

DRAFT REPORT

**Dawson County  
Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026**

**COMMUNITY  
ASSESSMENT**

Prepared for:

**Dawson County**  
Dawsonville, Georgia



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Kennesaw, Georgia

**June 21, 2006**  
Project 6311-06-0011

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1-2</b>
1.1	Purpose.....	1-2
1.2	Scope.....	1-2
<b>2</b>	<b>ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES .....</b>	<b>2-4</b>
2.1	Introduction.....	2-4
2.2	Population.....	2-4
2.2.1	Issues.....	2-4
2.3	Economic Development .....	2-6
2.3.1	Issues.....	2-6
2.3.2	Opportunities .....	2-7
2.4	Natural and Cultural Resources.....	2-8
2.4.1	Issues.....	2-8
2.4.2	Opportunities .....	2-8
2.5	Facilities and Services Issues .....	2-9
2.5.1	Issues.....	2-9
2.5.2	Opportunities .....	2-9
2.6	Housing.....	2-9
2.6.1	Issues.....	2-9
2.6.2	Opportunities .....	2-10
2.7	Land Use .....	2-11
2.7.1	Issues.....	2-11
2.7.2	Opportunities .....	2-12
2.8	Transportation.....	2-12
2.8.1	Issues.....	2-12
2.8.2	Opportunities .....	2-13
2.9	Intergovernmental Coordination.....	2-14
2.9.1	Issues.....	2-14
2.9.2	Opportunities .....	2-14
<b>3</b>	<b>ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS.....</b>	<b>3-15</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	3-15
3.2	Existing Land Use.....	3-15
3.3	Areas Requiring Special Attention.....	3-19
3.4	Recommended Character Areas.....	3-22
<b>4</b>	<b>ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES. 4-</b>	<b>25</b>

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The Community Assessment provides a factual and conceptual foundation for the remaining work involved in preparing the Dawson County Comprehensive Plan. Production of the Community Assessment involved the collection and analysis of community data and information. This report represents the final product of that analysis and provides a concise, informative report that stakeholders will use to guide their decision making during the development of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

The *Dawson County Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026*, of which this assessment is a portion, updates the *Dawson County-Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan 2010* adopted in 1991 by the Dawson County Board of Commissioners and the Dawsonville City Council. The City of Dawsonville is preparing an update for the areas within the city limits. The *Dawson County Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026* will primarily focus on the unincorporated areas, although since county government provides some services to residents of the city, a review of city data in some instances will help define the existing and future demands.

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

## 1.2 Scope

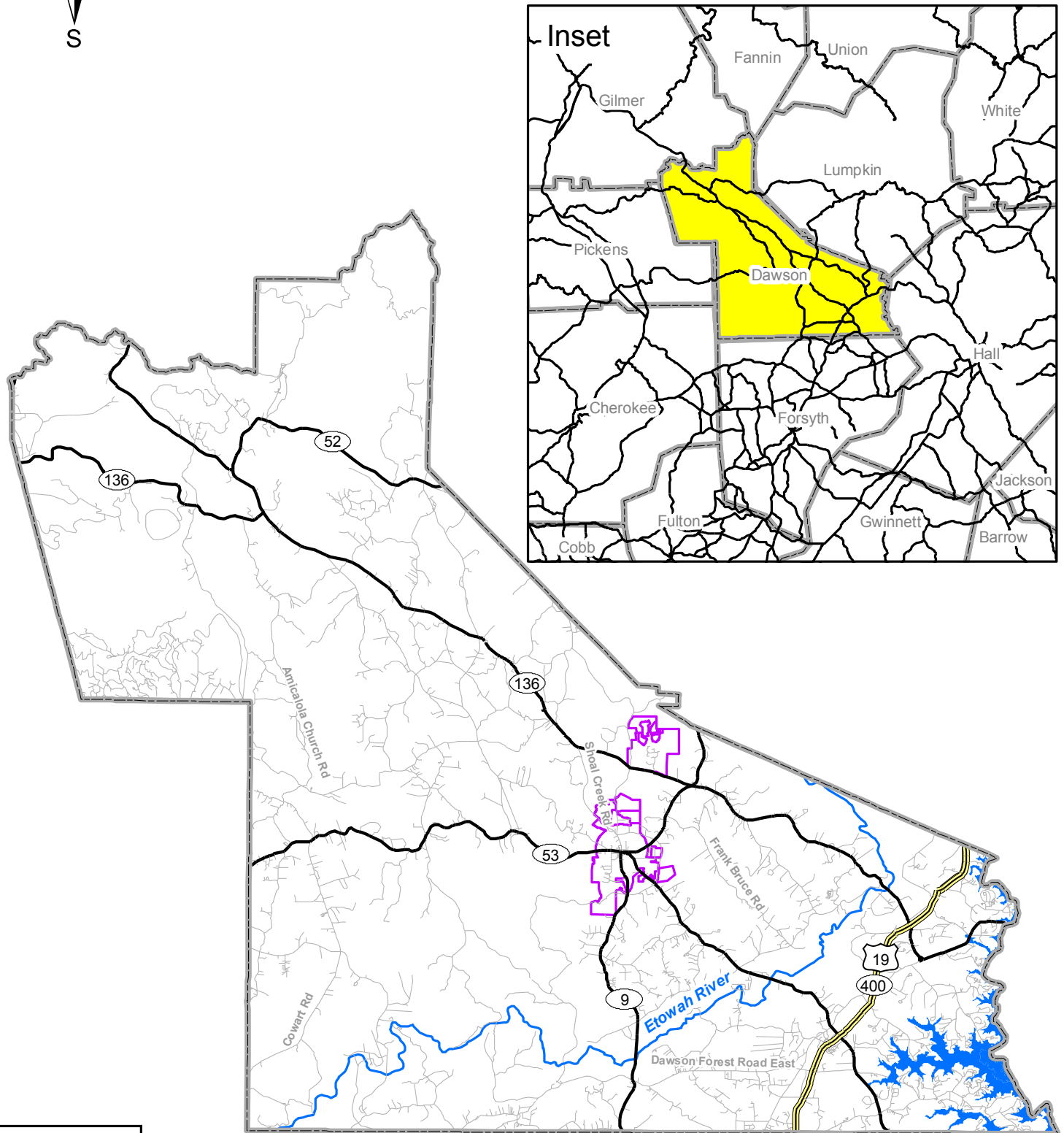
The Community Assessment includes the following information, as required by the DCA Standards:

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

The Community Assessment provides an executive summary of community analysis in order to provide an easy reference for stakeholders who will need to refer to the information throughout the planning process. Information referenced in Sections 2 and 3 of the report can be found in its entirety in the Technical Addendum. Figure 1-1 shows the county location in relation to surrounding counties.

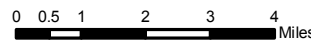


# Location



**Legend**

- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- ROADS
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY



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## Dawson County Comprehensive Plan 2006 - 2026

Prepared by:  
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6311060011

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## 2 Issues and Opportunities

### 2.1 Introduction

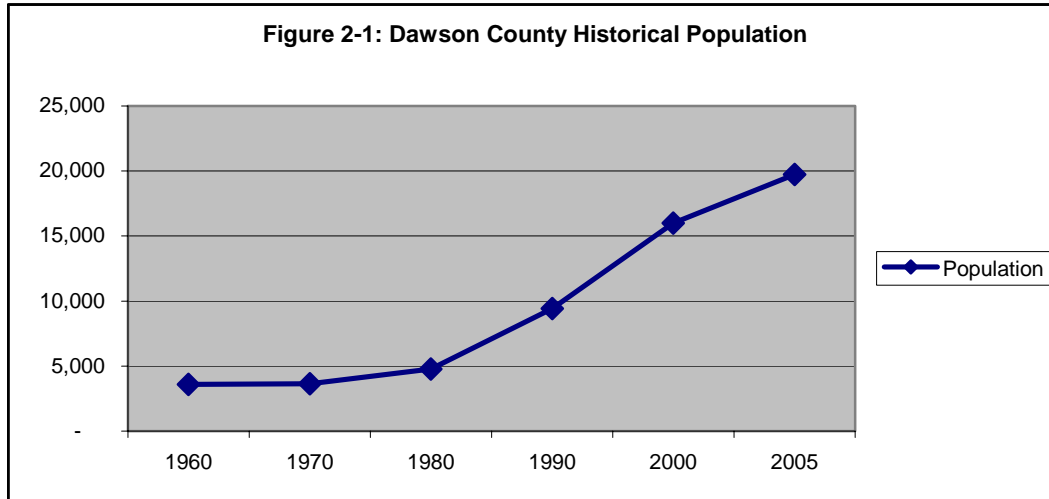
The issues and opportunities described below have been identified from a review the *Analysis of Supportive Data and Information*. This analysis included an examination of the Quality Community Objectives. The *Analysis of Supportive Data and Information* can be found as an addendum to this report. The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

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

### 2.2 Population

#### 2.2.1 Issues

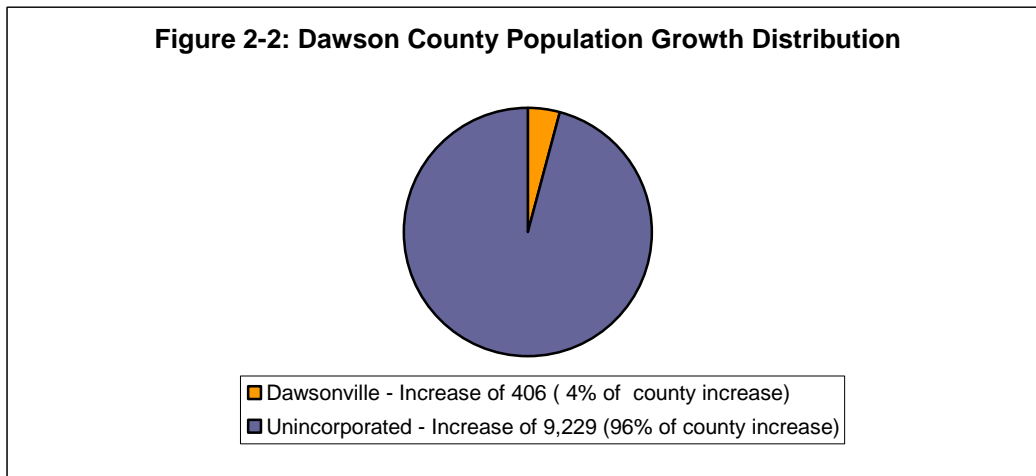
**Rapid population growth** – Dawson County sits directly in the path of the northern expansion of suburban metropolitan Atlanta. As a result, dramatic growth rates have occurred over the last 15 years. From 1990 to 2005 population increased by 109 percent from 9,429 to an estimated 19,731 – an average annual growth rate of 7.3 percent. Dawson County's population grew by an estimated 23.3 percent from 2000 to 2005, the 67<sup>th</sup>-highest county growth rate in the nation and 14<sup>th</sup>-highest county growth rate in the state. Each county surrounding Dawson County ranked in the state's top 25 fastest-growing counties.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

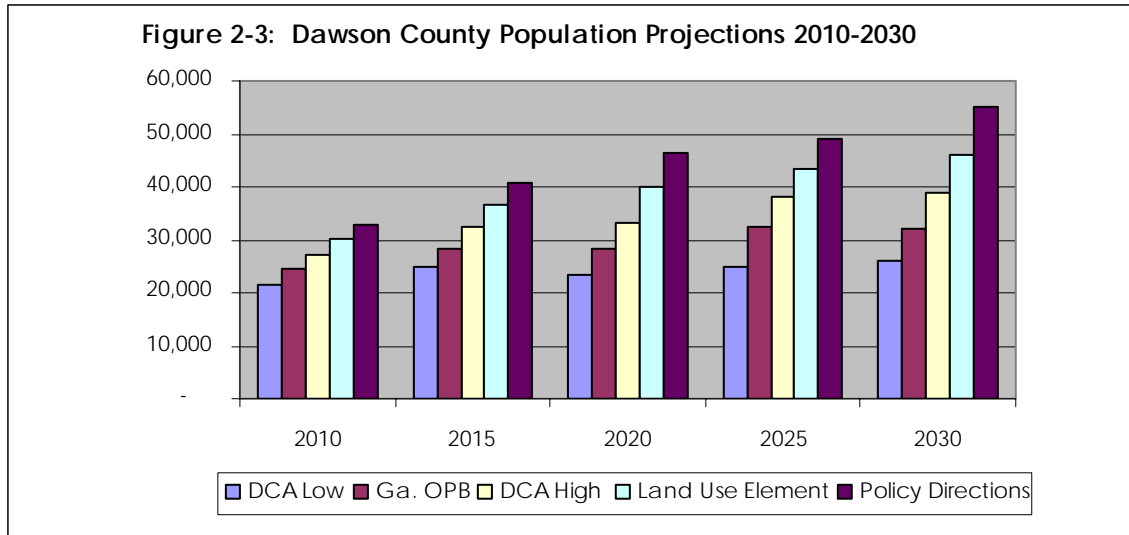
**Rapid household growth** – Growth in the number of households accompanied the high rate of population growth. County households increased from 3,360 in 1990 to an estimated 7,534 households in 2005 – an annual rate of 8.3 percent from 1990 to 2005.

