

CITY OF COMER

RESOLUTION

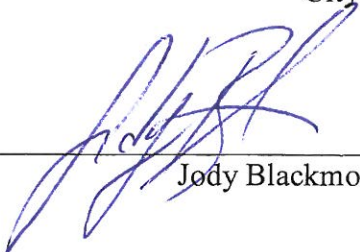
WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Comer, Georgia, was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Comer that the Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Comer, Georgia dated 2018, as approved by the Georgia Department Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 10 day of December, 2018.

City of Comer



Jody Blackmon , Mayor



Stephen H. Sorrells, Clerk

City of Comer Comprehensive Plan

2019 Update

Acknowledgements

*Steering Committee of the Joint County/Municipal
Comprehensive Planning Process*

John Scarborough **Madison County Board of Commission, Chair**
Linda Fortson **Madison County Board of Commission, Clerk**
Tripp Strickland **Madison County Board of Commission**
Terry Chandler **Madison County Farm Bureau**
Wayne Douglas **Madison County Planning & Zoning**
Marvin White **Madison County Industrial Development Authority**
Cynthia Hobbs **Citizen**
Paul Simmons **Citizen**

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Chapter 1

Introduction & Overview

Purpose

This comprehensive plan serves as a decision-making guide for local government officials and community leaders. Based on input from the public and a steering committee, the plan identifies needs and opportunities, goals and policies, land use practices, and an implementation framework for key elements.

Process

The comprehensive plan process follows the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective 10/1/2018.

Public Involvement

Public Input & Steering Committee

This plan is based on a joint county/cities planning process, which began with a public hearing and was followed by a community input session, during which the public and a local steering committee were invited to discuss local trends and aspirations. Following the initial public meetings, several work sessions were held with a steering committee, with citizen, staff, and elected official membership. Additional feedback opportunities were provided via the availability of steering committee members to take questions and comments throughout the process (as presented at the first public hearing). A final public hearing was held before submittal of the plan to DCA for review.

NEGRC's Role

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Planning & Government Services Division oversaw the development of this plan, including facilitating public and steering committee meetings.

Chapter 2

Needs & Opportunities

The following list of needs and opportunities results from a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted at the first input meeting, with both steering committee and public present, as well as professional analysis of relevant data and results of the online questionnaire. **Italicized entries indicate high priorities (with STWP project number in parentheses)*

Population, Community, and Governance

Comer is a rural town of 1,126 people with a median household income of \$51,000 per year. Comer is close to the state averages in median income, median age, and educational attainment (ESRI BAO). These statistics are an encouraging sign that Comer may have the critical mass of population and resources to create a thriving small town. Among the stakeholder-identified community strengths are embracing ethnic diversity and a respectable public school system. However, a lack of employment opportunities for people with post-secondary education is a noted weakness.

Planning, Land Use, and Housing

Comer is a former railroad stop sitting at the crossroads of State Routes 72, 98, and 22. Unlike many small towns, Comer has four entire blocks of traditional downtown development. The opportunity exists to reestablish these blocks as the heart of the community and nearby areas. For example, the city rehabilitated a city building in 2010, and it now functions

as a community facility. Comer is in the process of planning a parking area adjacent to this building to enhance its utility to the city. This type of adaptive use and targeted public investment is one of the community's strategies for improvement.

Comer's housing stock is 73% low-density single family homes, but there are multiple structures containing two-four units. New housing should be encouraged, as infill and aging homes (50% of homes are over 40 years old) may become candidates for conversion into two-four-unit housing. This may require adjustments to existing codes and practices.

The new bypass may be helpful for transportation purposes but could become a threat if it draws development away from Comer's core. Growth and access along the bypass must be managed selectively to avoid both competition with downtown business and development that is difficult to access without a car.

Transportation

Residents of Comer typically commute long distances by car for work. An estimated 50% of workers commute 20 or more minutes to work, and 60% leave the county (ESRI BAO). Growing local businesses and building pedestrian facilities could reduce the need for long car trips.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Comer benefits from a healthy agricultural sector, and extensive undeveloped land exists within the city limits. The community's greatest resource is the relatively large stock of healthy early 20th-century buildings in the downtown. Community leaders think this may be attractive to the movie industry and certification as a Camera Ready Community should be pursued.

Community Facilities and Services

Comer has a small downtown park and a partial sidewalk network. Expanding both of these could improve the walkability and attractiveness of the area. Light traffic on local streets is credited with providing safe spaces for non-motorists, and it presents an opportunity to focus limited resources on projects deemed critical to expanding the pedestrian and bicycle network.

An ISO rating of three is considered a strength, while the lack of a high-volume source of water and the lack of quality broadband service are noted weaknesses, and new development along the bypass may place increased demands on local water infrastructure. A Madison County/City of Elberton agreement to draw surface water from Lake Russell through Elbert County and into Madison County has created the possibility for new 12" water mains that will intersect Comer to connect with the city's existing system. City officials should partner with Madison County to realize this potential public works project.

The expense of expanded infrastructure must be balanced against the tax value of new development to ensure that expenses do not outpace revenue. Creating a development and maintenance plan for infrastructure is recommended. This plan should include broadband expansion, given the poor coverage in the area.

