Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan

Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for
Unincorporated Whitfield County and Cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell

Part II
Community Agenda

2008 - 2018
September 2008

Prepared By:

MACTEC

Prepared For:

Whitfield County

FINAL DRAFT
FOR NGRDC & DCA REVIEW

Whitfield County
Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for
Whitfield County and the
municipalities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell

COMMUNITY AGENDA

Prepared for:
Whitfield County
City of Dalton
City of Tunnel Hill
City of Varnell

By:

MACTEC, Inc. – Planning & Design Group
Atlanta, Georgia

September 24, 2008

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WHITFIELD COUNTY

WHITFIELD COUNTY

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT THE WHITFIELD COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018 COMMUNITY AGENDA TO THE NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners, in conjunction with the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell, has completed the Community Agenda document and the update to the Short Term Work Program as part of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update; 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, and the required public hearing was held and public notice of the public hearing advertised accordingly at the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners meeting on **September 15, 2008**.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners does hereby transmit the Community Agenda portion of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update to the North Georgia Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review.

Adopted by the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners on Sept. 15, 2008.

Barbara Love
Attest

Chairman, Whitfield County Board of Commissioners

CITY OF DALTON

MAYOR
DAVID E. PENNINGTON, III

CITY COUNCIL
DENISE WOOD
DICK LOWREY
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WWW.CITYOFDALTON-GA.GOV
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THE CITY OF DALTON
"THE CARPET CAPITAL OF THE WORLD"

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT THE WHITFIELD COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018 COMMUNITY AGENDA TO THE NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the City of Dalton Mayor and City Council, in association with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the municipalities of Tunnel Hill and Varnell, has completed the Community Agenda document and the update to the Short Term Work Program as part of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update; 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, and the required public hearing was held and public notice of the public hearing advertised accordingly at the City of Dalton Mayor and City Council meeting on September 15, 2008.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the City of Dalton Mayor and City Council does hereby transmit the Community Agenda portion of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update to the North Georgia Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review.

Adopted by the City of Dalton Mayor and City Council on September 15, 2008.

Bernadette Chatham
Attest, City Clerk

Mayor, City of Dalton

Equal Opportunity Employer

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL
RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT 2008-10

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT THE WHITFIELD COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018 COMMUNITY AGENDA TO THE NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the City of Tunnel Hill Mayor and City Council, in association with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the municipalities of Dalton and Varnell, has completed the Community Agenda document and the update to the Short Term Work Program as part of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update; 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, and the required public hearing was held (and public notice of the public hearing advertised accordingly) at the City of Tunnel Hill Mayor and City Council meeting on August 26, 2008.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the City of Tunnel Hill Mayor and City Council does hereby transmit the Community Agenda portion of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update to the North Georgia Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review.

Adopted by the City of Tunnel Hill Mayor and City Council on August 26, 2008.

Mayor, City of Tunnel Hill

City Clerk, City of Tunnel Hill

CITY OF VARNELL

CITY OF VARNELL

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT

RESOLUTION TO TRANSMIT THE WHITFIELD COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018 COMMUNITY AGENDA TO THE NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the City of Varnell Mayor and City Council, in association with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the municipalities of Dalton and Tunnel Hill, has completed the Community Agenda document and the update to the Short Term Work Program as part of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update; 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, and the required public hearing was held and public notice of the public hearing advertised accordingly.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the City of Varnell Mayor and City Council does hereby transmit the Community Agenda portion of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan Update to the North Georgia Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for official review.

Adopted by the City of Varnell Mayor and City Council on September 22, 2008.

Attest

Mayor, City of Varnell

THE CITY OF VARNELL
OFFICIAL SEAL
GEORGIA

Acknowledgements

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Board of Commissioners, District1

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Board of Commissioners, District 2

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CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

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Mark Gibson
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Senior Historic Preservation Specialist

Marla Bexley-Brown
Preservation Planner

Brad Davis
Planner

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Community Agenda for Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell

Located in the North Georgia Region and part of the Dalton Metropolitan Statistical Area, Whitfield County covers approximately 290 square miles of predominantly rural, yet increasingly suburban landscape in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Considered the "Carpet Capital of the World" due to its well-established carpet industry, Whitfield County includes four municipalities: Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell have joined together in an effort to meet the challenges ahead, working together with their citizens, elected officials, professional staff, business leaders, property owners and major employers to prepare the *Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018 Part II – Community Agenda*.

Brookwood Park located off of West Walnut Avenue in Dalton

WHY WE PLAN

Comprehensive planning is an important management tool for promoting a strong, healthy, community. A Comprehensive Plan provides a vision, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the future of the community. It protects private property rights and also encourages and supports economic development. The plan can be used to promote orderly and rational development so that Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell can remain physically attractive and economically viable while preserving important natural and historic resources.

The comprehensive plan provides the tool to become more certain about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met. It provides a tool for the community to achieve the development patterns it desires, such as: traditional neighborhoods, infill development, creating a sense of place, providing transportation alternatives, permitting mixed uses, protecting natural resources and accommodating economic growth.

Planning also helps the County and its municipalities invest their money wisely in infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer, schools, parks and green space, and other facilities to maintain and improve the quality of life for the residents of Whitfield County.

Why we plan

- Set a new standard for protecting natural and cultural resources
- Promote desired patterns of development
- Facilitate economic development
- Accommodate a range of housing and transportation options
- Prioritize capital expenditures
- Enhance quality of life

PURPOSE

The *Community Agenda* represents the community's vision, goals, policies, key issues and opportunities that the community chooses to address, and an action plan highlighting the necessary tools for implementing the comprehensive plan. In addition, it outlines desired development patterns and supporting land uses with a future development map for unincorporated Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

The *Community Agenda* serves the purpose of meeting the intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as established on May 1, 2005. Preparation in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining status as a Qualified Local Government. State law requires Whitfield County and its municipalities to update their respective comprehensive plans by October 31, 2008. For planning purposes, DCA classifies Whitfield County as an "Advanced" planning level jurisdiction.

This plan updates the *Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020* adopted in 2002 by the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the mayors and city councils of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. Like the 2002 plan, this 2008 update will serve as the official comprehensive plan for unincorporated Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. The 2008 plan does not include the town of Cohutta.

Whitfield County's natural beauty exposed on a clear, fall day looking west near Varnell

Historic Downtown Dalton provides a mix of government, commercial, office, and residential uses.

SCOPE

Part I of the *Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018* included the *Community Participation Program, Community Assessment* and *Analysis of Supporting Data* that were prepared prior to the implementation of the *Community Participation Program*. These provided a preliminary look at the issues and opportunities, areas of special concern and an analysis of the existing development patterns that included recommended Character Areas. The *Community Agenda*, which is Part II of the *Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018*, represents these ideas and additional ideas that have been discussed through the public participation process.

The *Community Agenda* does not restate the data included in Part I. Instead, it provides a fine-tuned list of issues and opportunities, future development maps with character areas and an implementation program. For the future development maps, the *Community Agenda* presents strategies for implementation of each character area depicted. For the implementation program, the *Community Agenda* includes the Short Term Work Program (STWP) and policy statements intended to guide the County and its municipalities.

Whitfield County Administration Building located in Downtown Dalton

CONTEXT OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

Whitfield County's population grew to a U.S. Census Bureau-estimated 93,380 in 2007, up from 83,525 in 2000, an increase of 11.7%. The roughly 9,800-person increase represented the greatest net population increase among all counties in northwest Georgia. Projections are for continued significant population growth which will require Whitfield County and its municipalities to accommodate in the range of 30,000 new residents over the next 20 years. This anticipated growth presents an opportunity for continued economic growth and expansion.

More than 13% of the housing units recorded in 2006 were built after 2000 and 52.6% were built after 1980, which is a reflection of the rate of growth taking place in Whitfield County. Less than 6% of Whitfield County's housing units were built prior to 1939.

Growth and residential development is increasingly occurring in unincorporated Whitfield County. The lack of wastewater treatment services in many of these areas has dictated large-lot, single family residential development patterns. Infrastructure improvements, including expansion of areas served by wastewater treatment services are required to accommodate the projected population growth.

County unemployment rates have consistently trended lower than the rates for the state and nation. The County labor force has grown at a steady average annual rate of approximately 1.1% between 1990 and 2006, compared to 1.6% for the County's population. Over the next 20+ years, the labor force is projected to grow at a 1.5% per year rate.

On the economic front, Dalton-Whitfield County produces the majority of the world's carpeting and is the headquarters for the world's carpet industry. The importance of the floor covering industry in the County extends beyond direct employment. Several other important clusters in the area are largely supported by this industry (e.g. chemicals and plastics firms and wholesaling firms). Economic uncertainty created by an increasingly evolving national and world economy has increased the urgency to diversify the County's economic portfolio in order to more quickly adapt to change. An educated and well-trained workforce will be key to the County's long-term success.

Context of Growth and Change

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Growing population
- Sewer service area expansion
- Growing labor force
- Unincorporated areas absorbing bulk of County's new growth
- Services demands of the daytime population
- Economic diversification

POPULATION TRENDS

Year	Whitfield Co.	Dalton	Tunnel Hill	Varnell
1970	55,108	18,872	1,147	314
1980	65,755	20,939	936	282
1990	72,462	22,218	970	358
2000	83,525	27,912	1,209	1,491
2007	93,380	33,394	1,100	1,302
Net population gain 1980-2007:				
	38,872	14,522	-47	988
Average Annual Growth Rate 1980-2007:				
	1.3%	2.2%	-0.2%	5.4%

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Year	Whitfield Co.	Dalton	Tunnel Hill	Varnell
2010	98,578	35,027	1,154	1,365
2015	105,731	37,569	1,238	1,464
2020	112,216	39,873	1,314	1,554
2025	118,982	42,277	1,393	1,648
2030	126,185	44,837	1,478	1,748
Net projected population gain 2006-2030:				
	32,205	11,443	378	446

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, DCA, MACTEC, NGRDC

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Creating a functional Comprehensive Plan begins with defining a common vision for the future development of the Community. A Community Vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future. It is the starting point for creating a plan and actions to implement the plan. A successful visioning process requires meaningful participation from a wide range of community stakeholders. Whitfield County residents, property owners, business owners and other stakeholders contributed to the production of the *Community Agenda*. Due to the participation involved in developing the plan, the

Community Agenda should generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of Whitfield County and thereby encourage citizens to remain engaged in the development process and ensure that the county and each municipality implement the plan.

VISIONING PROCESS

The Visioning Process, or citizen participation process, for the *Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018* included multiple layers of participation from the residents and stakeholders of Whitfield County. A Kick-Off Meeting, Community Visioning Workshops, a Countywide Framework Workshop, a Countywide Open House, and Public Hearings at Board of Commissioners and municipal mayor and council meetings provided opportunities for input. In addition, the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee added considerable input into the planning process.

Participants prioritiize community issues and opportunities at a Community Visioning Workshop held at Westside Elementary School.

Countywide Kickoff

The Countywide Kick-Off meeting took place in March 2008. Questionnaires were distributed at the meeting and made available for wider distribution by posting the document on the County website. Responses received by the consultant team helped supplement and expand the list of preliminary issues and opportunities presented in the Community Assessment.

Small groups consider questions about future growth during the Community Visioning Workshop at the Dalton Community Center.

Visioning Workshops

Visioning Workshops were held at six locations in the County in March and April 2008. These meetings focused specifically on the subarea served by the meeting location and also focused on county-wide planning policies. The subareas were as follows:

- Dalton/Central Whitfield County area
- Varnell/Cohutta/North Whitfield County area
- West Whitfield County area
- East Whitfield County area
- Tunnel Hill/Rocky Face/Northwest Whitfield County area

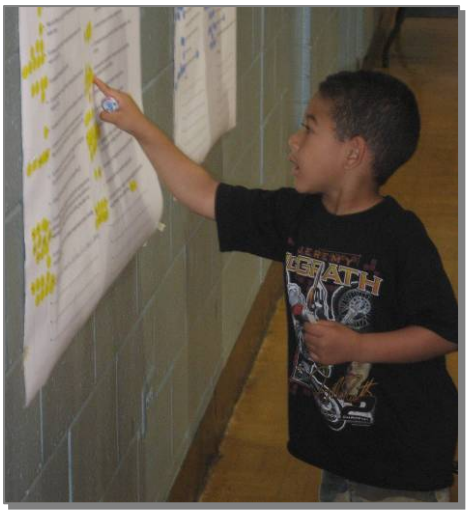
Participants provided their input on the future of Whitfield County during the workshops via community preference surveys, facilitated discussions, questionnaires, and one-on-one conversations with the planning team. Participants were asked to respond to preliminary issues and opportunities identified by the planning team during the data gathering process related to population, land use, housing, economic development, community facilities, natural and cultural resources and transportation. Participants also provided input on the proposed character areas at these meetings in addition to addressing the questions, "Where are we? Where are we going? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?"

Participants prioritze issues and opportunities as well as community strenghts during the Community Visioning Workshop held at the Varnel Gym.

Countywide Framework Workshop

The Countywide Framework Workshop was held in Dalton in May 2008. Participants had the opportunity to begin defining the role that each community would play in the future of Whitfield County,

pertaining to land use, housing, economic development, community facilities and services, natural and cultural resources, transportation, and intergovernmental coordination. These ideas would later be refined by the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee. In addition, participants had the opportunity to view the summarized stakeholder feedback gathered by the planning team during the Visioning Workshops. The consultant team assembled the information gathered during the Community Visioning and Framework Workshops and presented drafts to the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee for review and fine tuning prior to the Open House.



A young Dalton resident takes a turn at revieiwing the potential vision statements for Dalton at Whitfield County at the Community Visioning Workshop in Dalton.

Countywide Open House

The public was then presented the draft *Community Agenda* at the Countywide Open House in July 2008. The open house format allowed participants to drop in at their convenience and stay as little or as long as they desired. Participants viewed the Community Agenda document, large scale maps, and spoke individually with planning team members to present questions or concerns.

Public Hearings

A final *Community Agenda* document was prepared after the Countywide Open House that was then presented to the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the Mayor and City Councils of each municipality at regularly-schedule meetings in August 2008. Each of these meetings included a public hearing providing opportunities for stakeholders to offer additional input. Following the public hearings, the legislative bodies adopted transmittal resolutions authorizing the transmission of the *Community Agenda* to NGRDC and DCA for review.

Public hearings were also held and transmittal resolutions adopted by each participating legislative body prior transmitting *Community Assessment* and *Community Participation Program* to the NGRDC and DCA for review.

Steering Committee members shown above meeting in January 2008 at Dalton City Hall

COMMITTEES

In addition to meetings designed to solicit input from the general public, the planning team also organized two important committees who would provide important input and feedback into the planning process. The Technical Advisory Committee included representatives of each municipality and the County. The Steering Committee members represented a wide-range of community interests. Each committee is described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) began meeting in December 2007. This group's municipal and county representatives included planners, engineers, elected officials and other important city and County officials. The TAC assisted in defining the preliminary issues and opportunities, defining character areas for the *Community Assessment* and preparing the implementation program

during the *Community Agenda*. In addition, the TAC reviewed drafts of the major plan components at various points during the process of developing the *Community Agenda*, providing at each step of the way critical feedback and insight gained from the front lines of dealing with the important issues facing the county on a daily basis. The TAC members played a vital role in development of the Implementation and Policies chapters of the *Community Agenda*. Involvement of the TAC members in this phase was crucial since these are the people who will be coordinating the execution of many of the actions/projects identified in the Short-Term Work Program or administering polices defined in the Agenda. The committee of 18 members held a total of five meetings during the planning process. Two of these meetings where held jointly with the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee began meeting in January 2008. This group included a mix of appointed officials, key property owners, neighborhood leaders, chamber and other economic development professionals, community service providers, areas residents, and others with some stake in the future development of the County. Like the TAC member, the Steering Committee members also reviewed drafts of the major plan components at various points during the process of developing the *Community Agenda*, providing at each step of the way critical feedback and insight gained from their diverse backgrounds and experiences in Whitfield County. The committee of 21 members held a total of five meetings during the planning process. Two of these meetings where held jointly with the Technical Advisory Committee.

Questionnaires

Two community questionnaires were used in the development of the *Community Agenda.* An issues and opportunities questionnaire was distributed via the County website, at the Kickoff Meeting and at various locations for the general public. In addition, in conjunction with the County's Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (underway simultaneously with the production of the Community Agenda) generated tremendous public input via an online multiple-choice questionnaire. While focused primarily on park and recreation activities, this survey also provided valuable information for comprehensive planning.

You are invited to create the vision for future growth and development in Whitfield County!

Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell are updating the comprehensive plan. Public events are planned to help stakeholders envision the future.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive plan establishes a clear vision of the kind of place a community wants to be in the future, and provides a course of action to build what stakeholders envision. A Comprehensive Plan shapes decisions such as:

- Location of commercial, office and residential land uses
- Necessity of infrastructure expansion
- Areas of environmental or historical significance that should be protected
- Identify needs and appropriate land use controls such as zoning and development standards

Which Visioning Workshop should I attend?

Any interested resident, property owner or business owner should attend one of the five Visioning Workshops. Each Workshop will follow a similar agenda, yet focus on a particular area (i.e. general area surrounding the meeting location). Stakeholders are encouraged to attend workshops at locations nearest to them. The Countywide Framework Workshop will bring together these areas for one meeting, as will the Open House

How can I prepare for the meetings?

- Take time to think about what you want the community to be like in the future.
- Read the *Community Assessment*, available at http://www.whitfieldcountyga.com/ to familiarize yourself important issues that have been identified.
- Call neighbors, friends, members of your organization, or congregation and to invite them
- Prepare your ideas, questions, and concerns to be expressed at the meeting. You can download an Issues & Opportunities questionnaire from the Website as a guide, or you might just consider:
  - What areas are experiencing change?
  - Are there areas, streets or corridors that need special attention?
  - What are some specific uses or opportunities you would like to have (e.g. more shopping? community center? parks? office space?)

Public Meeting Schedule

Kickoff Meeting
Tues., March 18 @ 6:00 p.m.
County Admin. Building #2
214 King Street, Dalton

Visioning Workshops

Tunnel Hill Area
Thurs., April 3 @ 6:00 p.m.
Tunnel Hill City Hall
201 G. Vaughn Pkwy., Tunnel Hill

East Whitfield County Area
Tues., April 8 @ 6:00 p.m.
Dawnville Elementary School
1380 Dawnville Rd. NE

Varnell Area
Thurs., April 10 @ 6:00 p.m.
Varnell Gymnasium
Ruritan Drive, Off Ga. Hwy. 2, Varnell

Dalton Area
Tues., April 22 @ 6:00 p.m.
Dalton Community Center
218 N. Fredrick St., Dalton

West Whitfield County Area
Thurs., April 24 @ 6:00 p.m.
Westside Elementary School
1815 Utility Rd.

Framework Workshop
Tues., May 20 @ 6:00 p.m.
Dalton Community Center
218 N. Fredrick St., Dalton

Countywide Open House
Tues., June 10 @ (Time TBA)
County Admin. Building #2

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Website: http://www.whitfieldcounty.com

Community flyer shown above was distributed to the public to promote community meetings

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Throughout the planning process, public documents were posted on the Whitfield County and City of Dalton government websites. Public meetings were announced and detailed accounts reported in the Dalton *Daily Citizen* and *Chattanooga Times-Free Press* newspapers, which also provided those who did not attend meetings with an opportunity to understand the planning process.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

In order to implement a vision for growth and development by guiding and implementing land use and development policy in unincorporated Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell, as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Each jurisdiction addresses each of the elements described below in individual chapters that focus specifically on that jurisdiction.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

The Future Development Map reflects the community vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with an extensive public countywide visioning process, is expressed in unique "character areas" that cover the entire County. Together the character areas form the Future Development Map, which replaces the Future Land Use Map adopted with the previous comprehensive plan. The Future Development Map character areas are organized by common themes of development throughout the County promoting desired development patterns, guiding design and physical development, providing a framework for regulatory and policy changes and helping to guide future rezonings.

While the Future Development Maps recommend land uses and development patterns for a 20-year planning horizon, it is important that they be reviewed on an annual basis to determine if amendments are needed based on changing market and demographic trends.

THE DAILY CITIZEN

'Visioning' workshop for Tunnel Hill tonight

timesfreepress.com
Chattanooga Times Free Press

Planners use community's vision

Local newspapers ran stories related to the comprehensive plan update

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

A five-year short term work program (STWP) is the primary implementation tool for achieving the community vision. It includes action items for implementation by the governing body that are based on recommended strategies identified for each character area and for each planning element in the Issues and Opportunities section (housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, land use, transportation, community facilities and services and intergovernmental coordination). Action items that are intended to be implemented in the long term (after 2013) are presented in a long term work program.

POLICIES

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the comprehensive plan, including achieving the Vision for Future Development and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. Policy statements are identified for each planning element.

CHAPTER 2

UNINCORPORATED WHITFIELD COUNTY

Presenting the Community Vision, Community Issues & Opportunities and the Implementation Plan for Unincorporated Whitfield County

Whitfield County was established on December 30, 1851 by the Georgia General Assembly. The county was named for George Whitefield, a minister in the Church of England who settled in Georgia in 1738. Whitfield County had a 2007 estimated population of 93,379 and is bounded by the Georgia-Tennessee state line to the north, Murray County to the east, Gordon County to the south and Catoosa and Walker counties to the west.

Dug Gap Road winds along the west side of the ridge in unincorporated Whitfield County.

Whitfield County includes the municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. It also consists of numerous smaller communities that are not incorporated cities but are recognized places in the County. These are addressed by geographic area:

Multi-purpose trails located in Edwards Park in north Whitfield County

Northside

The northern portion of the County (north of Dalton city limits/ Dawnville Road area and east of I-75) includes agricultural and low-density residential uses east of SR 71/Cleveland Highway, suburban neighborhoods and commercial nodes along SR 71, and the ridges of Rocky Face and Cohutta. Northside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Beaverdale, Cedar Valley, Cohutta Ridge, Hopewell, Norton, Plainview, Pleasant Grove, Prater's Mill, Norton, Rocky Face Ridge, Toonerville and Waring.

Southside

The south side of Whitfield County is located south of the City of Dalton. The area includes portions of the Chattahoochee National Forest located west of I-75, interchange areas at Carbondale and Connector 3 as well as historic rural communities located throughout the area. Southside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Carbondale, Five Springs, Nance Springs, Phelps, River Bend and Tilton.

Westside

The west side of the County is comprised of the areas west of I-75, including residential areas south of Tunnel Hill, the steep slopes of the Dug Gap Ridge, the Chattahoochee National Forest and the western most portion of the county, and the following communities: Dug Gap Ridge, Gordon Springs, Mill Creek, Mt. Vernon and Trickum.

Eastside

The eastern portion of Whitfield County includes areas east of the City of Dalton, including a segment of the Dalton Bypass, commercial development along SR 76, higher density residential areas just east of Dalton, and the Dalton Municipal Airport. Eastside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Dawnville, Cedar Ridge and Keith's Mill.

COMMUNITY VISION

The Community Vision section paints a picture of what the Whitfield County desires to become and provides complete descriptions of the development patterns envisioned. This section begins with the vision statement for unincorporated Whitfield County. The Community Vision then presents the Future Development Map subsection that includes the Future Development Map with supporting character area descriptions. Finally, the Community Vision outlines its relationship to the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) as set forth by DCA in Appendix A.

Club building located in Dawnville community of east Whitfield County

VISION STATEMENT

Whitfield County and its cities are a proud and vibrant community that works to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency. We embrace our history while coming together as a community to promote economic growth and development, protect our natural and cultural resources and build a successful future for our children that includes:

- Guiding future development with informed land use plans that take into account the protection of our natural resources
- Providing a variety of walkable neighborhoods with sidewalks, greenway trails and bike lanes
- Creating a variety of opportunities for our children, including recreational facilities, historical and educational-oriented resources
- An inclusive community that offers a variety of public transportation opportunities for its residents, with special attention given to those disadvantaged by age, income, or special needs
- A community that embraces its history with preservation of historic resources and neighborhoods

- A clean, comfortable, nice, peaceful, family-friendly community
- A community that actively promotes and pursues innovative businesses, while investing in and retaining a high quality of life for our residents.
- A regional university that has attractive programs and an enriching educational environment
- A community rich with neighborhood parks

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Future Development Map that reflects the vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with the extensive public visioning process described in Chapter 1, is expressed in unique "character areas."

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the future. Character areas define areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have potential to evolve into unique areas or require special attention because of unique development issues.

The following pages present the Future Development Maps/character area narratives for unincorporated Whitfield County. Each description includes the following information:

- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

The **development pattern** describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design
- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park areas

Historic rural home located in the Dawnville community of east Whitfield County

- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development

The **primary land use** section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Finally, the **implementation strategies** section identifies the measures the County can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal.

In addition to the three levels of description above, the **Quality Community Objectives (QCO)** analysis for each Character Area can be found in Appendix A. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

The Future Development Map for unincorporated Whitfield County identifies the following character areas:

- Preserve
- Rural Agricultural Reserve
- Rural Residential
- Rural Neighborhood Revitalization
- Rural Crossroads
- Ridge Conservation
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Emerging Suburban
- Rural Corridor
- Commercial Corridor
- Transition Corridor
- Bypass Corridor
- Community Activity Center
- Regional Activity Center
- Interchange
- Industrial
- Airport
- Dalton State Corridor *
- Medical District *

** The majority of parcels are located inside the Dalton city limits. For a complete description of these character areas please reference Chapter 3.*

PRESERVE

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas and significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and conservation areas not suitable for development of any kind. The Preserve character area seeks to enhance the significance of these resources and ensure their protection.

Mill Creek in west Whitfield County and its floodplain are part of the Preserve character area.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for passive use recreation and tourism destinations (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education

Wetlands such as those shown above found adjacent to the Old Dixie Highway corridor south of the Dalton Bypass, are part of the Preserve character area.

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture

Public parks, such as the county-owned property adjacent to Valley Point middle and elementary schools, are also part of the Preserve character area.

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, addresses greenway trail crossings of all roads, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and addresses recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance*

☞ *Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve character areas*

- *Promote Preserve character areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations*
- *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices(BMP) to protect water quality*
- *Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners*
- *Adopt "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*
- *Follow BMPs for erosion and sedimentation control, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act*

Ridge conservation is important in order to protect views and the natural resources.

RIDGE CONSERVATION

This area includes the Rocky Face Ridge and Dug Gap Ridge that both parallel I-75, as well as all steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%). Hillside development has the potential to harm the area's natural resources and scenic views due to erosion and the loss of trees. The Ridge Conservation character area is intended to maintain the areas' ridgelines, which contribute to the County's unique character and its history, while accommodating low-density residential development with minimal impact on the environment.

New residential development occurring atop the ridge in the Ridge Conservation character area.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures
- Preserve historic/cultural resources along ridges
- Incorporate adequate infrastructure for accessibility and for water and fire protection needs
- Protect existing trees
- Protect steep slopes and natural landscape
- Protect scenic views
- Preserve rural character and viewsheds
- Conserve natural features and resources
- Limit impacts of new development on the environment
- Reduce impervious cover
- Utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Encourage low-intensity uses

Dug Gap Road winds through the ridge west of Dalton.

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Forestry/Agricultural

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Adopt hillside development/steep slope ordinance*

RURAL AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

The Rural Agricultural Reserve character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural and large-lot residential uses. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural. Housing tends to be scattered across the landscape on very large lots and is typically not in proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or sewer infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's rural tradition and active farms and maintain its rural, open spaces. These areas lack sewer infrastructure which makes urban and suburban scale development unsuitable.

Farms on large acerage dominate the coutnryside in northeast Whitfield County, which is home to a majority of the Rural Agricultural character area.

The Rural Agricultural Reserve character area comprises much of the northeast, southwest and southeast portions of the County, including the following communities: Beaverdale, eastern Hopewell, Norton, Prater's Mill, Gordon Springs, Trickum, River Bend, and portions of Nance Spring and Tilton.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

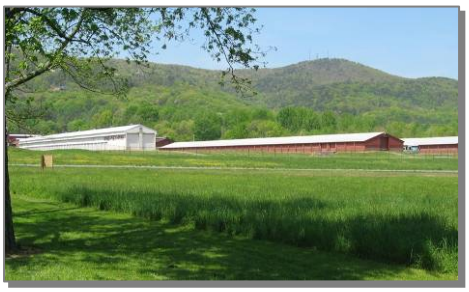
- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes and adopting local policies promoting the right to farm
- Benefit from use of land conservation tools that may include conservation easements, conservation subdivisions, Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer of Development (TDRs)
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, hillsides and other natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways
- Discourage extension of public utilities into these areas (*i.e.* public sewer)
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover

Conservation subdivisions allow smaller lots in exchange for protecting large areas of open space and are appropriate in Rural//Agricultural areas. Thes subivisions are appropriate, though at different overall densities, for the Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas.

- Discourage excessive clearing and grading in order to protect trees, topography and water quality
- Accommodate low-intensity residential uses at a net density of 1 dwelling unit per 25 acres
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

Primary Land Uses

- Agricultural
- Rural residential
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)



Rural Agricultural character area includes large farms.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a policy that discourages extension of public utilities into Rural Agricultural Reserve character areas*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Rural Agricultural Reserve zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Agricultural Reserve Character Area*
- ☞ *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*
- ☞ *Adopt typical street cross-sections and/or development standards for Rural Agricultural Reserve character areas that identify appropriate width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk*
- ☞ *Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners to help preserve viable farmland*
- ☞ *Promote the use of Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer of Development (TDRs)*
- ☞ *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks* ***(for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)***

Rural Residential character area along Old Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The Rural Residential character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural, "conservation subdivision" and/or large-lot residential uses. Rural Reserve areas consist of privately owned areas where agricultural uses and low density development are common. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural. Housing tends to be clustered in hamlets or are scattered across the landscape and are typically not in

proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's agricultural tradition and maintain its rural, open spaces.

Lack of sewer infrastructure is common, which makes urban and suburban scale development unsuitable. Conservation subdivisions may be a suitable alternative to large-lot residential uses and an appropriate response to development pressures for neighborhood development in order to maximize existing open space and viewsheds.