**Growth focused in unincorporated areas** – Much of Dawson County’s growth has most recently occurred along the Dawson Forest Road corridor and along the State Route 400 corridor in the Southeast section of the county. A small amount of the county’s growth has occurred within the city limits of Dawsonville. Much of the growth has occurred along Dawson Forest Road near the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority’s sewer trunk line. Growth taking place in other areas of the county will depend on the use of septic systems, which will require a larger minimum lot size.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Population and Housing projections show continued growth** – Assuming the infrastructure needs can be provided, population projections for Dawson County show that the population would continue to soar over the next 25 years to nearly 50,000, an increase of approximately 148 percent and an average annual growth rate of nearly six percent. Figure 2-2 shows the range of population projections analyzed for the Community Assessment. The population increase projected for 2030 would create approximately 18,000 households, an increase of 197.9 percent and an average annual growth rate of almost seven percent. As shown, growth in number of households will outpace population growth as the average household size continues to shrink in Dawson County, as projected throughout the nation.



Source: DCA Low - Projections based on DCA Website Projections (1.0 multiplier); Ga. OPB – Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget 2015 Population Projections as of 12/2004; DCA High - Projections based on DCA Website Projections (1.33 multiplier); Land Use Element – Dawson County Land Use Element 2005 Update prepared by Jerry Weitz & Associates/Robert and Company 2004; Policy Directions – Policy Directions Report: Dawson County Impact Fee Program, July 14, 2004 prepared by Ross+Associates;

Note: See Analysis of Supporting Data for more information about the various projections shown above.

## 2.3 Economic Development

### 2.3.1 Issues

**Gap in education and training** – In Dawson County, segments of the labor force lack education and job training needed to attract higher wage jobs, while other segments of the labor force have education and skill levels that make them overqualified for jobs available in the county. Overall, the latest available numbers for educational attainment show room for improvement. Fewer than 12 percent of county residents held bachelor’s degrees in 2000, while only 47 percent had education beyond high school.

**Lagging wages in county** – Dawson County’s wages lag far behind the state and national wages in almost every category recorded by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dawson County’s average annual wage in 2004 was only 71 percent of the state average annual wage, and 68 percent of the national annual wage. While the number of jobs in the county is increasing, they are not increasing as fast as the population and are increasing fastest in sectors with lower wages (retail trade, accommodation and food service, etc.).

**Mismatched labor force** – Since higher paying jobs reside in other counties, a majority of the county's growing labor force leaves the county each day for work. Meanwhile, just over half of the county's jobs are filled by Dawson County residents. Workers enter the county from neighboring counties to work. The median household income of Dawson County in 2003 was \$48,455, which was significantly higher than the State of Georgia (\$42,421) and the United States (\$43,318) median income. Meanwhile, average annual pay for those who work in Dawson County (and may live in other counties) is only \$26,936, which trails the State of Georgia (\$37,866) and the United States (\$39,354).

**Lack of a Strategic Economic Development Plan** – Dawson County lacks a strategic economic development plan. The Dawson County Chamber of Commerce, which also serves as the Dawson County Development Authority has adopted an economic development plan that emphasizes the need to improve public education and other issues facing the county. However, the Chamber developed the plan under the leadership of a board that has changed significantly in makeup since adoption. A new plan would provide an updated, more comprehensive, unified vision for economic development in the county.

**Tax base relies too heavily on residential property** – Dawson County residential property owners accept a significant portion of the tax burden due to a shortage of commercial and industrial development within the county. Property designated for future use as commercial in prime locations is needed to develop as commercial in order to boost the commercial tax base. Too often, however, this property is being used for residential uses, thus reducing potential contribution to the county tax base.

### 2.3.2 Opportunities

**Growing economic base** – Employment has increased by more than 380 percent between 1990 and 2004, going from 1,151 to 5,564, according the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With projected population growth between 2005 and 2030, the employment is expected to increase to 19,982, an increase of 151 percent, according the Dawson County's *Policy Directions Report*.

**New population brings higher incomes and education attainment** – Increasing population has brought higher-income households with increased levels of college and post-graduate educational attainment. The share of Dawson County residents with a college degree increased from 6.5 percent to 11.9 percent between 1990 and 2000, which in real numbers was an increase of 103 percent. Population growth between 2000 and 2005 has likely shifted that number even higher as incomes, cost of new housing and population increased. Median income in Dawson County grew from \$48,455 between 2000 and 2003, an increase of 3.0 percent, outpacing the state and nation. The county could use these changes to attract higher-paying jobs to the county, which provide more employment choices for the county's labor force within the county.

**Educational and training opportunities expanding** – Two institutions of higher learning have been established in Dawson County that can provide opportunities for preparing the labor force. Lanier Technical College opened a campus in Dawsonville in the spring of 2006. Meanwhile, Southern Catholic College opened near Dawsonville in the fall of 2005. North Georgia College and State University, located north of Dawson County in Lumpkin County, also offers nearby opportunities in education and training.

**Tourist Expansion** – Dawson County's abundant natural resources, rich history and culture, recreational opportunities and outlet shopping provide multiple options for visitors to the county. The Etowah River, Lake Lanier and many mountain streams provide ideal settings for a variety of outdoor activities. In addition, the North Georgia Premium

Outlet mall draws thousands for shopping and has attracted many other businesses to State Route 400 between the Forsyth County line and area around State Route 53. A marketing campaign encouraging tourists to take advantage of these opportunities could draw more income to the county.

**Access and land** – The State Route 400 corridor connects southeast Dawson County, the most developable portion of the county, with greater Atlanta with a four-lane highway in Dawson County that becomes a limited access freeway in Forsyth County. The highway creates an important connection to the interstate system. The interstate access creates opportunities for industrial and warehousing opportunities in abundance.

**Expanded commercial tax base** – Developing the State Route 400 corridor as planned with industrial and commercial uses will expand the commercial tax base and reduce the burden currently placed on residential property owners. The county has set a goal that commercial property should contribute 60 percent of the tax base. Developing as planned in this area will help the county reach that goal.

## ***2.4 Natural and Cultural Resources***

### **2.4.1 Issues**

**Water Quality** – Stormwater runoff from developed and developing areas increases the pollution of the watershed and increases flooding as water moves more quickly. Development in the county and upstream on the county's rivers, streams and creeks threatens the county's water quality – especially from non-point pollution. Development in the county and upstream has threatened endangered species, particularly those with habitats in the Etowah River. In addition, development demand for lakeside residential in the Lake Lanier watershed could threaten a major source of the greater Atlanta water supply.

**Air quality** – The region's growth, industry and transportation system has contributed to the region's air quality problem to an extent that may soon place the county under air quality non-attainment status. Non-attainment status typically results in a loss of federal highway funding.

**Landscape** – Much of the county's landscape is not suited for conventional suburban development. Steep slopes of more than 30 percent cover a great deal of the county. Development of these areas would contribute to soil erosion among other problems.

**Historic and cultural character threatened** – Development of farmland has contributed to the disappearing of farmland and the rural scenery of the county. Since level ground suitable for development is limited, development has drifted toward agricultural land. As suburban development continues in these areas, it threatens the rural, agricultural character and heritage of Dawson County. In addition, much of the county's historic resources can be found in rural areas.

### **2.4.2 Opportunities**

**Seeking solutions to threatened habitats** – Several studies are currently underway that upon completion will provide recommendations for policy and regulation changes. These studies include the Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the Statewide Water Management Planning Act. Updates to the county's stormwater regulations in response to the recommendations of the HCP could provide the design requirements needed to prevent pollution, habitat destruction and flooding.

**Preserve county character and environmentally sensitive areas** – Conservation subdivisions, transfer of development rights and other creative zoning regulations and land development practices can be used to preserve and conserve agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas and open space character, while also allowing new construction.

**Preserve history and culture** – The county needs to protect historic resources by conducting an extensive review of historical, cultural and archeological resources followed by the development of regulations, guidelines and educational/marketing programs specifically tailored to ensure that current residents and future generations will have the opportunity to appreciate the county's history and culture.

## ***2.5 Facilities and Services Issues***

### **2.5.1 Issues**

**Coordination between land and school planning** – Members of the Dawson County Board of Education are not currently represented on the City of Dawsonville and Dawson County planning committees. State law does not require these groups to agree on location of new schools and other land development related issues. Coordination does currently take place, but more coordinated planning is needed to ensure that new schools will be able to serve the growing population.

**Limited drinking water resources** – Water resources are limited, and no approved plans are in place to correct limitation (supply is limited region wide).

**Limited sewer service areas** – Sewer service is limited to the south and southeast portions of the county near Georgia 400. As a result, new suburban development must occur at densities low enough to support septic systems.

### **2.5.2 Opportunities**

**Parks master plan** – Dawson County approved a parks master plan in 2005 that provides the framework for developing the county parks system and recreational programs. A detailed green space plan could expand on the parks master plan and provide more guidance for properties.

**Expanded school capacity** – New school projects in the county include a new middle school, expanded elementary schools and new alternative school. These expansions provide increased capacity to meet the demands of new development.

**Shared cost of providing public services and facilitates for new development** – Efforts are currently underway to determine the best way to pay for facilities and services in order to serve the growing population (e.g. impact fees, etc.).

## ***2.6 Housing***

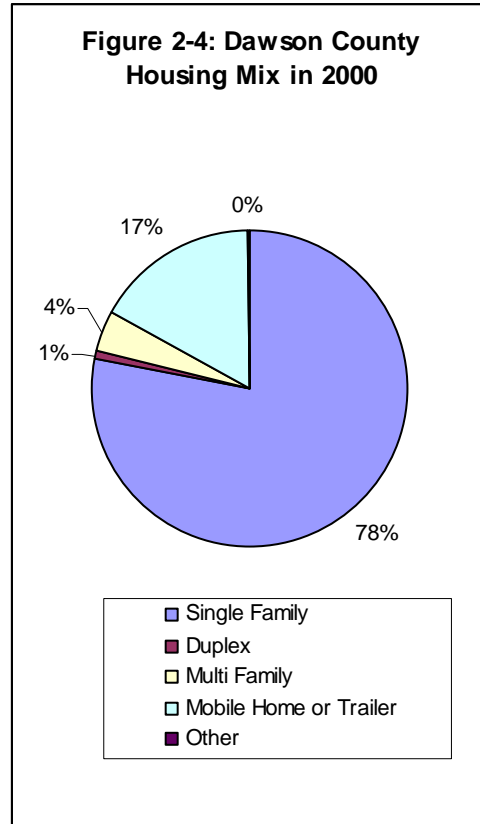
### **2.6.1 Issues**

**Lack of housing type mix** – The new housing market currently provides few options beyond single-family homes on large lots and limits options that would meet residents' needs at all stages of life. Shown in Figure 2-4, single family homes made up 78 percent of the county's housing stock in 2000, according the Census Bureau. Multi-family housing made up only four percent of the total housing stock, which was an increase from less than one percent in 1990. Conditions that contributed the prevalence of single family include:

- Zoning regulations that segregate housing types and do not provide for mixed use development
- Water limitations that limit the total supportable density
- Limited sewer availability means that homes built without sewer must rely on septic systems that need large lots in order to operate.

**Special housing needs** – Special housing needs of those with substance abuse rehabilitation needs are not currently being met in the county. Special housing needs for elderly also are not being met in the county (e.g. no nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospitals, etc.)

**Jobs-Housing Imbalance** – The jobs-housing balance goal seeks a geographic equilibrium between housing and jobs. The underlying theory is that as jobs and housing are more evenly distributed and mixed, people will be able to live closer to their jobs, and traffic congestion and vehicular traffic will be reduced. A balanced community generally has a jobs-housing ratio of 1.25 to 1.75, with 1.4 considered ideal. Dawson County's jobs-housing ratio in 2004 of 0.64 indicates that the county serves as a bedroom community more than a balanced community. In addition, the housing available in Dawson County in the fastest growing areas along the Georgia 400 corridor is priced to attract the bedroom community resident and prices out a large portion of those who actually work in Dawson County. The average wage for employees in Dawson County in 2004 would allow for the purchase of a home valued at \$91,688. The median income of residents of Dawson County, meanwhile, would allow for the purchase of a home of \$189,654. The actual average sale prices for homes in 2003 (data not available for 2004) in Dawson County was \$204,463, which explains why many of those who work in the county (48 percent of all workers in 2000) live in other counties. No public housing or subsidized housing currently exists in Dawson County to help offset this imbalance.



## 2.6.2 Opportunities

**Housing stock continues to increase** – Housing development between 2000 and 2004 increased the number of housing units from 7,162 to 8,714, an increase of 21.7 percent, which outpaced all adjacent counties with the exception of Forsyth (33.1 percent) and Cherokee (29.9 percent) counties. While the market has focused on single-family units, as population increases and diversifies, the growing housing market provides opportunities to meet an expanded list of housing needs for new residents (e.g. variety of housing types, assisted living facilities, etc.).

