

Introduction

As part of a statewide realignment of due dates for updating local comprehensive plans, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is requiring partial updates as an interim step for select communities until they must complete a full update under the new local planning standards. This document, the City of Blairsville Partial Plan Update 2009 – 2013, has been developed to assist the local government with maintaining their level of planning and community development until a full update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2013.

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Areas Requiring Special Attention

Analysis of the prevailing trends will assist in the identification of preferred patterns of growth for the future. More specifically such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention with regard to management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development.

- *Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur*

Most development is taking place within unincorporated Union County, but the Highway 515 corridor within the City limits is experiencing significant growth and interest in increased development. This is also the main corridor seeing conventional development forms that contrast with the regional, rural character of the community.

- *Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation*

Not applicable within the City limits.

- *Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors)*

Downtown Blairsville has some properties that struggle to remain consistently viable and/or sustain their structural integrity. This is the only area within the City experiencing concentrations of areas in need of redevelopment.

- *Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated*

Not applicable within the City limits.

- *Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites)*

The Merchants Walk area is the only site within the City with significant concentrations of vacant sites.

- *Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole*

Not applicable within the City limits.

- *Areas of significant natural or cultural resources*

Downtown Blairsville contains the only significant historic structures, and the City is working with the GMRDC and HPD to develop an updated resource inventory and management strategy.

Consistency with Quality Community Objectives

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted 17 Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve her unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to her fullest potential. This assessment is meant as a tool to give a community a comparison of how it is progressing toward these objectives set by the Department. but no community will be judged on progress. The questions focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles. A majority of positive responses for a particular objective may indicate that the community has in place many of the governmental options for managing development patterns. Negative responses may provide guidance as to how to focus planning and implementation efforts for those governments seeking to achieve these Quality Community Objectives. Should a community decide to pursue a particular objective it may consider this assessment as a means of monitoring progress towards achievement.

Development Patterns

Traditional Neighborhoods - Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.

Statement	Comments
1. Our zoning code does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.	Limited development regulations established. Mixed use is possible.
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.	Limited development regulations established. Some developments permitted administratively.
3. We have a street tree ordinance requiring new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.	No.
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas to make walking more comfortable in summer.	No.
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	Volunteer based.
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.	Yes, but not systematized.
7. In some areas, several errands can be made on foot, if desired.	Yes.
8. Some children can and do walk/ bike to school safely.	Very few. Schools are located around some industrial uses.
9. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods.	Some houses are nearby, but not many.

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.

Statement	Comments
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	Not comprehensive or complete.
2. We are actively working to promote Brownfield redevelopment.	NA
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.	Yes.
4. We have areas that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road.)	No. Limited application within City.
5. We allow small lot development (<5000 SF) for some uses.	Limited.

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

Statement	Comments
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where she was, based on our distinct characteristics.	Yes – Small, mountain town with some urban amenities.
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.	Not comprehensive.
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	No.
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage.	Not comprehensive.
5. Our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.	NA

Transportation Alternatives - *Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.*

Statement	Comments
1. We have public transportation in our community.	No.
2. We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.	Yes.
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.	No, but improvements are being planned.
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.	No, but sidewalks are encouraged.
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible	No, but this is encouraged.
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.	No.
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	Yes.

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.*

Statement	Comments
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	Yes
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.	Yes
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal)	Yes
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	Yes
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	Yes
6. Our community contributes to, and draws from, the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment, education.	Yes

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 local character.

Statement	Comments
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.	No
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.	No
3. We want new development to complement historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure that happening.	Preferred, but not facilitated.

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.

Statement	Comments
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.	No.
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace – either through direct purchase, or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	No.
3. We have a local land conservation program/ work with state or national land conservation programs to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.	No.
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	No.

The City of Blairsville has limited opportunity for large tracts of greenspace due to limited size and current density of development. Some natural landscape is preserved by default due to mountainous terrain and environmental protection standards, and as a larger community Union County still has an abundance of park space and preserved forest land.

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.*

Statement	Comment
1. We have a comprehensive natural resources inventory.	Yes, via the comprehensive plan.
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.	Yes.
3. We have identified our defining natural resources and have taken steps to protect them.	Yes.
4. Our community has passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we enforce them.	Yes.
5. Our community has and actively enforces a tree preservation ordinance.	No.
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	No.
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	Encouraged.
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.)	Yes, but improvements may be needed.