Rural Residential character areas are located north of Dalton, east and west of the Emerging Suburban areas (see Emerging Suburban character area description) that parallel SR 71/Cleveland Highway, as well as in the southwestern of the County. The following communities are included in the Rural Residential character area: Cohutta Ridge, western Hopewell, Cedar Valley, Dawnville, Toonerville, Mill Creek, and Carbondale.

Conservation subdivision example in South Fulton County, Georgia. Thes subivisions are appropriate, though at different overall densities, for the Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes or clustering residential development in a design that incorporates significant amounts of open space and natural conservation areas
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, and natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Discourage extension of public utilities into these areas (*i.e.* public water and sewer)
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Accommodate rural residential with a net density of 5 dwelling units per acre
- Promote the use of conservation subdivisions
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion controls and groundwater recharge protection area measures, including Best Management Practices (BMP)

Rural Residential character area in the Carbondale area of south Whitfield County

Rural Residential character area is generally characterized by large lot residential development.

Primary Land Uses

- Agricultural
- Rural residential
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Rural Residential zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Residential Character Area*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*

☞ *Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Residential character areas*

☞ *Adopt typical street cross-sections and/or development standards for these areas that identify appropriate width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk*

☞ *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality*

☞ *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks* ***(for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)***

Rural Corridor character area along SR 52 east of Varnell

RURAL CORRIDOR

The Rural Corridor character area includes sparsely developed or undeveloped public or private land on both sides of a rural arterial with significant natural, scenic or pastoral views that would be disrupted by leap frog, conventional suburban residential development along or near the corridor. Public roadway features, such as signs, roadside erosion control, drainage and materials storage also have a major impact on the scenic quality and character of these corridors. The overall character of the Rural Corridor character areas is similar to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential areas, but it differs in that pressure for development tends to be greater along corridors. The Rural Corridor character area covers roughly 300 feet of property on each side of Rural Corridors shown on the Future Development Map.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Prohibit linear, commercial strip center development and concentrate commercial development at Rural Crossroads nodes

- Enact guidelines for new development that enhance the scenic value of the corridor and addresses landscaping and architectural design to protect rural scenery, historic resources and prevent unattractive sprawl development/visual clutter along the roadway
- Preserve tree lines and groves adjacent to the corridor
- Consider the use of drainage swales for paved roads in lieu of curb and gutter
- Encourage compatible architectural styles that maintain the regional rural character and do not include franchise or corporate architecture
- Limit parking in front of commercial properties
- Connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes
- Provide bicycle accommodations
- Institute driveway controls and access management standards to facilitate traffic flow
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Promote Cohutta-Chattahoochee Scenic Byway spur to Prater's Mill

Rural Corridor character area along SR 286/Dawnville Road in east Whitfield County

Primary Land Uses

- Passive or small active parks
- Agriculture
- Large lot residential

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt Rural Corridor Overlay District*

☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan for Rural Corridors with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*

RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

The Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area encompasses the southern portion of the County, east of I-75 on both sides of U.S. 41/Dixie Highway. The character area includes residential uses (primarily low-density residential) as well as undeveloped or agricultural areas. Like the Rural Residential character area, development should respect the community's agricultural tradition and maintain its rural, open spaces, which can be achieved with the use of conservation subdivisions. Unlike the Rural Residential areas, this character area includes opportunities for infill development and community revitalization efforts in more established residential areas.

Example of the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area in southeast Whitfield County

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Stabilize and maintain existing housing stock
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setbacks and style of existing adjacent homes
- Preserve rural character, open spaces, view sheds, natural features/resources and farmland
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Accommodate rural residential at a net density of 1 dwelling units per 5 acres
- Promote the use of conservation subdivisions
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and sedimentation control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

Example of the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area in southeast Whitfield County

Primary Land Uses

- Rural residential
- Agricultural
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

Site designs that place parking to the rear or side of buildings help preserve rural character, while also providing retail and other services for surrounding communities.

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt a new zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area*

☞ *Prepare revitalization strategy for addressing housing needs identified in the Whitfield County Housing Condition Study for this area*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*

☞ *Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character areas*

☞ *Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character areas that identify*

appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use grass drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk

RURAL CROSSROADS

The Rural Crossroads character area includes key intersections in small communities in more rural areas of the County, including Cedar Valley, Cedar Ridge, Gordon Springs and Mill Creek. These areas are intended to serve adjacent residential or agricultural areas with limited goods and services concentrated around an intersection rather than spread out in a linear fashion along a roadway. Small scale retail uses, public facilities such as churches, fire stations, post offices and libraries, and agricultural support businesses such as commercial nurseries, farm implement sales and supply stores, farmer's markets and feed and seed stores are appropriate uses in this character area.

Rural Crossroads character area in the Mill Creek community

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect rural character
- Provide small-scale commercial opportunities for meeting local needs
- Cluster buildings at the area's center
- Maintain open space surrounding the center
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character rather than "franchise" or "corporate" architecture
- Limit clearing and grading
- Reduce access points along the highway
- Connect to greenways/trail system, wherever possible

Primary Land Uses

- Neighborhood or rural commerical uses
- Civic/institutional (at a rural scale only)
- Passive or active parks

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Adopt Rural Crossroads Zoning Overlay District that includes minimum standards for commercial building and site design*

☞ *Widen roadways only when absolutely necessary*

Suburban neighborhood character area near Varnell

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Suburban Neighborhood character area describes areas where conventional patterns of post-World War II suburban residential subdivision development have been the dominant pattern. In addition to conventional subdivisions, some multi-family uses are present in this character area. Neighborhoods tend to be

characterized by low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, and are predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.

This character area is typically found in established neighborhoods that surround historic areas and in unincorporated areas where growth has occurred over the last thirty years. Examples can be found surrounding Dalton, Tunnel Hill, north and southwest of Varnell and in the communities of Plainview, Waring, Pleasant Grove, Rocky Face, Mt. Vernon, and Five Springs.

Example of suburban neighborhood development in the Mt. Vernon community of Whitfield County

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setback and style of existing adjacent homes
- Maintain existing tree cover
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, school buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Incorporate sidewalks, traffic calming improvements and/or increased street interconnections, where appropriate, to improve walkability within existing neighborhoods as well as connectivity to neighboring communities and major destinations, including schools
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to local shops and services
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences

Suburban Neighborhood development in Whitfield County typically has wide lots with a limited pedestrian network, as shown above.

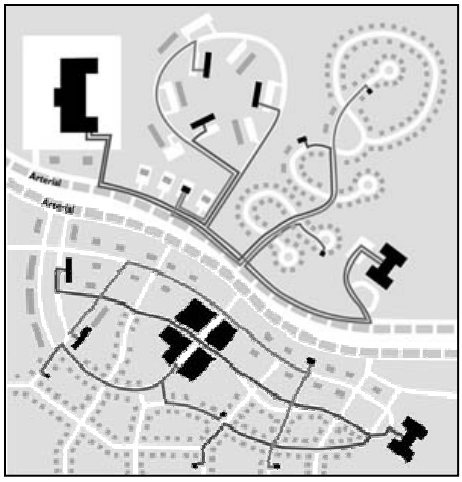
Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a connector street plan*



The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.

EMERGING SUBURBAN

The Emerging Suburban character area covers areas east of Dalton, west of I-75 around and south of Tunnel Hill, and along SR 71/Cleveland Highway that have experienced some residential growth and are positioned to accommodate more due to general

land use trends in the area or to proximity to existing neighborhoods.

New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated in the Community Activity Center character area.

Neighborhood focal points can be created within Emerging Suburban areas by locating schools or community centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Small-scale, walkable mixed use neighborhood centers can create neighborhood focal points and can be accommodated with master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). In addition, conservation subdivisions should be permitted as a suitable alternative to traditional low-density residential subdivisions in order to protect and maximize open space.

Emerging Suburban neighborhood located in Westside

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect natural and scenic resources
- Provide connected system of streets within new neighborhoods and to existing neighborhoods where possible, resulting in an expanded/alternate local street network for motorists and emergency vehicles
- Accommodate master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern, encourages walking, and minimizes the need for auto trips within a subdivision
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space and active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Limit clearing and grading
- Permit use of conservation subdivisions with the goal of maximizing open space
- Include a variety of housing choices
- Provide sidewalks, street trees and decorative, pedestrian-scale lighting
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences

A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Whitfield County.

Pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees and homes with front porches are encouraged in Emerging Suburban.

- Protect water quality with appropriate measures for soil and erosion control and groundwater recharge area protection, including Best Management Practices (BMP)

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential (net density of 2 dwellings per acre)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance*

☞ *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*

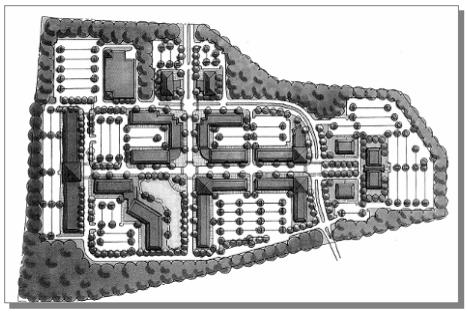
☞ *Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Suburban, Suburban Neighborhood and Traditional Neighborhood character areas currently underserved*

☞ *Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintains the natural tree canopy as much as possible*

Example of appropriate design and intensity for Regional Activity Centers shown above at The Avenues of Indian Lake in Hendersonville, Tennessee

REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER

Regional Activity Center character area represents a concentration of regionally-marketed commercial and retail centers, office and employment areas, and mixed use development. These areas are characterized by a high degree of access by vehicular traffic, on-site parking, low degree of internal open space; high floor-area-ratio; large tracts of land, campus or unified development.



Master Plans are an essential part of ensuring that regional mixed use areas develop as envisioned.

While established Regional Activity Centers are typically single-story suburban shopping centers with minimal office space and housing and limited parking lot landscaping, over time these areas should evolve into mixed use, walkable centers of commerce that attract customers from a regional market and include a variety of housing choices.

An example of this character area is West Walnut Avenue., located east of I-75. This area, which includes the Dalton Factory Outlet Stores and other commercial uses that benefit from close proximity to the interstate and serve both local residents as well as interstate traffic, is currently the retail center of the County and is a significant gateway to Dalton and surrounding areas. As an important gateway to the county as well as a heavily traveled area, focus should be paid on enhancing mobility and connectivity for cars and pedestrians, as well as the overall aesthetics of the area (streetscape and building/site design).

Example of appropriate scale and landscaping in the Regional Activity Center shown from the Gerber Village development in Asheville, North Carolina

Desired development patterns

- Include relatively high-density mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, including multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums, including affordable and workforce housing
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Design should be very pedestrian oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Include direct connections to nearby networks of greenspace or trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreation purposes
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Provide bike lanes or wide curb lanes to encourage bicycling and provide additional safety, provide conveniently located, preferably sheltered, bicycle parking at retail and office destinations and in multi-family dwellings
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and should not include "franchise" or "corporate" architecture
- Provide parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious arrangements in addition to the use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking

Quality commercial development appropriate in the Regional Activity Center character area here shown from the Town Center area of Cobb County, Georgia.

Mixed use should is encouraged to include upper-floor residential uses in the Regional Activity Center, such as the above from Rosemary Beach, Florida

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Regional Activity Center example of appropirate scale shown from The Avenue of Murfreesboro in Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Extend sewer infrastructure to Regional Activity Center character area locations currently without service*

☞ *Encourage "greyfield redevelopment" of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use, walkable development*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Ordinance to facilitate greyfield redevelopment and implement Regional Activity Center character area master plans*

- ☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Adopt Master Plans for Regional Activity Center character areas*

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Community Activity Center character area typically represents locations at important intersections along major thoroughfares adjacent to Suburban Neighborhood and Emerging Suburban areas. Community Activity Centers serve the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community, generally those neighborhoods within a five-to-10-minute drive. These community focal points include a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.

Development should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees, as shown by this phramacy in the Grant Park neighborhood of Atlanta.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Develop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the center through locating higher density housing options adjacent to the center, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provides a transition between the character area and surrounding areas
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with sidewalks between different uses
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development at major roadway intersections (nodal development) to serve surrounding residential areas
- Discourage strip development

- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage, align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways
- Provide inter-parcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Mixed use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office and residential in the same building, as shown in this exapmple from Seaside, Florida

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt "Big Box" ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Implement an overlay district or amend land development regulations to direct building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- ☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects*
- ☞ *Adopt a Mixed Use Development Overlay District*
- ☞ *Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly*

Transition Corridor character area along U.S. 41/Dixie Highway south of Dalton includes some industrial uses within its mix

TRANSITION CORRIDOR

The Transition Corridor character area represents arterial or collector roads with frontage that generally developed with single-family residences that have over the years seen increased traffic and resulting capacity improvements (i.e. road widening). These improvements resulted in increased traffic volume and associated impacts (e.g., noise, increased trash, street widening, etc.) making uses other than single-family residential more attractive. Some corridors are more densely developed with older structures and numerous curb cuts that may provide an opportunity for

redevelopment, while others are less developed with a mix of lot sizes and uses, including undeveloped property.

Transition Corridors have experienced or have the potential to experience piecemeal zoning changes that over an extended period result in front yard conversions to parking lots, unsightly home to business additions and conversions, and signage out of proportion to the structures. The Transition Corridor seeks to avoid this approach.

Transition Corridor character area along U.S. 41/Old Dixie Highway south of Dalton includes some residential uses within its mix

Frontage properties along Transition Corridors should follow the development pattern described for the adjacent road-fronting character areas. However, upon completion of more detailed corridor master plans, these corridors could accommodate new commercial development concentrated in nodes at important intersections, but should not accommodate strip commercial between nodes. With a master plan, the Transition Corridor could also accommodate higher residential densities along the roadway between nodes, with lower density areas beyond the frontage properties. Master plans along with a zoning overlay are necessary to ensure that change along these corridors occurs in an orderly, comprehensive manner and applies consistent development standards throughout the corridor.

Transitional Corridor character areas include:

- U.S 41/South Dixie Highway south of Dalton to the Connector 3 interchange
- Lafayette Road between Old Highway 41 and Mt. Vernon Road
- Old Highway 41
- U.S. 76 to Lower Dawnville Road/ SR 286

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- With a corridor master plan, cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor that serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide for walkable, higher intensity housing choices located between nodes
- Accommodate conversion of existing residential uses into office or commercial uses while maintaining the existing building
- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards and display unobtrusive business signs that are appropriately sized and constructed for the area
- Incorporate streetscape enhancements to improve the overall appearance of the corridors"

New development set back from the street on redeveloping Transition Corridors should protect mature trees where possible and include new landscaping and quality architectural design.

- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and adjacent character areas, in particularly those that include residential uses
- Landscape parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, to improve the appearance of a site, and to shield parking areas from public view
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage)
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning by coordinating land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Prevent encroachment of commercial uses into adjacent residential areas
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

Existing Commercial Corridor character area shown along SR 52 northeast of the Dalton city limits in unincorporated Whitfield County lacks sidewalks and is characterized by limited sign and building design consistancy.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial/retail uses, professional offices, mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space) and multi-family residential with the completion of a master plan for the corridor.
- Single-family residential

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridors to guide future enhancements along the roadways (e.g. landscaping, sidewalks and streetlights)*

☞ *Adopt a corridor overlay district to regulate building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor.*

Corridor Commercial areas should over time redevelop as mixed use, pedestrian-friendly communities.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Commercial Corridor character area includes developed land on both sides of a high-volume street or highway that is primarily made up of automobile-oriented strip commercial and office development. It is characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk (though they often do not have sidewalks) by parking lots with few shade trees. Commercial Corridors generally have a high degree of traffic congestion; numerous curb cuts, especially in more densely developed areas such as Dalton, minimize the transportation functionality of a corridor. Over time, the area should redevelop as pedestrian-friendly mixed use corridors.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor (see also Commercial Corridor character area description)
- Provide sidewalks and a more pedestrian-friendly environment by incorporating landscaped buffers between the roadway and sidewalks and placing buildings closer to the street
- Limit signs and billboards
- Increase landscaping along the corridor, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design related to the building, the site, and signage
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors should strive to create the connected, mixed-use corridor shown on the bottom and avoid recreating the existing condition shown on the top in the above graphic.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space)

Implementation Strategies

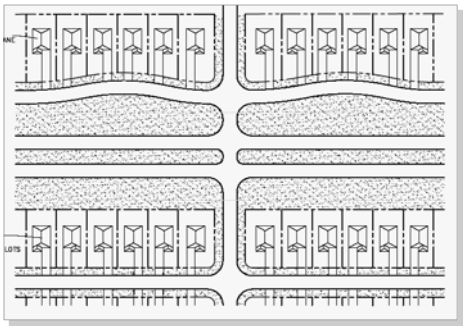
☞ *Prepare and adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Commercial Corridor character areas to guide future enhancements*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Overlay District to facilitate "greyfield redevelopment" and implement Commercial Corridor character area master plans*

☞ *Prepare and adopt "Big Box" ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*

☞ *Implement Commercial Corridor overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access management, interparcel access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*

- *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects*
- *Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly*



Access management is necessary along the Dalton Bypass to allow for development

BYPASS CORRIDOR

The Bypass Corridor character area is the Dalton Bypass. In addition to its transportation function, the Bypass is generating new development activity. This is true of the northern portion, where industrial uses are prevalent and where residential areas north of Dalton continue to expand. Development plans include a 1.2 million square feet mixed use development at Underwood Road (part of the Regional Activity Center character area), to include retail, residential (apartments and senior housing and flex office space. The project in turn has the potential to spawn additional growth along the Bypass.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Discourage strip development
- Maintain traffic flow with access management measures and nodal development
- Establish a connected street network for new development that links to existing streets
- Include a relatively high-density mix of commercial and retail centers, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types (town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums) that can serve a broad range of incomes, including workforce and senior housing
- Encourage mixed use development with screened parking, landscaping, internal sidewalk and street connectivity, and quality building materials and site design
- Provide strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Connect to nearby networks of greenspace/multi-use trails/bike paths where available
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential areas Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots

Dalton Bypass area shown above east of Dalton city limits

- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Prohibit billboards and limit business sign height/size to minimize "visual clutter"
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Industrial Warehousing
- Mixed use
- Higher density residential uses

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and incorporate into development review a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*

☞ *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites*

☞ *Recruit businesses that are suitable for the Bypass Corridor character area*

☞ *Implement a Bypass Corridor Overlay District to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access management, interparcel access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*

☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects*

Interchange character area shown above located at the I-75/Carbondale Road interchange

INTERCHANGE

The Interchange character area represents three of the five Whitfield County interchanges locations along I-75: east of Tunnel Hill and south of Dalton (Connector 3 and Carbondale exits are combined into a single Interchange area, as reflected on the Future Development Map). The interchanges are characterized by auto-oriented commercial and industrial uses that cater to travelers along I-75 and the nearby industrial workforce. Access to the interstate has allowed industrial uses to flourish in some areas while also providing numerous entry points to the County. As prominent gateways to the County, attention should be paid to permitted signage, the presence of sidewalks and other site or streetscape features that can enhance or detract from the aesthetic and functional qualities of the area.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Limit "interchange commercial" uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural or residential areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Provide access management measures such as interparcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Discourage strip development
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent "visual clutter"
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

Connector 3 interchange includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and retail uses in buildings with large, one-story footprints. The area is designed to accommodate automobile traffic, but provides few options for walking and biking.

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Interstate commercial (gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores)

Interchange area near Carbondale Road/I-75 interchange designated for future industrial and business park development.

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and incorporate into development review a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*

☞ *Continue to coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks*

☞ *Implement Interchange Overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the interchange area*

☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan, with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*

☞ *Expand sewer service to include all Interchange areas currently underserved (e.g. west of I-75 including portions of Carbondale and Connector 3 interchange areas*

INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial character area includes land used in low and high intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade, distribution, assembly, processing, and similar uses that may or may not generate excessive noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics. Most notable in the County is the carpet industry, which traditionally has been the driving economic force in the area and continues to be a large employer. A goal of this character area is to allow opportunities to expand this base while also accommodating new businesses.

Industrial area in south Dalton defined by large footprint, one-story industrial and warehouse structures.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Prohibit residential uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential or rural areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Provide access management measures to maintain traffic flow (e.g. shared driveways and interparcel access for similar uses on adjacent properties)
- Incorporate landscaping of parking lots
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements
- Protect air and water quality
- Prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding population
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site design
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent "visual clutter"

Industrial character areas should encourage development of attractive large-scale building footprints that can accommodate the needs of a changing economy.

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites*

- ☞ *Prepare and incorporate into development review a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*
- ☞ *Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks*

AIRPORT

The Airport character area is composed of those lands in the approach zones around the Dalton Municipal Airport (DMM). Largely vacant, with the exception of the airport, is currently largely undeveloped and rural with some scattered single-family residential development nearby.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Building heights limited to avoid conflict with airport operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses, including residential land uses, public gathering places (i.e., churches and schools), and any other use that may affect visibility or safe electronic instrument approaches and departures from the airport
- Discourage land uses that may present a potential conflict with future aviation operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses by enforcing regulations
- Promote traditional rural land uses in the surrounding areas

Dalton Municipal Airport in southeast Whitfield County

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Enforce existing height restrictions*
- ☞ *Review rezoning requests to insure compatibility with this character area.*
- ☞ *Determine and administer appropriate buffer for noise and safety to accommodate the long-range needs of the airport*
- ☞ *Evaluate need for other requirements for new development to address land use compatibility and the mitigation of any impacts that may adversely affect existing or future aviation operations or aviation-related land uses at the airport*

Map 1 Future Development Map – Unincorporated Whitfield County

COMMUNITY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

POPULATION

Issues

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

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

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

Opportunities

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

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

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

Strategies

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

HOUSING

Issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attached housing provides housing choice and is encouraged.

Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategies

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

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategies

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

Dalton State College provides higher education opportunities in North Georgia.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Issues

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

Opportunities

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

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

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

Dalton-Whtifield Landfille off of Old Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County

Strategies

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

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

TRANSPORTATION

Issues

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

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

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

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

Railroad access is an important strenth for Whitfield County

Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategies

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

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

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

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

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

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

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conasauga River in Whitfield County

Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

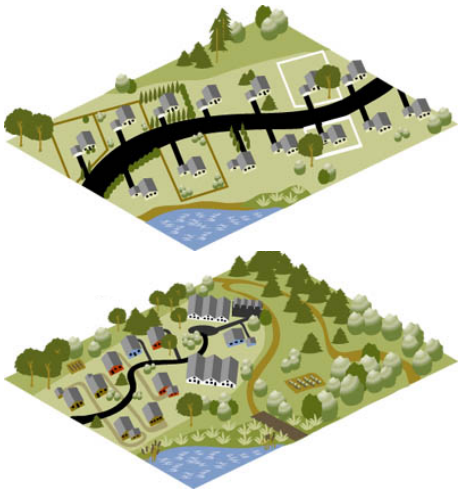
low-impact recreation and educational opportunities to Whitfield County residents.

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

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

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

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



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

Strategies

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

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

Commercial development in the Five Springs community

LAND USE

Issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opportunities

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

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

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

Strategies

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

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

Tree canopies are an important element of the Whitfield County character

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Issues

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

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

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

Opportunities

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

Strategies

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

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by Whitfield County to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

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- 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments (see appendix B)
- 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM (STWP)

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the County government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA *(Joint Development Authority)*	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by branding campaign prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA	Variable	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Adopt and promote County standards for the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems for Conservation Subdivisions				✓		Public Works	TBD	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Support the completion and implementation of a long range water resources master plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Environmental Health Dept.	N/A	DU *(Dalton Utilities)*
Community Facilities & Services	Promote updated infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with the Future Development Map and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the Future Development Map	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer	TBD	SPLOST, General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	$25,000	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations		✓	✓	✓	✓	Recreation Dept.	$10M +	General Fund, Grants, SPLOST

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Community Facilities & Services	Pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails		✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	TBD	Grants, General Fund
Transportation	Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update	✓	✓				County Planner, Public Works	N/A	MPO
Transportation	Development a street connectivity study / collector street plan			✓	✓		County Planner	$100,000	SPLOST
Transportation	Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, Public Works	$25,000	General Fund
Transportation	Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, Public Works	$25,000	General Fund
Transportation	Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC	TBD	TBD
Natural & Cultural Resources	Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor protection, water supply watershed protection and groundwater recharge area protection		✓				County Engineer, County Planner	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Incorporate minimum state requirements for environmental protection into the land development review process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer, County Planner	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Evaluate feasibility of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)				✓	✓	County Planner	$50,000	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits in Preserve and Ridge Conservation character areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Pursue additional greenspace acquisition funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner, Recreation Dept.	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Amend zoning ordinance to require or incentivize landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited (or none at all) irrigation				✓	✓	County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	$20,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Rural Agricultural Reserve zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to reflect desired density	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare a "Big Box" ordinance		✓	✓			County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Create an "industrial development impact matrix"		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, JDA	$20,000	JDA
Land Use	Amend land use regulations to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$5,000	General Fund, Grants
Land Use	Adopt a Rural Corridor Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Amend sign ordinance to implement desired development patterns of character areas		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare a Bypass Corridor Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare a Transition Corridor Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare an Interchange Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Land Use	Adopt development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$15,000	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to accommodate increased senior housing opportunities		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Review existing ordinances to support the right to farm, including adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Land Use	Evaluate need for additional land use regulations to address development near the airport		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, Airport Authority	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC, County Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner, County Board of Ed.	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC, County Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner, County Engineer	N/A	General Fund

LONG TERM WORK PROGRAM

A long term work program identifies specific long-term implementation actions the County government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*.

Housing

- Prepare housing revitalization study

Economic Development

- Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts (CID), Business Improvement Districts (BID) and Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) along important corridors and growth areas

Community Facilities & Services

- Expand sewer service to include areas currently underserved and areas where growth is planned
- Implement impact fees

Transportation

- Develop a local and county road improvement plan
- Prepare Access Management Plans for important corridors
- Implement sidewalk projects in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- Coordinate with MPO and Dalton to implement the Public Transit Feasibility Study
- Adopt a connector street plan
- Adopt Streetscape Master Plans to guide future enhancements along corridors

Natural & Cultural Resources

- Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan
- Implement education and marketing program to promote local historic and cultural resources
- Update the county-wide historic resources survey
- Adopt a new zoning district to apply to non-developable properties (public and private) for open space/environmental protection
- Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance

Land Use

- Adopt a Rural Crossroads Zoning District
- Adopt street connectivity requirements for residential areas
- Prepare Master Plans for Regional Activity Center areas

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Facilitate communication among mayors of the County's municipalities and the Board of Commissioners Chairman to discuss issues and develop opportunities to work together

POLICIES

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to County officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following policies are organized by major topic in the following subsections.

Housing

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Stabilize existing neighborhoods by supporting and promoting appropriate rehabilitation activities, infill construction, and code enforcement.
- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores, services and activity centers.
- Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to facilitate denser, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments with a variety of housing types.
- Promote a range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, single-family and multi-family options, senior housing, and higher value housing.

Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements, linkages to existing businesses, and diversification of our economic base.
- Target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Take into account impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision making on economic development projects.

- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, with the County's jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority.
- Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms and private initiatives such as Tax Allocation Districts, Commercial Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts to finance enhancements along important corridors and growth areas.
- Support workforce development efforts to prepare our workforce for expanded opportunities available in a diverse economy.

Community Facilities & Services

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (*i.e.*, already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.
- Limit development within our community to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- Restrict extension of public sewer infrastructure into rural areas where growth is not envisioned.
- Foster expansion of sewer services to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact urban development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens, including in areas where growth is planned.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Support SPLOST as a successful local funding source.

Transportation

- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).
- New and reconstructed roadways will be appropriately designed, using context sensitive design considerations, to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- New and reconstructed roadways will be designed to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions).
- Support creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- Ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.
- Ensure that new development is compatible with existing airport facilities and does not impede its function.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- The protection and conservation of our community's resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Work to redirect development pressure away from agricultural areas in order to conserve farmland to protect and preserve this important component of our community.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality protection.

- Support minimum state requirements for environmental resource protection and incorporate requirements into the land development review process.
- Protect greenspace and greenway corridors, and expand opportunities for public use with a connected system of greenways and trails.
- Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve greenspace and viable farmland, including grant funds, conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR).
- Promote natural, cultural and historic areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential infill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that are human-scale and less auto-oriented.
- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.
- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial or mixed use nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip development along major roadways.
- Incorporate land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.

- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers ("greyfields") with walkable, mixed use development.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in existing and emerging community and regional activity centers.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)
- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, among the jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS

Supplemental plans focus on special areas, situations or issues of importance to the community, such as plans for conservation or management of natural or cultural resources, redevelopment plans for particular areas of the community, master plans for downtown development, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, gateway plans, rural preservation plans, recreation plans, or the community's required solid waste management plan. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the *Community Agenda* by reference.

- Whitfield County Housing Condition Study
- Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County
- Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implementation
- North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan
- 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan
- Transit Feasibility Study

CHAPTER 3

CITY OF DALTON

Presenting the Community Vision, Community Issues & Opportunities and the Implementation Plan for the City of Dalton

The City of Dalton was incorporated in 1847 and is the county seat of Whitfield County. The City encompasses 19.84 square miles and has an estimated population of 33,401 according to the U.S. Census (July 2007). The city is served by SR 71, SR 52, U.S. 41, U.S. 76 and Interstate 75., which has allowed it to become a significant regional economic center, providing employment, retailing and service opportunities.