**Increased share of multi-family housing** – Multi-family housing gained in share from less than one percent in 1990 to more than four percent in 2000. Multi-family housing near

Georgia 400, between Georgia 53 and Dawson Forest Road, can provide housing for people working in the retail center.

**Mixed use activity centers** – Mixed use activity centers placed at strategic locations or nodes throughout the county can provide affordable housing options for a wider range of those who would like to live in the county. Undeveloped vacant land still has potential to develop in ways that will enhance the surrounding areas and provide mixed-use activity centers at strategic locations along the major corridors. The Commercial Planned Community Development district can be used for creating mixed-use activity centers.

**Revitalization of existing homes to provide affordable housing** – Neglected homes/neighborhoods in need of revitalization can provide affordable housing for new residents in areas with existing services and infrastructure and provide the residential base to support existing businesses.

**New regulations increasing opportunities for aging in place housing** – New zoning districts designed to provide a variety of housing types can make it possible to development communities that provide Dawson County residents with an opportunity to live in one neighborhood throughout the various stages of life, including senior housing.

## 2.7 Land Use

### 2.7.1 Issues

**Commercial to residential land use changes** – Residential development of properties designated for commercial growth threatens the county tax base. The land use plan currently in place was created with the goal of a 60 percent residential and 40 percent commercial system that would ultimately lessen the residential property owner tax. Development of residential in areas designated for commercial threatens that goal. Conversion of prime commercial land to residential use creates potential for land use incompatibility between new residential uses and commercial/industrial uses and severely restricts the potential to build the non-residential tax base.

**Agricultural conflicts** – Agricultural-residential land use conflicts can emerge when new residents move to areas with intensive farming (i.e. poultry farming).

**Residential to office demand** – Residential to office transitions are taking place on lots fronting highway and major road corridors due to development pressure.

**Commercial encroachment** – Encroachment of automobile-oriented, larger-scaled commercial uses in residential neighborhoods can detract significantly from neighborhood character.

**Incompatible land uses** – Incompatible land uses and abrupt zoning changes along the Georgia 400 corridor and parts of the Georgia 53 corridor occur as a result of the desire to focus commercial uses into these locations. This creates the potential for problems as new commercial and industrial uses locate adjacent to established low-density residential areas.

**Strip commercial development** – Strip commercial development will require special attention over the life of the plan to prevent underutilization and blight as market and economic conditions change (along the Georgia 400 corridor and the Georgia 53 corridor in the Dawsonville area).



## 2.7.2 Opportunities

**Encouragement of 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. In addition it provides the opportunity to cluster community facilities including schools, fire stations, libraries and parks in order to create a sense of place.

**Large minimum lot sizes in farming areas** – Lot size minimums in areas with intense farming can decrease the impact of the farming operations on adjacent residents. Five acres and two acres are the current minimums for these areas.

**Encourage TDRs** – Transfer of development rights can be applied to preserve agricultural lands and other sensitive areas in need of protection from development.

**Encourage conservation subdivisions** – Conservation subdivisions can be used to retain the character of agriculture and protect the natural resources of the environmentally sensitive areas. Conservation subdivisions could be developed with the Residential Planned Community Comprehensive Development district.

**Promote green space** – Development regulations can encourage developers of residential and mixed-use development to set aside appropriate amounts of green space for public recreation and storm water collection/filtering.

**Protect views** – Guidelines for scenic corridors could protect views. Adopted guidelines for Georgia 400 and the adoption of guidelines for Georgia 53 can help create a sense of place and can provide clear guidelines for property owners with residential lots facing Georgia 53 that are experiencing development pressure to convert to office or commercial uses.

## 2.8 Transportation

### 2.8.1 Issues

**Few transportation alternatives** – The Dawson County transportation system relies too heavily on the private automobile for transportation. Few alternative transportation options (pedestrian, bicycle, public transportation, etc.) exist for those who do not drive, which include not only those who cannot afford to purchase an automobile, but also children, teenagers and the elderly who do not drive.

**Intersection of Georgia 400/53** – Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) plans to improve the intersection of Georgia routes 400 and 53. GDOT would like to replace the at-grade intersection by either sending Georgia 400 traffic above or below Georgia 53, with access to each via ramps. The planned intersection improvements could negatively impact the surrounding commercial center.

**Limited pedestrian and bicycle network** – Few sidewalks and walking trails exist to provide places for walking and biking. The subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance do not require the construction of sidewalks and/or other walking and bicycle networks with the development of new subdivisions in all but two districts. The county has worked with the City of Dawsonville on a plan to provide sidewalks near Dawson County High School, but a program for installing sidewalks in neighborhoods and along corridors throughout the county is not in place.

**Limited street connectivity** – Little street connectivity and the lack of a street grid providing alternative routes for moving around the Georgia 400 area means that drivers must access arterials to make even the shortest trips. Dawson County does not have a

collector street plan or development regulations that would require new development to connect to previously developed neighborhoods, commercial areas, nearby parks, schools or recreational areas, with the exception of the Residential Community Planned Comprehensive Development district and the Commercial Planned Comprehensive Development district. Currently adopted land development regulations encourage the use of cul-de-sacs in all districts but Commercial Planned Comprehensive Development. As a result, the county has seen an overuse of cul-de-sacs that contribute over the long haul to a disconnected street system.

**No road improvement plan** – The County Road Improvement Program provides limited long-range vision for meeting future road improvement needs and instead works to catch-up as new development takes place. The funding currently is not in place to finance such a program, which limits the county's ability to direct development into specific areas with the use of new roadway infrastructure.

## 2.8.2 Opportunities

**Transportation alternatives** – An express bus service operated by the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) currently provides service from the City of Cumming in Forsyth County to downtown Atlanta, with various stops along the way. Expansion of that service north to the Georgia 400 area between Dawson Forest Road and Georgia 53 would provide new options for commuters in Dawson County who work at points south. In addition to bus service, providing a park-n-ride lot near the intersection of Georgia 400 and Georgia 53 would provide a formalized location for commuters to meet and travel to jobs in other areas.

**Guidelines for connected streets** – A collector street/street connectivity plan could establish a better connected street system for the county. Regulations that require street connectivity and the construction of planned streets could establish a network of connected streets providing the county with alternatives to Georgia 400 and other arterial roadways. Guidelines could build off of the corridor guidelines created for Georgia 400 and Georgia 53 in addition to the district regulations for the Residential Community Planned Comprehensive Development district and the Commercial Planned Comprehensive Development district.

**Bicycle and pedestrian improvements** – Installation of off-road bike trails and multi-use paths could improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking. Pedestrian enhancements at major intersections (crosswalks, signals, medians, etc.) could improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking as a transportation alternative for short trips. One example of the improvements needed would be pedestrian and bicycle bridges spanning Georgia 400 located along the corridor between Dawson Forest Road and Georgia 53. This and other improvements could increase connectivity and encourage walking and biking as transportation alternatives for short trips.

**Scenic by-ways** – Dawson County's major roads all have a Scenic By-ways designation in the currently adopted comprehensive plan. These designations provide the framework for establishing protective guidelines for these corridors to ensure the protection of scenic view sheds.

**Access management** – Guidelines for corridors in the county can include access management techniques that limit the number of curb cuts. Limiting curb cuts will provide for a more efficient flow of traffic, reduce left hand turns and reduce the number of entry points on to the roadway. Limited curb cuts also limit the interruptions of the streetscape, leading to fewer pedestrian conflicts on sidewalks and fewer conflicts with bicyclists in designated bicycle lanes.

**Provide appropriate cross sections for functional classifications** – Roadway cross-section and intersection treatments should reflect the functional classification of the roadway and relative needs for access and pedestrian flow versus circulation.

## ***2.9 Intergovernmental Coordination***

### **2.9.1 Issues**

**Dawsonville growth area** – Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville worked together and completed an updated joint city-county Land Use Element in 2005. Since that time, however, conflicts have emerged over how unincorporated areas adjacent to Dawsonville should develop.

**Provision of county services** – Service Delivery Strategies between Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville no longer accurately reflect the provision of many services. Updated agreements between city and county are needed in order to provide an efficient delivery of services to all residents of Dawson County.

**Relationship among various county boards and commissions** – Coordination among the various boards and commissions in Dawson County lacks the formality needed to ensure that all groups are pursuing a common goal.

### **2.9.2 Opportunities**

**Special Purpose Location Option Tax** – Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville currently work to use tools effectively and efficiently. The SPLOST is an excellent means for funding public improvements.

**Shared services** – Dawson County continues to provide many services to residents of incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county.

**Improved coordination among various county boards and commissions** – Members of important boards and commissions in Dawson County can improve coordination by using crossover appointments.

**City-County coordination implementing impact fees** – As Dawson County moves forward with implementing an impact fee program, the City of Dawsonville and Dawson County can work together to collect the fees in both the City of Dawsonville and in unincorporated Dawson County.

### 3 Analysis of Existing Development Patterns

#### 3.1 Introduction

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

#### 3.2 Existing Land Use

An existing land use map displays the development on the ground categorized into groups of similar types of development at a given point in time. For purposes of this analysis, the Dawson County Existing Land Use Map (Figure 3-3) shows what is on the ground as of November 2004, as collected for the preparation of the *Dawson County/Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan 2010 Land Use Element Amendment 2005*. At that time, the data was collected by preparing geographic information system acreage estimates of existing land use inventory based on field reconnaissance and aerial photographic interpretation. Figure 3-1 provides the acreage of existing land use by land use classification. Figure 3-2 provides a brief definition of each existing land use classification.

**Figure 3-1: Existing Land Use Acreage, 2004**

Land Use Classification	Dawson County		Unincorporated		Dawsonville	
	Acre	%	Acre	%	Acre	%
Forestry	52,282	38.1%	51,435	38.1%	847	35.2%
Agriculture	20,235	14.7%	20,045	14.8%	190	7.9%
Residential, Single-Family	22,941	16.7%	22,474	16.6%	467	19.4%
Residential, Manufactured Home	119	0.1%	117	0.1%	2	0.1%
Residential, Multi-Family	117	0.1%	95	0.1%	22	0.9%
Public/Institutional	619	0.5%	385	0.3%	234	9.7%
Transportation, Communication, Utilities (exc. Roads)	316	0.2%	308	0.2%	8	0.3%
Road Rights-of-Ways	3,604	2.6%	3,502	2.6%	102	4.2%
Commercial	647	0.5%	571	0.4%	76	3.2%
Light Industrial	574	0.4%	524	0.4%	50	2.1%
Parks, Recreation, and Conservation	35,648	25.9%	35,253	26.1%	395	16.4%
Vacant	298	0.2%	282	0.2%	16	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>137,400</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>134,991</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

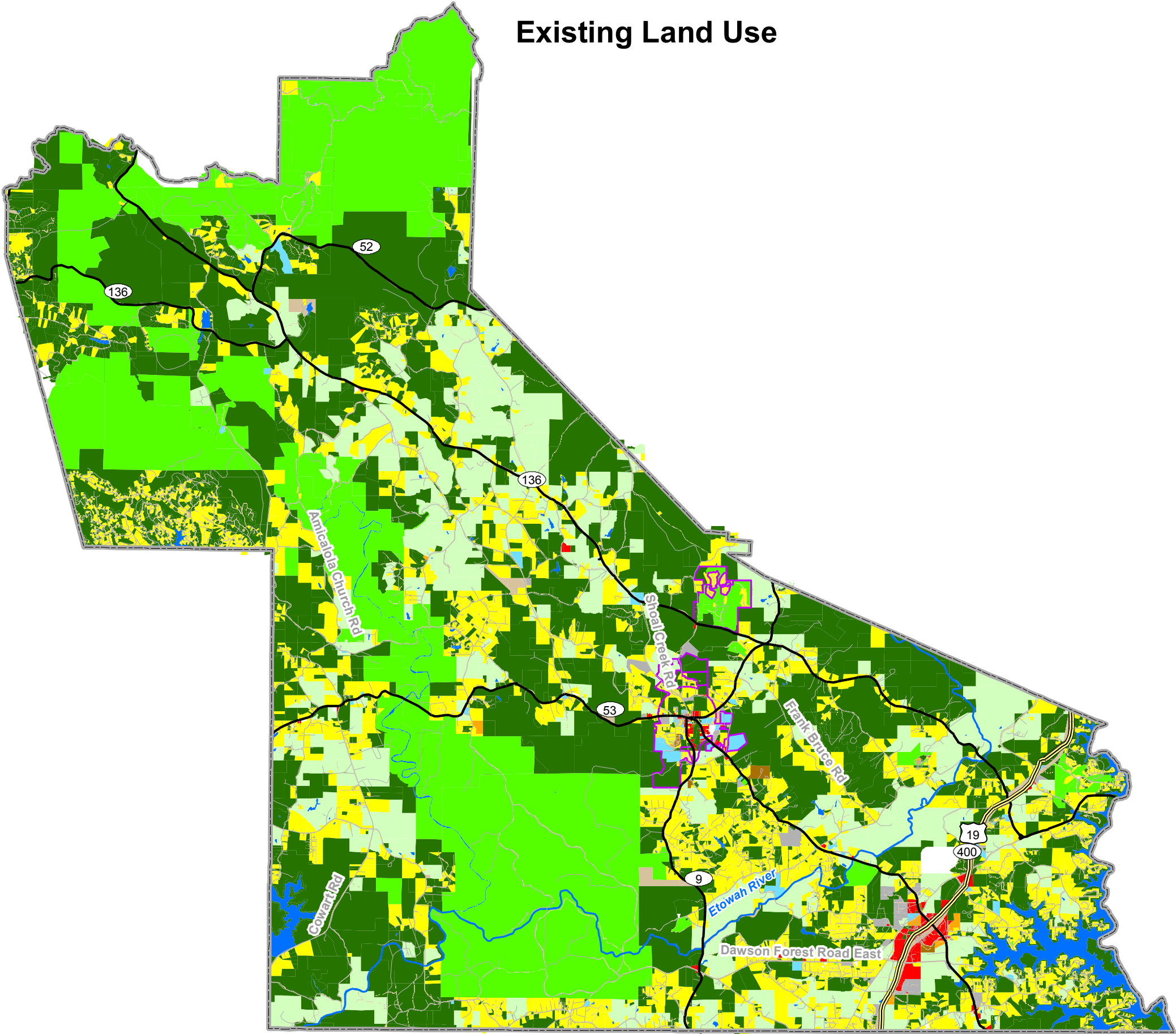
Source: Robert & Company, September 2004. GIS Acreage estimates of existing land use inventory based on field reconnaissance and aerial photographic interpretation. Revised 11/29/04.

