,000 plus residential unit development planned for it. At the present time the development has not actively proceeded due to service issues for water and sewer services and now because of the downturn in the residential development market. As the County's GIS system continues to develop an effort will be made to place most of these features within a data layer so that it will be easier to illustrate the impacts that a specific development will cause on the natural and cultural resources of the County and its municipalities. The historic farms are the features that are most likely to be affected by continued development as their owner's needs change. Efforts by family members to create non-profits or other entities to protect the land from the spread of residential developments across these parcels will have to occur in the near term. Natural resources are easier to protect from the direct impact of development based on the development restrictions found in the County's Unified Development Code which emulate the objectives and goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

The future land use map adopted in 2003 is maintained and rezoning applications and development reviews use the map as a policy tool to ensure that development occurs within the appropriate areas of the County. Commercial nodes in the unincorporated portions of the County are designed to be in areas where growth is expected to occur. The process of rezoning and development permitting adequately address areas where the County desires to see growth occur. As part of the adoption of the future land use map (character areas) the county identified where is desired to see growth occur. Since the adoption of this map in September 2003 the County has approved approximately 30 changes to the character area map; generally done in response to expanding nodes or areas identified for commercial development. The largest change to date was directed by the BOC to incorporate a new residential growth node in northeast Jackson County which incorporated a new water and sewer system and lays along an existing transportation corridor. Rapid growth, for Jackson County, is occurring in the western portion of the County in the areas identified for "Residential Growth" on the future land use map and

within the City of Braselton, which spans out into a 4 county area. This growth area spans across I-85 and includes development off of Hwy 53, Hwy 60, Hwy 124, Hwy 129, Hwy 332, and Hwy 11.

Even in light of this increased development pressure our transportation system remains fundamentally sound. While everyone agrees that the level of traffic has increased significantly along these corridors, there are no traffic studies showing that any road segment has fallen below a level of service C. Currently the intersection of Hwy 124 and Hwy 332 is being improved by a developer under GDOT approval to address the expected increase in traffic due to the commercialization of this intersection. A traffic signalization plan will also have to be implemented at this intersection to address likely turn conflicts. Whether this will be borne solely by the County or through a share of costs by future commercial developments within this commercial node must still be determined. The County is also working to realign Hwy 124 through the congested area in Braselton. This project has been work shopped and is currently in design with GDOT. The preservation of the existing historical sites, within the center of Braselton, remains a high priority in defining the final alignment for the project. A bypass around Braselton and Hoschton is still needed to address the traffic constraints on Hwy 124 and Hwy 53.

GDAOT has a project under design to widen Hwy 53 from Gainesville to its intersection with I-85. GDOT existing road widening and realignment projects on Hwy's 129 and 441 should be completed through the County within the next 12 months. These improved roads provide a better flow of traffic throughout the County and provide easier access into the County off of the interstate. The County has also continued to develop its commercial road segments paralleling I-85. Several segments have been completed to include the area north of Jefferson supporting the Valentine Industrial Park area and Steven B. Reynolds Boulevard north of Commerce. Individual development projects, both residential and commercial, are required to address ingress/egress issues to ensure that the road network remains functional despite the increase in development.

The availability of community services and facilities are always a concern of the BOC in considering development and rezoning requests. The County has recently completed a new Courthouse for the judicial services. A new jail is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in the next 18 months. The County is working with the water and sewer authorities to ensure that service expansion are consistent with the future land use map and that development then follows these services. The County is proposing to prepare a comprehensive Transportation Plan addressing not only the road network but also bicycle/trails, greenways, and public transportation. The creation of a CIP is also included as part of the STWP and will aid in planning for needed community services and facilities.

As the County and the municipalities move forward water and sewer service delivery will become more important. As part of the full review of the Comprehensive Plan the service delivery strategy must be reviewed, specifically as it is used by at least one municipality as a means of forcing annexations. The County must work specifically with the Jackson County Water and Sewerage Authority to ensure new water and sewer lines are planned only in those future land use areas intended for denser residential and commercial development. Currently, there are no areas that have out placed the ability



of community services and facilities. The area that is growing more critical is the school system. With 3 independent school systems operating within the County it becomes critical that residential development is encouraged to locate near the existing schools. Currently, all three systems are operating at or near capacity. The Jackson County School system has just opened its second high school along with an elementary school. Additional elementary schools are under construction. These three school systems must work together to ensure that the development occurring in each community is supportable. The school systems have worked out a revenue share formula for sales taxes.