Dalton City Hall located on East Waugh Street in Downtown Dalton

Historic Downtown Dalton

COMMUNITY VISION

VISION STATEMENT

Dalton shares with the Whitfield County community the collective vision for the area while also owning some of its own uniqueness. So, in addition to the collective vision, the City of Dalton has defined its future vision that includes:

- Growth Management policies that deliver efficient, sprawl preventing growth patterns and promote cooperation, coordination and efficient use and expansion of the City's public facilities and services
- A community offering a variety of neighborhood connections such as sidewalks, greenway trails and bike lanes
- Protecting and promoting downtown's historic resources and its traditional role as the business/civic center of the community
- Preserving the character of established neighborhoods and supporting revitalization efforts to increase housing opportunities and neighborhood stability

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Future Development Map that reflects the vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with the extensive public visioning process described in Chapter 1, is expressed in unique "character areas."

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the future. Character areas define areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have potential to evolve into unique areas or require special attention because of unique development issues.

The following pages present the Future Development Maps/character area narratives for unincorporated Whitfield County. Each description includes the following information:

- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

The **development pattern** describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design
- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park areas
- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development

Historic home located on North Thornton Avenue near Downtown Dalton

The **primary land use** section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Finally, the **implementation strategies** section identifies the measures the County can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal.

In addition to the three levels of description above, the **Quality Community Objectives (QCO)** analysis for each Character Area can be found in Appendix A. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted

by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

The Future Development Map for the City of Dalton identifies the following character areas:

- Preserve
- Ridge Conservation
- Town Neighborhood
- Town Neighborhood Revitalization
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Emerging Suburban
- Downtown
- Commercial Corridor
- Transition Corridor
- Bypass Corridor
- Community Activity Center
- Regional Activity Center
- Industrial
- Medical District
- Dalton State Corridor
- Airport

Civitan Park is part of the Preserve character area in Dalton

PRESERVE

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas and significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and conservation areas not suitable for development of any kind. The Preserve character area seeks to enhance the significance of these resources and ensure their protection.

Brookwood Park is part of the Preserve character area in Dalton

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces

- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for passive use recreation and tourism destinations (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture

Implementation Strategies

- *Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, integrates recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance, and reintroduces the previously proposed Mill Creek Greenway along the creek within the Dalton city limits*
- *Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross these areas*
- *Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations*
- *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality*
- *Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners*
- *Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*
- *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for erosion and sedimentation, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act*

Hillside development on Mt. Siani Road

RIDGE CONSERVATION

This area includes the City of Dalton portions of Rocky Face Ridge and Dug Gap Ridge paralleling I-75, and all other steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%) within the City. Hillside development has the potential to harm the area's natural resources and scenic views due to erosion and the loss of trees. The Ridge Conservation character area is intended to maintain the areas' ridgelines, which contribute to unique character and history of Dalton and Whitfield County, while accommodating low-density residential development that has a minimal impact on the environment.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures
- Preserve historic/cultural resources along ridges
- Incorporate adequate infrastructure for accessibility and for water and fire protection needs
- Protect existing trees
- Protect steep slopes and natural landscape
- Protect scenic views
- Preserve rural character and viewsheds
- Conserve natural features and resources
- Limit impacts of new development on the environment
- Reduce impervious cover
- Utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Encourage low-intensity uses

New subdivision develoment atop the ridge

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Forestry/Agricultural

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Adopt hillside development ordinance*

Single-family home within the Town Neighborhood character area located in the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue Local Historic District

TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Town Neighborhood character area includes residential areas in older parts of the community typically developed prior to World War II. Characteristics include pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, small, regular lots, shallow yards (relative to newer suburban counterparts), less space between

buildings, and some mixed-use elements such as small neighborhood businesses. In Dalton, this character area includes the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue and McCarty Subdivisions, which are locally designated historic districts.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain existing homes and character defining site features (*i.e.* drives, walls, lighting, landscaping, tree cover)
- Promote sensitive building rehabilitation that is in keeping with a building's existing architectural style and scale
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, style and setbacks of existing adjacent homes
- Promote single-family uses
- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and town center
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into the existing development pattern and can benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Maintain existing housing stock and preserve neighborhood character
- Protect historic structures and neighborhoods
- Adhere to locally adopted design guidelines, where applicable

Town Neighborhood area west of Downtown Dalton that includes the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue Local Historic District

Town Neighborhood near the intersection of Woodland Avenue and Underwood Avenue

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Amend zoning Ordinance to include flexible setback provisions for infill development*

☞ *Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance*

☞ *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and prioritize repair/replacement projects*

☞ *Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan for the North Georgia Region*

TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

The Town Neighborhood Revitalization includes established neighborhoods north and east of downtown Dalton, including the following neighborhoods: Crown Mill, Fort Hill, East Dalton and Thread Mill. These neighborhoods are historic but have experienced disinvestment and decline. Over time, the areas have experienced demolition of residences to accommodate commercial uses, parking areas, apartment buildings and industrial uses. Prevalent zoning of properties for industrial uses further contributes to the neighborhoods' instability and diminishing potential for revitalization.

Recent planning efforts, including the City of Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan (2003), Neighborhood Infill Guidelines (2003) and Dalton Historic Housing Infill Study (2006), address these areas and the issues of neighborhood revitalization, opportunities for new growth with infill, and inconsistencies between existing city regulations and desired development for the neighborhoods.

Town Neighborhood Revitilzation area on Underwood Circle in East Dalton

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Support the findings of Dalton's focused studies pertaining to redevelopment and infill opportunities
- Provide opportunities for affordable housing with building rehabilitation and infill construction
- Stabilize and maintain existing housing stock
- Protect residential buildings from demolition
- Accommodate a mix of housing types and sizes with redevelopment, including small-lot single family, townhomes, and live/work units in areas identified in the Urban Redevelopment Plan
- Allow for limited neighborhood commercial uses to serve local residents
- Promote sensitive building rehabilitation that is in keeping with a building's existing architectural style and scale and that of neighboring homes
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, style and setbacks of existing adjacent homes
- Promote single-family uses
- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and downtown Dalton, and between residences and neighborhood commercial uses
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into the existing development pattern and can benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible

- Prevent encroachment by commercial and industrial uses

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Townhomes
- Mixed use (live/work units)
- Neighborhood commercial (as identified in Urban Redevelopment Plan's concept plans)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

- *Amend zoning ordinance that support appropriate infill standards, including flexible setback provisions, to ensure new construction is compatible with existing development patterns*
- *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and prioritize repair/replacement projects*
- *Prepare and adopt a policy framework to prevent encroachment of inappropriate automobile-oriented development that would adversely affect the quality of life and public realm*
- *Prepare and adopt a Greenways Master Plan*
- *Prepare and adopt development regulations updates to address driveway and parking requirements*
- *Develop a City-wide vacant site inventory, identify those that are suitable for infill development and implement recommendations of infill studies already completed*
- *Create a City-wide inventory of buildings suitable for redevelopment*
- *Encourage the creation of neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch groups*
- *Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities for the North Georgia Region*
- *Implement recommendations of the City of Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan for the Crown Mill and East Dalton Neighborhoods*

Town Neighborhood Revitilization area in East Dalton

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Suburban Neighborhood character area describes areas where conventional patterns of post-World War II suburban residential subdivision development have been the dominant pattern. In addition to conventional subdivisions, some multi-family uses are present in this character area. Neighborhoods tend to be characterized by low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, and are predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.

Suburban Neighborhood character area in Dalton is primarily found in established west Dalton neighborhoods such as Westerly Heights, Dickson Acres, Judd Estates, Windemere, Brookwood and Valley Brook. The Pine Hills neighborhood in east Dalton is also part of this character area.

Quiet residential street in an existing Suburban Neighborhood area of Brookwood in west Dalton

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setback and style of existing adjacent homes
- Maintain existing tree cover
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, school buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Incorporate sidewalks, traffic calming improvements and/or increased street interconnections, where appropriate, to improve walkability within existing neighborhoods as well as connectivity to neighboring communities and major destinations, including schools
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services

Existing Suburban Neighborhood community of Westerly Heights near Dalton High School

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Suburban Neighborhood area of Westerly Heights in west Dalton

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Amend the zoning ordinance to permit flexible setback provisions for infill development*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a connector street plan*
- ☞ *Complete existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and to prioritize repair/replacement projects*

EMERGING SUBURBAN

Primarily located in adjacent areas of unincorporated Whitfield County, the Emerging Suburban character area does account for a small amount of property within the City located in northeast and northwest Dalton. It is conceivable that some unincorporated Emerging Suburban areas could be annexed during the planning period, therefore the full narrative is provided here.

Emerging Suburban areas are positioned to accommodate growth due to general land use trends in the area or to proximity to existing neighborhoods. New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated in the Community Activity Center character area.

Pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees and homes with front porches are encouraged in Emerging Suburban

Neighborhood focal points can be created within Emerging Suburban areas by locating schools or community centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Small-scale, walkable mixed use neighborhood centers can create neighborhood focal points and can be accommodated with master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). In addition, conservation subdivisions should be permitted as a suitable alternative to traditional low-density residential subdivisions in order to protect and maximize open space.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect natural and scenic resources
- Provide connected system of streets within new neighborhoods and to existing neighborhoods where possible, resulting in an expanded/alternate local street network for motorists and emergency vehicles
- Accommodate master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern, encourages walking, and minimizes the need for auto trips within a subdivision
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space and active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Limit clearing and grading
- Permit use of conservation subdivisions with the goal of maximizing open space
- Include a variety of housing choices

A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Whitfield County

- Provide sidewalks, street trees and decorative, pedestrian-scale lighting
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences
- Protect water quality with appropriate measures for soil and erosion control and groundwater recharge area protection, including the use of Best Management Practices (BMP)

Primary Land Uses

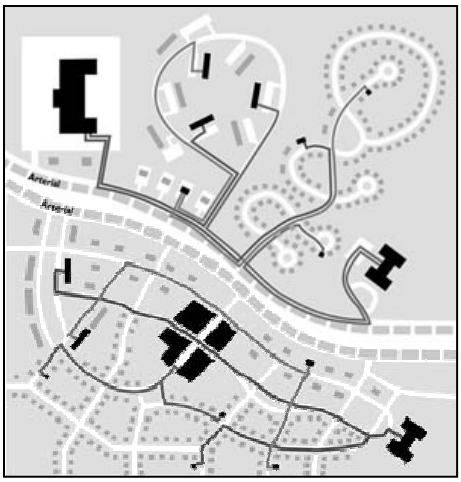
- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance*

☞ *Support street connectivity regulations that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*

☞ *Expand sewer service to include all residential character areas currently underserved*



The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.

DOWNTOWN

The Downtown character area includes Dalton's central business district, which includes both commercial uses and government buildings, as well as industrial uses that traditionally located near the railroad. Goals of the character area include encouraging a mix of uses to create vitality, reinforcing the area's role as a central business district and local activity center, and respecting and promoting the established development pattern of the downtown core.

This character area includes the Downtown Dalton Historic District, which is regulated by a design review process and is eligible for building rehabilitation assistance under the Façade Grant Program. Downtown Dalton is supported by an active Main Street Program and Downtown Development Authority and was the focus of the City's 1999 Streetscape Master Plan and 2001 Dalton Quality Growth Resource Team Report (Georgia Department of Community Affairs).

Pedestrian friendly streetscapes should be expanded in Downtown

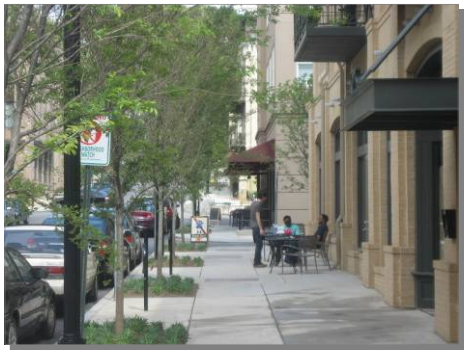
Downtown Dalton provides for mixed use

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Reinforce traditional pedestrian-scaled development patterns, including building placement, lighting, site features, sidewalk use and amenities, traffic patterns, etc.
- Retain and enhance existing building stock with appropriate maintenance and rehabilitation
- Represent a mix of uses that attract residents to the downtown and create vitality
- Serve, and connect to, surrounding neighborhoods
- Protect residential character along Thompson and Glenwood Avenues
- Reinforce downtown as the community focal point of Dalton
- Encourage mixed use development in buildings with underutilized upper floors and with infill opportunities (e.g. residential above ground floor retail)
- Accommodate redevelopment and infill opportunities that respect the traditional development patterns and architectural styles
- Accommodate higher-density residential housing opportunities
- Encourage a creative, visual environment that encourages exploration and attracts patrons such as attractive, changing window displays, public art, and outdoor dining
- Maintain and enhance the areas' historic character
- Clearly define road edges / streetscape with zero lot line setback for new building construction
- Promote commercial, civic and leisure functions of downtown and discourage industrial uses

Downtown supports multi-story commercial and mixed use buildings



Improved sidewalks, on-street parking and new mixed-use buildings, as shown here, are needed in Downtown Dalton

New construction in Downtown should contribute to the existing historic commercial character

Primary Land Uses

- Retail
- Office
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Multi-Family residential
- Government facilities/services
- Parks

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Update historic district design guidelines for downtown Dalton area*

☞ *Extend streetscape improvements to reach entire Downtown character area*

- ☞ *Update zoning ordinance in accordance with desired uses, including mixed-use development*
- ☞ *Continue efforts of Dalton DDA to market downtown, recruit a mix of businesses, and encourage redevelopment where appropriate*

REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER

Regional Activity Center character area represents a concentration of regionally-marketed commercial and retail centers, office and employment areas, and mixed use development. These areas are characterized by a high degree of access by vehicular traffic, on-site parking, low degree of internal open space; high floor-area-ratio; large tracts of land, campus or unified development.

Dalton's existing Regional Activity Centers occur, for the most part, in a linear fashion and include the areas surrounding Walnut Square Mall, West Walnut Avenue and Shugert Road/North Bypass. The North Bypass/Underwood Road area is shown as an emerging center. Each represents a significant gateway to the City. As such, each requires significant focus on enhancing mobility and connectivity for vehicles and pedestrians, enhancing the streetscape and creating a welcoming environment for travelers.

Established Regional Activity Centers are typically single-story suburban shopping centers with minimal office space and housing and limited parking lot landscaping. Over time, these areas should evolve into mixed use, walkable centers of commerce that attract customers from a regional market and include a variety of housing choices.

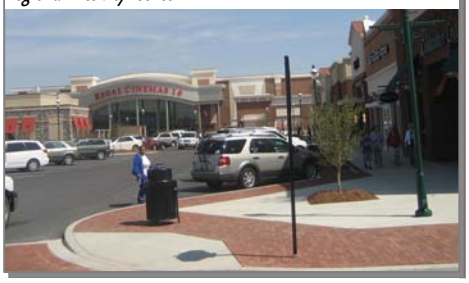
Desired development patterns

- Should include relatively high-density mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, including multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums, including affordable and workforce housing
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Design should be very pedestrian oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Include direct connections to nearby networks of greenspace or trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreation purposes
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Provide bike lanes or wide curb lanes to encourage bicycling and provide additional safety, provide conveniently located, preferably sheltered, bicycle parking at retail and office destinations and in multi-family dwellings

Existing strip commercial development within the Regional Activity Center along West Walnut Avenue

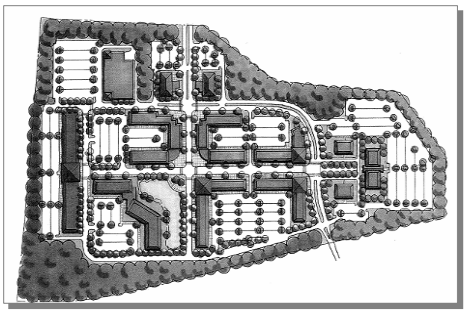
Big box commercial development within the Regional Activity Center along Shugart Road near the North Dalton Bypass and I-75

Multi-family housing on Shugart Road located within the Regional Activity Center



Example of appropriate design and intensity for Regional Activity Centers shown above at The Avenues of Indian Lake in Hendersonville, Tennessee

- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and should not include "franchise" or "corporate" architecture
- Provide parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious arrangements in addition to the use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking



Master Plans are an essential part of ensuring that Reginal Activity Center areas develop as envisioned

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Extend sewer infrastructure to Regional Activity Center character area locations currently without service*
- ☞ *Encourage "greyfield redevelopment" of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use, walkable development*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Ordinance to facilitate greyfield redevelopment and implement Regional Activity Center character area master plans*
- ☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Adopt Master Plans for Regional Activity Center character areas*

Example of appropriate scale and landscaping in the Regional Activity Center shown from the Gerber Vilalge development in Asheville, North Carolina

Regional Activity Center example of appropirate scale shown from The Avenue of Murfreesboro in Murfreesboro, Tennessee

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Community Activity Center character area typically represents locations at important intersections along major thoroughfares adjacent to Town Neighborhood, Suburban Neighborhood and Emerging Suburban areas. Community Activity Centers serve the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community, generally those neighborhoods within a five-to-10-minute drive. These community focal points include a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.

Dalton's existing Community Activity Centers the collection of big box retail on the northeast and southeast quadrants of the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Thornton Avenue and the

shopping area around the intersection of Legion Drive and SR 71/Cleveland Highway

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Develop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the center by locating higher density housing options adjacent to the center, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provides a transition between the character area and surrounding areas
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development at major roadway intersections (nodal development) to serve surrounding residential areas
- Discourage strip development
- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage and align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Development and redevelopment within the Community Activity Center should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees

Mixed use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office and residential in the same building

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities*

- *Prepare and adopt a Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- *Implement Community Activity Center overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the area*
- *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new commercial and mixed use development*
- *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects for Commercial Corridor character area locations*
- *Adopt Mixed Use development ordinance*
- *Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly*

Bry Man's Plaza Nort, an existing Community Activity Center at the intersection of Thornton Avenue and Walnut Avenue

TRANSITION CORRIDOR

The Transition Corridor character area represents arterial or collector roads with frontage that generally developed with single-family residences that have over the years seen increased traffic and resulting capacity improvements (i.e. road widening). These improvements resulted in increased traffic volume and associated impacts (e.g., noise, increased trash, street widening, etc.) making uses other than single-family residential more attractive. Some corridors are more densely developed with older structures and numerous curb cuts that may provide an opportunity for redevelopment, while others are less developed with a mix of lot sizes and uses, including undeveloped property.

Transition Corridors have experienced or have the potential to experience piecemeal zoning changes that over an extended period result in front yard conversions to parking lots, unsightly home to business additions and conversions, and signage out of proportion to the structures. The Transition Corridor seeks to avoid this approach.

Frontage properties along Transition Corridors should follow the development pattern described for the adjacent road-fronting character areas. However, upon completion of more detailed corridor master plans, these corridors could accommodate new commercial development concentrated in nodes at important intersections, but should not accommodate strip commercial between nodes. With a master plan, the Transition Corridor could also accommodate higher residential densities along the roadway between nodes, with lower density areas beyond the frontage properties. Master plans along with a zoning overlay are necessary to ensure that change along these corridors occurs in an orderly, comprehensive manner and applies consistent development standards throughout the corridor.

Dalton, the Transition Corridor character area includes Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is the only Transition Corridor in the City.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- With a corridor master plan, cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor that serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide for walkable, higher intensity housing choices located between nodes
- Accommodate conversion of existing residential uses into office or commercial uses while maintaining the existing building
- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards and display unobtrusive business signs that are appropriately sized and constructed for the area
- Incorporate streetscape enhancements to improve the overall appearance of the corridors"
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and adjacent character areas, in particularly those that include residential uses
- Landscape parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, to improve the appearance of a site, and to shield parking areas from public view
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage)
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning by coordinating land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Prevent encroachment of commercial uses into adjacent residential areas
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

Existing attached housing along Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, a five-lane thouroughfare in east Dalton.

New development set back from the street on redeveloping Transition Corridors should protect mature trees where possible and include new landscaping and quality architectural design.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial/retail uses, professional offices, mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space) and multi-family residential with a corridor master plan
- Single-family residential

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt Corridor/Streetscape Master Plan for Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to guide enhancements*

☞ *Adopt a Transition Corridor overlay district to regulate building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor.*

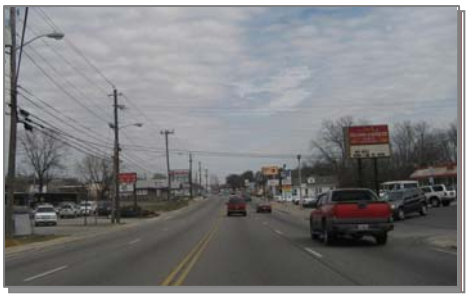
COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Commercial Corridor character area includes developed land on both sides of a high-volume street or highway that is primarily made up of automobile-oriented strip commercial and office development. It is characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk (though they often do not have sidewalks) by parking lots with few shade trees. Commercial Corridors generally have a high degree of traffic congestion; numerous curb cuts, especially in more densely developed areas such as Dalton, minimize the transportation functionality of a corridor. Over time, the area should redevelop as pedestrian-friendly mixed use corridors. Commercial Corridors in Dalton include SR 71/Cleveland Highway, East Walnut Avenue and East Murray Avenue.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor (see also Commercial Corridor character area description)
- Provide sidewalks and a more pedestrian-friendly environment by incorporating landscaped buffers between the roadway and sidewalks and placing buildings closer to the street
- Limit signs and billboards
- Increase landscaping along the corridor, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design related to the building, the site, and signage
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses



Existing development along North Glenwood Avenue within the Commercial Corridor character area looking northbound

Existing Commercial Corridor along U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road looking southbound near I-75 within the Commercial Corridor character area

Existing Commercial Corridor along East Walnut Avenue looking westbound west of the Walnut Square Mall Regional Activty Center area

Existing commercial development along U.S. 41/South Thornton Avenue Commercial Corridor south of Downtown.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space)

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Corridor/Streetscape Master Plans for Commercial Corridor character areas to guide enhancements*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Ordinance to facilitate "greyfield redevelopment" and implement Commercial Corridor character area master plans*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- ☞ *Implement corridor overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan, with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new commercial and mixed use development*
- ☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) corridor planning and plan implementation improvement projects for Commercial Corridor character area locations*
- ☞ *Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly*

Corridor Commercial areas should over time redevelop as mixed use, pedestrian-friendly communities

Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors should strive to create the connected, mixed-use corridor shown on the bottom and avoid recreating the existing condition shown on the top in the above graphic.

BYPASS CORRIDOR

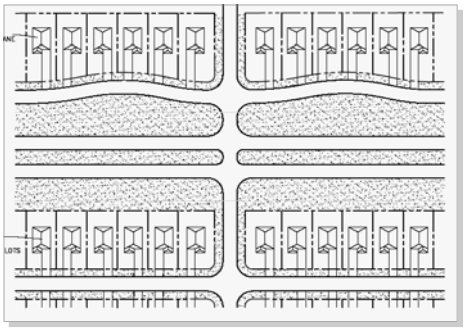
The Bypass Corridor character area is the Dalton Bypass. In addition to its transportation function, the Bypass is generating new development activity. This is true of the northern portion, where industrial uses are prevalent and where residential areas north of Dalton continue to expand. Development plans include a 1.2 million square feet mixed use development at Underwood Road (part of the Regional Activity Center character area), to include retail, residential (apartments and senior housing and flex office space. The project in turn has the potential to spawn additional growth along the Bypass.

Dalton Bypass area shown above east of Dalton city limits

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Discourage strip development
- Maintain traffic flow with access management measures and nodal development
- Establish a connected street network for new development that links to existing streets
- Include a relatively high-density mix of commercial and retail centers, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types (town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums) that can serve a broad range of incomes, including workforce and senior housing
- Encourage mixed use development with screened parking, landscaping, internal sidewalk and street connectivity, and quality building materials and site design
- Provide strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Connect to nearby networks of greenspace/multi-use trails/bike paths where available
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential areas Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Prohibit billboards and limit business sign height/size to minimize "visual clutter"
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses



Access management is necessary along the Dalton Bypass allow for development

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Industrial Warehousing

- Mixed use
- Higher density residential uses

Implementation Strategies

- *Prepare and incorporate into development review a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*
- *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites*
- *Recruit businesses that are suitable for the Bypass Corridor character area*
- *Implement a Bypass Corridor Overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- *Prepare an Access Management Plan, with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new commercial and mixed use development*
- *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) corridor planning and plan implementation improvement projects for the Bypass Corridor character area*

Industrial area in south Dalton is defined by large footprint, one-story industrial and warehouse structures.

INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial character area includes land used in low and high intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade, distribution, assembly, processing, and similar uses that may or may not generate excessive noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics. Most notable in the County is the carpet industry, which traditionally has been the driving economic force in the area and continues to be a large employer. A goal of this character area is to allow opportunities to expand this base while also accommodating new businesses.

East Walnut Avenue passing through the Industrial character area east of Downtown Dalton

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Prohibit residential uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential or rural areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development

- Provide access management measures to maintain traffic flow (e.g. shared driveways and interparcel access for similar uses on adjacent properties)
- Incorporate landscaping of parking lots
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements
- Protect air and water quality
- Prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding population
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site design
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent "visual clutter"

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites*

☞ *Prepare and incorporate into development review a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*

☞ *Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks to facilitate economic base diversification efforts*

Medical District character is currently defined by a variety of building styles including residential-looking businesses such as the one shown above.

Small monument signs, such as the one shown above for a pharmacy in the Medical District, should, should be used for all businesses in this character area.

MEDICAL DISTRICT

This character area represents the Hamilton Medical Center and ancillary medical center uses that are found on-site in a campus-type development or within walking distance or a short drive from the medical center. Examples include professional medical and dental offices, nursing home facilities, retail pharmacies and restaurants. Supporting uses are intended to provide easily accessible services for hospitals employees, patients and visitors.

In addition, the close proximity of this character area to housing provides an opportunity for employees to live and work in the same general area. While the Medical District plays a vital role in the community, it is important to encourage building / site design features and landscape buffers to mitigate the impacts of the Medical District on adjacent residential properties. Likewise, multimodal connections to adjacent neighborhoods should be provided.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Promote a pedestrian-scale "medical community" where medical uses and support services (Medical Center, restaurants, etc.) are connected by a network of sidewalks
- Accommodate housing that benefits from close proximity to health services (senior housing, nursing home, special needs housing, and guest lodging for families of hospital patients)
- Reduce on-site vehicular use and off-site vehicular trips by providing a mix of compatible services for employees and visitors
- Encourage mixed-use opportunities (e.g. medical offices above ground floor retail)
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding residential areas
- Prohibit encroachment (including parking and light trespass) into the adjacent residential areas
- Retain open space and incorporate landscaping into site design and parking areas
- Encourage shared parking among uses
- Discourage parking in the front yard for homes that have been converted to office uses

More recently constructed sections of Hamilton Medical Center include sidewalks that connect the building to landscaped parking areas. Future development in the area should include these amenities.

Pedestrians infrastructure in the Medical District provides few protections for those who chose to walk. More crosswalks, sidewalks. pedestrian path systems and shared parking arrangements are needed to make walking a safe alternative.

Primary Land Uses

- Hospital or clinic
- Professional medical office
- Retail support (drugstore, restaurant)
- Residential (senior housing, assisted living facility, special needs housing, guest lodging for patients' families)
- Mixed use (upper floor office or residential and ground floor retail)

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the area sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and to prioritize repair/replacement projects*

☞ *Prepare a Medical District Area Master Plan*

DALTON STATE CORRIDOR

The Dalton State Corridor character area includes the college as well as College Drive. The area is noted most for the college campus but includes the surrounding area with its ancillary college uses that are found on-site in a campus-type development or within walking distance or a short drive from the college. Examples include

park and recreation facilities, dormitory or multi-family residential uses and supporting commercial. Supporting uses are intended to provide easily accessible services for college employees, students and visitors.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Provide for the location of institutions of higher learning allowing for the full list of ancillary uses
- Highlight the areas in order to focus efforts to provide appropriate transition from adjacent uses as well as provide for opportunities for housing and services nearby
- Promote a pedestrian-scale "college community" where college uses and support services (college, apartments, restaurants, etc.) are connected by a network of sidewalks
- Reduce on-site vehicular use and off-site vehicular trips by providing a mix of compatible services for students, employees and visitors
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding residential areas
- Prohibit encroachment (including parking and light trespass) into the adjacent residential areas
- Retain open space and incorporate landscaping into site design and parking areas.
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Primary Land Uses

- College/University/Technical College
- Hospitality/Hotels/Lodging
- Restaurants
- Retail support (drugstore, restaurant)
- Residential
- Mixed use (upper floor office/residential and ground retail)

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the area sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and to prioritize repair/replacement projects*

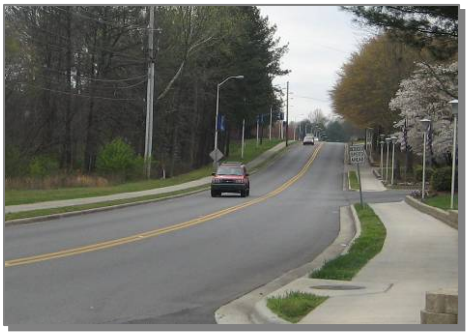
☞ *Prepare a streetscape master plan designed to provide increased opportunities for walking and biking*

☞ *Encourage the development of additional housing opportunities for students, faculty and staff of the college*

Dalton State College campus anchors the corridor.

Multi-family apartment communities, such as the one above, provide higher-density housing options in close proximity to the college.

Southern portion of the Dalton State Corridor is defined by hospitality uses such as hotels and restaurants.



College Drive now is lined on both sides with sidewalks that connect Dalton State to nearby residential, commercial and office uses.

AIRPORT

The Airport character area is composed of those lands in the approach zones around the Dalton Municipal Airport (DMM). Largely vacant, with the exception of the airport, is currently largely undeveloped and rural with some scattered single-family residential development nearby.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Building heights limited to avoid conflict with airport operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses, including residential land uses, public gathering places (i.e., churches and schools), and any other use that may affect visibility or safe electronic instrument approaches and departures from the airport
- Discourage land uses that may present a potential conflict with future aviation operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses by enforcing regulations
- Promote traditional rural land uses in the surrounding areas

Dalton Municipal Airport is located in southeast Whitfield County, but is included within the city limits of Dalton.