Economic Development

The potential for new development along the bypass and the desire to improve downtown necessitates an economic development plan that emphasizes intentional growth while re-establishing a thriving downtown. Examining and adjusting codes and ordinances, supporting "pop-up" businesses, and facilitating façade improvements are examples of small steps that can be taken to activate downtown. Expanding opportunities to start businesses and develop property may also grow employment opportunities for people with post-secondary education.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Improvements to state routes will require approval from the Georgia Department of Transportation. Comer should also identify potential projects for inclusion in future SPLOST campaigns.

Chapter 3

Vision, Goals, & Policies

VISION STATEMENT

Comer will continue to be a rural community and will be anchored by a vibrant and historic downtown where residents of all ages can safely walk, recreate, and connect with neighbors. Small-scale economic activity, such as events and limited commercial development, will support local needs.

Goals & Policies

1. Plan for, build, and adapt complete streets that are safe for all residents.
2. Develop and enhance recreation opportunities within walking distance of residents.
3. Re-establish downtown as the core of the community by encouraging activities that preserve, enliven, and draw people and small businesses.
4. Manage access and growth along SR 72 bypass to attract development that will not compete with downtown business.
5. Improve broadband connectivity.

Chapter 4

Land Use

These future land uses (FLU) correspond to the map that follows. While zoning regulations vary, FLU represents a standardized approach to envisioning and planning for desired scenarios. As such, inconsistencies between FLU and existing land use or zoning maps may arise because FLU presents a blueprint for what is to come.

Agriculture / Forestry

Predominantly farms. Residential development should maintain a rural character with single-family homes on large lots.

Commercial

Property where business and trade are conducted. Includes retail stores, shopping centers, and office buildings.

Industrial

Property used for warehousing, distribution, trucking, and manufacturing.

Government and Public/Institutional

Used for local community facilities, general government, and institutional purposes. Examples include schools, government buildings, health facilities, places of worship, and libraries.

Residential

Conventional residential subdivisions, as well as conservation subdivisions, with supportive recreational amenities and small-scale public/institutional uses.

Public Recreation / Conservation

Recreation areas, lands held for conservation, and floodplains.

Transportation / Communication / Utilities

Areas used for transportation-, communication-, or utility-related activities, such as power generation plants, sewage and water treatment facilities, landfills, railroad facilities, telecom towers, public transit, telephone switching stations, airports, or similar uses.

Chapter 5

Community Work Program

The Short-Term Work Program (2019-2023), updated every five years, provides a list of specific activities that the community plans to address as immediate priorities. A Report of Plan Accomplishments, which provides status commentary on the previous work plan (2013-2017), follows.

Short-Term Work Program, 2019-2023

#	Activity	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
1	Conduct a tax-value-per-acre study to efficiently direct public and private investment	2019	City	\$500	City, DCA
2	Identify locations and funding paths for restoring historic commercial buildings	2019-2020	City	Minimal	City
3	Audit existing development patterns and internal city practices to promote compact, walkable development	2019-2020	City	\$2,000	City, GDOT
4	Consider and, if appropriate, adopt design guidelines for commercial and/or residential development	2018-2019	City	Minimal	City, DCA
5	Pursue state certification as a Camera Ready Community	2019	City	None	NA
6	Expand downtown park and farmers market including preservation of relevant structures.	2020-2022	City	TBD	City, Grants, SPLOST
7	Adopt a complete streets and trails plan	2020-2021	City	\$1,000	City, GDOT
8	Create a plan for infrastructure expansion and maintenance including broadband	2019-2020	City	TBD	City, DCA, Grants
9	Partner with Madison County to ensure that the county's planned 12" water line connects with the city's existing system	2019	City, County	TBD	City, Grants, SPLOST, County
10	Identify projects for SPLOST and TSPLOST funding	2019-2020	City	None	NA
11	Create an economic development plan	2022-2023	City	\$1,000	City, DCA
12	Develop plan to support pop-up businesses in historic downtown commercial buildings to enliven the community, draw interest towards core buildings, and test local business concepts	2023	City	\$500	City, DCA

Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2013-2017

Activity	Status	Notes
Evaluate and repair sanitary sewer collection system	Ongoing	Long-range project that will not be carried over into STWP
Establish crossing across creek and pave unpaved portion of Hill St.	Completed (crossing) Postponed (paving)	Paving postponed to long-range status, will not be carried over
Provide information about historic preservation	Completed	

Appendix

Appendix: Participation Records

*These records refer to the joint county/cities planning process

PUBLIC NOTICE

The first public meeting for the Madison Co. Future Land Use Map will be Tuesday November 1, 2016 at 6:30 in the Public Meeting Room. This is located at the Government Complex at 91 Albany Ave., Danielsville. Please use the upper back door.

Comprehensive Plan Update
Public Hearing
12-27-17
6:00 p.m.

Please sign in. Thank you.

1. Magic Goodrich	19.
2. Cynthia Hobbs	20.
3. Steve W. Smyth, Comer	21.
4. Paul D. Simpson	22.
5. John D. Scarborough	23.
6.	24.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The second meeting for the Madison Co. Future Land Use Map will be Tuesday December 6, 2016 at 6:30 in the Public Meeting Room, located in the Government Complex at 91 Albany Ave, Danielsville. Please use the upper back door.