**Figure 3-2: Existing Land Use Category Definitions**

<i>Existing Land Use Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Parks, Recreation, and Conservation	Dawson Forest, a 10,000-acre tract of land owned by the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport Authority, is the largest single tract of land shown on the existing land use as parks, recreation, and conservation. It is currently heavily forested and is managed for wildlife. Lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service are shown as parks, recreation, and open space on the existing land use map.
Forestry	Private forest lands
Agricultural	Properties devoted predominantly to agricultural production; may include moderately intensive livestock raising.
Residential, Single-Family	Site-built, detached, single-family dwellings, each located on its own lot.
Residential, Manufactured Home	Manufactured homes, whether located on individual lots or within a land-lease community (i.e., manufactured home park).
Multiple-Family Residential	Apartments, condominiums, and attached single-family dwellings (fee-simple townhouses).
Planned Residential Community	Existing master-planned communities, including "Chestatee," "Big Canoe," and "Gold Creek."
Commercial	Land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, services, and entertainment facilities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center.
Public-Institutional	Includes state, federal, or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc. Facilities that are publicly owned, but would be classified more accurately in another land use category, are not included in this category. For example, publicly owned parks and/or recreational facilities are placed in the Park/Recreation/Conservation category and landfills fall under the Industrial category; and general office buildings containing government offices are placed in the Commercial category.
Transportation, Communications, and Utilities	Includes such uses as major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, electric utility substations, airports, port facilities, and other similar uses.
Light Industrial	Land dedicated primarily to storage, warehousing, wholesale trade, and manufacturing facilities. This category also includes a solid waste transfer station and inert waste landfill.
Vacant	Land that clearly does not fit any other category of use, such as a lot with no buildings or improvements in the center of a residential neighborhood.

Land classified as Forestry makes up the largest chunk of the county with more than 38 percent of the county's total area. Forestry consists of private forest with large chunks in the northwest, southwest and central areas of the county. The remaining forest lands are scattered throughout the county and contribute to the rural character of the county. Stakeholder interviews revealed that many large tracts of land were owned by private timber companies, which intend to divest themselves of such properties because it is more economical to grow timber elsewhere in Georgia given rising property taxes or rising expectations for development.

# Existing Land Use

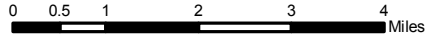


**Legend**

- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- ROADS
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY

**EXISTING LAND USE**

- RESIDENTIAL
- MOBILE HOME RESIDENTIAL
- MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL
- TRANSPORTATION/UTILITIES
- PARKS/RECREATION/CONSERVATION
- AGRICULTURE
- FORESTRY
- VACANT/UNDEVELOPED
- LAKE



*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
2006 - 2026

Prepared by:  
THP  
Prepared by:  
MAS  
Project Number:  
6311060011

Figure Number:  
3-3

Land classified as Parks, Recreation and Conservation makes up the second largest portion of the county with almost 26 percent of the county's total area. These areas include Dawson Forest, a 10,000-acre tract of land owned by the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport Authority. The tract is currently heavily forested and is managed for wildlife. This category also includes lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service.

Land classified as Residential, Single Family makes up the third-largest portion of the county at nearly 17 percent, followed by Agriculture at just under 15 percent. Public/Institutional classification and Commercial classification properties each made up 0.5 percent of the county in 2004, with Light Industrial following at 0.4 percent. Figure 3-2 provides the full list of land use classifications. An opportunity exists to expand the county's commercial and industrial base. Promoting commercial and industrial economic development will improve the area's jobs-housing balance, fiscal situation and tax base. More than 88 percent of the county's Commercial and 91 percent of the county's Light Industrial properties lie in unincorporated portions of the county.

### ***3.3 Areas Requiring Special Attention***

As growth continues, there will inevitably be impacts to the existing natural and cultural environment as well as the community facilities, services and infrastructure that are required to service existing and future development. This section outlines areas where the real estate market has already shown signs that it will produce development that is dominated by single-function land uses, buildings that are not coordinated with adjacent buildings and isolated from other uses, and circulation systems that serve exclusively the automobile; where growth should be avoided due to the environmentally-sensitive nature of the land; and areas near Etowah River and Lake Lanier where development should be designed to reduce as much as possible the various non-point pollutants that could endanger wildlife habitat and the county and region's drinking water supply.



**Figure 3-4: Areas Requiring Special Attention Definitions**

<i>Areas Requiring Special Attention</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Conservation	Critical natural resources that include wildlife management areas, national forests, steep slopes and mountain areas.
Lake Lanier Watershed	Development occurring east of Georgia 400 drains directly into Lake Lanier, which supplies much of the Atlanta region's drinking water. As development continues, runoff must be reduced in order to prevent pollution.
Etowah River Corridor	Rapid development that occurred along the Etowah River in adjacent counties endangered the habitat of the river's diverse wildlife. As Dawson County develops, it must ensure that runoff into the river does not contribute to the conditions already created by development in other counties.
Dawsonville Growth Area	Dawson County's land use plan in 2005 called for some growth in the Dawsonville growth area. Since that time, however, the city and county have not seen eye to eye on the desired intensity of development to occur there.
Georgia 400 Corridor	Dawson County adopted design guidelines that provide a framework for development that occurs along the Georgia 400 corridor.
Rural Corridors	Rural corridors in Dawson County have held on to their rural character for the most part. Georgia routes 53, and 136, however, will see development in the near future. These areas need to have plans in place to prevent the loss of the character that makes them so unique.

## Figure 3-5 Areas Requiring Special Attention Map

### **3.4 Recommended Character Areas**

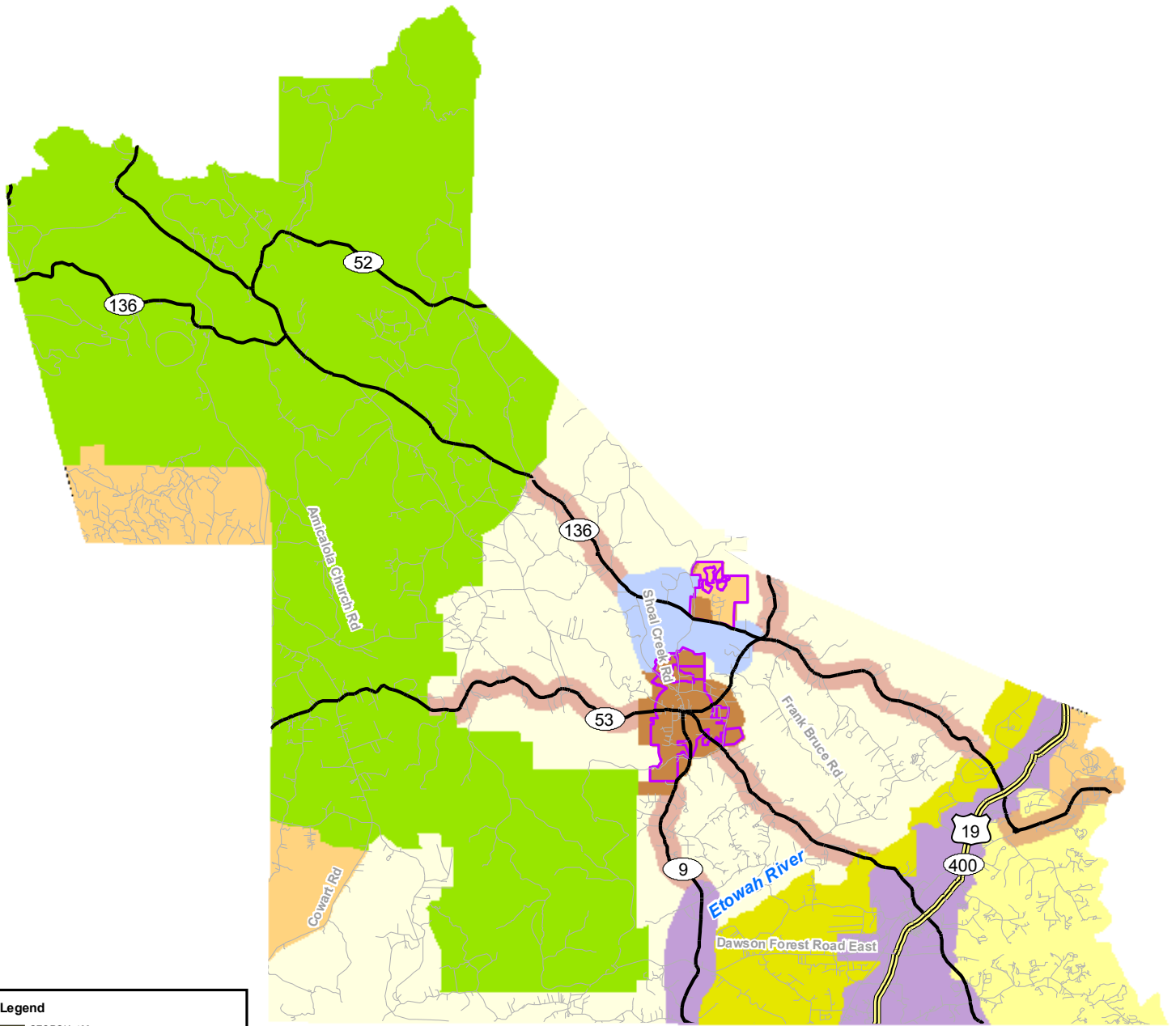
Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Applying development strategies to character in Dawson County can preserve existing areas and help others function better and become more attractive. They help guide future development through policies and implementation strategies that are tailored to each situation. The character areas recommended for Dawson County, defined and described in Figure 3-6 and mapped in Figure 3-7, define areas that:

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

**Figure 3-6 Recommended Character Area Descriptions**

<i>Character Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
Conservation	Primarily undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for suburban development. These areas include scenic views, steep slopes, flood plains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas and other environmentally sensitive areas. This may include very low density residential development.
Lakeside Residential	Suburban residential subdivision development surrounding Lake Lanier. Stormwater runoff becomes an issue in this area because it drains into the lake that provides drinking water for Metropolitan Atlanta and supports the habitat of a variety of species.
Mixed Use Corridor/Node	Developed or undeveloped land on both sides of designated Georgia 400. Includes retail centers, office and employment areas usually on large tracts of land with campus or unified development. Also includes Portions of Georgia 9 around the intersection of Dawson Forest Road.
Planned Community	May be of the resort variety, like Big Canoe, which has increasingly become home to permanent as well as seasonal residents and "Chestatee," a golf course community. Planned residential communities are encouraged to provide unique, flexible, creative and imaginative arrangements and site plans that result in predominantly single family residential development.
Rural Residential	Rural, undeveloped land likely to face development pressures for lower density (one unit per two plus acres) residential development. Typically will have low pedestrian orientation and access, very large lots, open space, pastoral views and high degree of building separation. These areas typically have limited water/sewer infrastructure.
Suburban Residential	Area where pressures for the typical types of suburban residential subdivision development are greatest (due to availability of water and sewer service). Guidelines are needed to encourage pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods that are accessible to transit, adequate open space, strategically placed civic buildings, a connected system of streets and housing choices.
Rural Corridor	Developed or undeveloped land paralleling the route of a major thoroughfare that has significant natural, historic or cultural features, and scenic or pastoral views with a distinct rural character.
Cultural Amenities Mixed Use Corridor	Area that includes areas of local cultural significance that will experience growth related to the cultural resources. These areas will include a mixture of uses. Includes Southern Catholic College, Dawson County Park, Bowen Arts Center and other properties along the Shoal Creek Road and Gold Creek Road corridors.