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 workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.*

Statement	Comments
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	Yes.
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	Not consistently.
3. We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	Not comprehensive. Some utilities do this independently.
4. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth. These areas are based on the natural resources inventory of our community.	Yes.

Appropriate Businesses - *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.*

Statement	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.	This needs updating.
2. Our ED organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible.	To some degree. Current economic climate makes this difficult.
3. We recruit businesses that provide/ create sustainable products.	Encouraged.
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple us.	Yes, but it is not balanced in the fashion desired by the community. Additional goods manufacturing and professional service is desired.

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

Statement	Comments
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.	Accessible through the State.
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	Limited.
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	Limited.
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	Very limited.

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 (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.

Statement	Comments
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	On a limited basis.
2. People who work in our community can afford to live here.	Yes.
3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate, and above-average incomes)	Should be reviewed after current economic crisis.
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and recommending smaller setbacks.	Encourage but do not require.
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.	Very limited.
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	Limited.
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	Yes.
8. We support community development corporations building housing for lower-income households.	Yes.
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.	Yes.
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.	On a limited basis.

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.

Statement	Comments
1. Our community provides work-force training options for our citizens.	Yes.
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	Not in a comprehensive sense.
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	Yes.
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	Limited.

Governmental Relation

Local Self-determination - *Communities should be allowed to develop and work toward achieving their own vision for the future. Where the state seeks to achieve particular objectives, state financial and technical assistance should be used as the incentive to encourage local government conformance to those objectives.*

Statement	Comments
1. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.	Not a formal campaign.
2. We have processes in place that make it simple for the public to stay informed on land use and zoning decisions, and new development.	Yes.
3. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	Yes.
4. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	Yes.
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.	No.
6. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently and are sure that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	To be reviewed and reconsidered.
7. We have a budget for annual training for planning commission members and staff, and we use it.	No.
8. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community	Yes.

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.*

Statement	Comments
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for Comprehensive Planning purposes	Yes.
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategies	Yes.
3. We cooperate with at least one local government to provide or share services (parks and recreation, E911, Emergency Services, Police or Sheriff's Office, schools, water, sewer, other)	Yes.

Identified Issues and Policies

The following issues have been recognized as critical to the City of Blairsville in moving forward for the next 5 years. These are considered to be complimentary (in addition) to those issues already identified within the full Comprehensive Plan.

- The following is a summary of issues identified as part of the Partial Plan Update Process.
- Need to review coordination of development policies and long-term management/expansion plans for utilities and infrastructure.
- Need to review land use management plans
- Need to develop bicycle and sidewalks plan
- Need to develop downtown revitalization plan
- Need to review housing and economic impacts of current economic crisis
- Need to review tourism and marketing efforts; Update as needed
- Need to consider historic preservation policies

In addition, several items have been identified as policies, general objections and directions for the City in regards to different issues. These policies will be used as guidelines for general, long-term practices for the City of Blairsville.

- Continue to support joint economic development with Union County, including improvements to the airport and adjacent industrial park
- Take necessary actions to protect the public water supply
- Improve and expand infrastructure in City
- Expand water and wastewater facilities to serve anticipated growth
- Continue to revitalize downtown

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Blairsville, GA 30512
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Fax

To: *A. Don Hagell* From: *Joni Carls*
 Fax: _____ Pages: *2*
 Phone: *706-745-2000* Date: *3-23-07*
 Re: *City Council Minutes* CC: _____

- Urgent For Review Please Comment Please Reply Please Recycle

• **Comments:** The information contained in this fax is confidential. If you receive this in error please return fax to sender.

February 17th. 2007 Council Minutes.

Special Call Meeting of Mayor and City Council February 17, 2009 6:00 P.m.**PRESENT:**

Jim Conley, Mayor
Betty Williams, Council
Jane Thompson, Council
Bill Kelley, Council
Rhonda Mahan, Council
Debbie Phillips, Council

ABSENT:

Janna Akins, City Attorney

VISITORS:

Johnny Carroll
Michael Baxter
Adam Hazell

Agenda:

Water tanks bids for cleaning
Contracts with BWSC Engineers—old and new services
Contract with Action Landscaping
Well site location information
Update on Air Acquisition
Comprehensive plan short term work program discussion
Johnny Carroll, Chief of Police

Mayor Conley called the meeting to order.

Johnny Carroll, Chief of Police, advised Officer Phil Hunter has submitted his resignation which was accepted effective 02/27/09. Chief Carroll and Officer Baxter advised the Mayor and Council they had reviewed applications on file. The position will be posted and advertised in the North Georgia News with job requirements stipulated.