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Enforce existing height restrictions*
- ☞ *Review rezoning requests to insure compatibility with this character area*
- ☞ *Determine and administer appropriate buffer for noise and safety to accommodate the long-range needs of the airport*
- ☞ *Update Airport Local Area Plan*
- ☞ *Evaluate need for other requirements for new development to address land use compatibility and the mitigation of any impacts that may adversely affect existing or future aviation operations or aviation-related land uses at the airport*

Map 2 Future Development Map – City of Dalton

COMMUNITY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

POPULATION

Issues

High population density in Dalton — Due to the fact that Dalton has historically developed as a major industrial-based economy, there is a relatively high population density in the city limits that includes a high proportion of renter-occupied housing. Local concerns about community stability and crime can be aggravated by high rates of rental housing and high population densities.

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

Existing multi-family housing apartment community located on Shugart Road

Opportunities

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

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

Strategies

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

HOUSING

Issues

Aging in place – As large segments of the population age, the need continues to grow and demand will be created to address residential

needs of the Baby Boomers and empty nesters, including providing for "aging in place" with associated services and reasonable accommodation for those that are handicapped or disabled.

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

High density and rental rates in Dalton — Due to the fact that Dalton has historically developed as a major industrial-based economy, there is a relatively high density of housing in the city limits that includes a high proportion of renter-occupied housing. There are more rental housing units than owner-occupied housing units in Dalton.

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

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

Attached housing provides housing choice and is encouraged

Opportunities

Steady home value increases - Both the number of sales and the value of homes in Whitfield County showed a steady increase from 1997 to 2004. Average home sale prices increased 23.7% from 1997 to 2004, and 15.7% from 2000 to 2004. The average home sales price was $124,430 in 2004.

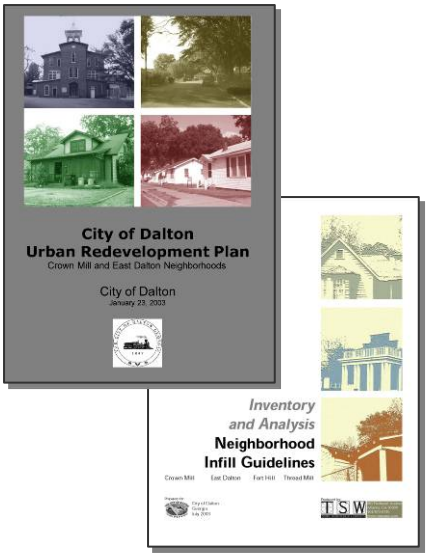
Local assistance - The Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation offers comprehensive services for residents, helping to increase home ownership, improve the physical condition of housing and the quality of affordable housing, decreasing the foreclosure rate and decreasing the number of homeless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

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

Strategies

- ☞ *Increase code enforcement throughout the City (incorporated and unincorporated areas) to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")*
- ☞ *Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas concentrating new higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services*

- *Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND) to prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments and also encourage a variety of housing types*
- *Complete a detailed housing market study and continually track housing market data; recruit residential developers who build higher value housing*
- *Adopt/amend zoning districts that prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development and also encourage a variety of housing types*
- *Promote housing options within the City, including affordable housing, senior housing, and higher value housing development based on large population of homeowners who may "trade up" in upcoming years*
- *Implement recommendations from housing-related studies for the Dalton area, including the Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan, the Neighborhood Infill Guidelines and the Dalton Historic Housing Infill Study to stabilize neighborhoods and increase affordable housing stock*
- *Promote services of Dalton Housing Authority to assist at-risk residents, increase home ownership, and secure federal funds for rehabilitation or infrastructure projects*



Recommendations outlined in the Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan and the Nighborhood Infill Guidelines should be implemented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues

Lagging wages in County— Average weekly wage and annual pay for most industries trailed the state and nation. Dalton-Whitfield County residents who were part of the labor force were less likely than residents of the state as a whole to hold management, professional and related occupations and more likely to hold positions in production, transportation and material moving occupations.

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

Employing educated young workers – There is limited diversity of the local economy and college educated young residents often seek job opportunities outside of Whitfield County. New industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

Educational Attainment – The County suffers from significantly low levels of educational attainment. On every level of educational attainment, the County lags behind the state and other nearby Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

Dalton State College provides opportunities for advanced education in the Northwest Georgia area

Downtown evenings – There is too limited activity in downtown Dalton after 5:00 pm. More evening entertainment and restaurant activity is needed to invigorate downtown's economy.

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

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

Attracting young professionals to City neighborhoods – Many young professional employees in Whitfield County choose to live in areas outside of the County, in spite of longer commutes. The County has struggled to attract these young professionals the neighborhoods within Whitfield County.

Entertainment options, in addition to the Winn Theater and other existing downtown venues are needed to attract young progressionals to Dalton.

Opportunities

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

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

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

Access to major transportation infrastrructure such as I75, as shown above at the U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road interchange, provides Dalton with freeway access to Atlanta and Chattanooga.

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

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

Local education and job training resources – Dalton has strong local institutions that provide higher education and job training,

including Dalton State College which has a large student population and good diversity of degree programs.

Strategies

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

Dalton Fire Department fire station near Downtown Dalton

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Issues

Water pressure for fire flow – Where industrial uses have been introduced into some former agricultural areas, there is insufficient water pressure for fire protection.

Shortage of after-school youth-oriented activities/facilities – There are insufficient after-school options for youth. Needed youth-oriented activities/facilities include YMCAs, and transportation options are also needed for youth after school.

Opportunities

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

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

Strategies

- *Expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned*
- *Complete and implement long range water resources master plan*
- *Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure; Septic tanks will remain appropriate for areas designated to remain rural during the planning period.*
- *Update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the comprehensive plan*
- *Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas*
- *Pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails*

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

TRANSPORTATION

Issues

Limitations to local street network – It is easy to get to Dalton/Whitfield via I-75 and state highways, but limited connectivity in certain areas of the local street network and some local points of congestion can make it difficult to move around the community.

Traffic light coordination – Traffic lights in Dalton are not optimized to move traffic at highest efficiency.

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

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

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

Opportunities

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

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

Streetscape – Opportunity exists to continue downtown Dalton revitalization with continuation of streetscape improvements efforts.

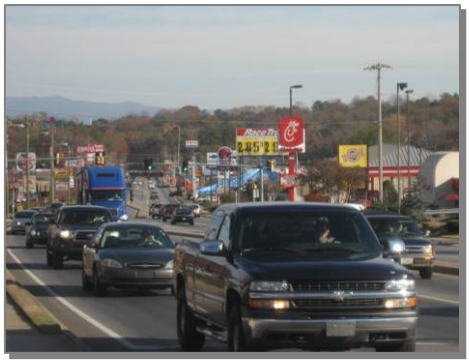
Atlanta and Chattanooga connections – I-75 serves the community well currently, and longer term potential for high speed or commuter rail connections to Atlanta and Chattanooga would greatly benefit Dalton.

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

Implementation of bike/pedestrian recommendations – Projects have already been identified in previous studies, including the 2005 Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan, which identify needed improvements. In addition, roadway improvement projects present an opportunity to incorporate pedestrian and/or bicycle provisions, and the County's waterways provide potential greenway/trail alignments. The City's subdivision regulations also provide a good regulatory baseline, as they require sidewalks in new subdivisions.

Strategies

- *Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update*
- *Coordinate with the MPO in the development of a street connectivity study and collector street plan that provides a long-range outline for developer-driven construction of a connected street system in areas where growth is anticipated*
- *Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads, including those constructed by public agencies and developers, that provide room for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles, thus offering residents and those traveling through each community a variety of transportation choices*
- *Adopt subdivision regulation and zoning ordinance amendments that require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments, including commercial and mixed-use*
- *Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*
- *Coordinate with the MPO regarding bicycle/pedestrian planning and funding efforts, including additional Safe Routes to Schools funding*
- *Implement recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*
- *Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail that includes a stop in Dalton*
- *Continue to lobby for a new interchange along I-75 between Walnut Avenue and Connector 3 that includes the extension of Brickyard Road providing an additional connection between U.S. 41/South Dixie Highway and I-75.*



Traffic congestion on West Walnut Avenue

- *Continue coordinated land use and transportation planning*
- *Coordinate with MPO Traffic Signalization Study*
- *Coordinate with MPO and Whitfield County to implement the recommendations outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study*

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issues

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

Maintaining historic neighborhoods – Preservation planning and actions will be required to protect historic resources and community character.

Protecting mountain and valley views – The views created by the topography of certain areas in Dalton are of great value. Protecting these assets is important in order to continue to attract quality development.

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

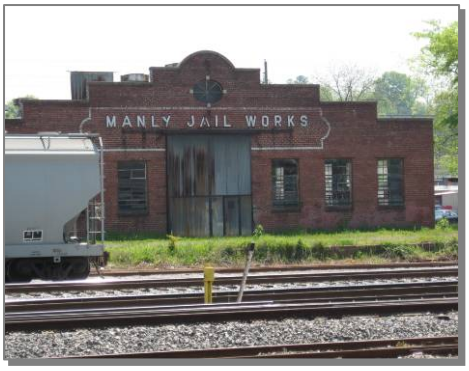
Protecting of County economic and cultural history artifacts – Efforts to promote the preservation of artifacts of the Dalton-Whitfield County's textile roots and culture currently receive limited funding. More funding is needed to ensure preservation of these connections to the past.

Out-of-date historic resource inventory – The last historic resources survey in Whitfield County was last performed in 1994. Many structures, sites and districts not included in the 1994 study have since become eligible, based on the minimum criteria that a resource is at least 50 years old.

Lacking environmental regulations – Dalton lacks needed regulations for protection of steep slopes, water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and wetlands.

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

Identification sign for the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue Local Historic District that covers residential areas west of Downtown



Preservation of Dalton's underutilized historic industrial buildings adjacent to the railroad is an important component of long-range planning in the City.

Opportunities

Promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations – Civil War, Trail of Tears, Old Federal Road and railroad-oriented sites and activities could be promoted more directly as tourist destinations.

Appreciation of history – Local residents and elected officials have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the County and

understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs.

Creeks and streams – The City's rivers and streams are "hidden resources" with potential for enhanced access to provide passive, low-impact recreation and educational opportunities to Whitfield County residents.

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

Available preservation tools – Dalton's Main Street Program, Downtown Development Authority, Historic Preservation Commission and status as a Certified Local Government indicate the City's support for maintaining, enhancing and promoting its history. Tools such as locally designated districts and associated design guidelines, a façade grant program, and downtown promotional events are already being employed by the City to bring attention to its historic residential and commercial assets.

Strategies

- *Adopt a Hillside Development Ordinance*
- *Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the review process*
- *Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section for new development to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design*
- *Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, integrates recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance, and integrates previous plans to create a greenway with multi-use paths and other recreational opportunities along Mill Creek in Dalton*
- *Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources*
- *Adopt updated Downtown Dalton Design Guidelines*
- *Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements*
- *Adopt "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for steep slopes, water supply watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*
- *Continue to follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities*
- *Continue to enforce Trees, Plants and Shrubs Ordinance, and support amendments (if necessary) to implement the desired development pattern of character areas and to promote the use of*

Dalton High School logo painted onto the hillside facing West Waugh Street next to the school

landscaping with native vegetation that requires limited (or no) irrigation

LAND USE

Issues

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

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

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

Downtown poultry processing – The continued presence of a major poultry processing facility in downtown Dalton is a land use issue and hindrance to revitalization and business expansion.

Opportunities

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

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

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

Redevelopment incentives – There are opportunities in Dalton to use Tax Allocation Districts to provide incentives for needed redevelopment projects.

Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Dalton*

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

Example of three-story mixed use development appropriate for providing increased housing choice and retail/services in Whitfield County

Commercial development at the intersection of Thornton Avenue and Walnut Avenue

- *Prepare and adopt "Big Box" ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites, and consider creation of a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*
- *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new commercial and mixed use development*
- *Prepare and adopt sign ordnance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas*
- *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- *Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas*
- *Develop zoning districts (overlay or amendment to existing districts) that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing, ranging from senior-oriented housing developments to attached or detached "granny flats" in neighborhoods*
- *Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along the gateway corridors and other throughway roads in the County to lessen the effects of linear sprawl*
- *Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use development*
- *Implement existing studies that support infill and rehabilitation opportunities*

Commercial development adjacent to the Walnut Square Mall in east Dalton at the intersection of Airport Road and U.S. 76/East Walnut Avenue

Existing commercial development on East Morris Street within the Commercial Corridor character area.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Issues

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

Unincorporated islands and municipal boundaries – Dalton includes multiple areas of unincorporated islands. In addition, municipal boundaries have been expanded over time in such a way as to create confusing service delivery areas surrounding the City.

Opportunities

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

Strategies

- *Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation*
- *Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment*
- *Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services*
- *Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO*

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by the City of Dalton to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

- 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments (see Appendix B)
- 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM (STWP)

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the Comprehensive Plan. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief Description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Housing	Complete a detailed housing market study and continually track housing market data			✓			City Administrator/ D-W CDC	$25,000	General Fund
Housing	Implement the Infill Housing Study (2006) to support appropriate infill in the Crown Mill, East Dalton, Fort Hill and Thread Mill neighborhoods		✓	✓			City Administrator/ D-W CDC	N/A	Source
Housing	Implement the Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan (2003)		✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator, City Council, Mayor	See Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan "Action Plan"	
Housing	Include a Dalton Housing Authority link on the City website		✓				City Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Housing	Promote the creation of neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch groups		✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator/ Police Dept.	N/A	General Fund
Economic Development	Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas			✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA (Joint Development Authority)	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by the Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by the 2008 branding prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Develop a City-wide vacant site inventory, and identify and promote sites that are suitable for infill development or redevelopment				✓		City Administrator/ D-W CDC	$15,000	General Fund
Economic Development	Continue to support and promote efforts of Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority and Downtown Dalton Development Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	N/A	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Support the completion and implementation of a long-range water resources master plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	TBD	DU (Dalton Utilities)

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Community Facilities & Services	Promote updated infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with the Future Development Map and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the Future Development Map	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Engineering	TBD	General Fund
Transportation	Coordinate with the MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update	✓	✓				City Administrator, Public Works	N/A	MPO
Transportation	Development of a street connectivity study / collector street plan			✓	✓		MPO	$100,000	MPO
Transportation	Coordinate with MPO Traffic Signalization Study		✓				City Administrator	N/A	MPO
Transportation	Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve character areas				✓		Public Works, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Transportation	Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize repair / replacement projects			✓			Public Works, MPO, RDC	TBD	General Fund, MPO, RDC
Transportation	Seek additional Safe Routes to Schools grant funds			✓	✓	✓	City Administrator, MPO	N/A	General Fund/ MPO
Transportation	Extend streetscape improvements to reach entire Downtown character area		✓	✓	✓	✓	Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	TBD	General Fund, DDA
Transportation	Update Airport Local Area Plan				✓	✓	City Administrator, Airport Authority	$25,000	Airport Authority
Natural & Cultural Resources	Prepare a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$2,000	Dues to RDC
Natural & Cultural Resources	Continue to follow the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual, and encourage use of the Stormwater Better Site Design Standards for new development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Building Inspector	N/A	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for steep slopes, water supply watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator, Building Inspector	N/A	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Review Trees, Plants and Shrubs Ordinance and update, if needed, to ensure landscaping and tree protection provisions support desired development patterns for each character area		✓				RDC	$3,000	Dues to RDC
Natural & Cultural Resources	Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners in Preserve and Ridge Conservation character areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt "Big Box" ordinance		✓	✓			RDC	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Create an "industrial development impact matrix"		✓	✓	✓		City Administrator, JDA	$20,000	JDA
Land Use	Prepare amendments to development regulations to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with all new development		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$5,000	General Fund, Grants
Land Use	Prepare amendments to zoning ordinance to accommodate senior living opportunities near other housing and shopping/medical/services		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare amendments to zoning ordinance to allow shared parking and driveways for commercial businesses		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Update historic district design guidelines for downtown Dalton area	✓	✓				DDA	$10,000	DDA
Land Use	Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Ordinance		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare overlay districts for important corridors and activity centers to enhance the look and function of the areas		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare sign ordinance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas		✓	✓	✓		RDC	$10,000	General Fund

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Intergovernmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, County Board of Ed.	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, MPO	N/A	General Fund

LONG TERM WORK PROGRAM

A long term work program identifies specific long-term implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*.

Economic Development

- Implement sewer master plan to expand infrastructure

Community Facilities & Services

- Expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned

Transportation

- Prepare an Access Management Plan for Commercial and Bypass Corridors and Regional Activity Centers
- Coordinate with MPO and Whitfield County to implement the Transit Feasibility Study
- Lobby for a new interchange along I-75 between Walnut Avenue and Connector 3
- Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail
- Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads
- Implement recommended projects for Dalton in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan

Natural & Cultural Resources

- Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that includes paths/recreational opportunities along Mill Creek
- Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources

Land Use

- Adopt Master Plans for Regional Activity Center character areas
- Adopt a Streetscape Master Plan for Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to guide future enhancements

POLICIES

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to City officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following policies are organized by major topic in the following subsections.

Housing

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Stabilize existing neighborhoods by supporting and promoting appropriate rehabilitation activities, infill construction, code enforcement, the creation of neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch groups, and the services of the Dalton Housing Authority
- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores, services and activity centers.
- Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to facilitate denser, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments with a variety of housing types.
- Promote a range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, single-family and multi-family options, senior housing, Dalton State student housing, and higher value housing.
- Protect established residential areas from encroachment by non-residential uses and automobile-oriented development.

Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements, linkages to existing businesses and diversification of the economic base.
- Target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.

- Take into account impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision making on economic development projects.
- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, with the County's jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms and private initiatives such as Tax Allocation Districts, Commercial Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts to finance enhancements along important corridors and growth areas.
- Support efforts to market downtown Dalton, to recruit a mix of businesses that generate activity in the downtown and provide local shopping, dining, entertainment and service options, and to encourage appropriate rehabilitation and redevelopment.
- Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Support workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a diverse local economy.

Community Facilities & Services

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (*i.e.*, already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.
- Limit development within our community to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact urban development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified in the comprehensive plan as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.

Transportation

- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using context sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using "Complete Street" concepts to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions, and planning for future connectivity between subdivisions and adjacent undeveloped property with stub out streets).
- Support creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- Ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.
- Ensure that new development is compatible with existing airport facilities and does not impede its function.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- The protection and conservation of our community's resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality protection.
- Support minimum state requirements for environmental resource protection and incorporate requirements into the land development review process.

- Protect greenspace and greenway corridors, and expand opportunities for public use with a connected system of greenways and trails.

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential infill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed use developments that are human-scale, less auto-oriented and provide pedestrian connections between uses.
- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.
- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial or mixed use nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip development along major roadways.
- Incorporate land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers ("greyfields") with walkable, mixed use development.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in downtown Dalton as well as existing and emerging Community and Regional Activity Centers.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)

- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, among the jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS

Supplemental plans focus on special areas, situations or issues of importance to the community, such as plans for conservation or management of natural or cultural resources, redevelopment plans for particular areas of the community, master plans for downtown development, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, gateway plans, rural preservation plans, recreation plans, or the community's required solid waste management plan. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the *Community Agenda* by reference.

- City of Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan (2003)
- City of Dalton Neighborhood Infill Guidelines (2003)
- City of Dalton Historic Housing Infill Study (2006)
- North Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005)
- Transit Feasibility Study (2006)
- 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (2005)

CHAPTER 4

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

Presenting the Community Vision, Community Issues & Opportunities and the Implementation Plan for the City of Tunnel Hill

The City of Tunnel Hill is located west of the northernmost I-75 interchange in Whitfield County. U.S. Census figures for July 2007 estimate a population of 1,249 for the city. Tunnel Hill has a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses inside the city limits, as well as a unique historic resource: the 1850 Western and Atlantic railroad tunnel that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is open to the public, alongside the Tunnel Hill Heritage Center.

Historic markers located near the visitors center

COMMUNITY VISION

VISION STATEMENT

Tunnel Hill shares with Whitfield County the collective vision for the County while also owning some of its own uniqueness. So, in addition to the collective vision, the City of Tunnel Hill has defined its future vision that includes:

- A community that provides for a variety of opportunities to live and work in Tunnel Hill
- A community that preserves its historic resources, neighborhoods and unique character
- Future development that supports and preserves its rural and natural setting while also providing for traditional neighborhood development patterns
- Preserving manufacturing jobs while also creating new commercial opportunities

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Future Development Map that reflects the vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with the extensive public visioning process described in Chapter 1, is expressed in unique "character areas".

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the future. Character areas define areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have potential to evolve into unique areas or require special attention because of unique development issues.

The following pages present the Future Development Maps/character area narratives for Tunnel Hill. Each description includes the following information:

- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

The **development pattern** describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design
- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park areas
- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development

Tunnel Hill and adjacent communities share a deep connection to the area's history.

The **primary land use** section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Finally, the **implementation strategies** section identifies the measures the City can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal.

In addition to the three levels of description above, the **Quality Community Objectives (QCO)** analysis for each Character Area can be found in Appendix A. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted

by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development. The Future Development Map for the City of Tunnel Hill identifies the following character areas:

- Preserve
- Ridge Conservation
- Town Neighborhood
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Emerging Suburban
- Commercial Corridor
- Transition Corridor
- Interchange
- Community Activity Center

PRESERVE

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas and significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and conservation areas not suitable for development of any kind. The Preserve character area seeks to enhance the significance of these resources and ensure their protection.

Tunnel Hill Park is an example of the City's Preserve character area.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for passive use recreation and tourism destinations (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Coordinate with the County to development a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a comprehensive system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and integrates recommendations of the Conasauga River Alliance*

☞ *Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross these areas*

☞ *Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations*

☞ *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality*

☞ *Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners*

☞ *Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*

☞ *Follow BMPs for erosion and sedimentation, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act*

Creek and picnic area located in Tunnel Hill Park off of G. Vaughn Parkway

RIDGE CONSERVATION

This area includes all steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%) in the County, which include areas in Tunnel Hill. Hillside development has the potential to harm the area's natural resources and scenic views due to erosion and the loss of trees. The Ridge Conservation character area is intended to maintain the areas' ridgelines, which contribute to the County's unique character and its history, while accommodating low-density residential development with minimal impact on the environment.

Tunnel Hill Cemetery is another example of the Preserve character area.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures
- Preserve historic/cultural resources along ridges
- Incorporate adequate infrastructure for accessibility and for water and fire protection needs
- Protect existing trees

- Protect steep slopes and natural landscape
- Protect scenic views
- Preserve rural character and viewsheds
- Conserve natural features and resources
- Limit impacts of new development on the environment
- Reduce impervious cover
- Utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Encourage low-intensity uses

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Forestry/Agricultural

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Adopt a hillside development ordinance*

Town Neighborhood character area includes a mixture of historic and more recent residential development.

TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Town Neighborhood character area includes residential areas in older parts of the community typically developed prior to World War II. Characteristics include pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, small, regular lots, shallow yards (relative to newer suburban counterparts), less space between buildings, and some mixed-use elements such as small neighborhood businesses. This character area is generally near traditional town centers, downtowns or crossroads, and it is reflected in Tunnel Hill primarily on the north side of the U.S. 41/Old Cotton Mill Road intersection.

Single-family residential home in Tunnel Hill's Town Neighborhood character area

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain existing homes and character defining site features (*i.e.* drives, walls, lighting, landscaping, tree cover)
- Promote sensitive building rehabilitation that is in keeping with a building's existing architectural style and scale and that of neighboring homes
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, style and setbacks of existing adjacent homes
- Promote single-family uses
- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and town center
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into the existing development pattern and can

benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services

- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Maintain existing housing stock and preserve neighborhood character
- Protect historic structures and neighborhoods
- Adhere to locally adopted design guidelines, where applicable

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Amend the zoning ordinance to include flexible setback provisions for infill development*

☞ *Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance*

☞ *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize projects*

☞ *Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities for the North Georgia Region*

Large-lot Suburban Neighborhood character area development on the edge of Tunnel Hill

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Suburban Neighborhood character area describes areas where conventional patterns of post-World War II suburban residential subdivision development have been the dominant pattern. In addition to conventional subdivisions, some multi-family uses are present in this character area. Neighborhoods tend to be characterized by low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, and are predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.

This character area is typically found in established neighborhoods that surround historic areas or traditional town centers, including portions of Tunnel Hill and areas adjacent to the City limits.

Suburban Neighborhood character area in north Tunnel Hill

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setback and style of existing adjacent homes
- Maintain existing tree cover
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, school buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Incorporate sidewalks, traffic calming improvements and/or increased street interconnections, where appropriate, to

improve walkability within existing neighborhoods as well as connectivity to neighboring communities and major destinations, including schools

- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Amend the zoning ordinance to include flexible setback provisions for infill development*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a connector street plan*

☞ *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize projects*

Undeveloped property in Tunnel Hill designated as Emerging Suburban character area

EMERGING SUBURBAN

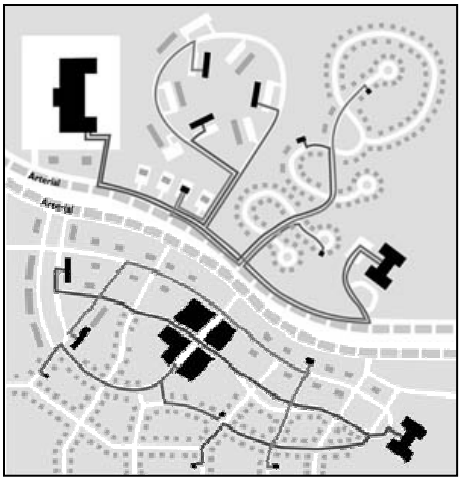
The Emerging Suburban character area represents areas that have experienced some residential growth and are positioned to accommodate more due to general land use trends in the area or to proximity to existing neighborhoods. Emerging Suburban areas are often found at the edges of a city's boundaries, beyond more established land uses and traditional development patterns. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated at mixed use nodes located at designated major intersections on state or federal highways (See Community Activity Center character area description).

New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. Neighborhood focal points can also be created by locating schools, community centers, or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences (see Community Activity Center character area description). This preferred neighborhood design can be accommodated with master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). In addition, conservation subdivisions should be permitted as a suitable alternative to traditional low-density residential subdivisions in order to protect and maximize open space.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect natural and scenic resources
- Provide connected system of streets within new neighborhoods and to existing neighborhoods where possible, resulting in an expanded/alternate local street network for motorists and emergency vehicles
- Accommodate master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern, encourages walking, and minimizes the need for auto trips within a subdivision
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space and active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Limit clearing and grading
- Permit use of conservation subdivisions with the goal of maximizing open space
- Include a variety of housing choices
- Provide sidewalks, street trees and decorative, pedestrian-scale lighting
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion control and groundwater recharge protection area best management practices (BMP)



The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.

A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Whitfield County.

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential (net density of 2 dwellings per acre)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance*

☞ *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple*

stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop

☞ *Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include all areas currently underserved*

☞ *Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible*

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Commercial Corridor character area in Tunnel Hill represents the City's main commercial strip along both sides of U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road from the railroad overpass to near Campbell Road. The area is currently made up primarily of one story, automobile-oriented commercial strip and office buildings separated from the highway and sidewalk by parking lots with limited landscaping or shade trees. The area includes numerous curb cuts. The intent is that the area should redevelop as a more walkable, well-landscaped, mixed use main street for Tunnel Hill during the life of this plan.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Encourage shared parking among uses
- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage. align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Increase landscaping along the corridor, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design related to the building, the site, and signage
- Develop and/or redevelop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the corridor's commercial center by locating higher density housing options adjacent to or along the corridor, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provides a transition between the character area and surrounding areas

Strip commercial development currently defines the Community Activity Center character area of Tunnel Hill along U.S. 41.

Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors should strive to create the connected, mixed-use corridor shown on the bottom and avoid recreating the existing condition shown on the top in the above graphic.

- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks and enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks to streets that intersect with the corridor and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and other destinations, such as the school, post office, the Heritage Center/Tunnel Hill, parks, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development within the Commercial Corridor and avoid as much as possible stretching the corridor outside of the existing boundaries into established residential neighborhoods

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities*

☞ *Implement an overlay district or amend existing land development regulations to direct building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the area*

☞ *Amend land use regulations to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) corridor planning and plan implementation improvement projects for Commercial Corridor character area locations*

☞ *Adopt Mixed Use development ordinance*

☞ *Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly*

Development should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees.

Mixed use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office and residential in the same building.

TRANSITION CORRIDOR

The Transition Corridor character area represents an arterial roads with frontage that generally developed with single-family residences that have over the years seen increased traffic and resulting capacity improvements (i.e. road widening). These improvements resulted in increased traffic volume and associated impacts (e.g., noise, increased trash, street widening, etc.) making uses other than single-family residential more attractive. The corridor is developed with a mix of lot sizes and uses, including large-lot single family residential and undeveloped property.

Transition Corridors have experienced or have the potential to experience piecemeal zoning changes that over an extended period result in front yard conversions to parking lots, unsightly home to business additions and conversions, and signage out of proportion to the structures. The Transition Corridor seeks to avoid this approach.

Frontage properties along Transition Corridors should follow the development pattern described for the adjacent road-fronting character areas. However, upon completion of more detailed corridor master plans, these corridors could accommodate new commercial development concentrated in nodes at important intersections, but should not accommodate strip commercial between nodes. With a master plan, the Transition Corridor could also accommodate higher residential densities along the roadway between nodes, with lower density areas beyond the frontage properties. Master plans along with a zoning overlay are necessary to ensure that change along these corridors occurs in an orderly, comprehensive manner and applies consistent development standards throughout the corridor.

In Tunnel Hill, this character area includes portions of U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road north and south of Commercial Corridor.