# Character Areas

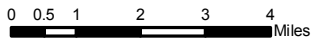


**Legend**

- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- ROADS
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY

**CHARACTER AREAS**

- CITY OF DAWSONVILLE AND GROWTH AREAS
- CONSERVATION
- Cultural Amenities / Mixed Use
- LAKE RESIDENTIAL
- MIXED-USE CORRIDOR
- PLANNED COMMUNITY
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL
- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- RURAL CORRIDOR PROTECTION



Map Document: (P:\gis\Projects2006\Dawson\_County\deliv\_mxd\character\_areas.mxd) 6/1/2006 - 12:10:34 PM



*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
2006 - 2026

Prepared by: THP
Prepared by: MAS
Project Number: 6311060011

Figure  
Number:  
3-7

## **4 Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives**

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

<b>Traditional Neighborhoods</b>			
Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.	✓		With the exception of the two planned community districts, all districts require separation of housing and commercial.
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development "by right" so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process.		✓	
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.	✓		Tree Ordinance requires street trees in new subdivisions.
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		✓	
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	✓		
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.		✓	Few sidewalks exist currently in the county (outside of the City of Dawsonville); only zoning districts require sidewalks.
7. In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.		✓	focus on campus style, consolidated that requires bussing
8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.		✓	Schools built to serve population that is scattered throughout the county.
9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.		✓	A handful of children may have this opportunity.
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.		✓	Schools built to serve population that is scattered throughout the county with less focus on serving neighborhoods.

<b>Infill Development</b>			
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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.		✓	Few areas of the county have sites that would have infill opportunities since so much of the development has occurred over the last 10 years.
2. Our community is actively working to promote Brownfield redevelopment.		✓	
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.	✓		Greyfield development may become a bigger issue in near future with plans for improving the intersection of Georgia 400/Georgia 53; Georgia 400 strip malls may have development pressure to redevelop at higher densities as land values rise.
4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).	✓		Future land use plan outlines nodes for mixed use, pedestrian-friendly development.
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses.		✓	Small lots possible in two districts that would not apply to existing potential infill lots.



<b>Sense of Place</b>			
<p>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.</p>			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics.	✓		Natural areas provide unique beauty. Built environments in many locations provide distinct character. Areas such as Georgia 400 and Georgia 53 corridors now have guidelines to help ensure that character remains distinct.
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have taken steps to protect those areas.		✓	Historic buildings aren't prevalent in the county and the county does not have a historic commission or historic building/district protection ordinance.
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	✓		Corridor guidelines have been adopted for Georgia 400; corridor guidelines have been developed and are under consideration for Georgia 53.
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	✓		
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.	✓		Corridor guidelines offer guide for Georgia 53 and Georgia 400, but other areas do not have guidelines.
6. If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.	✓		Future land use plan designates farmland for that use.

<b>Transportation Alternatives</b>			
Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We have public transportation in our community.		✓	Potential for extending GRTA Express buses to county.
2. We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.		✓	
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.		✓	Sidewalks are not prevalent in most county communities.
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.		✓	Sidewalks are required only in the planned residential and planned commercial zoning districts.
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.		✓	
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.	✓		State bicycle routes located within the county.
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.		✓	

Regional Identity			
Each region should promote and preserve a regional "identity," or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	✓		
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.	✓		
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc.).	✓		
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	✓		
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	✓		
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.	✓		

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.	✓		
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.		✓	
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.	✓		

<b>Open Space Preservation</b>			
New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.		✓	County has discussed the possibility of creating a greenspace plan.
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.		✓	Some greenspace is set aside in new developments, but remains in private control; planned communities are required to preserve open space.
3. We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.		✓	Work with DNR and federal government in protecting national forest and wildlife management areas within the county.
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.		✓	No conservation subdivision ordinance is in place, per se, but a district does exist that allows for these subdivisions.

<b>Environmental Protection</b>			
Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.		✓	No comprehensive inventory exists, but multiple plans are underway to study the natural resources and develop means to protect them; future land use plan does outline the "Part V" areas and provides protection for them
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.	✓		Future land use plan relies on this information to steer development from these areas.
3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.	✓		Future land use plan identifies areas to protect.
4. Our community has passed the necessary "Part V" environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.	✓		
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.	✓		
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	✓		
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	✓		Best practices are being used; creative practices are encouraged in planned community/commercial districts.
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.).	✓		Minimum state requirements have been adopted; more regulation may be needed in the future to protect these resources.

<b>Growth Preparedness</b>			
<p>Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.</p>			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	✓		
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	✓		
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.	✓		
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	✓	✓	Regulations may need some revision following the update of the plan.
5. We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	✓		
6. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.	✓		
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	✓		
8. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.	✓		Visioning process associated with the future land use plan update in 2004-2005 provided valuable educational campaign for community.
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.	✓		
10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	✓		

<b>Appropriate Businesses</b>			
The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.	✓		Economic development plan is currently in place, but it needs to be updated to more comprehensively address the county's business needs
2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.	✓		
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	✓		
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.	✓		

<b>Employment Options</b>			
A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.			
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.			
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	✓		
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	✓		This is a growing sector, but makes up a small portion of the job opportunities. Many county residents hold professional and managerial positions, but they do so at jobs in other counties.

<b>Housing Choices</b>			
A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.		✓	
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.		✓	Many workers in the county cannot afford to live in the county due to the county's low average wages.
3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).		✓	More housing is needed for those who work in the county, but cannot afford to live there.
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.		✓	Original towns do not exist outside of the Dawsonville.
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or "neo-traditional" development.		✓	Options not currently available, but could be made available in the Commercial Planned Comprehensive Development district.
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	✓		
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	✓		
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.		✓	Due to the young age of the housing stock, CDC's haven't been needed to date.
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.		✓	
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.	✓		Residential- Planned Comprehensive Development district can allow small lots, but no other districts allow them.



<b>Educational Opportunities</b>			
Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.	✓		Lanier Technical College recently opened a branch in the county.
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	✓		
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	✓		Southern Catholic College is located in the county; North Georgia College and State University is located in neighboring Lumpkin County.
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	✓		Some jobs area available in the county for college graduates, but most jobs do not require college degree.

<b>Regional Solutions</b>			
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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.	✓		
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	✓		Participates with the Upper Etowah River Alliance and Upper Chattahoochee Basin Group.
3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.	✓		Library system shared with Lumpkin County.
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.	✓		

<b>Regional Cooperation</b>			
Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive planning purposes.	✓		Future Land Use Element Update and Vision were jointly-developed by Dawsonville and the county.
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.		✓	Update of strategies is needed to better reflect the service delivery taking place in the county.
3. We initiate contact with other local governments and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft region-wide strategies.	✓		Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan is one example of working with other governments to find regional solutions.
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	✓		

DRAFT REPORT

**Dawson County  
Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026**

**ANALYSIS OF SUPPORTING DATA  
FOR THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

Prepared for:

**Dawson County**  
Dawsonville, Georgia



**MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, Inc.**  
Kennesaw, Georgia

**June 21, 2006**  
Project 6311-06-0011

# Table of Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>1-1</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>1-5</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1-7</b>
<b>2 POPULATION .....</b>	<b>2-7</b>
<b>2.1 Total Population.....</b>	<b>2-7</b>
2.1.1 Historic Population Growth.....	2-7
2.1.2 Population Growth in Surrounding Counties .....	2-8
2.1.3 Daytime Population.....	2-9
2.1.4 Population Projections .....	2-10
2.1.5 Total Households and Household Size .....	2-11
2.1.6 Distribution of Household Types.....	2-12
<b>2.2 Age Distribution .....</b>	<b>2-13</b>
<b>2.3 Race and Ethnicity .....</b>	<b>2-14</b>
2.3.1 Racial and Ethnic makeup.....	2-14
2.3.2 Race and Ethnicity Compared to Surrounding Counties .....	2-15
2.3.3 Race and Hispanic Origin Projections.....	2-15
<b>2.4 Income .....</b>	<b>2-16</b>
2.4.1 Household Income .....	2-16
2.4.2 Median Household Income .....	2-17
2.4.3 Personal income .....	2-17
2.4.4 Per Capita Income .....	2-18
2.4.5 Poverty.....	2-18
<b>2.5 Education .....</b>	<b>2-20</b>
2.5.1 Educational Attainment .....	2-20
<b>3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>3-21</b>
<b>3.1 Economic Base.....</b>	<b>3-21</b>
3.1.1 Employment.....	3-21
3.1.2 Location Quotient Analysis.....	3-23
3.1.3 Shift Share Analysis.....	3-25
3.1.4 Employment Projections .....	3-26
3.1.5 Wages.....	3-27
<b>3.2 Labor Force .....</b>	<b>3-28</b>
3.2.1 Participation .....	3-28
3.2.2 Unemployment .....	3-33
3.2.3 Commuting Patterns .....	3-33

<b>3.3</b>	<b>Economic Resources .....</b>	<b>3-34</b>
3.3.1	Development Agencies .....	3-34
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Economic Trends .....</b>	<b>3-35</b>
3.4.1	Sector Trends .....	3-35
3.4.2	Major Employers.....	3-37
<b>4</b>	<b>HOUSING .....</b>	<b>4-38</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Housing Types and Trends .....</b>	<b>4-38</b>
4.1.1	Housing Types and Mix.....	4-38
4.1.2	Latest Housing Trends.....	4-38
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Condition and Occupancy .....</b>	<b>4-39</b>
4.2.1	Housing Age .....	4-39
4.2.2	Housing Condition .....	4-40
4.2.3	Housing Tenure .....	4-40
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Special Housing Needs.....</b>	<b>4-41</b>
4.3.1	Elderly.....	4-41
4.3.2	Homeless .....	4-41
4.3.3	Victims of Domestic Violence .....	4-41
4.3.4	Migrant Farm Workers .....	4-41
4.3.5	Persons with Disabilities .....	4-42
4.3.6	Persons with HIV/AIDS.....	4-42
4.3.7	Persons Recovering from Substance Abuse.....	4-42
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Housing Costs .....</b>	<b>4-43</b>
4.4.1	Median Property Values and Rent.....	4-43
4.4.2	Owner Occupied Housing Values .....	4-43
4.4.3	Home Sale Prices .....	4-44
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Cost-Burdened Households.....</b>	<b>4-44</b>
<b>4.6</b>	<b>Job-Housing Balance .....</b>	<b>4-47</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>5-51</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Environmental Planning Criteria .....</b>	<b>5-51</b>
5.1.1	Water Supply Watersheds .....	5-51
5.1.2	Protection of Groundwater Recharge Areas.....	5-51
5.1.3	Wetlands Protection .....	5-52
5.1.4	River Corridor Protection .....	5-52
5.1.5	Mountain Protection .....	5-52
5.1.6	Other Ongoing Protection Plans .....	5-53
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas.....</b>	<b>5-53</b>
5.2.1	Public Water Supply Sources.....	5-54
5.2.2	Steep Slopes .....	5-54
5.2.3	Flood Plains .....	5-54
5.2.4	Soils.....	5-55

5.2.5	Plant and Animal Habitats .....	5-56
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Significant Natural Resources.....</b>	<b>5-61</b>
5.3.1	Scenic Areas.....	5-61
5.3.2	Agricultural Land and Significant Soil .....	5-61
5.3.3	Forests, Parks, Recreation and Conservation .....	5-61
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Significant Cultural Resources.....</b>	<b>5-62</b>
5.4.1	Local History.....	5-62
5.4.2	National Register of Historic Places Listings.....	5-62
5.4.3	Potentially Eligible National Register Sites .....	5-63
5.4.4	Archeological Landmarks .....	5-64
5.4.5	Archeological Sites .....	5-64
<b>6</b>	<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES .....</b>	<b>6-66</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Water Supply and Treatment.....</b>	<b>6-66</b>
6.1.1	Water Service Area and Distribution.....	6-66
6.1.2	Water Supply .....	6-66
6.1.3	Future Water Demand Projections.....	6-66
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment.....</b>	<b>6-66</b>
6.2.1	Septic Systems.....	6-66
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Other Facilities and Service.....</b>	<b>6-67</b>
6.3.1	Fire Protection.....	6-67
6.3.2	Public Safety .....	6-68
6.3.3	Parks and Recreation .....	6-69
6.3.4	Stormwater Management.....	6-71
6.3.5	Solid Waste Management.....	6-71
6.3.6	Education.....	6-71
6.3.7	Libraries.....	6-73
6.3.8	Health Care .....	6-74
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy.....</b>	<b>6-75</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>7-76</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7-76</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Road Network.....</b>	<b>7-76</b>
7.2.1	Functional Classification .....	7-76
7.2.2	National Highway System.....	7-77
7.2.3	Speed Limits.....	7-77
7.2.4	Existing Traffic Volumes .....	7-78
7.2.5	Number of Lanes.....	7-78
7.2.6	Traffic Conditions .....	7-78
7.2.7	Overview of the Road Freight Conditions .....	7-80
7.2.8	Bridge Inventory and Conditions.....	7-81
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Alternative Modes.....</b>	<b>7-81</b>