Jackson County is blessed in not having a large redevelopment issue. Older industrial structures are generally located within the limits of one of the municipalities. Jefferson's largest industrial structure is currently being used by Real Deals for retail sales of various household items. Other older structures along the main roads are being slowly converted/used for other retail purposes. As such the County does not have an area that requires significant improvements to increase community aesthetics. Most older strip commercial developments still maintain their basic usability and have not fallen into disrepair or been cluttered with junk and debris. One ongoing court case affects the usability or surrounding property in the northern portion of the County off of Hwy 129. The issues focus on grandfathering criteria and the definition and permitted use in agricultural and industrial zoning districts.

Jackson County and its municipalities are fortunate that the remaining items in this section do not present a major issue to the further development of the community and do not require additional attention beyond the current policies adopted by each city and the county.

### **Identification of Issues and Opportunities**

The issues identified during the QCO assessment were carried over into the 2007 to 2012 STWP. Even with the vastly improved Unified Development Code (UDC) in 2003 a number of the comments in the QCO identified further items that should be incorporated into the UDC. Staff is currently working on amendments to the UDC to address commercial architectural requirements, revision the types of land that qualify for open space inclusion, limitations on the size of convenience stores. This is a continuing process where staff is actively engaged with the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners to address changes that will further the County's vision for development. Additional proposed changes that will be considered for revision over the coming year include landscaping/tree ordinance upgrades, additional types of developments that could be done under a master planned subdivision, and affordable housing as to type and size.

### **Updated Implementation Program**

**Short Term Work Program: 2007 to 2012 Comprehensive Plan Work Program**

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>									
Develop a clear cutting ordinance. (UDC)		X					Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Inventory and map sensitive natural resources in the County.		X	X				Staff	Regular Salary	GIS
Re-evaluate the Greenspace Plan, to include inspection of past developments and there progress.				X			Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Create a County storm water best management practices manual.		X					Staff	Regular Salary	Engineering
Update Landscaping Ordinance to include buffers and street yard trees.	X						Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Rewrite "tree ordinance" to look at specimen trees to include identification and inventory.	X						Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Create a chipping, mulching, and recycling facility for developers to use as an alternative to burning and dumping.		X	X	X	X	X	\$75,000	Regular Salary, General Fund & Grants	Solid Waste and Keep Jackson Beautiful
Develop an educational river, and stream clean-up and testing program.			X	X	X	X	\$10,000	Regular Salary, General Fund & Grants	Keep Jackson Beautiful
Develop a water conservation and education program.	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$10,000	Regular Salary, General Fund & Grants	Water & Sewer Authorities, Engineering
Expand recycling program throughout the County to include,	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$20,000	Regular Salary	Solid Waste

public education, composting and material recovery.									
Conduct a future water needs assessment.	X	X					\$70,000	Regular Salary	County Manager, JCWSA
Restore the Old Court House.		X	X	X			\$2,000,000	County Bond	Capital Projects
<b>Economic Development</b>									
Develop a workforce skills assessment report.		X	X				\$15,000	Revenue Balance	Chamber
Conduct a small business health assessment study.		X	X				\$10,000	Revenue Balance	Chamber
Promote economic develop through the County Website.	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$3,000	Regular Salary	Planning, Finance, County Manager
Encourage and develop an entrepreneurial revolving loan fund and program.			X	X	X	X	\$100,000	Grants, Revenue Balance	Chamber
Support programs and initiatives that ensure diversity in Jackson County's economic base.		X	X	X	X	X	Undetermined	Grants, Revenue Balance	Chamber
<b>Housing</b>									
Conduct a comprehensive housing study of the current housing stock and needs.			X	X			\$50,000	General Fund	Planning & Consultant
Reevaluate the density of residential developments within water and sewer service areas and exclude connection to FLUM.		X	X				Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Revise UDC to require all large subdivisions to provide on-site recreational amenities.	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff	Regular Salary	Planning, BOC
Encourage large land holdings to plan for multiple land uses and housing types.		X	X	X	X	X	Staff	Regular Salary	Planning, BOC