Transition Corridor character area includes a mix of residential and commercial uses, such as the business shown above in north Tunnel Hill on U.S. 41.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- With a corridor master plan, cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor that serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide for walkable, higher intensity housing choices located between nodes
- Accommodate conversion of existing residential uses into office or commercial uses while maintaining the existing building
- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards and display unobtrusive business signs that are appropriately sized and constructed for the area
- Incorporate streetscape enhancements to improve the overall appearance of the corridors"
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and adjacent character areas, in particularly those that include residential uses
- Landscape parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, to improve the appearance of a site, and to shield parking areas from public view
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage)

Residential character remains within the Transitional Corridor character area in Tunnel Hill, as shown above along U.S. 41 north of the Community Activity Center.

- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning by coordinating land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Prevent encroachment of commercial uses into adjacent residential areas
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial/retail uses, professional offices, mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space) and multi-family residential with a corridor master plan
- Single-family residential

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridor character area locations to guide future enhancements*

☞ *Adopt a corridor overlay district or amend land use regulations to guide building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*

☞ *Amend land use regulations to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

INTERCHANGE

The Interchange character area represents three of the five interchanges locations along I-75, including the Tunnel Hill interchange. The interchanges are characterized by auto-oriented commercial and industrial uses that cater to travelers along I-75 and the nearby industrial workforce. Access to the interstate has allowed industrial uses to flourish in some areas while also providing entry points to the County, including the City of Tunnel Hill. As a prominent gateway to the area, attention should be paid to the Tunnel Hill interchange regarding permitted signage and other site or streetscape features that can enhance or detract from the aesthetic qualities of the City.

Interchange character area located near the intersection of SR 201 and I-75 in Tunnel Hill has developed with metal butler buildings with little design character.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Limit "interchange commercial" uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural or residential areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development

- Provide access management measures such as interparcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Discourage strip development
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent "visual clutter"
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Interstate commercial (gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores)

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and incorporate into development review a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*

☞ *Coordinate economic development activities for business recruitment*

☞ *Implement Interchange Overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the interchange area*

☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan, with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*

☞ *Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include all Interchange areas currently underserved*

Industrial uses are included within the Interchange character area, shown here in the southeast quadrant of the I-75/SR 201 interchange area.

Map 3 Future Development Map – City of Tunnel Hill

COMMUNITY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

POPULATION

Issues

Aging population – Tunnel Hill's aging population will increasingly have special needs in terms of residential choices and community services and facilities.

Opportunities

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

Strategies

☞ *Update Comprehensive Plan frequently to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances*

HOUSING

Issues

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

Limited housing mix – Most of Tunnel Hill's housing stock is large-lot single-family residential with very few multi-family options.

Tunnel Hill currently offers few housing type choices. With the exception of the small multi-family building shown above, much of the city's housing stock is single family detatched.

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

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

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

Opportunities

Steady home value increases - Both the number of sales and the value of homes in Whitfield County showed a steady increase from 1997 to 2004. Average home sale prices increased 23.7% from 1997 to 2004, and 15.7% from 2000 to 2004. The average home sales price was $124,430 in 2004.

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

Infill housing - Infill housing opportunities can contribute to affordable housing stock and help stabilize and enhance established neighborhoods.

Tunnel Hill's small town charm creates a character that the community wants to maintain as the area grows.

Strategies

- ☞ *Increase code enforcement throughout City to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")*
- ☞ *Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas concentrating new higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services*
- ☞ *Coordinate with Whitfield County to complete a detailed housing market study and continually track housing market data; recruit residential developers who build higher value housing*
- ☞ *Adopt/amend zoning districts that prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development and also encourage a variety of housing types*
- ☞ *Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND) to prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use*

neighborhood developments and also encourage a variety of housing types

☞ *Promote both affordable housing as well as higher value housing development based on homeowners who may "trade up" in upcoming years*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues

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

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

Employing educated young workers – There is limited diversity of the local economy and college educated young residents often seek job opportunities outside of Whitfield County. New industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

Educational Attainment – The County suffers from significantly low levels of educational attainment. On every level of educational attainment, the County lags behind the state and other nearby Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

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

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

Attracting young professionals to Tunnel Hill and surrounding area neighborhoods – Many young professional employees in Whitfield County choose to live in areas outside of the Tunnel Hill and Whitfield County, in spite of longer commutes. The area has struggled to attract these young professionals to the neighborhoods within Whitfield County.

Opportunities exist within the Interchange character area to attract jobs and retail development, but sewer infrastructure is needed to facilitate this development.

Opportunities

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

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

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

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

I-75 provides Tunnel Hill and the surrounding area with easy access to Dalton, Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Strategies

- *Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks to facilitate efforts to diversify the economic base*
- *Continue business/industrial retention efforts*
- *Coordinate with the County to complete the implementation of sewer master plan to expand infrastructure to strategic opportunity areas shown on the Future Development Map*
- *Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in the City's Commercial Corridor character area*
- *Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a more diversified local economy*
- *Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County, the Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports, and the 2008 branding prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority*
- *Leverage the area's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life*
- *Continue to support and promote efforts of Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority*

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Issues

Lack of sewer service in Tunnel Hill – Growth in Tunnel Hill and surrounding northwest Whitfield County is limited due to lack of sewer infrastructure. Planned sewer expansion should be coordinated with land use planning.

Opportunities

Sewer expansion as growth management tool – Lack of sewer creates the need for large residential lots. When sewer services expand to Tunnel Hill and open the door for new development, the opportunity exists for the City to use the expansion as a way to direct growth to locations the City outlines in the land use plan and to manage the timing of new growth.

Future water needs – Substantial water resources are available for Tunnel Hill residents via Dalton Utilities that can support long-term growth with proactive planning and resource management.

Whitfield County Fire Department Station located in Tunnel Hill.

Strategies

- *Extend sewer service to Tunnel Hill*
- *After sewer is extended to Tunnel Hill, discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure; Septic tanks will remain appropriate for areas designated to remain rural during the planning period*
- *Coordinate with County to update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the plan*
- *Coordinate with Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the Whitfield County Board of Education on school planning and community planning efforts; establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments for Tunnel Hill that are consistent with Whitfield County requirements*
- *Pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails, and support implementation of Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan*

Tunnel Hill Elementary School located on School Street in Tunnel Hill.

TRANSPORTATION

Issues

Lack of Northside bypass – SR 201 traffic flows through the heart of Tunnel Hill's neighborhoods and creates a physical barrier that discourages pedestrian traffic between the City Hall and park area on the east side of the highway and the Elementary School on the west.

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

Limited bicycle/pedestrian facilities – Though sidewalks are in place along U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road, connectivity between the Commercial Corridor and residential uses is limited, and sidewalk/bicycle provisions in general are not extensive.

Opportunities

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

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

Atlanta and Chattanooga connections – I-75 serves the community well currently, and longer term potential for high speed or commuter rail connections to Atlanta and Chattanooga would greatly benefit Tunnel Hill residents and all of Whitfield County.

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

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

Railroad access is available in Tunnel Hill that could enhance the area's potential to attract new jobs.

Strategies

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

include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access

- *Coordinate with MPO bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts in addition to implementing recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*
- *Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail*
- *Continue coordinated land use and transportation planning*
- *Coordinate with MPO Traffic Signalization Study*
- *Coordinate with MPO to implement the recommendations outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study*

Opportunities exist to reuse historic buildings in Tunnel Hill, such as the one shown above most recently used as a ministry center for a community church.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issues

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

Maintaining historic neighborhoods – Preservation planning and actions will be required to protect historic resources and community character in Tunnel Hill.

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

Protecting Civil War sites – Civil War sites/land areas are in need of protection. The National Park Service has identified Whitfield County as having the largest intact collection of Civil War defenses in the nation.

Out-of-date historic resource inventory – The last historic resources survey in Whitfield County that included Tunnel Hill was last performed in 1994. Many structures, sites and districts not included in the 1994 study have since become eligible, based on the minimum criteria that a resource is at least 50 years old.

Lacking environmental regulations – Tunnel Hill's regulations should included appropriate measures for resource protection, including steep slope and floodplain protection.

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

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

The historic tunnel from which the city gets its name has been preserved

Opportunities

Promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations – Civil War, Trail of Tears and Old Federal Road sites could be promoted more directly as tourist destinations. Tunnel Hill's historic assets should continue to be promoted; the joint partnership between the City of Tunnel Hill, the Tunnel Hill Historical Foundation, Whitfield County and the Dalton Convention and Visitors Bureau is a good model of cooperation that can benefit other endeavors.

Appreciation of history – Residents and elected official of Tunnel Hill and Whitfield County have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the area and understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs.

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

Opportunities exist to make better use of the city's historic commercial and industrial building stock located adjacent to the railroad.

Strategies

- *Adopt a Hillside Development Ordinance*
- *Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the review process*
- *Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design*
- *Coordinate with Whitfield County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a comprehensive system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and integrates recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance*
- *Coordinate with Whitfield County to prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan*
- *Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements*
- *Adopt "Part V" Environmental Ordinances, where applicable, in accordance with Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*
- *Continue to follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities*
- *Apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) status to qualify for federal funds for historic preservation (requires adoption of a historic preservation ordinance and creation of a historic preservation commission)*

☞ *Amend zoning ordinance to require landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited (or no) irrigation*

LAND USE

Issues

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

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

Commercial services imbalance – There is a lack of commercial services and providers of goods in Tunnel Hill and the northern part of the County. Almost all Whitfield County's commercial activity is concentrated in and around Dalton.

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

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

Opportunities

Mixed use development – Most development in Tunnel Hill is either historic town neighborhood single family or suburban residential development, both of which separate residential from commercial. Mixed use developments that are clustered or in nodes could provide the Tunnel Hill with the opportunity to provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences and also preserve open space.

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

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

Strategies

- *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Tunnel Hill*
- *Prepare and adopt "Big Box" ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*
- *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites, and consider creation of a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*
- *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- *Prepare and adopt sign ordnance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas*
- *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- *Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas*
- *Develop zoning districts (overlay or amendment to existing districts) that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing, ranging from senior-oriented housing developments to attached or detached "granny flats" in neighborhoods*
- *Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along the Commercial Corridor (U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road) to lessen the effects of linear sprawl*
- *Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible*

Historic home located on Jordan Street in Tunnel Hill

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Issues

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

Unincorporated islands and municipal boundaries – Whitfield County's cities include multiple areas of unincorporated islands. In addition, municipal boundaries have been expanded over time in such a way as to create confusing service delivery areas surrounding each municipality.

Opportunities

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

Strategies

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

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by Whitfield County to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

- 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments (see appendix B)
- 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM (STWP)

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Housing	Increase code enforcement throughout the City to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")				✓	✓	City Council, City Administrator	TBD	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	DU *(Dalton Utilities)*, City Council	TBD	DU
Community Facilities & Services	Participate in the creation of a long range water resources master plan			✓			DU *(Dalton Utilities)*, City Council	TBD	DU
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate with County to update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator, City Council	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate school planning and community planning efforts; establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, County Board of Ed.	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas along with greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails				✓		City Council, City Administrator, Park and Recreation Commission	TBD	General Fund
Transportation	Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	N/A	MPO
Transportation	Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve Character areas	✓	✓				City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Transportation	Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize repair or replacement projects					✓	MPO, City Council, RDC	$15,000	MPO, General Fund

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Transportation	Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements for residential subdivisions				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities to protect water quality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Amend zoning ordinance to require landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited irrigation (or none at all)					✓	City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits to preserve open space			✓	✓	✓	City Administrator, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt a "Big Box" ordinance					✓	City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path systems with new development			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a TND ordinance			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to permit senior living opportunities near other housing			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to permit flexible building setback provisions for infill development			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt Mixed Use Development Ordinance			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt Community Activity Center Overlay District			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt Transition Corridor Overlay District			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt Interchange Overlay District			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly		✓	✓	✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, County Board of Ed.	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, MPO	N/A	General Fund

LONG TERM WORK PROGRAM

A long term work program identifies specific long-term implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda.*

Economic Development

- Evaluate potential for a Business Improvement District (BID), Community Improvement District (CID) or Tax Allocation District (TAD) for Commercial Corridor character area locations

Community Facilities & Services

- Coordinate with the County to implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Transportation

- Coordinate with the MPO in the development of a street connectivity study
- Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads
- Prepare an Access Management Plan for Community Activity Center character areas
- Implement recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- Adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridor character area locations to guide future enhancements

Natural & Cultural Resources

- Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan
- Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources
- Coordinate with the County to prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan
- Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance
- Apply to the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program to be eligible for federal historic preservation funds

Land Use

- Adopt Transition Corridor and Community Activity Center overlay districts (or adopt comparable land use regulations) to enhance the look and function of these areas

POLICIES

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to City officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following policies are organized by major topic in the following subsections.

Housing

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores, services and activity centers.
- Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to facilitate denser, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments with a variety of housing types.
- Promote a range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, single-family and multi-family options, senior housing, and higher value housing.
- Protect established residential areas from encroachment by non-residential uses and automobile-oriented development.

Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements, linkages to existing businesses, and diversification of our economic base.
- Target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Take into account impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision making on economic development projects.

- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Support coordinated economic development activities (with the County, other cities and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority), including business recruitment efforts and implementation of economic development-related studies.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms or private initiatives, such as Tax Allocation Districts, Commercial Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts to finance improvements in important corridors and growth areas.
- Leverage local assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Support business/industrial retention efforts.
- Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a diverse local economy.

Community Facilities & Services

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (*i.e.*, already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.
- Limit development within our community to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact urban development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.

Transportation

- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).

- Design new and reconstructed roadways will using context sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using "complete streets" concepts to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions, and planning for future connectivity between subdivisions and adjacent undeveloped property with stub out streets).
- Support creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- Ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs, both on a City and County-wide level.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- The protection and conservation of our community's natural, cultural and historic resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Work to redirect development pressure away from agricultural areas in order to conserve farmland to protect and preserve this important component of our community.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality protection.
- Support minimum state requirements for environmental resource protection and incorporate into the development review process.
- Incorporate minimum map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the development process.
- Promote passive-use tourism and recreation uses for environmentally sensitive areas and historic resources areas, which are not suitable for development.

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential infill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that are human-scale and less auto-oriented.
- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.
- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial or mixed use nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip/linear development along major roadways.
- Open to land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in the town centers as well as existing and emerging Community Activity Centers.
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers ("greyfields") with walkable, mixed use development.
- Support specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)
- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, among the jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield joint Development Authority.

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS

Supplemental plans focus on special areas, situations or issues of importance to the community, such as plans for conservation or management of natural or cultural resources, redevelopment plans for particular areas of the community, master plans for downtown development, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, gateway plans, rural preservation plans, recreation plans, or the community's required solid waste management plan. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the *Community Agenda* by reference.

- North Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005)
- Transit Feasibility Study (2006)
- 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (2005)

CHAPTER
5

CITY OF VARNELL

Presenting the Community Vision, Community Issues & Opportunities and the Implementation Plan for the City of Varnell

The City of Varnell was established in 1835 and has an estimated population of 1,584 based on 2007 U.S. Census figures. Located in northern Whitfield County, south of Cohutta and west of SR 71, Varnell is predominantly residential with commercial uses oriented around the traditional town center and toward SR 71. The City's commercial heritage includes the historic Prater's Mill, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic Prater's Mill is located in east Varnell.

COMMUNITY VISION

VISION STATEMENT

Like Tunnel Hill and the other cities in Whitfield County, Varnell has identified its future vision that buildings on the collective county vision. Varnell's community vision includes:

- A community where development is guided by land use plans take into account existing/proposed utility infrastructure and the protection of watersheds
- A community offering a variety of neighborhood connections such as sidewalks, greenway trails and bike lanes
- A clean and aesthetically appealing community
- Providing cultural activities and educational opportunities to both residents and tourists visiting the area
- Development that is tied to the historic and rural character of the area

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Future Development Map that reflects the vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with the extensive public visioning process described in Chapter 1, is expressed in unique "character areas".

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each

area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the future. Character areas define areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have potential to evolve into unique areas or require special attention because of unique development issues.

The following pages present the Future Development Maps/character area narratives for the City of Varnell. Each description includes the following information:

- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

The **development pattern** describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design
- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park areas
- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development

Existing commercial development located along SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnell

The **primary land use** section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Finally, the **implementation strategies** section identifies the measures the City can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal.

In addition to the three levels of description above, the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) analysis for each Character Area can be found in Appendix A. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure

how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

The Future Development Map for the City of Varnell identifies the following character areas:

- Preserve
- Ridge Conservation
- Town Neighborhood
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Emerging Suburban
- Transition Corridor
- Community Activity Center

PRESERVE

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas and significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and conservation areas not suitable for development of any kind. The Preserve character area seeks to enhance the significance of these resources and ensure their protection.

Greenspace adjacent to the Varnell City Hall is part of the Preserve character area.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for passive use recreation and tourism destinations (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture

Implementation Strategies

- *Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a comprehensive system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and integrates recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance*
- *Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross these areas*
- *Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations*
- *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality*
- *Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners*
- *Adopt "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*
- *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for erosion and sedimentation, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act*

Playground equipment at the Varnell Park adjacent to the Gym and part of the Preserve character area

RIDGE CONSERVATION

This area includes all steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%) in the County, which include areas in Varnell. Hillside development has the potential to harm the area's natural resources and scenic views due to erosion and the loss of trees. The Ridge Conservation character area is intended to maintain the areas' ridgelines, which contribute to the County's unique character and its history, while accommodating low-density residential development with minimal impact on the environment.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures
- Preserve historic/cultural resources along ridges
- Incorporate adequate infrastructure for accessibility and for water and fire protection needs
- Protect existing trees

- Protect steep slopes and natural landscape
- Protect scenic views
- Preserve rural character and viewsheds
- Conserve natural features and resources
- Limit impacts of new development on the environment
- Reduce impervious cover
- Utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Encourage low-intensity uses

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Forestry/Agricultural

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Adopt hillside development ordinance*

TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Town Neighborhood character area includes residential areas in older parts of the community typically developed prior to World War II. Characteristics include pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, small, regular lots, shallow yards (relative to newer suburban counterparts), less space between buildings, and some mixed-use elements such as small neighborhood businesses. This character area is generally near traditional town centers, downtowns or crossroads, and is reflected in established residential areas in Varnell surrounding the E. Varnell St. /Varnell Railroad St. intersection.

Historic homes shape the character in the Town Neighborhood character area of Varnell.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain existing homes and character defining site features (*i.e.* drives, walls, lighting, landscaping, tree cover)
- Promote sensitive building rehabilitation that is in keeping with a building's existing architectural style and scale and that of neighboring homes
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale and style of existing adjacent homes
- Ensure that building setbacks of infill development are consistent with surrounding homes
- Promote single-family uses
- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and town center

- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into the existing development pattern and can benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Maintain existing housing stock and preserve neighborhood character
- Protect historic structures and neighborhoods
- Adhere to locally adopted design guidelines, where applicable

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Amend zoning ordinance to include flexible setback provisions for infill development*

☞ *Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance*

☞ *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize projects*

☞ *Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities for the North Georgia Region*

Single-family homes on large lots define the character of the Suburban Neighborhood character area in Varnell.

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Suburban Neighborhood character area describes areas where conventional patterns of post-World War II suburban residential subdivision development have been the dominant pattern. In addition to conventional subdivisions, some multi-family uses are present in this character area. Neighborhoods tend to be characterized by low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, and are predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.

This character area is typically found in established neighborhoods that surround historic areas and traditional town centers, and much of Varnell is reflected as Suburban Neighborhood based on existing development patterns.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale and style of existing adjacent homes

- Ensure that building setbacks of infill development are consistent with surrounding homes
- Maintain existing tree cover
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, school buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Incorporate sidewalks, traffic calming improvements and/or increased street interconnections, where appropriate, to improve walkability within existing neighborhoods as well as connectivity to neighboring communities and major destinations, including schools
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to area goods and services
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences

Undeveloped property adjacent to SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnell is part of the Emerging Suburban character area.

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Amend zoning ordinance to create flexible setback provisions for infill development*

☞ *Prepare and adopt a connector street plan*

☞ *Complete inventory and analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify needs and prioritize projects: new systems, filing in gaps in existing systems, or replacing sub-standard facilities*

Pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees and homes with front porches are encouraged in Emerging Suburban.

EMERGING SUBURBAN

The Emerging Suburban character area includes areas just outside the City that have experienced some residential growth and are positioned to accommodate more due to general land use trends in the area or to proximity to existing neighborhoods. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated at mixed use nodes located at designated major intersections on state or federal highways (See Community Activity Center character area description).

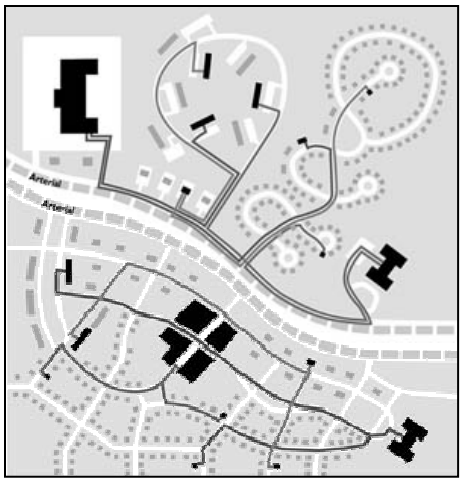
New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. Neighborhood focal points can also be created by locating schools, community centers, or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences (see Community Activity Center character area description). This preferred neighborhood design can be

accommodated with master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). In addition, conservation subdivisions should be permitted as a suitable alternative to traditional low-density residential subdivisions in order to protect and maximize open space.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect natural and scenic resources
- Provide connected system of streets within new neighborhoods and to existing neighborhoods where possible, resulting in an expanded/alternate local street network for motorists and emergency vehicles
- Accommodate master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern, encourages walking, and minimizes the need for auto trips within a subdivision
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space and active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Limit clearing and grading
- Permit use of conservation subdivisions with the goal of maximizing open space
- Include a variety of housing choices
- Provide sidewalks, street trees and decorative, pedestrian-scale lighting
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion control and groundwater recharge area protection measures, including Best Management Practices (BMP)



The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.

A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Whitfield County.

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential (net density of 2 dwellings per acre)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- ☞ *Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include all Emerging Suburban, Suburban Neighborhood and Traditional Neighborhood character areas currently underserved*
- ☞ *Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible.*

Varnell's existing development character located in the Community Activity Center is defined by the suburban-style Varnell Commons shopping center shown above.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Community Activity Center character represents locations at important intersections along major thoroughfares adjacent to Town Neighborhood, Suburban Neighborhood and Emerging Suburban areas. Community Activity Centers serve the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community, generally those neighborhoods within a five-to-10-minute drive. These community focal points can include a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.

Varnell's Community Activity Center area straddles the city boundary at the intersection of SR 71/Cleveland Highway and SR 2/Prater's Mill Road and includes the Varnell Commons shopping center, which includes a grocery store, other retail outparcels. The area also includes undeveloped property.

Development should blend in with surrounding areas and is encouraged to protect existing trees.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Develop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the center through locating higher density housing options adjacent to the center, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provides a transition between the character area and surrounding areas
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks

- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development at major roadway intersections (nodal development) to serve surrounding residential areas
- Accommodate smaller-scale commercial uses that serve local residents rather than regional-oriented "big box" development
- Discourage strip development
- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage and align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Mixed use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office and residential in the same building.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities*

☞ *Implement an overlay district or amend land development regulations to direct building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*

☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects for Community Activity Center character area locations*

☞ *Adopt mixed use development ordinance*

☞ *Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly*

TRANSITION CORRIDOR

The Transition Corridor character area represents arterial roads with frontage that generally developed with single-family residences that have over the years seen increased traffic and resulting capacity improvements (i.e. road widening). These improvements resulted in increased traffic volume and associated impacts (e.g., noise, increased trash, street widening, etc.) making uses other than single-family residential more attractive. Some corridors are more densely developed with older structures and numerous curb cuts that may provide an opportunity for redevelopment, while others are less developed with a mix of lot sizes and uses, including undeveloped property.

Transition Corridors have experienced or have the potential to experience piecemeal zoning changes that over an extended period result in front yard conversions to parking lots, unsightly home to business additions and conversions, and signage out of proportion to the structures. The Transition Corridor seeks to avoid this approach.

Transition Corridor in Varnell and adjacent unincorporated Whitfield County along SR 71/Cleveland Highway

Frontage properties along Transition Corridors should follow the development pattern described for the adjacent road-fronting character areas. However, upon completion of more detailed corridor master plans, these corridors could accommodate new commercial development concentrated in nodes at important intersections, but should not accommodate strip commercial between nodes. With a master plan, the Transition Corridor could also accommodate higher residential densities along the roadway between nodes, with lower density areas beyond the frontage properties. Master plans along with a zoning overlay are necessary to ensure that change along these corridors occurs in an orderly, comprehensive manner and applies consistent development standards throughout the corridor.

This character area includes all or portions of the major corridors in Varnell – SR 201/Varnell Road, SR 2/Praters Mill Road and SR 71/Cleveland Highway.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- With a corridor master plan, cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor that serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide for walkable, higher intensity housing choices located between nodes
- Accommodate conversion of existing residential uses into office or commercial uses while maintaining the existing building
- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards and display unobtrusive business signs that are appropriately sized and constructed for the area

- Incorporate streetscape enhancements to improve the overall appearance of the corridors
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and adjacent character areas, in particularly those that include residential uses
- Landscape parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, to improve the appearance of a site, and to shield parking areas from public view
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage)
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning by coordinating land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Prevent encroachment of commercial uses into adjacent residential areas
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial/retail uses, professional offices, mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space) and multi-family residential with a corridor master plan
- Single-family residential

Implementation Strategies

☞ *Prepare and adopt Corridor/Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridor character area locations to guide enhancements*

☞ *Adopt an overlay district or amend land development regulations to direct building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*

Map 4 Future Development Map – City of Varnell

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

Varnell's Town Neighborhood character area includes churches, small scale retail, residential and civic uses.

POPULATION

Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Strategies

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

HOUSING

Issues

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

Limited housing mix – Most of Varnell's housing stock is made up of large-acre lot, single-family residential with very few multi-family options available.

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

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

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

Deteriorating housing – Poor housing conditions can be found in Varnell and surrounding areas.

Much of the housing development occurring in the Varnell area is occurring outside of the city limits in unincorporated Whitfield County.

Opportunities

Steady home value increases - Both the number of sales and the value of homes in Whitfield County showed a steady increase from 1997 to 2004. Average home sale prices increased 23.7% from 1997 to 2004, and 15.7% from 2000 to 2004. The average home sales price was $124,430 in 2004.

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

Infill housing - Infill housing opportunities can contribute to affordable housing stock and help stabilize and enhance established neighborhoods in Varnell.

Strategies

- *Increase code enforcement in Varnell to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")*
- *Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating new higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services*
- *Recruit residential developers who build a range in housing types/price points, including higher value housing*

- *Adopt/amend zoning districts that allow more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development and also encourage a variety of housing types*
- *Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)*
- *Promote higher value housing development based on large population of homeowners who may "trade up" in upcoming years*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues

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

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

Employing educated young workers – There is limited diversity of the local economy and college educated young residents often seek job opportunities outside of Whitfield County. New industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

Educational Attainment – The County suffers from significantly low levels of educational attainment. On every level of educational attainment, the County lags behind the state and other nearby Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

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

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

Attracting young professionals to City neighborhoods – Many young professional employees in Whitfield County choose to live in areas outside of the County, in spite of longer commutes. The area has struggled to attract these young professionals the neighborhoods within Whitfield County.

Varnell Gymnaism provides opportunities for recreation for the area residents.

Opportunities

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

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

Access to Transportation - Varnell businesses have ready access to a major interstate corridor (via a short drive on SR 201), state highways, a rail corridor and airports in Chattanooga and Atlanta.

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

Strategies

- *Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks to facilitate efforts to diversify the economic base*
- *Continue business/industrial retention efforts*
- *Coordinate completion of implementation of sewer master plan to expand infrastructure to strategic opportunity areas shown on the Future Development Map*
- *Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in the town center as well as existing and emerging Community Activity Centers*
- *Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a more diversified local economy*
- *Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County, the Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports, and the 2008 branding prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority*
- *Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life*
- *Continue to support and promote efforts of Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority*

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Issues

Limited sewer service area – Growth in Varnell and surrounding area is currently limited due to lack of sewer infrastructure. Planned sewer expansion should be coordinated with land use planning.

Opportunities

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

Future water needs – Substantial water resources are available in Varnell via Dalton Utilities that can support long term growth with proactive planning and resource management.

Strategies

- *Expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.*
- *Complete and implement long range water resources master plan*
- *After extension of sewer service to Varnell, discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure. Septic tanks will remain appropriate for areas designated to remain rural during the planning period.*
- *Update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive land use plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with land use plan*
- *Coordinate with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the Whitfield County Board of Education on school planning and community planning efforts; establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments that match Whitfield County requirements*
- *Coordinate with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners to Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations*
- *Continue to actively pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails*

The City of Varnell provides trash pickup services to the residents of the City.

U.S. Post Office in Varnell

TRANSPORTATION

Issues

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

Limited bicycle/pedestrian facilities – Though sidewalks are in place on SR 71, Varnell and surrounding area does not have an adequate sidewalk network, connectivity between the City neighborhoods, the unincorporated community surrounding Nob North Golf Course is limited.

Opportunities

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

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

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

Varnell is surrounded by rural, agricultural areas, such as the area shown here between the city and SR 71/Cleveland Highway.

Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update*
- ☞ *Coordinate with the MPO in the development of the street connectivity study that includes the adoption of a collector street plan that provides a long-range outline for developer-driven construction of a connected street system in areas where growth is anticipated*
- ☞ *Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads, including those constructed by public agencies and developers, that provide room for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles, thus offering residents and those traveling through each community a variety of transportation choices*
- ☞ *Adopt subdivision regulation and zoning ordinance amendments that require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan for the Community Activity Center character area (Hwy 71) with recommendations that*

include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access

- *Coordinate with the MPO bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts in addition to implementing recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*
- *Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail*
- *Continue coordinated land use and transportation planning*
- *Coordinate with MPO Traffic Signalization Study*
- *Coordinate with MPO to implement the recommendations outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study*

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issues

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

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

Varnell's historic housing stock is threatened.