7.3.1	Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities .....	7-81
7.3.2	Public Transportation and Services .....	7-81
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Parking .....</b>	<b>7-82</b>
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Railroads and Airports.....</b>	<b>7-82</b>
7.5.1	Freight Railroads.....	7-82
7.5.2	Passenger Railroads .....	7-82
7.5.3	Airports.....	7-82
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Transportation and Land Use Connection.....</b>	<b>7-82</b>
7.6.1	Local Projects .....	7-83
7.6.2	State Transportation Improvement Program Projects (STIP) .....	7-83
7.6.3	Issues and Opportunities.....	7-84
<b>APPENDIX: ATLAS OF MAPS.....</b>		<b>7-86</b>

## List of Tables

Table 2-1: Historic Population.....	2-7
Table 2-2: Historic Population Growth Rates .....	2-7
Table 2-3: Population Trends in Surrounding Counties – Total Population .....	2-8
Table 2-4: Population Trends in Surrounding Counties - Percent Change.....	2-8
Table 2-5: Population Trends in Surrounding.....	2-9
Table 2-6: Daytime Population .....	2-9
Table 2-7: Population Projections.....	2-10
Table 2-8: Historical Number of Households .....	2-11
Table 2-9: Household Projections .....	2-11
Table 2-10: Average Household Size Historical and Projections .....	2-12
Table 2-11: Distribution of Household Types, 2000 .....	2-12
Table 2-12: Historical Age and Age Projections.....	2-13
Table 2-13: Race and Hispanic Origin Total Population .....	2-14
Table 2-14: Race and Hispanic Origin Share of Population.....	2-14
Table 2-15: Race and Hispanic Origin of Surrounding Counties .....	2-15
Table 2-16: Race and Hispanic Origin Total Population Projections.....	2-15
Table 2-17: Race and Hispanic Origin Share of Population Projections .....	2-16
Table 2-18: Household Income Distribution .....	2-16
Table 2-19: Median Household Income .....	2-17
Table 2-20: Personal Income by Type of Income .....	2-17
Table 2-21: Per Capita Income .....	2-18
Table 2-22: Poverty - Percent of Specified Age Groups in Poverty .....	2-18
Table 2-23: Poverty Thresholds for 2005 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children .....	2-19
Table 2-24: Educational Attainment.....	2-20
Table 3-1: Number of Employees .....	3-21
Table 3-2: Employment by Industry Sector .....	3-22
Table 3-3: Share of Employment by Industry Sector.....	3-22
Table 3-4: Location Quotient Analysis for Dawson County.....	3-23
Table 3-5: Shift Share Analysis for Dawson County .....	3-25
Table 3-6: Employment Projections.....	3-26
Table 3-7: Weekly Wages by Industry 2004.....	3-27
Table 3-8: Average Employment Wages for All Industries.....	3-27
Table 3-9: Average Pay as Percentage of State and Nation .....	3-28
Table 3-10: Historical Labor Force Size.....	3-28
Table 3-11: Labor Force Participation .....	3-29
Table 3-12: Labor Force Employment by Occupation 2000.....	3-29
Table 3-13: Labor Force Employment by Industry .....	3-30
Table 3-14: Share of Labor Force Employment by Industry.....	3-31
Table 3-15: Labor Force Employment by Industry Projections.....	3-32
Table 3-16: Historical Labor Force Unemployment Rates.....	3-33
Table 3-17: Commuting Patterns – Inside/Outside County.....	3-33
Table 3-18: Employee Commuter Patterns in Dawson County.....	3-33
Table 3-19: Georgia Mountains Region Largest Job Growth Industries .....	3-35
Table 3-20: Georgia Mountains Industries with Most Job Decline .....	3-36
Table 3-21: Top 10 Employers in Dawson County .....	3-37
Table 4-1: Types of Housing and Mix for Dawson County .....	4-38
Table 4-2: Types of Housing Percent Change .....	4-38
Table 4-3: Housing Permit Trends.....	4-38
Table 4-4: Housing Unit Trends in Surrounding Counties .....	4-39
Table 4-5: Age of Housing for Dawson County and Dawsonville .....	4-39



Table 4-6: Condition of Housing for Dawson County.....	4-40
Table 4-7: Tenure of Housing Units for Dawson County .....	4-40
Table 4-8: Seasonal Housing in Dawson County.....	4-40
Table 4-9: Dawson County Sheriff's Actions Related to Domestic Violence .....	4-41
Table 4-10: Population with a Disability in Dawson County .....	4-42
Table 4-11: Type of Disabilities in Dawson County.....	4-42
Table 4-12: Median Property Value and Median Rent.....	4-43
Table 4-13: Specified Owner-Occupied Units.....	4-43
Table 4-14: Number of Annual Home Sales and Annual Average Prices for Dawson County ....	4-44
Table 4-15: Cost-Burdened Households .....	4-44
Table 4-16: Percentage of the Total Population in Poverty for Individuals.....	4-45
Table 4-17: Poverty Status for Families .....	4-45
Table 4-18: Poverty Status for Female-headed Households .....	4-45
Table 4-19: Residents Using Public Assistance .....	4-46
Table 4-20: Jobs-Housing Balance for Dawson County.....	4-47
Table 4-21: Correlation of Household Income to Housing Prices for Dawson County Residents.	4-48
Table 4-22: Correlation of Average Weekly Wages to Housing Prices for Dawson Workers (2003) 4-49	
Table 5-1: Soils of Dawson County .....	5-55
Table 5-2: Federal- and State-Listed Endangered and Threatened Species – Birds.....	5-56
Table 5-3: Federal- and State-Listed Endangered and Threatened Species - Animals .....	5-57
Table 5-4: Federal- and State-Listed Endangered and Threatened Species - Plants.....	5-57
Table 5-5: Special Concern Animal Species .....	5-58
Table 5-6: Special Concern Plant Species.....	5-60
Table 6-1: Dawson County School System (2005-2006 School Year).....	6-72
Table 6-2: Dawson County Public School General Information.....	6-72
Table 6-3: Dawson County Health Care Facility General Information.....	6-74
Table 6-4: Dawson County Service Delivery Strategy Summary .....	6-75
Table 7-1: County Functional Classification .....	7-77
Table 7-2: County Traffic Volumes .....	7-78
Table 7-3: County Roadway Lanes Inventory .....	7-78
Table 7-4: Means of Transportation to Work for Workers 16 Years and Over (Universe Workers 16 years and over).....	7-79
Table 7-5: Travel Time to Work for Workers 16 Years and Over (Universe: Workers 16 years and over) .....	7-80
Table 7-6: County Bridges in Unsatisfactory Condition .....	7-81
Table 7-7: County Local Projects.....	7-83
Table 7-8: County Short Range Projects.....	7-84
Table 7-9: County Long Range Projects* .....	7-84

# 1 Introduction

The “Analysis of Supporting Data” follows the guidelines of the Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-12-1, Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective May 1, 2005. This section presents the full collection of analysis and supporting data that provides the backbone for the “Analysis of Supportive Data and Information” section of the Community Assessment. Maps associated with the Technical Addendum are located in the “Atlas of Supportive Maps” section.

## 2 Population

### 2.1 Total Population

#### 2.1.1 Historic Population Growth

**Table 2-1: Historic Population**

Area	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004	2005
Dawson County	3,590	3,639	4,774	9,429	15,999	19,064	19,731
City of Dawsonville	307	288	342	467	619	873	NA
Unincorporated	3,283	3,351	4,432	8,962	15,380	18,191	NA

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (population numbers for 2004 and 2005 are estimates)

**Table 2-2: Historic Population Growth Rates**

Area	% Change 1980-1990	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2004	% Change 1990-2004	% Change 2000-2005	% Change 1990-2005
Dawson County	97.5%	69.7%	19.2%	102.2%	23.3%	109.3%
City of Dawsonville	36.5%	32.5%	41.0%	86.9%	Not Available	Not Available
Unincorporated	102.2%	71.6%	18.3%	103.0%	Not Available	Not Available
State of Georgia	18.6%	26.4%	7.3%	36.3%	10.8%	40.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (population numbers for 2004 and 2005 are estimates)

Dawson County population hovered between 3,000 and 5,000 from the post-World War II era of the 1940s to the 1980s. Population before the war in 1940 stood at 4,479 and would later fall to 3,590 in 1960. It began a slow climb upward in the 1960s that ended with a population of 4,774 in 1980 as shown in Table 2-1.

Slow growth became a thing of the past in the 1980s not only for Dawson County, but many other counties encircling greater Atlanta. Suburban and exurban Atlanta growth continued its historical push outward from the center of the region and in the 1980s began to reach Dawson County. The push expanded the county population 98 percent. As populations increased, the calculated rate of growth became less dramatic in the 1990s and in the first five years of the 2000s, but that hardly meant a slowdown in growth for the county. The 23.3 percent growth rate estimated by the Census Bureau between 2000 and 2005 ranks the county as the 67<sup>th</sup> fastest-growing county in the nation, one of 18 Georgia counties in the nation’s top 100. The 23.3 percent growth rate represented about 6,500 new residents. The rate of growth and average annual rates of growth for 1990 to 2000, 2000 to 2005 and 1990 to 2005 each well exceed the average annual growth rate for the state, as shown in Table 2-2.

Dawson County’s only incorporated city – the county seat of Dawsonville – has experienced a much lower rate of growth than that of unincorporated Dawson County, as shown in Table 2-2.

The south and southeastern sections of the county have attracted the largest amount of new growth. Much of the commercial growth has occurred in the vicinity of Georgia 400 near the North Georgia Premium Outlets shopping center that opened in the late 1990s.

## 2.1.2 Population Growth in Surrounding Counties

**Table 2-3: Population Trends in Surrounding Counties – Total Population**

County	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Dawson County	3,712	3,590	3,639	4,774	9,429	15,999	19,731
Cherokee County	20,750	23,001	31,059	51,699	90,204	141,903	184,211
Forsyth County	11,005	12,170	16,928	27,958	44,083	98,407	140,393
Gilmer County	9,963	8,922	8,956	11,110	13,368	23,456	27,335
Hall County	40,113	49,739	59,405	75,649	95,428	139,277	165,771
Lumpkin County	6,574	7,214	8,728	10,762	14,573	21,016	24,324
Pickens County	8,855	8,903	9,620	11,652	14,132	22,983	28,442

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (population numbers for 2005 are estimates)

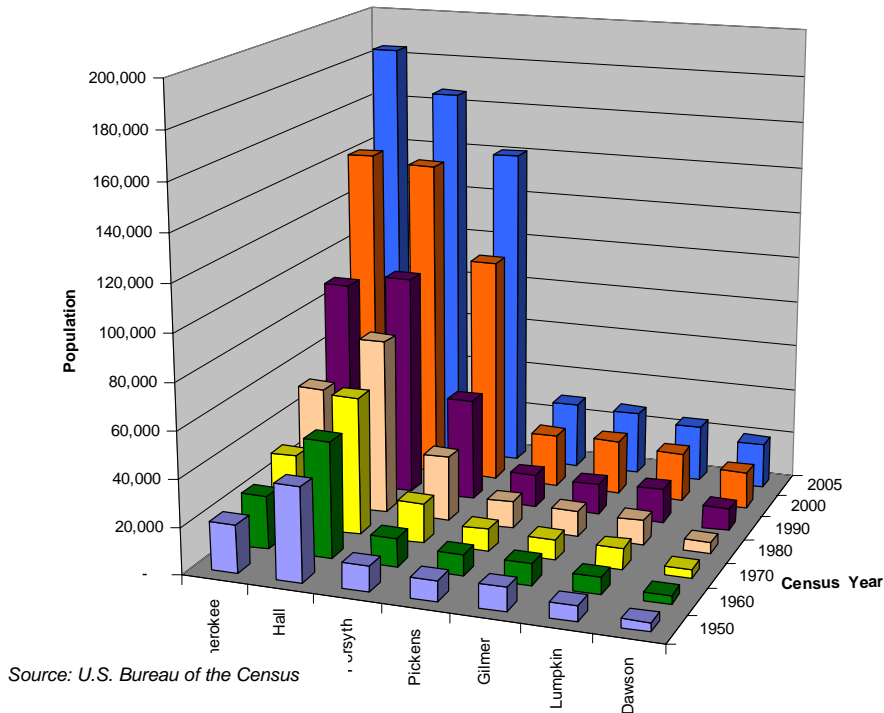
**Table 2-4: Population Trends in Surrounding Counties - Percent Change**

County	% Change 1950-60	% Change 1960-70	% Change 1970-80	% Change 1980-90	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2005	State Rank 2000-2005
Dawson County	-3.3%	1.4%	31.2%	97.5%	69.7%	23.3%	14th
Cherokee County	10.8%	35.0%	66.5%	74.5%	57.3%	29.8%	6th
Forsyth County	10.6%	39.1%	65.2%	57.7%	123.2%	42.7%	1st
Gilmer County	-10.4%	0.4%	24.1%	20.3%	75.5%	16.5%	23rd
Hall County	24.0%	19.4%	27.3%	26.1%	45.9%	19.0%	19th
Lumpkin County	9.7%	21.0%	23.3%	35.4%	44.2%	15.7%	25th
Pickens County	0.5%	8.1%	21.1%	21.3%	62.6%	23.8%	11th

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (population numbers for 2005 are estimates)

Suburban growth surged through Dawson County's southern neighbors with skyrocketing population increases over the last 25 years. The five neighboring counties' growth rates, shown in Table 2-4 and Table 2-5 above, rank in the state's top 25 (out of 159 counties) for 2000 to 2005. Forsyth County, leads the state and ranks fifth nationally at 42.7 percent. Cherokee County ranks sixth in the state and 25<sup>th</sup> nationally at 29.8 percent. As a result of the growth marching into Dawson County (and more on the way), the U.S. Census Bureau added the county to the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta Metropolitan Statistical Area following the 2000 Census.