Adam Hazell, AICP, GA Mtn APDC, discussed the Comprehensive Short Term Plans and the partial plan update process. The Mayor and City Council were given copies of the list for review for updating purposes. Motion by Bill Kelley seconded by Jane Thompson with a unanimous yea vote to authorize the Mayor and Staff to complete and modify the partial plan update to be submitted by GA Mtn APDC to DCA for approval.

Water tank clean-out bids were reviewed. Motion by Debbie Phillips seconded by Rhonda Mahan with a unanimous yea vote to contract with Utility Services Company, per Larry Stephens 's recommendation, for the bid price of \$1,800.00 per tank. The two tanks which will be cleaned are located at Dogwood Hills. Exhibit "A"

Motion by Debbie Phillips seconded by Jane Thompson to execute a contract with BWSC for \$7,325.00 for surveying previously performed in conjunction with Airport Air Easement contracts and to ratify the payment in March, 2008 with check #11688. Exhibit "B"

The contract with Action Landscaping for clearing was not available for review.

Review of the Scope of Work for administration services, additional surveying and resident project inspection as submitted by BWSC Engineering Firm was not approved. The Council was concerned

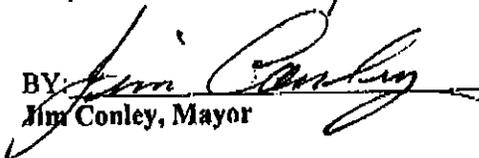
CITY OF BLAIRSVILLE
~
RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT

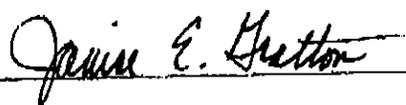
WHEREAS, the City Council for the City of Blairsville has completed the Partial Update required of its Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005 and established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, including the required public hearing opportunity as held this February 17, 2009; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the City Council for the City of Blairsville does hereby transmit the Partial Update of its Comprehensive Plan to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review.

Adopted this day February 17, 2009

BY: 
Jim Conley, Mayor

ATTEST: 

Short-Term Work Program: 2009-2013
City of Blairsville Comprehensive Plan

Year	Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility
2009	Develop Rural Transit Plan with GMRDC	NA	NA	City, GMRDC
2009	Review Service Delivery Agreement; Update as needed	\$1,000	City general fund	Admin
2009	Expand wastewater facilities to serve anticipated growth	\$1M	GEFA, EPA, EPD	City
2009	Revitalize downtown; Create a Downtown Development Authority; establish a downtown redevelopment committee within Chamber.	NA	NA	City, Chamber
2009	Study and combine public services where duplication may exist	NA	City, DCA	City, GMRDC, DCA
2010	Consider a Tourism and Marketing Strategy with County or other parties	\$5,000	DED, City	Admin./ Dev. Authority
2010	Update historic resources inventory	\$10,000	City general fund	City, GMRDC
2010	Develop a detailed plan and schedule for water treatment and distribution, including a maintenance program. (Master plan)	\$15,000	GEFA, EPA, EPD	City
2010	Improve delivery of waste water service by developing and implementing a master plan for collection system maintenance and replacement plan, including treatment plant upgrades.	\$30,000	GEFA, EPA, EPD	City
2010	Expand city hall to accommodate current and future needs.	TBD	Grants, Loans, City	City
2010	Take necessary actions to protect the public water supply.	NA	City, EPD	City, GMRDC, DNR
2010	Expand and build out airport per master plan	TBD	County, City, GEFA	City, County
2011	Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility Master Plan	\$10,000	DOT, City	City, GMRDC
2011	Develop Property Redevelopment Guide	\$3,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2011	Conduct Housing Market study	\$5,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2011	Review/ update policies for managing housing stock (density, type)	NA	NA	City, GMRDC, DCA
2011	Publish and distribute a list of historic properties and direct scenic routes and tourist excursions to historic property destinations.	\$3,000	City, DNR	City, GMRDC, HPD
2011	Begin Comp Plan update: Community Assessment	\$3,000	City, DCA	City, GMRDC, DCA
2012	Develop Rural Transit Plan with GMRDC	NA	NA	City, GMRDC
2012	Utilize State, regional and federal programs which provide funding, staff and services to enhance the City's historic preservation program	NA	NA	City, GMRDC, HPD
2012	Finish Comp Plan update: Community Agenda	\$3,000	City, DCA	City, GMRDC, DCA
2012	Improve and expand infrastructure in City	\$20,000	City, GEFA, DCA	City
2013	Review and update environmental protection policies	NA	NA	City, GMRDC, DNR
2013	Develop neighborhood sustainability plans	\$1,000	City, DCA	City, GMRDC, DCA