Protecting Civil War sites – Civil War sites/land areas are in need of protection. The National Park Service has identified Whitfield County as having the largest intact collection of Civil War defenses in the nation.

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

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

Out-of-date historic resource inventory – The last historic resources survey in Whitfield County that included Varnell was last performed in 1994. Many structures, sites and districts not included in the 1994 study have since become eligible, based on the minimum criteria that a resource is at least 50 years old.

Lacking environmental regulations – Varnell lacks needed regulations for protection of steep slopes, protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas and wetlands.

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

Environmental planning with future land use and development Environmental considerations are needed in the context of future

land use planning and development to protect and preserve eco-systems and watersheds.

Opportunities

Promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations – Civil War, Trail of Tears and Old Federal Road sites could be promoted more directly as tourist destinations. The not-for-profit Prater's Mill Foundation, which restored Prater's Mill and oversees preservation and promotion efforts, provides a good working model of organized efforts that can benefit historic preservation efforts in the County.

Appreciation of history – Residents and elected officials of Varnell and Whitfield County have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the area and understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs.

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

Locally-owned commercial establishments remain part of Varnell's retail mix.

Strategies

- *Adopt a Hillside Development Ordinance*
- *Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the review process.*
- *Adopt the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section for new development to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design*
- *Coordinate with Whitfield County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and integrates recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance*
- *Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources, including Prater's Mill*
- *Coordinate with Whitfield County to prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan*
- *Support minimum state requirements for stream buffers*
- *Adopt applicable "Part V" Environmental Ordinances in accordance with Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*

- *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities to protect water quality*
- *Amend zoning ordinance to require landscaping with native vegetation o non-invasive species that requires limited irrigation (or none at all)*
- *Adopt a historic preservation ordinance and create a historic preservation commission to be able to seek Certified Local Government (CLG) status, which can make the City eligible for federal historic preservation funds*

LAND USE

Issues

Commercial services imbalance – There is a lack of commercial services and providers of goods in the Varnell and north Whitfield County where there is a growing population. Almost all commercial activity is concentrated in Dalton.

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

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

New commercial development along SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnell

Opportunities

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

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

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

Strategies

- *Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Varnell*
- *Prepare and adopt "Big Box" ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.*

- *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites, and consider creation of a "development impact matrix" to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*
- *Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- *Prepare and adopt sign ordnance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas*
- *Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop*
- *Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas*
- *Develop zoning districts, overlay or amendment to existing districts that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing, ranging from senior-oriented housing developments to attached or detached "granny flats" in neighborhoods*
- *Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along corridors and other throughway roads to lessen the effects of linear sprawl*
- *Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible.*

Corner commercial butler building located in the heart of Varnell near SR 201

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Issues

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

Unincorporated islands and municipal boundaries – Varnell includes multiple areas of unincorporated islands. In addition, municipal boundaries have been expanded over time in such a way as to create confusing service delivery areas surrounding the City.

Opportunities

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

Strategies

- *Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation*
- *Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment*

- *Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services*
- *Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO*

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by the City of Varnell to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

- 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments (see appendix B)
- 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM (STWP)

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Housing	Increase code enforcement throughout the City to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")					✓	City Council, City Administrator	TBD	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Participate in the creation of a long range water resources master plan			✓			City Administrator	N/A	DU *(Dalton Utilities)*
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate with County to update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	TBD	County, General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate school planning and community planning efforts; establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, County Board of Ed.	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas along with greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails			✓	✓		City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Transportation	Coordinate with the MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update	✓	✓	✓			City Administrator	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Transportation	Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve Character areas			✓			City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Transportation	Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize repair or replacement projects			✓			City Council, MPO	TBD	General Fund, MPO
Transportation	Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements for residential subdivisions			✓			City Council, MPO	TBD	General Fund, MPO

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance					✓	City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Amend zoning ordinance to require landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited irrigation (or none at all)				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas		✓	✓			City Council, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits to preserve open space					✓	City Administrator	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt a "Big Box" ordinance			✓			City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path systems with new development				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a TND ordinance				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to permit senior living opportunities near other housing				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to permit flexible building setback provisions for infill development				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt Mixed Use development ordinance				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly		✓				City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, MPO	N/A	General Fund

LONG TERM WORK PROGRAM

A long term work program identifies specific long-term implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*.

Community Facilities & Services

- Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned
- Coordinate with the County to implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations

Transportation

- Coordinate with the MPO in the development of a street connectivity study
- Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads
- Prepare an Access Management Plan for Community Activity Center character areas
- Implement recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- Adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridor character area locations to guide future enhancements

Natural & Cultural Resources

- Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan
- Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources
- Coordinate with the County to prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan
- Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance
- Apply to the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program to be eligible for federal historic preservation funds

Land Use

- Adopt Transition Corridor and Community Activity Center overlay districts (or adopt comparable land use regulations) to enhance the look and function of these areas

POLICIES

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to City officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following policies are organized by major topic in the following subsections.

Housing

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores, services and activity centers.
- Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to facilitate denser, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments with a variety of housing types.
- Promote a range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, single-family and multi-family options, senior housing, and higher value housing.
- Protect established residential areas from encroachment by non-residential uses and automobile-oriented development.

Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements, linkages to existing businesses, and diversification of our economic base.
- Target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Take into account impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision making on economic development projects.

- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Support coordinated economic development activities (with the County, other cities and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority), including business recruitment efforts and implementation of economic development-related studies.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms or private initiatives, such as Tax Allocation Districts, Commercial Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts to finance improvements in important corridors and growth areas.
- Leverage local assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Support business/industrial retention efforts.
- Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a diverse local economy.

Community Facilities & Services

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (*i.e.*, already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.
- Limit development within our community to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact urban development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.

Transportation

- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).

- Design new and reconstructed roadways will using context sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using "complete streets" concepts to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions, and planning for future connectivity between subdivisions and adjacent undeveloped property with stub out streets).
- Support creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- Ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs, both on a City and County-wide level.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- The protection and conservation of our community's natural, cultural and historic resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Work to redirect development pressure away from agricultural areas in order to conserve farmland to protect and preserve this important component of our community.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality protection.
- Support minimum state requirements for environmental resource protection and incorporate into the development review process.
- Incorporate minimum map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the development process.
- Promote passive-use tourism and recreation uses for environmentally sensitive areas and historic resources areas, which are not suitable for development.

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential infill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that are human-scale and less auto-oriented.
- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.
- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial or mixed use nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip/linear development along major roadways.
- Open to land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in the town centers as well as existing and emerging Community Activity Centers.
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers ("greyfields") with walkable, mixed use development.
- Support specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)
- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, among the jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield joint Development Authority

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS

Supplemental plans focus on special areas, situations or issues of importance to the community, such as plans for conservation or management of natural or cultural resources, redevelopment plans for particular areas of the community, master plans for downtown development, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, gateway plans, rural preservation plans, recreation plans, or the community's required solid waste management plan. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the *Community Agenda* by reference.

- North Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005)
- Transit Feasibility Study (2006)
- 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (2005)

FINAL DRAFT
FOR NGRDC & DCA REVIEW

Whitfield County
Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for
Whitfield County and the
municipalities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell

COMMUNITY AGENDA
APPENDIX

Prepared for:
Whitfield County
City of Dalton
City of Tunnel Hill
City of Varnell

By:

MACTEC, Inc. – Planning & Design Group
Atlanta, Georgia

September 24, 2008

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APPENDIX A: QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

In addition to the three levels of description above, the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) analysis for each Character Area can be found below. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. The QCOs were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

Regional Identity – Regions should promote and preserve an "identity," defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

Growth Preparedness – Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

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, 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.

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.

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

Heritage Preservation – The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Open Space Preservation – New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.

Environmental Protection – Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, 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.

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.

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

Regional 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.

Housing Opportunities – Quality housing and 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.

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

Infill Development – Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.

Sense of Place – Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

UNINCORPORATED WHITFIELD COUNTY

Quality Community Objective	***Character Areas***																
	Preserve	*Ridge Conservation*	*Rural Agricultural Reserve*	*Rural Residential*	*Rural Neighborhood Revitalization*	*Rural Crossroads*	*Suburban Neighborhood*	*Emerging Suburban*	*Rural Corridor*	*Commercial Corridor*	*Transition Corridor*	*Bypass Corridor*	*Community Activity Center*	*Regional Activity Center*	*Interchange*	*Industrial*	*Airport*
Traditional Neighborhoods								✓									
Infill Development							✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			
Sense of Place	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Transportation Alternatives						✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓		✓	
Heritage Preservation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓											
Open Space Preservation	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓									
Environmental Protection	✓	✓						✓								✓	
Growth Preparedness	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Appropriate Businesses						✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment Options						✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing Choices				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		
Educational Opportunities												✓		✓	✓	✓	
Regional Cooperation	✓	✓													✓	✓	✓

CITY OF DALTON

Quality Community Objective	***Character Areas***															
	Preserve	*Ridge Conservation*	*Town Neighborhood*	*Town Neighborhood Revitalization*	*Suburban Neighborhood*	*Emerging Suburban*	*Downtown*	*Commercial Corridor*	*Transition Corridor*	*Bypass Corridor*	*Community Activity Center*	*Regional Activity Center*	*Industrial*	*Medical District*	*Dalton State College*	*Airport*
Traditional Neighborhoods			✓	✓		✓	✓									
Infill Development			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Sense of Place	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Transportation Alternatives			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Heritage Preservation	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓								✓	
Open Space Preservation	✓	✓				✓								✓	✓	
Environmental Protection	✓	✓				✓							✓			
Growth Preparedness	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Appropriate Businesses							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment Options							✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing Choices			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
Educational Opportunities										✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Regional Cooperation	✓	✓											✓	✓	✓	✓

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

Quality Community Objective	***Character Areas***								
	Preserve	*Ridge Conservation*	*Town Neighborhood*	*Suburban Neighborhood*	*Emerging Suburban*	*Transition Corridor*	*Commercial Corridor*	*Interchange*	*Community Activity Center*
Traditional Neighborhoods			✓		✓				
Infill Development			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sense of Place	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transportation Alternatives			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Identity	✓	✓	✓						✓
Heritage Preservation	✓	✓	✓						
Open Space Preservation	✓	✓			✓				
Environmental Protection	✓	✓			✓				
Growth Preparedness	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Appropriate Businesses						✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment Options							✓	✓	✓
Housing Choices			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Educational Opportunities									
Regional Cooperation	✓	✓						✓	

CITY OF VARNELL

Quality Community Objective	Character Areas						
	Preserve	Ridge Conservation	Town Neighborhood	Suburban Neighborhood	Emerging Suburban	Transition Corridor	Community Activity Center
Traditional Neighborhoods			✓		✓		
Infill Development			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sense of Place	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Transportation Alternatives			✓		✓	✓	✓
Regional Identity	✓	✓	✓				✓
Heritage Preservation	✓	✓	✓				
Open Space Preservation	✓	✓			✓		
Environmental Protection	✓	✓			✓		
Growth Preparedness	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Appropriate Businesses						✓	✓
Employment Options							✓
Housing Choices			✓	✓	✓		✓
Educational Opportunities							✓
Regional Cooperation	✓	✓					

APPENDIX B: REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Report of Accomplishments (ROA) provides a status of each work item identified in the 2002-2006 Short Term Work Programs for Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. For each activity the ROA identifies whether it was completed, postponed, or dropped, or if it is underway. Reasons are provided for a dropped or postponed activity, and a projected completion date is provided for items that are underway.

UNINCORPORATED WHITFIELD COUNTY

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
Economic Development	Designate a single point of contact and reliable public funding for local economic development activities.	✓			
Economic Development	Upgrade the appearance of I-75 interchanges and major commercial corridors leading into Dalton by adding landscaping and tourist oriented signage.	✓			
Economic Development	Select one of the I-75 interchanges as the primary "tourist" entrance and locate a visitor center.	✓			
Economic Development	Conduct a feasibility study for a business incubator to encourage and assist startup companies.	✓			
Economic Development	Prepare a tourism development strategy that more specifically determines opportunities, priorities, funding and agency coordination.	✓			
Economic Development	Conduct a feasibility study for an interactive exhibit or museum(s).		Committee in place		
Economic Development	Identify and seek Scenic Byway designation for highway routes that feature unique scenic, natural, cultural, historic, archaeological or recreational resources.	✓			
Economic Development	Continue to foster partnerships between business and education to identify workforce training and literacy needs, continue support for the Phoenix High School, support continued expansion of both curriculum and facilities at Dalton State College, and add	✓			
Housing	Establish an organization responsible for implementing Comprehensive Plan housing policies and action agenda.	✓			
Housing	Create a joint City/County Infrastructure Financing Bond Fund to support projects that will provide affordable housing home ownership opportunities.	✓			
Housing	Conduct a comprehensive review of manufactured home site design standards and enforcement polices.	✓			
Housing	Conduct a comprehensive review of current housing codes and enforcement policies.	✓			
Housing	Update housing condition studies and target specific neighborhoods for housing improvements.	✓			
Housing	Continue to seek and utilize HUD Community Block Grants, Georgia Residential Finance Authority rehabilitation assistance programs, and similar programs to improve deteriorated housing stock.	✓			
Natural & Cultural Resources	Develop and adopt a historical preservation ordinance that protects Civil War battlefield sites.	✓	HPC-acquired land at Rocky		

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
			Face ridge		
Natural & Cultural Resources	Establish a Joint Historic Preservation Commission.				Established City and WC HPCs
Natural & Cultural Resources	Implement the adopted Whitfield County Green Space Plan.		Purchased land-property being acquired		
Natural & Cultural Resources	Support and adequately fund Keep Dalton Beautiful, Inc. for environmental education.	✓			
Natural & Cultural Resources	Implement Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum protection standards for water supply watersheds, major river corridors, wetlands, and significant groundwater recharge areas.		✓		
Natural & Cultural Resources	Educate the public regarding proper siting and maintenance of conventional on-site wastewater treatment systems, and provide information on alternative on-site sewage treatment technology.		✓		
Natural & Cultural Resources	Develop and implement storm water management programs to minimize non-point source pollution.	✓			
Natural & Cultural Resources	Develop site design standards for steep slope areas and sign restrictions to prevent blocking of scenic views.		Steep Slope Ordinance drafted		
Natural & Cultural Resources	Develop scenic view easement mechanisms, and public acquisition of crucial scenic areas.	✓			
Community Facilities & Services	Update and prepare a joint City/County Recreational Master Plan.			Separate plans-Dalton and Whitfield	
Community Facilities & Services	Construct additional fire station in northeast side of the county.	✓			
Community Facilities & Services	Construct a new City/County Training/Burn Facility.	✓	Separate burn buildings; some joint training		
Community Facilities & Services	Upgrade fire fighting equipment and vehicles and add personnel.		Will be adding a capital budget-more personnel		
Community Facilities & Services	Establish and equip a Hazardous Response Team.	✓			
Community Facilities & Services	Conduct a needs assessment for current public health care facilities and programs to determine future expansion requirements.	✓		Health care building built 5 years ago	
Community Facilities & Services	Conduct an independent level of service needs assessment for the Whitfield County Sheriffs Department.			✓	
Community Facilities & Services	Update the joint city/county Ten Year Solid Waste Plan.	✓			
Community Facilities & Services	Develop a Sewer Services Expansion Plan that is compatible with Future Land Use Map.		✓		
Community Facilities & Services	Prepare and adopt a Capital Improvements Plan and Budget for implementing and financing the Sewer Services Expansion Plan.		✓		
Community Facilities & Services	Conduct a fixed route (or alternative) Public Transportation Study.	✓			
Community Facilities & Services	Add staff, books and other circulation materials, and technology resources to Dalton-Whitfield Regional Library.	✓ Provided $100,000 in last SPLOST			
Community Facilities & Services	Develop a 20-year Transportation Plan that is compatible with the Future Land Use Map.		Update with Comp Plan		
Community Facilities & Services	Revise Subdivision Regulations and minimum design specifications regarding access points on major roads, interconnection between subdivisions, traffic impact analysis, traffic safety standards, right of way dedications and frontage roads on major arterials		Update with Comp Plan		
Land Use	Revise Zoning Ordinance to add mixed use Planned Unit Development regulations; Planned Industrial Development regulations; minimum housing standards per Zone District; strengthen Sign Regulations, incorporate adequate site design standards and site plan	✓			

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
Land Use	Revise Subdivision Regulations to incorporate open space conservation design standards.	✓ Required in PUD district only			
Land Use	Study the appropriateness of tree protection and minimum landscaping requirements.		Drafted, but not adopted		
Land Use	Determine future Urban Service Area and define uniform design and construction standards regarding streets, storm drainage, sidewalks, and other improvements applicable to this area.			?	
Land Use	Revise County Zoning Map for consistency with the Future Land Use Map.	✓ Piecemeal Changes			
Land Use	Revise Zoning Ordinance to add mixed use Planned Unit Development regulations; Planned Industrial Development regulations; minimum housing standards per Zone District; strengthen Sign Regulations, incorporate adequate site design standards and site pan re	✓			

CITY OF DALTON

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
Economic Development	Designate a single point of contact and reliable public funding for local economic development activities	✓ Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority			
Economic Development	Upgrade the appearance of I-75 interchanges and major commercial corridors leading into Dalton by adding landscaping and tourist oriented signage.		✓ Additional upgrades will be done with SPLOST and also during GDOT projects		
Economic Development	Select one of the I-75 interchanges as the primary "tourist" entrance and locate a visitor center.	✓ Walnut Avenue; visitor is center is located in the Trade Center			
Economic Development	Develop a shuttle bus service linking the trade center, hotels, shopping centers and other attractions.			✓	
Economic Development	Improve visual appearances of streets leading into downtown with landscaping, distinctive signage, etc.		✓ Downtown streetscape projects		
Economic Development	Conduct a feasibility study for a business incubator to encourage and assist start up companies.		In discussions		
Economic Development	Prepare a tourism development strategy that more specifically determines opportunities, priorities, funding and agency coordination.		✓		
Economic Development	Conduct a feasibility study for an interactive exhibit or museum(s).		✓		
Economic Development	Finish the downtown streetscape project.	✓			
Economic Development	Redevelop the old Norfolk Southern Depot.		✓		
Economic Development	Continue to foster partnerships between business and education to identify workforce training and literacy needs, continue support for the Phoenix High School, support continued expansion of both curriculum and facilities at Dalton State College, and add High School curriculum to ensure job skills for local industries and businesses are attained for graduates.	✓			
Economic Development	Expand the existing boundaries of the Dalton Downtown Development Association (DDDA).			✓	
Housing	Establish an organization responsible for implementing the comprehensive plan housing policies and action agenda.	✓ Not-for-profit Dalton-Whitfield CDC			
Housing	Add subsidized housing units for elderly and low income.	✓ Short and long-term transitional housing units			
Housing	Create a joint City/County Infrastructure Financing Bond Fund to support projects that will provide affordable housing ownership opportunities.				
Housing	Update housing condition studies and target specific neighborhoods for housing improvements.	✓ Whitfield Housing Conditions study and Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan study areas			
Housing	Continue to seek and utilize HUD Community Block Grants, Georgia Residential Finance Authority rehabilitation assistance programs, and similar programs to improve deteriorated housing stock.	✓			
Natural/Cultural Resources	Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures as integral elements of tourism and downtown redevelopment.			✓	

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
Natural/Cultural Resources	Implement the adopted Whitfield County Green space Plan.		✓		
Natural/Cultural Resources	Support and adequately fund Keep Dalton Beautiful, Inc. for environmental education.		✓		
Natural/Cultural Resources	Implement Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum protection standards for water supply watersheds, wetlands, and significant groundwater recharge areas.		✓		
Natural/Cultural Resources	Develop and implement storm water management programs to minimize non-point source pollution.	✓			
Natural/Cultural Resources	Develop site design standards for steep slope areas and sign restrictions to prevent blocking of scenic views.		✓		
Natural/Cultural Resources	Develop scenic view easement mechanisms, and public acquisition of crucial scenic areas.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Update and prepare a joint City/County Recreation Master Plan.			Separate plans- Dalton and Whitfield	
Community Facilities/Services	Relocate Dalton City Fire Station number two.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Purchase and upgrade fire fighting equipment, and add personnel.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Establish and equip a Hazardous Response Team.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Construct a new City/County Training/Burn Facility.	✓	Separate burn buildings; some joint training		
Community Facilities/Services	Update the joint city/county Ten Year Solid Waste Plan.	✓			
Community Facilities/Services	Add staff, books and other materials, and technology resources to the Dalton/Whitfield Regional Public Library System.	✓			
Community Facilities/Services	Develop a Sewer Services Expansion Plan that is compatible with Future Land Use Map.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Prepare and adopt a Capital Improvements Plan and Budget for implementing and financing the Sewer Services Expansion Plan.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Develop a 20-year Transportation Plan that is compatible with the Future Land Use Map.		✓		
Community Facilities/Services	Conduct a fixed route (or alternative) Public Transportation Study.	✓			
Community Facilities/Services	Conduct an inventory of existing facilities and develop a plan to link neighborhoods with schools, shopping areas, recreational facilities, and other major activity centers with bike trails and sidewalk systems.	✓			
Land Use	Revise subdivision regulations and minimum design specifications regarding access points on major roads, interconnection between subdivisions, traffic impact analysis, traffic safety standards and frontage roads along major arterial routes.			✓	
Land Use	Revise Subdivision Regulations to incorporate open space conservation design standards.			✓	
Land Use	Revise Zoning Ordinance to incorporate Planned Industrial Development regulations; more effective buffer requirements between incompatible districts; eliminate the pyramid Zoning District system; include zero lot line and other higher housing development			✓	
Land Use	Determine future Urban Service Area and define uniform design and construction standards regarding streets, storm drainage, sidewalks, and other improvements applicable to this area.			✓	
Land Use	Revise City Zoning Map for consistency with the Future Land Use Map.		Update with Comp Plan		

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
Economic Development	Complete historical museum for local and tourist interest.	✓			
Economic Development	Expand heritage festivals, tours, and special events.	✓			
Economic Development	Develop a railroad-oriented tourist attraction.		✓ 2010		
Economic Development	Develop site plan and seek funding for streetscape improvements along U.S. 41 business district (lighting, landscaping, sidewalks, etc.)	✓ Sidewalks and minor landscaping			
Natural/Cultural Resources	Survey and adopt local Tunnel Hill Historic District.				✓
Natural/Cultural Resources	Establish a Joint Historic Preservation Commission.				✓ Tunnel Hill Historical Society is already in place
Natural/Cultural Resources	Adopt Wetland and Watershed protection regulations.	✓ Part of stormwater only			
Community Facilities	Expand existing City Hall complex for Police Dept. needs.			✓ 2010	
Community Facilities	Participate in County Sewer Services Expansion Plan to extend sewer to the city.		Discussions underway		
Community Facilities	Construct new gymnasium facility.				✓
Community Facilities	Update the joint city/county Ten Year Solid Waste Plan.	✓			
Community Facilities	Add ballfield and storage building at Harry Griffin Park.	✓ Storage building			Ballfield dropped

CITY OF VARNELL

Element	Activity	Status			
		Complete	Underway	Postponed	Dropped
Natural/Cultural Resources	Establish a Joint Historic Preservation Commission.			✓	
Community Facilities	Work with County School Board to ensure that Varnell children attend Varnell Schools.			✓	
Community Facilities	Work with postal service to establish a rural delivery postal service from the Varnell Post Office to Varnell residents.			✓	
Community Facilities	Construct a new gymnasium.	✓			
Community Facilities	Complete development of playground, ball field, and picnic grounds at Highland Park Drive.	✓			
Community Facilities	Complete Peacock Alley Play Parks' restrooms, landscaping, and pavilion.	✓			
Community Facilities	Work with County Emergency Medical Services to establish a branch ambulance facility.	✓			
Community Facilities	Update the city/county Ten Year Solid Waste Plan.	✓			
Community Facilities	Complete renovation of City Hall Complex.				✓
Land Use	Develop and adopt junk and litter regulations.			✓	
Land Use	Adopt Wetland, Water Supply and Watershed protection regulations.			✓	
Land Use	Develop and pursue coordinated annexation strategy.				✓

APPENDIX C: GLOASSARY OF TERMS & DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

The following pages provide a comprehensive list of terms and phrases used throughout this plan and other community planning documents. The lisp provides a brief description for each term or phrase shown.

Accessory dwelling unit - Garage apartments, granny flats, or similar secondary housing units located on the same lot with a single family residence.

Adaptive reuse or adaptive use - The redevelopment of existing older or abandoned structures for new development opportunities. These activities provide for the revitalization and redevelopment of older urban areas by providing new uses for existing structures. (e.g., residential loft units in former warehouse buildings).

Adequate public facilities ordinance - A requirement that infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, schools, etc.) be available to serve new development; sometimes called "concurrency."

Agricultural districts - Areas designed to keep land in agriculture that are legally recognized. Enrolled areas may be considered for special benefits and protection from regulations.

Agricultural zoning - Restricts land uses to farming and livestock, other kinds of open-space activities and limited home building.

Alleys - Service easements running behind or between rows of houses. Alleys provide access to utilities and sanitation, garages, backyards and accessory units.

Annexation - A change in existing community boundaries resulting from the incorporation of additional land.

Aquifer -A water-bearing geologic formation. The source of ground water for drinking and irrigation.

Big box retailer - Large, stand-alone discount stores, such as Wal-Mart and Office Depot

Best Management Practice (BMP) - Refers to the practice considered most effective to achieve a specific desired result for protection of water, air and land and to control the release of toxins.

Biodegradation - Breakdown of organic material into innocuous products by the action of living organisms

Biodiversity - The grand diversity of life on Earth and all the interconnections that support these myriad forms of life; includes variety of life at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels.

Blight - Physical and economic conditions within an area that cause a reduction of or lack of proper utilization of that area. A blighted area is one that has deteriorated or has been arrested in its development by physical, economic, or social forces.

Board of commissioners - A county's legislative body. Board members are elected by popular vote and are responsible for enacting ordinances, imposing taxes, making appropriations and establishing county policy. The board adopts general planning, zoning and subdivision regulations.

Brownfields - Sites that are underutilized or not in active use, on land that is either contaminated or perceived to be contaminated.

"Granny units" housing - Typically, this refers to an accessory dwelling attached to or near the main residence (a.k.a. granny flats or mother-in-law suites)

Buffer zone - A strip of land created to separate and protect one type of land use from another.

Built environment - The urban environment consisting of buildings, roads, fixtures, parks and all other improvements that form the physical character of a city.

Bus lanes - A lane on a street or highway reserved primarily, or exclusively, for buses.

Bus rapid transit (BRT) - BRT combines the quality of rail transit and the flexibility of buses. It can operate on bus lanes, HOV lanes, expressways or ordinary streets.

Capital facilities (Infrastructure) - Public facilities characterized by a one-time cost, a useful life generally exceeding five years, significant and construction costs and long-term financing requirements. Land acquisition, site preparation, development planning, and engineering

Central business district (CBD) - The downtown retail trade and commercial area of a city or town, or an area of very high land valuation, traffic flow and concentration of retail business offices, theaters, hotels and services.

Certified local government (CLG) - A local government that protects local historic resources with a preservation ordinance, preservation commission and local designation. A designated CLG is eligible to receive federal funds for historic preservation activities.

Charrette - Intensive workshop designed to involve a project's stakeholders in a facilitated process to gain consensus on policy and physical elements of a development plan.

Charter city - A city, which has been incorporated under its own charter rather than under the general laws of the state. Charter cities have broader powers to enact land use regulations that do general law cities.

Choice - The availability of a wide variety of housing, transportation and shopping options that meet the needs of community residents from different economic levels and age groups.

City council - A city's legislative body. The popularly elected city council is responsible for enacting ordinances, imposing taxes, making appropriations, establishing policy and hiring some city officials. The council adopts local general planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Cluster development - A pattern of development in which industrial and commercial facilities and homes are grouped together on parcels of land in order to leave parts of the land undeveloped. Cluster development is often used in areas that require large lot sizes, and typically involves density transfer. Zoning ordinances permit cluster development by allowing smaller lot sizes when part of the land is left as open space (also known as Conservation Subdivision).

Commercial - Land use that is primarily for businesses, which may include shopping, restaurants, gas stations, etc.

Community design factors - Factors that influence the way a community is laid out and how it looks. This may include such things as the street grid pattern, the presence of sidewalks, the mix of land uses and the physical character of the buildings.

Community identity - Physical, natural or cultural assets that represent distinctive qualities unique to an individual community. A community's identity is enhanced by embracing and respecting the history and character of those existing features that nurture a sense of attachment and uniqueness within the area.

Community plan - A portion of the local general plan that focuses on a particular area or community within the local government. Community plans supplement the policies of the general plan.

Community services - Services provided to citizens by a local government that may include police, fire, hospital, schools, trash removal, water treatment, recycling, etc. These services are paid for by local taxes and user fees.

Community transportation centers - These centers serve as an origin or major stopping point for community-based services.

Community-based service - Provides curb-to-curb or short-distance mobility within communities and feeder connections to bus routes and rail services.

Community improvement district (CID) – See sidebar.

Commuter rail - Train service that takes suburban commuters to jobs close in and back again

Compact building design - The act of constructing buildings vertically rather than horizontally, configuring them on a block or neighborhood scale that makes efficient use of land and resources, and is consistent with neighborhood character and scale. Compact building

Community Improvement District

A Community Improvement District (CID) is a self-taxing district that uses additional property tax dollars to make improvements within a defined district. CIDs are controlled by the private property owners and the property owners decide how to spend the money raised via a Board of Directors.

In order to form a CID in the state of Georgia, a simple majority of the commercial property owners within the CID must agree to form a CID. In addition, these property owners must represent at least 75% of the assessed tax value within the proposed CID boundaries.