**Table 2-5: Population Trends in Surrounding**



### 2.1.3 Daytime Population

**Table 2-6: Daytime Population**

Category	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Daytime population inside county	7,177	13,267	84.9%
Number of people leaving the county during the day to work	3,102	5,223	68.4%
Number of people coming into the county during the day to work	850	2,491	193.1%
Total number of workers during the day	2,330	5,277	126.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF1)

The daytime population captured by the 2000 Census increased more dramatically than the total population at 85 percent. As shown in Table 2-6, the total number of workers entering the county for work each day increased 193 percent between 1990 and 2000 to 2,491. The total number of workers in the county during the day increased more than 126 percent to 5,277 during the same period. Meanwhile, 5,223 residents left Dawson County for work in other counties each day, also a significant increase of more than 68 percent. Daytime population measures the number of people present in an area during normal business hours, which contrasts with the population present during the evening and nighttime hours. The expansion or contraction experienced between nighttime and daytime provides important information for transportation, disaster, and relief planning.

## 2.1.4 Population Projections

Table 2-7: Population Projections

Year	DCA High**	DCA Low*	OBP***	Land Use Element	Policy Directions Report ****
2005	19,731	19,731	19,731	19,731	20,710
2010	23,464	21,612	24,757	25,000	25,980
2015	28,428	24,418	28,342	32,500	31,972
2020	33,392	27,224	32,456	38,000	38,691
2025	39,994	30,030	36,571	43,501	46,143
2030	46,596	32,837	40,685	49,001	55,049
Growth Rate 2005-2030	136.2%	66.4%	106.2%	148.3%	165.8%
Annual Average Growth Rate 2005-2030	5.4%	2.7%	4.2%	5.9%	6.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (numbers for 2005 are estimates)

\* DCA Low estimate based on average annual growth rate between 1980 to 2000;

\*\*DCA High\*\* adjusted from Low with a multiplier of 1.33 to accommodate for the U.S. Bureau of the Census-estimated growth between 2000-2005 that the DCA Low did not accommodate)

\*\*\* State of Georgia Office of Budget and Planning estimates produced in 2005 for 2010 and 2015; estimates for 2020-2030 assume same average annual growth as 2000-2015 in estimate)

\*\*\*\* 2030 estimate based on the growth rate from 2020 to 2025; Policy Directions Report only included projections to 2025.

The growth strategy embraced by Dawson County over the next 25 years will greatly influence the future population numbers. The housing and job market also will play a large role in determining the future population. The Land Use Element of the *Dawson County-City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan 2010*, adopted in 2005, outlines a phased growth strategy that provides the county and City of Dawsonville with the policy framework to ensure that new growth occurs only when the county and city are prepared to serve the new population. The Land Use Element projected a population of 32,500 in 2015, which represents a 52.9 increase from 2005 to 2015 (average annual growth rate of 5.3 percent). The plan accommodates a population of more than 100,000.

In addition to examining projections prepared for the Land Use Element Update in 2005 for the years 2010 and 2015 and prepare longer-range projections, MACTEC examined similar projections from the *Policy Directions Report: Dawson County Impact Fee Program* prepared in 2004, Georgia Office of Budget and Planning estimates prepared in 2005 and the county estimates prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for 2005. With this information, MACTEC used the data spreadsheet created by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to prepare a range of projections for 2010, 2015, 2020, 2025 and 2030, as shown in Table 2-7. Notes in Table 2-1 explain the multiplier needed to create the high projection.

The projections, shown in Figure 2-7, range from a 2030 population of 32,837 with an average annual growth rate of 2.6 percent based solely on the average unusual growth rate from 1980 to 2000 by DCA, to 55,049 with an average annual growth rate of 6.6 percent, based on the rates of growth projected by the *Policy Directions Report*.

## 2.1.5 Total Households and Household Size

**Table 2-8: Historical Number of Households**

Year	Dawson County	Unincorporated	City of Dawsonville
1980	1,663	1,536	127
1990	3,360	3,195	165
2000	6,069	5,835	234
2005 (Estimate)	7,534	7,273	261
Growth Rate 1980-2000	264.9%	279.9%	84.3%
Average Annual Growth Rate 1980-2000	13.2%	14.0%	4.2%
Growth Rate 1990-2000	80.6%	82.6%	41.8%
Average Annual Growth Rate 1990-2000	8.1%	8.3%	4.2%
Growth Rate Change 2000-2005	24.1%	24.6%	11.5%
Average Annual Growth Rate 2000-2005	4.8%	4.9%	2.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; DCA Projections (based on 1.33 multiplier)

**Table 2-9: Household Projections**

Year	Dawson County	Unincorporated	City of Dawsonville
2000	6,069	5,835	234
2005	7,534	7,273	261
2010	8,999	8,711	288
2015	10,947	10,633	314
2020	12,896	12,555	341
2025	15,487	15,119	368
2030	18,079	17,684	395
Growth Rate 2000-2030	197.9%	203.1%	68.8%
Average Annual Growth Rate 2000-2030	6.6%	6.8%	2.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; DCA Projections (based on 1.33 multiplier)

Note: Household Projections for Dawson County prepared with multiplier of 1.33 to accommodate for growth between 2000-2005

The county households increased more than 264 percent between 1980 and 2000, with an 80 percent increase between 1990 and 2000 as shown in Table 2-8, and are projected to increase to 18,079 by 2030, as shown in Table 2-9. Average household size dropped to 2.62 in the county and is projected to continue to drop, as shown in **Table 2-10**. The smaller household size provides explanation for the difference in household and population growth rates. Households are projected to increase to more than 18,079 over the next 25 years, while the average household size should continue to shrink reflecting a national trend.

**Table 2-10: Average Household Size Historical and Projections**

Year	Average Household Size	
	Dawson County	City of Dawsonville
1980	2.86	2.61
1990	2.79	2.65
2000	2.62	2.31
2005	2.56	2.24
2010	2.5	2.16
2015	2.44	2.09
2020	2.38	2.01
2025	2.32	1.94
2030	2.26	1.86
Growth Rate 2000-2030	-13.7%	-19.5%
Average Annual Growth Rate 2000-2030	-0.5%	-0.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2000 Census; DCA Plan Builder 2006

## 2.1.6 Distribution of Household Types

**Table 2-11: Distribution of Household Types, 2000**

Type	Dawson County		State of Georgia
	Total	% of Total	% of Total
Total Households	6,069	100%	100%
Family households (families)	4,687	77.2%	70.2%
With own children under 18 years	2,046	33.7%	35.0%
With no children under 18 years	2,641	43.5%	35.3%
Married-couple family	3,989	65.7%	51.5%
With own children under 18 years	1,660	27.4%	24.4%
With no children under 18 years	2,329	38.4%	27.1%
Female householder, no husband present	497	8.2%	14.5%
With own children under 18 years	292	4.8%	8.6%
Nonfamily households	1,382	22.8%	29.8%
Householder living alone	1,126	18.6%	23.6%
Householder 65 years and over	301	5.0%	7.0%
Households with individuals under 18 years	2,232	36.8%	39.1%
Households with no under 18 years	3,837	63.2%	60.9%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	1,100	18.1%	18.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 2-11 compiles household type information for 2000. In 2000, Dawson County's percentage of families with children under 18 was low, compared to the same figure for the state. These figures have likely shifted toward the state's figure with the estimated 23.3 percent population increase from 2000 to 2005. However, it's worth noting that in fast-growing suburban communities, traditional families tend to have higher than average numbers of school age children that present a fiscal challenge as the county seeks to find ways to fund the public schools these families generate. Generally, Dawson County has a higher share of family households and

married couple families, but smaller shares of family households with children, married couple families with children, single persons living alone, and single moms, than the state.

## 2.2 Age Distribution

Table 2-12: Historical Age and Age Projections

Age Category (years)	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2020	2030
0 – 4	7.6%	7.7%	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%	6.9%	6.9%
5 – 13	15.3%	15.3%	14.4%	14.3%	14.2%	14.2%	14.1%
14 – 17	7.1%	4.7%	3.7%	3.4%	3.2%	2.9%	2.7%
18 – 20	4.9%	4.3%	3.4%	3.3%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%
21 – 24	5.9%	5.0%	4.2%	4.1%	4.0%	3.9%	3.8%
25 – 34	16.9%	18.8%	14.7%	14.6%	14.4%	14.2%	14.1%
35 – 44	11.5%	15.4%	17.7%	18.2%	18.6%	19.1%	19.5%
45 – 54	10.6%	11.3%	14.6%	14.9%	15.1%	15.4%	15.7%
55 – 64	9.6%	8.6%	11.0%	11.1%	11.1%	11.3%	11.3%
65 & over	10.6%	8.9%	9.3%	9.2%	9.2%	9.0%	9.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3); DCA Projections with 1.33 multiplier (Shaded)

Table 2-12 shows the historical age distribution for Dawson County as well as projections through the year 2030 based on the DCA High population projection described in section 2.1.4. The projections base the growth on trends experienced from 1980 to 2000 (and adjusted to reflect the total population estimated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 2005). As a result, these projections show the share of the population in each age group remaining fairly constant over the next 25 years. National projections, however, anticipate that the senior citizen share of the population will increase significantly during this time period. For example, the number of Americans aged 45-65 (who will reach age 65 over the next two decades) increased by 39 percent from 1994 to 2004, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging.



## 2.3 Race and Ethnicity

### 2.3.1 Racial and Ethnic makeup

Table 2-13: Race and Hispanic Origin Total Population

Category	1980	1990	2000	2004	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2004
Total Population	4,774	9,429	15,999	19,064	69.7%	19.2%
Population By Race						
White	4,733	9,328	15,554	18,628	66.7%	19.8%
African American	0	4	57	147	1325.0%	157.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	37	82	59	50	-28.0%	-15.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	7	58	95	728.6%	63.8%
other race	1	8	271	144	3287.5%	-46.9%
Persons of Hispanic origin	3	39	254	515	551.3%	102.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness & Econ. Development

Table 2-14: Race and Hispanic Origin Share of Population

Category	1980	1990	2000	2004
Population By Race				
White	99.1%	98.9%	97.2%	97.7%
African American	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.8%	0.9%	0.4%	0.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.5%
other race	0.0%	0.1%	1.7%	0.8%
Persons of Hispanic origin	0.1%	0.4%	1.6%	2.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development

White residents made up an overwhelming share of the population in the County with an estimated 97.7 percent in 2004, as shown in Table 2-13 and Table 2-14. The Census does not include Hispanic as a race, but accounts for this population under ethnicity. As a result, people of Hispanic origin generally make up portions of more than one racial group. The figures included with this analysis include persons of Hispanic origin with the various racial groups for comparison purposes.

## 2.3.2 Race and Ethnicity Compared to Surrounding Counties

**Table 2-15: Race and Hispanic Origin of Surrounding Counties**

Category	Dawson	Cherokee	Forsyth	Gilmer	Hall	Lumpkin	Pickens
Population By Race							
White	97.7%	92.5%	94.4%	96.2%	90.0%	95.9%	97.1%
African American	0.8%	4.5%	1.9%	0.8%	7.1%	1.6%	1.6%
Other race	0.8%	1.9%	2.8%	2.3%	2.2%	1.3%	0.7%
Persons of Hispanic origin	2.7%	7.6%	7.1%	8.8%	24.1%	4.8%	2.7%
Persons of Hispanic origin % change (2000 to 2004)	102.8%	72.6%	72.0%	30.0%	42.4%	58.7%	59.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development

Explosive growth in the county of the population of persons of Hispanic origin exceeded that of any neighboring county between 2000 and 2004, according to Census estimates – growing 102.8 percent. As shown in Table 2-15, persons of Hispanic origin increased their share of the population from 1.6 in 2000 percent to 2.7 percent in 2004, according to the estimates. Dawson County’s Hispanic population increased 102.8 percent. Providing bilingual services and education present a service challenge for the community.