Encourage workforce housing availability by decreasing minimum square footage and increasing quality measures.		X	X				Staff	Regular Salary	Planning & Building Inspections
<b>Community Facilities</b>									
Conduct a needs assessment for County office needs.			X	X			\$35,000	General Fund	County Manager & Consultant
Conduct a personnel staffing needs assessment.		X					\$50,000	General Fund	County Manager, Human Resources & Consultant
Develop a sewer master plan.		X	X				\$20,000	Regular Salary, Reserve Funds	S & W Authority, Planning
Locate more ambulances throughout the County to improve response time.	X	X	X	X	X		\$135,000	General Fund, SPLOST	EMS, Capital Projects Manager
Develop a comprehensive public safety plan for the County.		X	X				\$20,000	Grants, Regular Salary, General Fund	EMS, Sheriff, Volunteer Fire
Develop a sidewalk, greenway, and bikeway plan.			X	X			\$30,000	Regular Salary, General Fund	Planning & Consultant
Develop a Capital Improvement Plan that includes a systematic maintenance and funding plan for roads	X	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	Regular Salary, General Fund	Finance, Roads, County Manager
Repeal the special tax district options in the UDC.		X					Staff	Regular Salary	Planning, BOC
Utilize Old Court House for improved public services such as planning, building inspections, engineering.				X	X	X	\$2,000,000	Grants, bonds, SPLOST	County Manager, Finance
Evaluate the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan.	X	X					Staff	Regular Salary	Planning, Parks & Recreation

Develop and evaluate impact fees for the County.	X	X					\$50,000	General Fund	Planning & Consultant
Establish County Animal Shelter	X	X					\$500,000	General Fund, Bonds, SPLOST	Public Development, Capital Projects Manager
<b>Land Use &amp; GIS</b>									
Encourage creative urban design to include mixed use projects for housing, resource conservation, "village" concepts, smaller lot subdivisions and affordable housing.		X	X	X	X	X	Staff	Regular Salary	Planning, BOC
Create general design guidelines to improve the aesthetic appeal of all forms of development in the county.			X	X	X	X	Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Amend the UDC annually to reflect changes in community desires and reflect economic changes.	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Incorporate smart growth principles into UDC.	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff	Regular Salary	Planning
Create GIS land-use layers to help in decision making processes.	X	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	Regular Salary, General Fund, Enterprise	GIS
Establish a Countywide monument system for geodetic control	X	X	X	X			\$150,000	General Fund, JCWSA & Cities	GIS

**Long-Term and Ongoing Activities (optional)**

There are no projected long-term or ongoing activities that are planned under this Partial Update. These issues will be covered as part of the required Comprehensive Plan update due by October 2010.

**Policies (required)**

The County and municipalities do not foresee requiring additional policies for ongoing guidance and direction to ensure that the local decisions are consistent with the issues and opportunities identified in the QCO assessment.

**A Report of Accomplishments (required)**

The following list is the items included in the STWP adopted in 2003 as part of the updated Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Plan Amendment. Many of the items have been completed and incorporated into the County’s daily operations. Some have been continued forward into the new STWP for the 2007 to 2012 period. Other items have not been completed since they are no longer a priority for the County.

Short-Term Work Program  
2002-2007 Comprehensive Plan Work Program  
County of Jackson

Project Description	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Responsible Party	Status
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>								
Developing a clear cutting ordinance	X						County	Adopted the Unified Development Code which includes an Environmental Resources Protection Element. The UDC is constantly being reviewed for improvements and a historical element is being contemplated, but will not occur prior to the full Comprehensive Plan Update.
Incorporate Best Management Practices in the UDO.	X						County	Adopted in Articles 9 thru 11 of the UDC, complete.
Incorporate Best Management Practices in the agriculture and in the UDO.	X						County	Adopted in Articles 9 thru 11 of the UDC, complete.
Develop and institute a Greenspace Plan.	X	X					Greenspace Committee-County	Program was adopted in 2000 and indirectly incorporated into the UDC through the open space subdivision development and in the buffer requirements adjacent to water bodies. Additionally Article 9 identifies conservation resource areas and easement requirements.
Develop a comprehensive storm water management strategy.			X				County PW	Not adopted.
Inventory and map sensitive natural resources in the County	X						County	Not completed in 2002. A GIS division was just created in June 2007 and has this as a work item to address.