CIDs typically use the tax dollars they receive as matching funds (matched with state and federal dollars) for various infrastructure improvements. Successful CIDs in North Georgia have received as much as $50 of state and federal grant money for each $1 collected locally and have funded projects such as:

- Marketing and Promotion
- Maintenance
- Construct roads, sidewalks, street lights, and devices to control the flow of traffic.
- Parks and recreational areas and facilities.
- Storm water and sewage disposal systems.
- Development and distribution of water
- Provide off duty police for traffic control during peak traffic periods

design reduces the footprint of new construction, thus preserving greenspace to absorb and filter rain water, reduce flooding and stormwater drainage needs, and lower the amount of pollution washing into our streams, rivers and lakes.

Compact building design - The act of constructing buildings vertically rather than horizontally, configuring them on a block or neighborhood scale that makes efficient use of land and resources, and is consistent with neighborhood character and scale. Compact building design reduces the footprint of new construction, thus preserving greenspace to absorb and filter rain water, reduce flooding and stormwater drainage needs, and lower the amount of pollution washing into our streams, rivers and lakes.

Comprehensive plan - Regional, state or local documents that describe community visions for future growth. Comprehensive plans describe general plans and policies for how communities will grow and the tools that are used to guide land use decisions, and give general, long-range recommendations for community growth. Typical elements include, land use, housing, transportation, environment, economic development and community facilities.

Conditional use permit (CUP) - Pursuant to the zoning ordinance, a conditional use permit (CUP) may authorize uses not routinely allowed on a particular site. CUPs require a public hearing and, if approval is granted, are usually subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions by the developer. Approval of a CUP is not a change in zoning.

Conservation easements - Conservation easements are voluntary, legally binding agreements for landowners that limit parcels of land or pieces of property to certain uses. Land under conservation easements remains privately owned and most easements are permanent.

Conservation subdivision – See sidebar to the right.

Context sensitive design (CSD) - A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources. CSD is an approach that considers the total context within which a project will exist.

Conservation Subdivisions

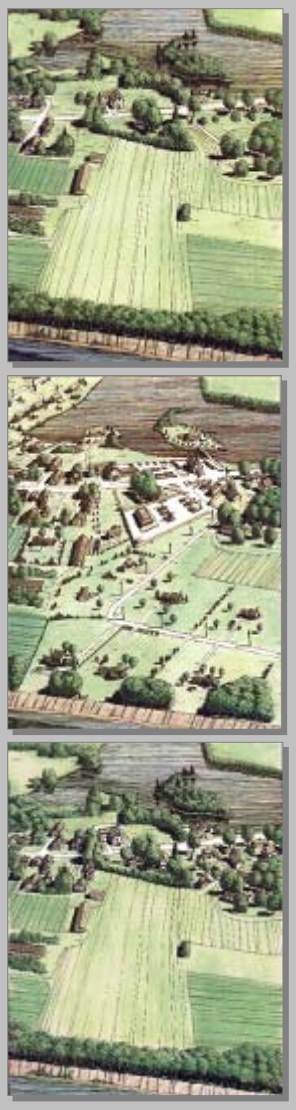
Conservation subdivisions (also called cluster subdivisions) are an alternative to conventional residential lot designs. Designers identify land resources (e.g. scenic views, steep slopes, riparian areas, etc.) worthy of conservation, then design development in a way that respects and preserves the resources identified.

Conservation subdivisions make development in Greenfield, or undeveloped, areas much more sustainable since open space is protected. By clustering homes, future households are accommodated more efficiently on less developed land.

A chief component of the conservation subdivision is that the developer can develop the same number of lots with conservation subdivisions as he can with conventional subdivisions. The difference is that conservation subdivisions allow the development to occur with much smaller lots that are clustered in order to preserve the areas for open space.

Conservation subdivisions can be residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of overall acreage is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while houses are clustered on the remainder of the property. They are similar in many respects to golf course communities, but instead of a manicured golf course, they feature natural forests, meadows, wetlands and community gardens or farmland.

Conservation subdivisions contrast with conventional subdivisions in which nearly the entire parcel is subdivided into house lots and streets. Conventional subdivisions provide few green spaces for walking, little habitat for wildlife and few opportunities for residents to interact with their neighbors. Conservation subdivisions, on the other hand, provide all of these things.



Alternatives for rural area (top) with equal residential and commercial square footage with conventional large-lot rural zoning regulations (center) and with conservation subdivision regulations (bottom).

Source: Center for Rural Mass.

Corridor - A connecting strip of habitat that facilitates the migration and movement of species between core habitat areas, preventing the isolation of populations and enhancing the chances of survival.

Cross-acceptance - A negotiated process by which jurisdictions reach agreement on the location and the nature of planned development; its purpose is to ensure consistency among the comprehensive plans and the growth management programs of individual local governments within a region.

CZMA (Coastal Zone Management Area) - National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provides funding for implementation and sets standards (including prevention of non-point source pollution) for states to comply with when they develop a plan to protect their coastal areas.

Density - The average number of people, families, or housing units on one unit of land. Density is also expressed as dwelling units per acre.

Density bonus - Allows developers to build in specified areas densities that are higher than normally allowed.

Design flexibility - Allows for flexibility in parking and open space designations, setbacks and height limitations in order to facilitate the production of a range of affordable housing types.

Design standards - Guidelines which serve as a community's expression to control its appearance, from within and without, through a series of standards that govern site planning policies, densities, building heights, traffic and lighting.

Development fees - Fees charged to developers or builders as a prerequisite to construction or development approval. The most common are: (1) impact fees (such as parkland acquisition fees, school facilities fees, or street construction fees) related to funding public improvements which are necessitated in part or in whole by the development; (2) connection fees (such as water line fees) to cover the cost of installing public services to the development; (3) permit fees (such as building permits, grading permits, sign permits) for the administrative costs of processing development plans; and, (4) application fees (rezoning, CUP, variance, etc.) for the administrative costs of reviewing and hearing development proposals.

Development rights - Development rights give property owners the right to develop land in ways that comply with local land use regulation.

Disinvestment - The withdrawal of taxes, capital, jobs and other resources from a community.

Down-zoning - A change in zoning classification to less intensive use and/or development.

Ecosystem - The species and natural communities of a specific location interacting with one another and with the physical environment.

Ecosystem services - The natural processes within an ecosystem that cycle nutrients through the system, convert and disperse energy, purify water and generate air

Edge city - Suburban "down towns" that began to spring up on the edges of metropolitan areas in the 1980s, usually at the intersection of a radial freeway and a bypass or beltway.

EIR or Environmental Impact Report - A detailed review of a proposed project, its potential adverse impacts upon the environment, measures that may avoid or reduce those impacts, and alternatives to the project.

Eminent domain - The legal right of government to take private property for public use provided the owner is offered just compensation for the taking of property.

Endangered - Species that are in danger of extinction. It also is a category that denotes protection under federal law (Endangered Species Act).

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) - The federal body charged with responsibility for natural resource protection and oversight of the release of toxins and other threats to the environment.

ERI (Environmental Resource Inventory) - A listing and description of natural resources and general environmental characteristics of a given geographic area.

Estuary - A water body where salt and fresh water meet resulting in brackish water. These areas usually have associated marshlands and are critical nursery and feeding habitat for a variety of marine species.

Eutrophication - The natural aging process of water bodies, by siltation and organic decomposition, which reduces both water volume and oxygen levels. Surface run-off or airborne deposition of nitrogen and phosphorus accelerate this.

Exotic species - A species that has invaded an ecosystem in which it does not normally occur, usually through accidental (or intentional) human introduction

Express routes - Bus service with a limited number of stops.

Fair-share housing - A program for equitable and balanced distribution of low- and moderate-income housing among the jurisdictions within a region.

Final map subdivision - Land divisions, which create five or more lots. Such requirements may include installing road improvements, the construction of drainage and sewer facilities, parkland dedications and more.

Fiscal impact analysis - The analysis of the estimated taxes that a development project would generate in comparison to the cost of providing municipal services required by that project.

Flexible routes - Routes that will provide curb-to-curb service within a defined corridor, generally within 1/2 to 1 mile of the route.

Flood hazard area - Total stream and adjacent area periodically covered by overflow from the stream channel containing 1) the floodway which is the channel itself and portions of the immediately adjacent overbank that carry the major portion of flood flow, and 2) the flood fringe beyond it which is inundated to a lesser degree.

Flood plain - Nearly level area adjacent to a water body, subject to inundation under heavy rain or blockage conditions (overflow area).

Form-based code – See sidebar below.

Form-Based Code

TNDs and greyfield redevelopment projects built over the last 20 years in the United States have been developed using form-based zoning regulations that prescribe traditional neighborhood form.

The form-based TND ordinance is distinguished from conventional zoning in that it places more emphasis on the arrangement and form of buildings and spaces than on how they will be used.

The form-based code approach seeks to regulate building form rather than, or in addition to, land use. It establishes zones of building type based on pedestrian accessibility and the scale and character of surrounding development, but largely allows building owners to determine how the buildings will be used.

Form-based codes typically contain a regulating plan that identifies which building envelope standards apply to which block frontages, building envelope standards that set basic parameters for building height, setbacks, roof design, and fenestration; and architectural and streetscape standards.

General plan - A statement of policies, including text and diagrams setting forth objectives, principles, standards and plan proposals, for the future physical development of the city or county.

Genetic diversity - A variation in the inherited characteristics (such as coloration and height) of individuals within and between populations of a species.

GIS (Graphic Information Systems) - resources or features such as soil types, population densities, land uses, transportation corridors, waterways, etc. GIS computer programs link features commonly seen on maps (such as roads, town boundaries, water bodies) with related information not usually presented on maps, such as type of road surface, population, type of agriculture, type of vegetation, or water quality information. A GIS is a unique information system in which individual observations can be spatially referenced to each other.

Green infrastructure - A strategically planned and managed network of parks, greenways, conservation easements and working lands with conservation value that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for communities and people.

Green spaces and/or open spaces - Areas left relatively natural and undeveloped in urban and suburban settings, such as parks, bicycle and pedestrian trails and natural wildlife areas. Also includes the living environment of a species, that provides whatever that species needs for its survival, such as nutrients, water and living space

Greenfields - Newly developed commercial real estate on what was previously undeveloped open space.

Greenspace - Permanently protected land and water, including agricultural and forestry land, that is in its undeveloped, natural state.

Greenway - A linear open space; a corridor composed of natural vegetation. Greenways can be used to create connected networks of open space that include traditional parks and natural areas.

Greyfield Redevelopment – See sidebar on the next page.

Groundwater - All water below the surface of the land. It is water found in the pore spaces of bedrock or soil, and it reaches the land surface through springs or it can be pumped using wells.

Growth management - A term that encompasses a whole range of policies designed to control, guide, or mitigate the effects of growth.

Habitat - The living environment of a species, that provides whatever that species needs for its survival, such as nutrients, water and living space.

Habitat fragmentation - The division of large tracts of natural habitat into smaller, disjunct parcels.

High density development overlay - Creates a new high-density overlay zoning to encourage the production of rental, workforce homeownership and special needs housing. Applies to locations with appropriate infrastructure and transportation, such as rezoned commercial properties or multi-family residential sites. The overlay zone would mandate minimum higher densities in special overlay and other zones in exchange for provision of a range of needed community housing.

Greyfield Redevelopment

Today's American urban landscape is dotted with shopping malls which have become obsolete. These shopping centers, built primarily in the 1970's and 1980's, are dying due to various factors including differences in the market, changes in accessibility, and increased competition.

A new tool for design experts is to turn these fading centers, named 'greyfields' for the typically empty parking lots surrounding them, into thriving downtown communities. Greyfield revitalization efforts attempt to exchange afflicting influences with smart new growth that is both more environmentally friendly and establishes a strong sense of place.

Revitalization of greyfield sites often consists of major redevelopment rather than conventional regional retail or simple face-lifts. Design initiatives are inspired by classic urban form and by classic urban form and characterized by attractive, walkable streets and high density. Many greyfield sites are more suitable to be converted into housing, retail, office, services, and public space rather than standard retail. In these cases mixed-use development becomes an attractive option.

The mixed-use development plan concept replaces an isolated big box store with large parking lot with traditional, urban design that places buildings close to the street, separated only by a sidewalk and landscaped strip. Parking is located in the rear or to the side of the commercial buildings in order to create a friendly pedestrian environment along each street. The design connects the development to the adjacent community's street grid with pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

Eastgate Town Center, before (top) and proposed after (bottom) in Chattanooga, Tennessee

Source: Dover Kohl & Partners

High occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes - A lane or lanes on a highway, freeway, separate right of way, or arterial street restricted for use by vehicles carrying more than one person.

Historic area - An area or building in which historic events occurred, or one which has special value due to architectural or cultural features relating to the heritage of the community. Elements in historic areas have significance that necessitates preservation or conservation.

Housing element - A comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It sets forth local housing policies and programs to implement those policies.

Impact fees - Costs imposed on new development to fund public facility improvements required by new development and ease fiscal burdens on localities.

Impact fees or taxes - Assessments levied on new development to help pay for construction of parks and the infrastructure(schools, roads, and other public facilities) needed to serve the new population; impact taxes differ from fees in that they allow assessments to be proportional to the size of the new house or business.

Impervious surface - Any surface through which rainfall cannot pass or be effectively absorbed. (Roads, buildings, paved parking lots, sidewalks etc.)

Incentive zoning - Provides for give and take compromise on zoning restrictions, allowing for more flexibility to provide environmental protection. Incentive zoning allows a developer to exceed a zoning ordinance's limitations if the developer agrees to fulfill conditions specified in the ordinance. The developer may be allowed to exceed height limits by a specified amount in exchange for providing open spaces or plazas adjacent to the building.

Industrial - Land use that is primarily for businesses, such as warehouses, manufacturing plants, automobile service shops, etc.

Infill - Development that occurs on previously developed land within established communities.

Infill development - The reuse of urban land or vacant lots in developed neighborhoods and urban areas. Infill development (buildings, parking, and other uses) is most successful when it is accomplished at a scale and with design features that are compatible with the existing and surrounding neighborhoods.

Infrastructure - A general term describing public and quasi-public utilities and facilities such as roads, bridges, sewers and sewer plants, water lines, power lines, fire stations, etc.

Inclusionary zoning - A system that requires a minimum percentage of lower and moderate income housing to be provided in new developments.

Initial study - An analysis of a project's potential environmental effects and their relative significance.

Initiative - A ballot measure which has been placed on the election ballot as a result of voter signatures and which addresses a legislative action.

Intermodal - Those issues or activities which involve or affect more than one mode of transportation, including transportation connections, choices, cooperation and coordination of various modes. Also known as "multimodal."

ISTEA/TEA-21 (Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century) - Federal legislation that encompasses all transportation regulation and funding (Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act was the original title).

Jitney - Privately-owned, small or medium-sized, vehicle usually operated on a fixed route but not on a fixed schedule.

Land trust - Nonprofit organization interested in the protection of natural resources and historic areas.

Land use - The manner in which a parcel of land is used or occupied.

Leapfrog development - Development that occurs beyond the limits of existing development and creates areas of vacant land between areas of developed land.

Level of service (LOS) - A qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream in terms of speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience and safety.

Light rail - The modern version of a streetcar or tram.

Line-haul service - A fixed-route bus system that operates on arterial streets or on toll ways or expressways.

Linkages - Features that promote the interconnectedness of neighborhoods, commercial and office areas, open space resources and public places, and provide convenient access between these different uses.

Location efficient mortgage - A lending program that allows homebuyers to borrow more money, based on the transportation cost savings of living near mass transit

Live-work unit - Buildings that offer the opportunity for individuals to live and work in the same structure. Units may be rental or condominium. Purchase of home and office may be accomplished through a single mortgage.

Lot area - Lot area is the total square footage of horizontal area included within the property lines.

Minimum density standards - Standards that establish minimum higher densities to ensure that existing land available for development is not underutilized.

Mixed use - Development that combines two or more of the types of development: residential, commercial, office, industrial or institutional.

Mixed use development – See sidebar below..

Mixed Use Development

Mixed use development combines numerous uses on one site in a strategic way, including office, retail, residential, hotel, services, and public transportation. Historically mixed use was a common form of development in America, and today is returning in response to land use segregation and the desire for an improved sense of community.

Developing with a mixed use approach can alleviate traffic and help reduce pollution, while providing residents a cherished place to call downtown. Accessibility becomes a major benefit, as various stores, restaurants, and homes are located in the same vicinity. Parking needs of the different uses vary throughout the day, and can be skillfully shared and placed in the backs of buildings or on-street as to not discourage pedestrian movement. Also, 'pocket parks,' parks which are tucked within the urban fabric of a downtown, balance with density to create an enjoyable, livable atmosphere.

Mixed land uses can create convenient places to live for people of various ages and income levels, enhancing the vitality of a community and its streets. Substantial fiscal and economic benefits can also be generated out of mixed use development, as the area becomes more attractive to residents and to businesses who acknowledge the benefits related to areas able to appeal to more people.

Mixed-use corner lot devlopment above includes ground floor office and retail with upper floor residential in the Lockland Springs neighborhood of Nashville, Tennessee.

Neo-traditional development - A traditional neighborhood, where a mix of different types of residential and commercial developments form a tightly knit unit. Residents can walk or bike to more of the places they need to go and municipal services costs are lower due to the close proximity of residences. A more compact development also reduces the amount of rural land that must be converted to serve urban needs.

New urbanism - A planning and design movement that promotes artfully designed urban neighborhoods that host diverse income groups and races, a mix of homes, stores, and restaurants, and useful public spaces.

Nodal development – Nodal development concentrates mixed used development (such as commercial, office and higher density residential) to provide required densities and service to make transit affordable and to foster community hubs where daily services can be reached within walking distance.

Metropolitan planning organization (MPO) - The organization designated by local elected officials as being responsible for carrying out the urban transportation and other planning processes for an area.

Mitigation - Process or projects replacing lost or degraded resources, such as wetlands or habitat, at another location.

Modal split - A term that describes how many people use alternative forms of transportation. Frequently used to describe the percentage of people using private automobiles as opposed to the percentage using public transportation.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - A comprehensive federal law requiring analysis of the environmental impacts of federal actions such as the approval of grants; also requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for every major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

Negative declaration - The negative declaration is an informational document that describes the reasons why the project will not have a significant effect and proposes measures to mitigate or avoid any possible effects.

Niche - The unique function and place of a species in its ecosystem.

NIMBY ("Not in My Backyard") - NIMBY is an acronym for the sentiment that exists among some people who do not want any type of change in their neighborhood.

Non-point source pollution (NPS) - Pollution that cannot be identified as coming from a specific source and thus cannot be controlled through the issuing of permits. Storm water runoff and some deposits from the air fall into this category.

Nonporous surface - A surface that water cannot permeate.

Overlay zone - A set of zoning requirements that is superimposed upon a base zone. Overlay zones are generally used when a particular area requires special protection (as in a historic preservation district) or has a special problem (such as steep slopes, flooding or earthquake faults). Development of land subject to overlay zoning requires compliance with the regulations of both the base and overlay zones.

Parcel map - A minor subdivision resulting in fewer than five lots. The city or county may approve a parcel map when it meets the requirements of the general plan and all applicable ordinances.

Part V Environmental Ordinances – Ordinances that address one or more of the following: groundwater recharge area protection, wetlands protection, river corridor protection, mountain protection, and water supply watershed protection in accordance with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) environmental planning criteria of Part V of the 1989 Georgia Planning Act, Chapter 391-3-16.

Pedestrian-friendly - A term used to describe streets or areas that are laid out in an interconnected network providing convenient and safe pedestrian access between important destinations. Areas that are pedestrian-friendly, are attractively landscaped, provide visual interest and a sense of security to encourage walking.

Planned unit development (PUD) - PUDs are areas that are planned and developed as one entity, by a single group. Planned unit developments usually include a variety of uses, including different housing types of varying densities, open space, and commercial uses. Project planning and density is calculated for the entire development rather than individual lots.

Planning - The process of setting development goals and policy, gathering and evaluating information, and developing alternatives for future actions based on the evaluation of the information.

Planning commission - A group of residents appointed by the city council or board of commissioners to consider land use planning matters. The commission's duties and powers are established by the local legislative body and might include hearing proposals to amend the general plan or rezone land, initiating planning studies (road alignments, identification of seismic hazards, etc.), and taking action on proposed subdivisions.

Public spaces - Places that create community identity, foster social interaction and add community vitality. They may include major sites in central locations such as urban riverfronts, downtown plazas and parks, shopping streets and historic districts. Public spaces may be libraries, post offices or other civic building areas. Smaller, less central sites include neighborhood streets and parks, playgrounds, gardens, neighborhood squares and older suburban commercial centers.

Public-private partnerships - A collaborative arrangement between public and private entities in which resources and information are shared in order to serve a

particular public purpose. Public-private partnerships specify joint rights and responsibilities and imply some sharing of risks, costs or assets, thereby allowing parties to effectively achieve common goals.

Purchase of development rights (PDR) - Programs through which local governments may purchase development rights and dedicate the land for conservation easements, protecting it as open space or agricultural areas (see sidebar on the next page for more information).

Pyramid zoning - Allows residential development in any area of a jurisdiction except where zoned for recreation, open space and heavy manufacturing/industrial

Qualified local government (QLG) - A county or municipality which has a comprehensive plan in conformity with the minimum standards and procedures and has established regulations consistent with its comprehensive plan with the minimum standards and procedures.

Quality of life - Those aspects of the economic, social and physical environment that make a community a desirable place in which to live or do business. Quality of life factors include those such as climate and natural features, access to schools, housing, employment opportunities, medical facilities, cultural and recreational amenities and public services.

Redevelopment - Reinvestment in older elements of a region – a historic structure, long-time residential community, brownfield, shopping center or main street – offers an opportunity to revitalize communities while preserving social and environmental values.

Rehabilitation - In communities with a large stock of older housing or other structures that could lend themselves more easily to conversion into residential units, rehabilitation can be a very affordable and environmentally-friendly way to provide more housing, commercial areas and offices.

Referendum - A ballot measure challenging a legislative action by the city council or county board of commissioners. Referenda petitions must be filed before the action becomes final and may lead to an election on the matter.

Resource efficiency - The efficient use of natural resources maximizes productivity while minimizing waste and environmental impact. For example, buildings that incorporate energy efficient technologies are typically more comfortable, have lower utility bills and have less impact on the environment. Resource efficiencies garnered through sensitive design, increased densities, integration of land uses and a balanced transportation system may improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and save money.

Reverse commute - A trip that is running in the opposite direction of the heaviest traffic. The reverse commute generally involves travel between employment locations in the outlying suburban areas and residence locations closer to the urban core of the metropolitan area.

Purchase of Development Rights

The purchase of development rights (PDR) involves the voluntary sale by a landowner of the right to develop a property to a government agency or private nonprofit land trust. The land owner receives a cash payment in return of signing a legally binding agreement, a deed of easement that restricts the use of the land, usually in perpetuity to farming and open space. The land remains private property with no right of public access. State and local governments have relied primarily on the sale of bonds to finance the purchase of development rights.

The sale of development rights lowers the value of the farm for estate tax purposes, aiding in the transfer of the farm to the next generation. The price of the development rights is determined by an appraisal. Although future generations that farm a preserved farm will have development rights to sell, the farm will retain a value for farming, and the land can be sold to someone else to farm.

PDR and the purchase of conservation easement are the same thing. By convention, however, PDR refers to the purchase of a conservation easement by a government agency, whereas the acquisition of conservation easements is done by private land trusts. The PDR also tends to refer to the preservation of active farm and forestlands.

When development rights are purchased from several; contiguous farms, development can be more effectively directed away from the farming area, allowing farm owners to invest in their farms without complains from non-farm neighbors.

Residential - Land use that is primarily for houses, townhouses, apartments or other dwelling types.

Riparian area - Vegetated ecosystems along a water body through which energy, materials, and water pass. Riparian areas characteristically have a high water table and are subject to periodic flooding.

Runoff - The water that flows off the surface of the land, ultimately into our streams and water bodies, without being absorbed into the soil.

Rural character - Rural character consists of qualities such as horse farms, lakes, pastures, farms, estates and undisturbed roadsides. Areas contain mature and natural landscape with informal placement of trees and indigenous vegetation is characteristic of the area.

Scale - Urban designers typically emphasize the importance of human scale in successful environments. Considerations of human scale include building height and

bulk regulations to ensure that new development and redevelopment efforts are pedestrian-oriented and compatible with the existing built environment.

Scenic byway - Any designated highway, street, road or route which features certain resources (cultural, natural, archaeological, historical and recreational) that should be protected or enhanced (Georgia Scenic Byways Project: 1998, p. 2)

Sediment and erosion control - Practices and processes that effectively protect the soil surface from the erosive force of rain, storm water runoff and, in some cases, wind. Higher rates of erosion and sediment loss typically accompany urban development. A variety of planning, design and engineering practices are used to minimize the negative impacts of erosion on urban streams.

Sedimentation - Build up of soils in streams and lakes via runoff from surrounding land, especially land cleared of vegetation.

Sense of place - A feeling of attachment and belonging to a particular place or environment having a special character and familiarity.

Setback - A minimum distance required by zoning to be maintained between two structures or between a structure and property lines.

Shared parking - Parking area that is utilized by more than one business, development or property to minimize parking surfaces in an area. Shared parking works best when the various users have customers with parking needs at different times of the day.

Siltation - Process by which loose soil is transferred and builds up in streams, rivers, and lakes, causing changes in stream channels and in depth. It may result in filling in an area and/or causing flooding.

Site plan - A scaled plan showing proposed uses and

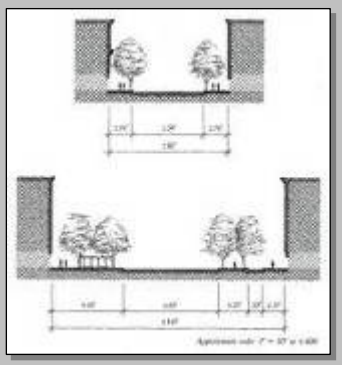
Streetscape

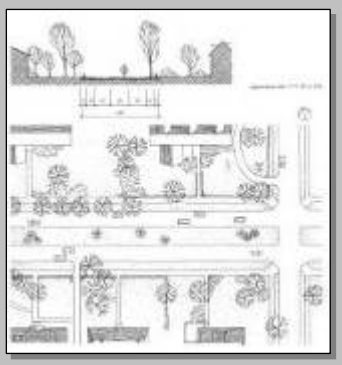
Streets inform the structure and comfort of urban communities. Their sizes and arrangements influence the form of growth in an area, affecting the amount of activity afforded to a region. Streets also shape how people relate to one another and their community, whether traveling in vehicle or pedestrian traffic. A hierarchy of roads becomes important to the centralization of an urban core and its surrounding vicinity, organizing patterns of density and focusing attention on one or many centers. Following are descriptions of three major road typologies which will become pertinent to Whitfield County planning.

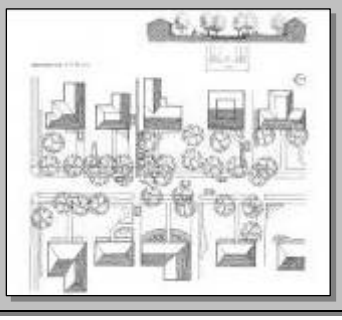
Avenue - An avenue describes a straight, broad roadway bordered on both sides with either trees or large shrubs at regular intervals. The presence of an avenue often indicates an arrival to a landscape or architectural feature. Trees planted along avenues are typically of the same species or cultivar, creating a uniform appearance and emphasizing the full length of the street.

Boulevard - A boulevard indicates a wide, multi-lane thoroughfare, often planted with rows of trees. The boulevard can be perceived as three distinct routes: two sidewalks and the roadway itself, trees separating each of these components. Boulevards can affect the structure and comprehension of a city's layout, linking important localities, and can also become popular destinations themselves. The boulevard can accommodate and even promote residential, business, and retail purposes, and, as in traditional use, often exists as a special place of promenade. In addition to the movement of vehicles and goods, the design purpose of a boulevard is about pedestrian traffic. Boulevards become a way for people to enjoy a city, and help to create identity.

Residential Street - Residential streets are designed to create a quiet, traffic-protected area. The feeling throughout is pedestrian friendly. Often the curb-to-curb width of the street is wide enough to allow some on-street parking. Residential streets can be emphasized by the planting of trees and shrubs.







Examples of avenue, boulevard and residential streets

structures for a parcel of land. A site plan could also show the location of lot lines, the layout of buildings, open space, parking areas, landscape features, and utility lines.

Smart growth - - Well-planned, environmentally-sensitive land development that protects open space and farmland, revitalizes communities, keeps housing affordable and provides more transportation choices.

Sprawl - Out-of-control, poorly planned development that destroys habitat and open space and diverts resources from existing communities.

Stream - A body of water flowing in a channel.

Stream corridor - The area (containing wetlands, flood plains, woodlands, unique habitats, and steep slopes) which lies between relatively level uplands and stream banks and through which water, draining from the uplands, flows and is naturally cleansed and stored. Base flow for streams comes from ground water as springs and seeps.

Streetscape - The space between the buildings on either side of a street that defines its character. The elements of a streetscape include: building frontage/façade; landscaping (trees, yards, bushes, plantings, etc.); sidewalks; street paving; street furniture (benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, fountains, etc.); signs; awnings; and street lighting.

Subdivision - A subdivision occurs as the result of dividing land into lots for sale or development.

Sustainable development - Development with the goal of preserving environmental quality, natural resources and livability for present and future generations. Sustainable initiatives work to ensure efficient use of resources.

SWAP (Source Water Assessment Plan) - A requirement of the 1996 amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act that an assessment and protection plan be developed for each surface water source used for drinking water.

Taking - A taking occurs when a government action violates the 5th Amendment property rights of a landowner by taking a piece of property without offering fair compensation. "Takings" include physical acquisitions of land, and may include regulations that unduly deprive landowners of certain uses of their property or have the

Tax Increment Financing/Tax Allocation District

A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, referred to as Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) in Georgia, is established for the purpose of publicly financing certain redevelopment activities in underdeveloped areas. Redevelopment costs are financed through the pledge of future incremental increase in property taxes generated by the resulting new development. Typically, upon creation, TADs have vacant commercial and residential properties, blighted conditions and numerous vacant buildings or are in need of significant environmental remediation.