Report of Accomplishments: 2004-2008
City of Blairsville Comprehensive Plan

Action	Status	Comment
Develop a detailed plan and schedule for water treatment and distribution, including a maintenance program. (Master plan)	In Progress	
Improve delivery of waste water service by developing and implementing a master plan for collection system maintenance and replacement plan, including treatment plant upgrades.	In Progress	To be completed in 2010
Revise and update local building codes to reduce fire hazards and include an inspection program	Complete	Addressed through County
Develop and implement a pedestrian and sidewalk plan linking community services	In Progress	
Acquire land and construct additional hanger space at the Blairsville Airpor	Complete	
Expand city hall to accommodate current and future needs.	In Progress	To be completed in 2010
Require all business to provide night or emergency contact information to Fire Dept.	Complete	
Update Service Delivery Strategy as the community growth and services are updated	Complete	
Participate in the coordination of all development within the county through one entity and allow for all departments and agencies to provide comments and input on growth as it is proposed	Complete	
Take necessary actions to protect the public water supply.	In Progress	2009
Expand and build out airport per master plan	In Progress	2009
Revitalize downtown; Create a Downtown Development Authority; establish a downtown redevelopment committee with Chamber.	Complete	
Address Source Water Protection as required by Georgia EPD.	Complete	
Update SWAP (Source Water Assessment Plan) as required by EPD	Complete	
Evaluate and update the Mountain Protection Plan as needed.	Complete	Addressed through County
Provide more guidance and restrictions on development within known floodplains	Complete	
Encourage use of Union County Mountain Protection guidelines Create a building code and standards for development on steep slopes of >30%.	Complete	
Publish and distribute a list of historic properties and direct scenic routes and tourist excursions to historic property destinations.	Postponed	Deferred as priority until funding available
Perform a comprehensive survey of historic resources in Union County and Blairsville.	Postponed	Deferred as priority until funding available
Utilize State, regional and federal programs which provide funding, staff and services to enhance the City's historic preservation program	Postponed	Deferred as priority until funding available
Encourage transition of housing stock to higher residential density, insitutional living opportunities and commercial/ adapative reuse in appropriate areas, while retaining and preserving existing single-family neighborhoods	Complete	Addressed through County
Expand supply of rental housing and affordable housing	Complete	Addressed through County
Expand and improve local housing programs to assist low income households.	Complete	Addressed through County
Investigate incentives to encourage single family residential infill	Complete	Addressed through County
Improve and expand infrastructure in City	In Progress	
Study and combine public services where duplication may exist	In Progress	
Expand wastewater facilities to serve anticipated growth	In Progress	
Identify and provide additional facilities and locations for future industry	Complete	Addressed through County
Recruit natural gas utility for City/County.	Complete	Addressed through County

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF
BLAIRSVILLE, GEORGIA
ADOPTING THE 2009 PARTIAL PLAN UPDATE TO THE
UNION COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

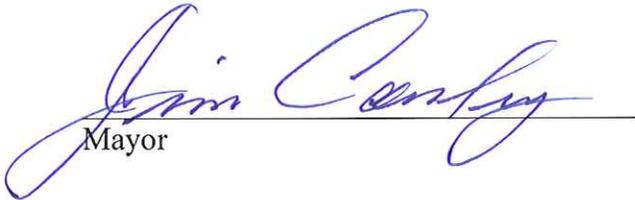
WHEREAS: The City Council, as the governing authority of the City of Blairsville, Georgia has participated in developing a partial update to the Union County Joint Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS: The 2009 Partial Plan Update was prepared in accordance with the Rules and Procedures of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

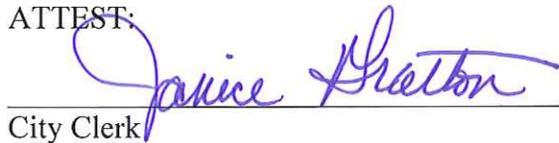
WHEREAS: The 2009 Partial Plan Update has been reviewed and approved by the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs;

Now, therefore, **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the City Council that the 2009 Partial Plan Update is adopted and it becomes part of the Union County Joint Comprehensive Plan.

Adopted by the City Council this 14th day of April, 2009.



Mayor

ATTEST:


City Clerk