Incorporate restrictions of appropriate that development within sensitive natural resources within the County	X						County	Completed.
Adopt a tree protection ordinance	X						County	Adopted in 2003 but the County is looking at further strengthening of the requirements.
Provide open space as part of the development regulations	X						County	Adopted as part of the UDC.
Conduct an inventory of historic cemeteries						X	County	Completed by the Historic Society.
<b>Economic Development</b>								
Develop a workforce skills assessment report			X				Chamber	Not done. This is still an outstanding item that is being looked at by the Chamber of Commerce.
Promote and market the County's tourism potential (agricultural, natural, and historic).		X					Chamber	Not done. This is a low priority item.
Develop an economic development plan				X			Chamber	
Evaluate current infrastructure and its ability to serve commercial and industrial clients			X				Chamber	Completed. Infrastructure availability and capacity is reviewed as part of every residential subdivision and commercial development.
<b>Housing</b>								
Develop regulations that allow for innovative housing development	X						County	Part of the UDC, Article 5. It does not address housing mix.
Encourage higher density residential within water and sewer service areas	X						County	Additional density and floor area ration provided for water and sewer connected projects.
Encourage large land holdings to plan for multiple land uses and housing types	X						County	No a priority at this time.
Institute a housing ratio policy	X						County	No a priority at this time.
Develop a comprehensive housing study current stock			X				County	No a priority at this time.
Institute housing design standards	X						County	Only applies to open space and master planned subdivisions.
<b>Community Facilities</b>								
Develop a Capital Improvements Plan		X					County	Not completed. Carried over into the new STWP.
Develop public street light standards		X					County	Included in the UDC.
Conduct a needs assessment for County office needs		X					County	Completed. Should be updated in this next cycle as the courts and supporting agencies have moved into the new courthouse.

Conduct a personal needs assessment.	X						County	Ongoing.
Develop a sewer and water master plan.		X					S & W Authority	Ongoing.
Widen Jefferson River Road						X	GDOT	Not completed.
Develop a comprehensive solid waste management plan that addresses collection, disposal, recycling, and yard waste.			X				County	Completed. Should be reviewed and updated in this next cycle.
Expand recycling program throughout the County. Investigate new programs such as composting and materials recovery				X			County	Ongoing.
Develop education programs regarding solid waste and recycling options		X					County	Ongoing.
Locate more ambulances throughout the County to improve response time	X	X	X	X	X	X	Public Safety	Ambulances have been added. Additional expansions are planned over the next several years.
Add additional hydrants to provide public water throughout the County	X	X	X	X	X	X	Public Safety	Ongoing.
Develop a comprehensive public safety plan for the County				X			Public Safety	Ongoing.
Develop a comprehensive transportation plan with surrounding counties		X	X				GDOT	Not done.
Develop a systematic maintenance plan for roads within the County			X				County	Completed, but not carried through as a budget priority.
Develop a sidewalk, greenway and bikeway plan						X	County	Not done.
<b>Land Use &amp; GIS</b>								
Update the Comprehensive Plan with a Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA)	X	X					County	Completed.
Create a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)	X						County	Completed.
Encourage creative urban design solutions for development within the county, including mixed-use developments, mixed housing developments, resource conservation subdivisions, "village" concepts, and smaller lot subdivisions for the development of quality affordable housing.	X	X					County and Cities	Completed.
Adopt distinct land use regulations for the rural areas of the County that ensure compatible land use and provide agricultural protection.	X	X					County and Cities	Completed.
Require Zoning decisions to be consistent with the comprehensive plan.	X						County	Completed.



Study the potential of creating a vegetation and natural buffer along the I-85 Corridor.	X						County	Not done.
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**Conclusion**

The community assessment process coming out of this state mandated Partial Comprehensive Plan Update has served as a good planning tool. It has provided the initial focus for the Board of Commissioners to understand the process the County and the cities will have to complete over the next two and a half years to complete the actual Comprehensive Plan update. Additionally, it has provided the nexus to continue a dialog between the elected officials and staff to address development issues that are occurring in the community and looking at proposed revisions to the existing codes to address community concerns.