The Georgia Redevelopment Powers Law was enacted in 1985 to give additional powers to local municipalities in order to facilitate the redevelopment of blighted or economically depressed areas. One of the powers this law granted to local governments was to issue tax allocation bonds to finance infrastructure and other redevelopment costs within a TAD.

In order for an area to be designated a TAD, the government must verify that the area is need of redevelopment. These findings are reported in a Redevelopment Plan, which demonstrates why the area needs to be redeveloped and how the municipality plans to revitalize the area. The plan provides the redevelopment agency with the powers to improve dilapidated facilities and to use tax increment financing to achieve the goals of the redevelopment plan.

A tax increment is the difference between the amount of property tax revenue generated before TAD designation and the amount of property tax revenue generated after the TAD designation. Establishment of a TAD does not reduce property tax revenues. Property taxes collected on properties included in the TAD at the time of its designation continue to be distributed to the school districts, county, community college and all other taxing districts in the same manner as if the TAD did not exist.

Only property taxes generated by the incremental increase in the values of these properties after that time are available for use by the TAD. The only change is that during the life of the TAD the property tax revenues are distributed differently with the incremental increase going into a special fund to finance some of the redevelopment expenditures within the TAD.

Tax Increment Financing is a widely used economic development tool that offers local governments a way to revitalize their communities by expanding their tax base, offsetting, in part, federal and state funds that are no longer available. TADs can act as the catalyst to attract further private investment into economically depressed areas.

For instance, the City of East Point established a TAD to facilitate the development of Camp Creek Marketplace in a historically underserved market, providing hundreds of new jobs and access to retailers. TADs help local governments attract private development and new businesses which create jobs, attract customers, and in turn generate additional private investment. Essentially, a TAD generally leads to an increase in tax revenues, above what already existed.

effect of diminishing the value of property.

Tax Allocation District (TAD) – See "Tax increment financing" and sidebar.

Tax Increment Financing - A program designed to leverage private investment for economic development projects in a manner that enhances the benefits accrued to the public interest (includes creation of a Tax Allocation District).

Tax-base sharing - redistribution of a portion of revenue resulting from growth in the property tax base of individual jurisdictions to a taxing district in which multiple jurisdictions share in regional economic development; the purpose is to spread the benefits of growth equitably throughout a region.

TEA-21 (Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century) - Federal legislation that encompasses all transportation regulation and funding (Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act was the original title).

Tentative map - The map or drawing illustrating a subdivision proposal. The city or county will approve or deny the proposed subdivision based upon the design depicted by the tentative map. A subdivision is not complete until the conditions of approval imposed upon the tentative map have been satisfied and a final map has been certified by the city or county and recorded with the county recorder.

Traditional neighborhood development (TND) – See sidebar.

Traffic calming - Street design measures that slow traffic down restrict the areas in which cars are allowed, and otherwise manage the flow of traffic to make other forms of transportation such as walking and bicycling more attractive and feasible options.

Traffic signal priority systems - System of traffic controls in which buses are given an advantage over other general-purpose traffic by use of early or extended green time to avoid delays at intersections. Systems are sometimes combined with traffic signal preemption systems used by emergency vehicles.

Transfer of development rights (TDR) - A system that assigns development rights to parcels of land and gives landowners the option of using those rights to develop or to sell their land. TDRs are used to promote conservation and protection of land by giving landowners the right to transfer the development rights of one parcel to another parcel. By selling development rights, a landowner gives up the right to develop his/her property, but the buyer could use the rights to develop another piece of land at a

Traditional Neighborhood Development

The term traditional neighborhood development (TND) describes the planning and urban design of pre- and early 20th-Century urban form built prior to the nation's reliance on the automobile.

The early forms of these neighborhoods are primarily streetcar and commuter rail suburbs. On a smaller scale they resemble traditional American small towns of the early 20th Century. More recent forms are primarily large master planned communities.

In general, TNDs consist of the following characteristics:

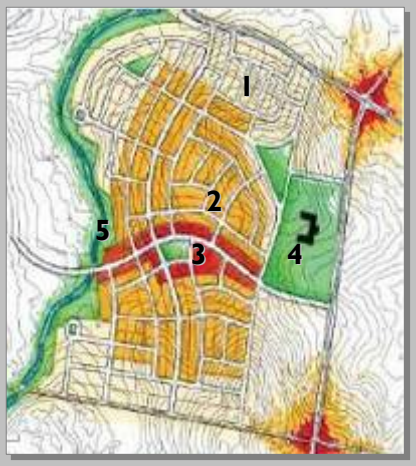
- Compact defined urban neighborhoods composed of compatible mix of uses and housing types
- Network of connected streets with sidewalks and trees for convenient and safe movement throughout the neighborhoods for all modes of transportation
- Focus on pedestrian over the automobile, while retaining automobile convenience
- Integrate parks and public spaces into each neighborhood
- Placement of important civic buildings and key sites to create landmarks and a strong sense of place

Instead of isolating uses from one another, traditional neighborhood development places emphasis on creating quality environments that are not left behind for the newest area next door. TNDs accommodate growth for a diverse array of lifestyles, incomes, and needs.

TNDs provide marketable and viable choices that will retain a sense of belonging and identity. The TND philosophy contends that an appropriate mix of uses, housing types, and strong design provide the backbone livable and sustainable neighborhoods.

TND concepts are key to Whitfield County's future as development moves south from the Chattanooga area and north from the Atlanta area.

Traditional Neighborhood Development form:
(1) Lower-density residential
(2) Urban residential
(3) Mixed-use center
(4) Open Space & Civic Site
(5) Linear Park.



greater intensity than would otherwise be permitted.

Transit nodes - Stops along a public transportation route where people board and disembark, often where one or more routes intersect with each other. These sites can provide ideal locations for mixed-use development as well as transit-oriented development.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) - The development of housing, commercial space, services, and job opportunities in close proximity to public transportation. Reduces dependency on cars and time spent in traffic, which protects the environment and can ease traffic congestion, as well as increasing opportunity by linking residents to jobs and services.

Transit-supportive development - A development pattern that reinforces the use of public transportation through efficient, pedestrian-oriented land use design and higher densities. The development, within walking distance of the transit station, center or stop, offers a variety of housing and commercial activities.

Transportation demand management (TDM) - A transportation plan that coordinates many forms of transportation (car, bus, carpool, rapid transit, bicycle, walking, etc.) in order to distribute the traffic impacts of new development. Rather than emphasizing road expansion or construction (as does traditional transportation planning), TDM examines methods of increasing the efficiency of road use.

Upzone - To change the zoning of a tract or parcel of land from a lesser to greater intensity of usage. An example would be a change in zoning from single family to multi-family or mixed use.

Urban growth boundary - A boundary designating specific areas for development over a given period of time (e.g., as protected green space; it ensures that new development makes the most efficient use of available land and encourages more livable urban spaces

Use permits - Zoning permits issued for "special" or "conditional" uses (as opposed to uses "allowed by right") that must be reviewed and approved by a public body and may have to meet extra requirements or standards.

Use value taxation - Land assessments according to the value of the present use rather than the speculative value.

USGS (United States Geological Survey) - A federal agency which provides mapping of topography, aquifer levels and areas where aquifers are recharged.

Variance - The relaxation of requirements of a zoning district for a specific parcel or tract of land. Variances are often issued to avoid unnecessary hardships to a landowner.

Walkability - Areas that are walkable and are safe, comfortable, interesting and accessible. They offer amenities such as wide sidewalks, attractive storefronts that face the sidewalk, shade, shelter and a sense of spatial enclosure provided through landscaping and streetscape elements. These areas are inviting to pedestrians for shopping, recreation and relaxation.

Watershed - Watersheds are nature's boundaries - they are the land areas that drain to surface water bodies such as lakes and streams. Watershed management seeks to prevent flooding and water pollution, to conserve or restore natural systems and to protect human health through integrated land and water management practices.

Wetlands - Area having specific hydric soil and water table characteristics supporting or capable of supporting wetlands vegetation.

Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs are typically instituted to preserve open space or ecologically sensitive areas, such as wetlands, agricultural or forest uses or historic buildings or landmarks. In each case, the purpose is to protect the underlying resource while compensating the owner of the resources for its use.

Detaching development rights from agricultural land means that such land cannot be developed or could only be developed at a very low intensity. When TDR is applied to historic buildings located in high-value areas, those buildings are preserved, because development pressure that would otherwise result in building's demolition and replacement is alleviated.

TDR features moving development potential from a property targeted for preservation to a property planned for development. The owner of the first property receives cash compensation from a developer or local government. The transfer of development rights (TDR) means that the development right can be moved to another site to develop that other property at a higher density than would normally be allowed.

The first step is for a local government to establish a TDR market. This includes identifying a sending area, from which TDRs will be sent, and a receiving area, where developers use the TDRs to build at a higher density. For farmland preservation purposes, after the development rights are transferred, the sending area is then restricted to farming.

The two leading TDR programs for preserving farmland are in Montgomery County, Maryland and in the New Jersey Pinelands. Purchase of development rights has been far more popular than TDRs, however, partly because of the controversy in identifying sending and receiving area.

Zoning - Local codes regulating the use and development of property. The zoning ordinance divides the city or county into land use districts or "zones", represented on zoning maps, and specifies the allowable uses within each of those zones. It establishes development standards such as minimum lot size, maximum height of structures, building setbacks, and yard size.

Zoning adjustment board - A group appointed by the local legislative body to consider minor zoning adjustments, such as conditional use permits and variances. It is empowered to conduct public hearings and to impose conditions of approval.

Zoning administrator - A planning department staff member responsible for hearing minor zoning permits.

Zoning and subdivision regulations - Regulations controlling the use, placement, spacing and size of lots and buildings within specified districts (zoning) and regulations controlling the conversion of land into building lots, including provisions for supporting infrastructure (subdivision).

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF WHITFIELD COUNTY, GEORGIA TO ADOPT THE WHITFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018: JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR WHITFIELD COUNTY AND THE MUNICIPALITIES OF DALTON, TUNNEL HILL, AND VARNELL (HEREINAFTER, THE "COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.")

WHEREAS, Whitfield County has joined with the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell to engage in a process jointly to update the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective May 1, 2005, and established by the *Georgia Planning Act of 1989,* which includes Community Assessment and Community Agenda components with information about population, housing, economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, existing land use, future development, and plan implementation, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan has been reviewed by the North Georgia Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and determined to have met the applicable minimum planning standards; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan is the product of a planning process which should continue to evolve and periodic updates should take place based upon changing conditions and the reassessment of community vision and goals; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan is not, and should not be, a zoning plan, but is intended to be a guide concerning decisions of elected officials regarding development and zoning matters; and

WHEREAS the Short Term Work Program portion of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a guide for local government implementation activities and should be updated on a regular basis.

NOW, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED, and IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, by the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners, that the WHITFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2018: JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR WHITFIELD COUNTY AND THE MUNICIPALITIES OF DALTON, TUNNEL HILL, AND VARNELL is hereby approved and adopted, along with Community Agenda, accompanying maps, goals, policies and programs, as a general guide for future growth, change, development and progress within Whitfield County.

The County Clerk is hereby requested to transmit a certified copy of this Resolution to the North Georgia Regional Development Center within seven (7) days of this date.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED, this 8th day of December, 2008.

Brian D. Anderson, Sr., Chairman

Absent
Mike Cowan, Vice Chairman

Greg Jones

Randy Waskul

Leo J. Whaley

Attest:

Barbara Love
County Clerk, Barbara Love
(SEAL)

MAYOR
DAVID E. PENNINGTON, III

CITY COUNCIL
DENISE WOOD
DICK LOWREY
GEORGE SADOSUK
CHARLIE BETHEL

THE CITY OF DALTON
"THE CARPET CAPITAL OF THE WORLD"

WWW.CITYOFDALTON-GA.GOV
P.O. BOX 1205
DALTON, GEORGIA 30722
PHONE (706) 278-9500
FAX (706) 278-8245

RESOLUTION
TO ADOPT THE
COMMUNITY AGENDA
OF THE
JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2008-2018

FOR WHITFIELD COUNTY AND CITIES OF DALTON, TUNNEL HILL AND VARNELL

Whereas, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

Whereas, the Community Agenda 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell has been completed to establish a future development vision, policies and implementation strategies to guide growth and development for the county and its cities; and

Whereas, such Community Agenda, 2008-2018 has been approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that the City of Dalton hereby officially adopts the Community Agenda, 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the Cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

Resolved, this 15th day of December, 2008.

BY: _____
Mayor, City of Dalton

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk, City of Dalton

RESOLUTION
TO ADOPT THE
COMMUNITY AGENDA
OF THE
JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2008-2018

FOR WHITFIELD COUNTY, AND CITIES OF
DALTON, TUNNEL HILL, AND VARNELL

Whereas, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

Whereas, the Community Agenda 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell has been completed to establish a future development vision, policies and implementation strategies to guide growth and development for the county and its cities; and

Whereas, such Community Agenda, 2008-2018 has been approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that the City of Varnell hereby officially adopts the Community Agenda, 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the Cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

Resolved, this 9th day of December, 2008.

BY: Dan Peeples
Mayor, City of Varnell

ATTEST: Pam Harrison
City Clerk, City of Varnell

THE CITY OF VARNELL
OFFICIAL SEAL
GEORGIA

RESOLUTION
TO ADOPT THE
COMMUNITY AGENDA
OF THE
JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2008-2018

FOR WHITFIELD COUNTY, AND CITIES OF
DALTON, TUNNEL HILL, AND VARNELL

Whereas, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

Whereas, the Community Agenda 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell has been completed to establish a future development vision, policies and implementation strategies to guide growth and development for the county and its cities; and

Whereas, such Community Agenda, 2008-2018 has been approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that the City of Tunnel Hill hereby officially adopts the Community Agenda, 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the Cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

Resolved, this 9th day of December, 2008.

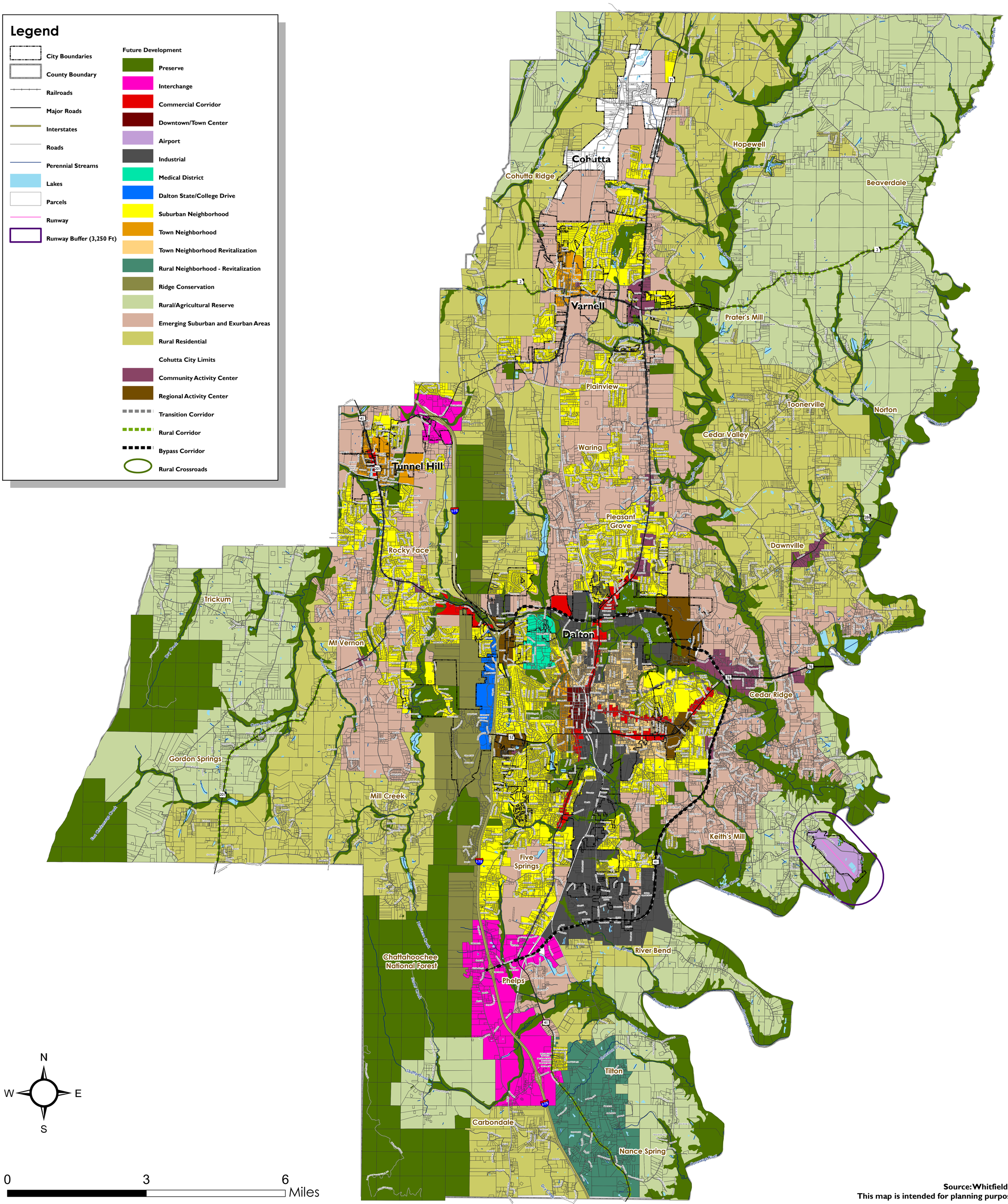
BY: _____
Mayor, City of Tunnel Hill

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk, City of Tunnel Hill

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL 1856 GEORGIA

Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008 - 2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan for Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnell Hill and Varnell



Source: Whitfield County
This map is intended for planning purposes only.

Prepared by:

MACTEC

DRAFT

Future Development Map

Prepared By: _____
Checked By: _____

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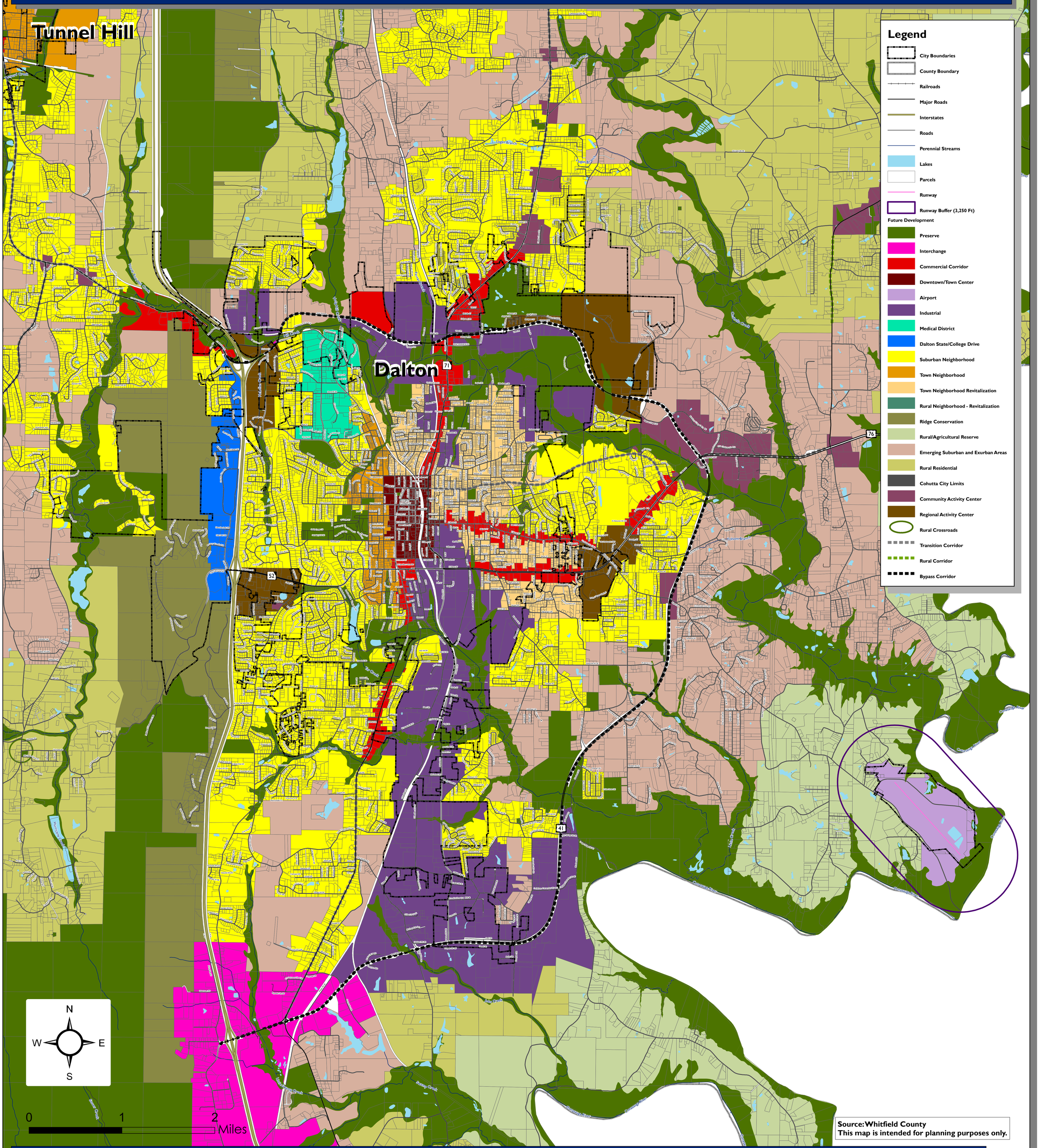
Prepared By: _____
Checked By: _____

Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008 - 2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan for Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnell Hill and Varnell



Source: Whitfield County
This map is intended for planning purposes only.

Prepared by:

MACTEC

DRAFT

City of Dalton Future Development Map

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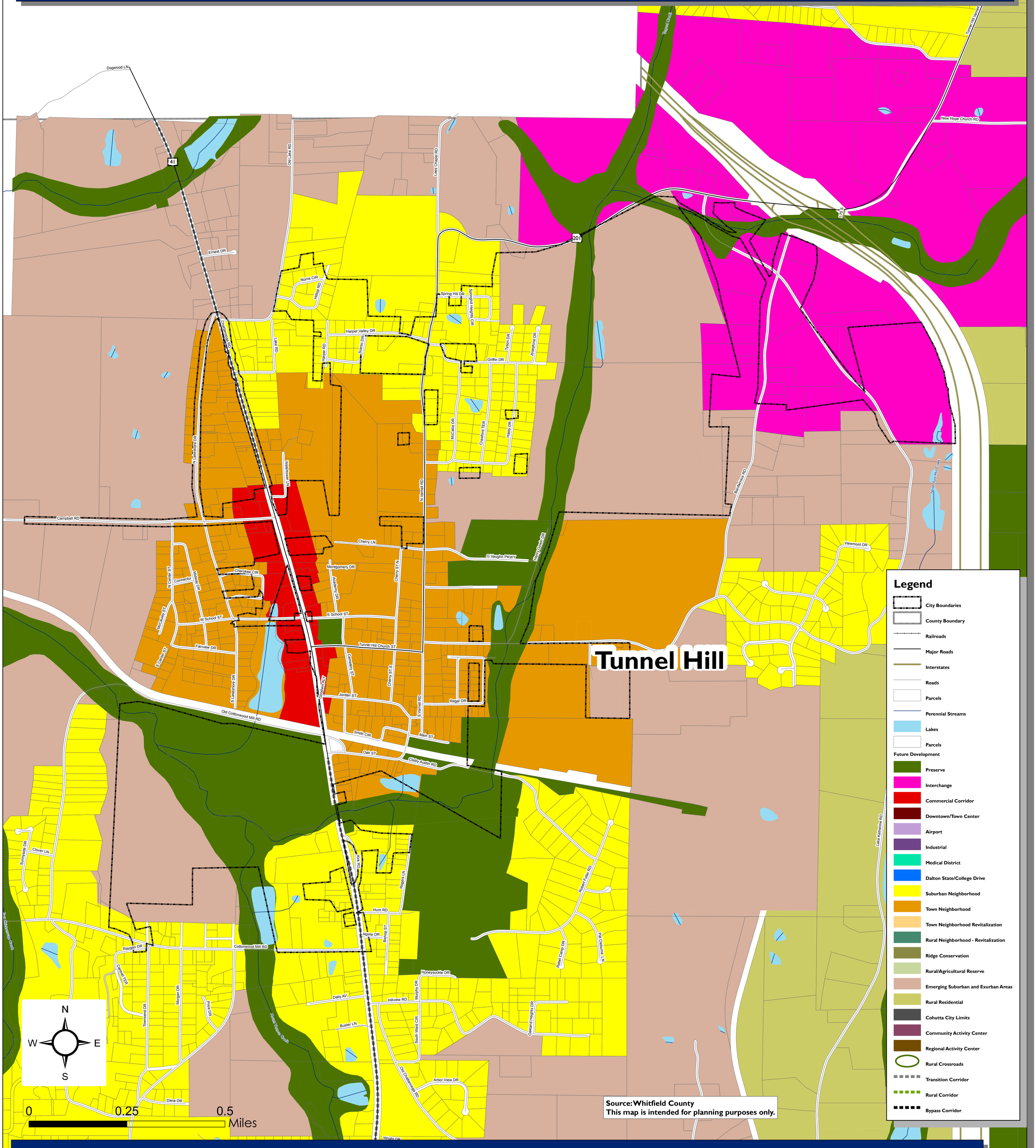
Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008 - 2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan for Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnell Hill and Varnell



Prepared By: _____
Checked By: _____

Prepared by:

MACTEC

DRAFT

City of Tunnel Hill Future Development

Map Document: (G:\Whitfield\mxd\Tunnel Hill\TunnelHill_FutureDev.mxd)
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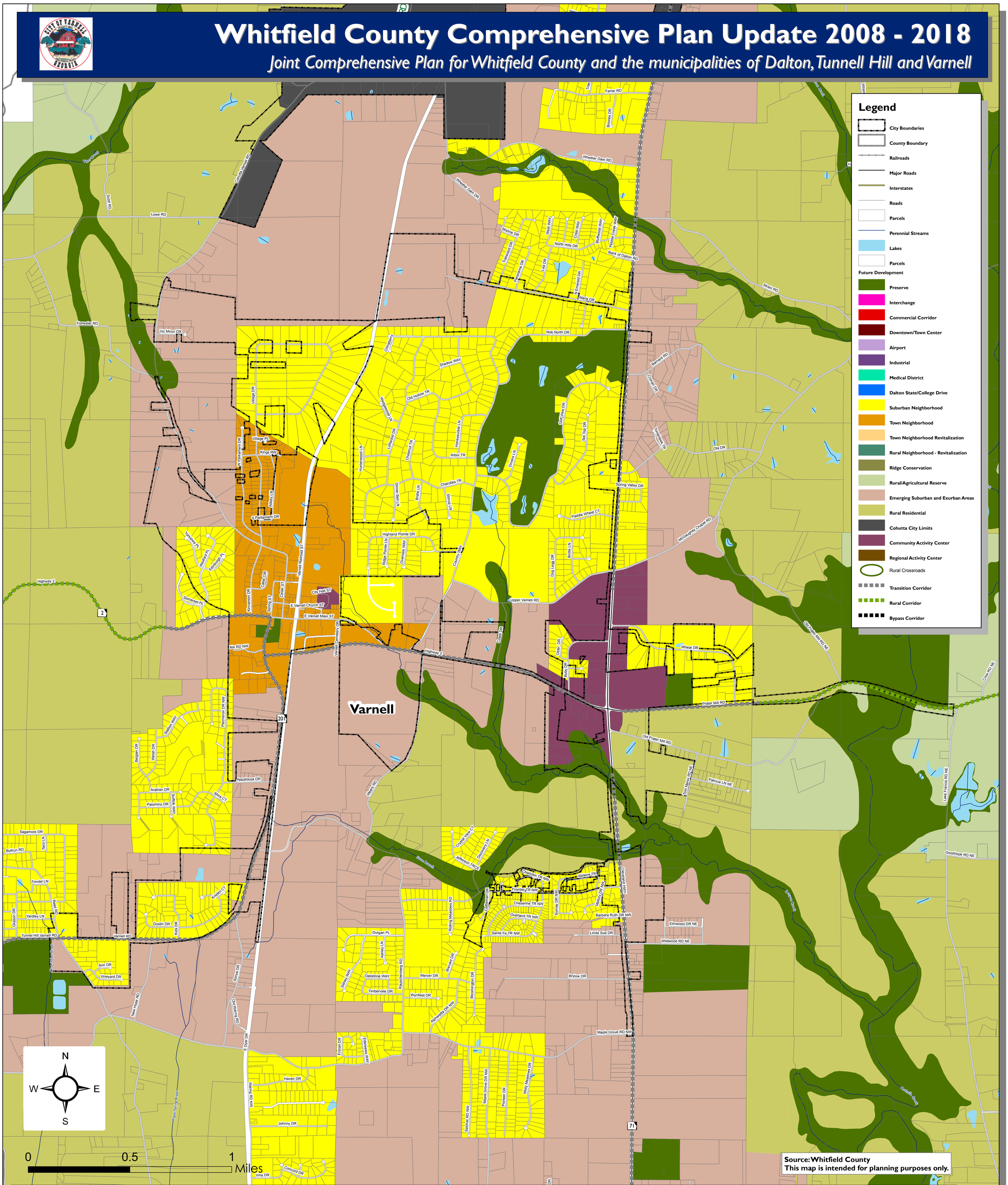
Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008 - 2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan for Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnell Hill and Varnell



Prepared by:

MACTEC

DRAFT

City of Varnell Future Development

Prepared By: _____
Checked By: _____

Map Document: (G:\Whitfield\mxd\Varnell\Varnell_FutureDev.mxd)
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