## 2.3.3 Race and Hispanic Origin Projections

**Table 2-16: Race and Hispanic Origin Total Population Projections**

Category	2005	2010	2015	2025	2030
Total Population	19,731	23,465	28,427	33,391	39,994
Population By Race					
White	19,152	22,750	27,535	32,321	38,685
African American	76	95	120	145	179
American Indian/Alaska Native	66	74	83	93	106
Asian or Pacific Islander	76	95	119	143	176
other race	361	451	570	689	848
Persons of Hispanic origin	533	812	2,055	3,298	8,827

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (population numbers for 2005 are estimates); DCA Projections (with 1.33 multiplier)

Note: DCA projections for race calculated with multiplier of 1.33 in order to match the growth rate estimated between 2000-2004 by the Bureau of the Census; projections for Hispanic origin calculated with a multiplier of 5.0 in order to match the growth rates estimated between 2000-2004

**Table 2-17: Race and Hispanic Origin Share of Population Projections**

Category	2005	2010	2015	2025	2030
Population By Race					
White	97.1%	97.0%	96.9%	96.8%	96.7%
African American	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
other race	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.1%
Persons of Hispanic origin	2.7%	3.5%	7.2%	9.9%	22.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (population numbers for 2005 are estimates); DCA Projections (with 1.33 multiplier)

Note: DCA projections for race calculated with multiplier of 1.33 in order to match the growth rate estimated between 2000-2004 by the Bureau of the Census; projections for Hispanic origin calculated with a multiplier of 5.0 in order to match the growth rates estimated between 2000-2004

Based on the trends established 2000-2004, the share of population of persons of Hispanic origin should continue to grow over the next 25 years in Dawson County, as shown in Table 2-16 and Table 2-17.

## 2.4 Income

### 2.4.1 Household Income

**Table 2-18: Household Income Distribution**

Category	1990		2000		% Change 1990-2000
	Count	%	Count	%	
Total Households	3,403	100%	6,070	100%	78.4%
Income less than \$9,999	474	13.9%	386	6.4%	-18.6%
Income \$10,000 - \$14,999	351	10.3%	261	4.3%	-25.6%
Income \$15,000 - \$19,999	295	8.7%	345	5.7%	16.9%
Income \$20,000 - \$29,999	702	20.6%	765	12.6%	9.0%
Income \$30,000 - \$34,999	311	9.1%	292	4.8%	-6.1%
Income \$35,000 - \$39,999	167	4.9%	457	7.5%	173.7%
Income \$40,000 - \$49,999	399	11.7%	648	10.7%	62.4%
Income \$50,000 - \$59,999	274	8.1%	826	13.6%	201.5%
Income \$60,000 - \$74,999	216	6.3%	592	9.8%	174.1%
Income \$75,000 - \$99,999	125	3.7%	794	13.1%	535.2%
Income \$100,000 - \$124,999	25	0.7%	334	5.5%	1236%
Income \$125,000 - \$149,999	59	1.7%	149	2.5%	153%
Income \$150,000 and above	5	0.1%	221	3.6%	4320%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Household income distribution changes between 1990 and 2000 shifted a larger share of the county's total households to higher income brackets as evidenced by a 27 percent drop in households earning under \$15,000 and large percentage increases in household earning over \$40,000 (shown in Table 2-18). Numbers of households within income categories with incomes of \$50,000 or more all increased by 153 percent or more. The largest percentage increase

occurred in the top bracket where households earning \$150,000 increased 4,320 percent – from five to 221 households.

## 2.4.2 Median Household Income

**Table 2-19: Median Household Income**

Area	1995	2000	2003 Estimate	% Change 2000-2003	% Change 1995-2003
Dawson County	\$39,144	\$48,455	\$49,909	3.0%	27.5%
State of Georgia	\$33,623	\$42,057	\$42,421	0.9%	26.2%
United States	\$34,076	\$41,990	\$43,318	3.2%	27.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates 1995, 2000 and 2003

Median household income grew as the county added new households with higher levels of education and higher incomes. As shown in Table 2-19, the median income rose from \$48,455 to an estimated \$49,909 from 2000 to 2003, which keeps Dawson County well above the both the state and national level.

## 2.4.3 Personal income

**Table 2-20: Personal Income by Type of Income**

Category	Dawson County		City of Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Wages and/or Salaries	73.5%	74.1%	66.0%	74.7%	78.5%	78.2%
Other types	1.7%	0.9%	3.5%	1.2%	1.1%	1.7%
Self employment	10.1%	9.1%	12.0%	4.3%	6.3%	5.6%
Interest, dividends, or net rental	5.8%	7.0%	5.4%	8.1%	5.6%	5.3%
Social Security	4.9%	4.1%	6.7%	4.0%	4.3%	4.0%
Public assistance	1.0%	0.3%	3.3%	0.4%	0.7%	0.0%
Retirement	3.1%	4.6%	3.1%	7.3%	3.4%	4.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

County residents received more than 74 percent of their personal income from wages and salaries in 2000, compared to 78.2 percent for the state, as shown in Table 2-20. They received seven percent of their personal income from interest, dividends or net rental, while the state as a whole only received 5.3 percent of its personal income by that means. More than nine percent of the county's personal income came from self employment, a significantly higher percentage than that of the state (5.6 percent). Retirement income made up 4.6 percent of the personal income in the county and the state.

## 2.4.4 Per Capita Income

Table 2-21: Per Capita Income

Area	1990	2000	2003 Estimate	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2003
Dawson County	\$12,198	\$22,520	\$28,010	84.6%	24.4%
City of Dawsonville	\$8,415	\$20,207	-	140.1%	-
State of Georgia	\$13,631	\$21,154	\$22,879	55.2%	8.2%

Source: University of Georgia, Georgia Statistics System, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development (estimate not available for City of Dawsonville 2003)

Per capita income rose dramatically from 1990 to 2000, as captured in Table 2-21 for both the county and City of Dawsonville. The increases moved the county ahead of the state level for per capita income and represented rates of increase well above that of the state as well.

## 2.4.5 Poverty

Table 2-22: Poverty - Percent of Specified Age Groups in Poverty

Age Groups	Dawson County			State of Georgia			United States		
	1995	2000	2003	1995	2000	2003	1995	2000	2003
All Ages	11.4%	9.5%	9.2%	15.6%	12.3%	13.3%	13.8%	11.3%	13.6%
Ages 0-17	17.5%	14.3%	14.3%	23.5%	17.5%	19.1%	20.8%	16.2%	17.6%
Ages 5-17	16.1%	13.5%	13.1%	22.1%	16.1%	17.8%	18.7%	14.6%	16.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates 1995, 2000 and 2003; Model-based Estimates for States, Counties and School Districts

Poverty levels in Dawson County fell below those for the across the board, according to estimates prepared by the Census Bureau in 2003 shown in Table 2-22. However, 9.2 percent of all county residents lived in poverty in 2003. More somberly, 14.3 percent of the counties children lived in poverty in 2003, compared to 17.6 percent of the state's children.

**Table 2-23: Poverty Thresholds for 2005 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children**

Size of family unit	Related children under 18 years								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person (unrelated individual)									
Under 65 years	\$10,160								
65 years and over	\$9,367								
Two persons									
Householder under 65 years	\$13,078	\$13,461							
Householder 65 years and over	\$11,805	\$13,410							
Three persons	\$15,277	\$15,720	\$15,735						
Four persons	\$20,144	\$20,474	\$19,806	\$19,874					
Five persons	\$24,293	\$24,646	\$23,891	\$23,307	\$22,951				
Six persons	\$27,941	\$28,052	\$27,474	\$26,920	\$26,096	\$25,608			
Seven persons	\$32,150	\$32,350	\$31,658	\$31,176	\$30,277	\$29,229	\$28,079		
Eight persons	\$35,957	\$36,274	\$35,621	\$35,049	\$34,237	\$33,207	\$32,135	\$31,862	
Nine persons or more	\$43,254	\$43,463	\$42,885	\$42,400	\$41,603	\$40,507	\$39,515	\$39,270	\$37,757

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2005

Table 2-23 outlines the poverty thresholds for 2005 as determined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The bureau uses these income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but the bureau updates for inflation using Consumer Price Index. The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or non-cash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

## 2.5 Education

### 2.5.1 Educational Attainment

Table 2-24: Educational Attainment

Category	Dawson County			State of Georgia		
	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Less than 9th Grade	16.5%	6.0%	81.4%	12.0%	7.6%	28.9%
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	23.4%	14.4%	-33.8%	17.1%	13.8%	-18.7%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	33.7%	32.4%	11.4%	29.6%	28.7%	4.7%
Some College (No Degree)	13.0%	22.7%	74.3%	17.0%	20.4%	24.6%
Associate Degree	4.9%	5.4%	217.4%	5.0%	5.2%	54.8%
Bachelor's Degree	6.5%	11.9%	103.1%	12.9%	16.0%	35.3%
Graduate or Professional Degree	2.1%	6.1%	230.5%	6.4%	8.3%	59.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 2-24 indicates the educational attainment percentages for Dawson County. Educational attainment improved more substantially for the county than for the state between 1990 and 2000, but remained lower overall with a smaller share of graduate or professional degrees and bachelor's degrees than the state. This improvement suggests that new residents have greatly contributed to the county's educational attainment progress and that these numbers should continue to climb as growth continues. The increase may also reflect the results of efforts by various county organizations to increase educational attainment.

### 3 Economic Development

Data collected for and analyzed in this section comes from a variety of sources that include the Dawson County Development Authority/Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Bureau of Labor, Georgia Department of Economic Development, U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development. As a result of the various methods for categorizing data employed by each organization, some of the figures will seem inconsistent. For example, the total number of jobs in Dawson County reflected in the Shift-Share Analysis obtained from the University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development only includes jobs categorized by the U.S. Bureau of Labor into 11 sectors, while the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages shows a higher number because it includes all jobs in Dawson County as reported.

On another important note, understanding the following sub-sections requires an understanding of the difference between the definitions of *employment* and *labor force* for the purpose of this analysis. *Employment* represents the jobs located in Dawson County with no concern for where the employees live. *Labor force* represents the population of Dawson County with no concern for the location of the job.

#### 3.1 Economic Base

##### 3.1.1 Employment

Table 3-1: Number of Employees

Year	Dawson County	State of Georgia	United States
1990	1,151	2,938,272	108,603,565
1995	1,866	3,354,041	115,487,841
2000	4,193	3,913,547	129,877,063
2001	4,504	3,871,763	129,635,800
2002	4,702	3,807,915	128,233,919
2003	5,211	3,783,232	127,795,827
2004	5,564	3,840,663	129,278,176
% Change 1990-2000	264.3%	33.2%	19.6%
% Change 2000-2004	32.7%	-1.9%	-0.5%
Annual % of Change 2000-2004	5.4%	-0.3%	-0.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2006

The number of jobs in Dawson County continued to rise at a significantly-faster rate than that of the state and nation between 2001 and 2004 (latest data available), as shown in Table 3-1. The 5.4 percent average annual growth rate allowed for an estimated total of 5,565 jobs in the county (which grew to 5,798 by the second quarter of 2005), far outpacing the rates for the state and nation rates that saw slight dips.



**Table 3-2: Employment by Industry Sector**

Sector	1990	1995	2000	2004	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2004
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	225	350	1,266	1,702	463%	34.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	97	155	620	710	539%	14.5%
Manufacturing	0	0	0	564	-	-
Professional and Business Services	47	78	381	522	711%	37.0%
Construction	62	112	292	462	371%	58.2%
Education and Health Services	21	45	149	208	610%	39.6%
Financial Activities	45	104	165	183	267%	10.9%
Other Services	0	0	0	176	-	-
Public Administration	21	50	0	119	-100%	-
Natural Resources and Mining	0	0	0	27	-	-
Information	0	0	0	17	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>2,923</b>	<b>4,690</b>	<b>464%</b>	<b>60.5%</b>

Source: University of Georgia, Georgia Statistics System, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Employment and Wages 2004

**Table 3-3: Share of Employment by Industry Sector**

Sector	Dawson County				State of Georgia			
	1990	1995	2000	2004	1990	1995	2000	2004
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	43.4%	40.1%	43.3%	36.3%	5.0%	4.6%	5.3%	5.2%
Education and Health Services	18.7%	17.8%	21.2%	15.1%	15.9%	16.9%	16.8%	19.6%
Professional and Business Services	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.0%	5.8%	5.1%	5.4%	5.6%
Manufacturing	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.0%	3.3%	3.8%	3.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	12.0%	12.8%	10.0%	9.9%	8.4%	8.8%	8.7%	9.4%
Public Administration	4.1%	5.2%	5.1%	4.4%	17.4%	16.2%	13.8%	11.7%
Financial Activities	8.7%	11.9%	5.6%	3.9%	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%
Construction	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	2.9%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%
Information	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	10.1%	12.1%	14.0%	13.4%
Other Services	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	6.7%	6.4%	5.5%	5.8%
Natural Resources and Mining	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	23.7%	22.9%	23.2%	22.5%

Source: University of Georgia, Georgia Statistics System, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Employment and Wages 2004

As shown in Table 3-2, Dawson County increased the number of jobs classified by the U.S. BOLS in the 11 sectors shown by 464 percent between 1990 and 2004. Table 3-3 shows the share represented by each during the same time period. The county employed 5,566 workers in 2004 all industries including some jobs that the BOLS could not classify into the 11 sectors listed in Table

3-2 and Table 3-3. Employment increased by 3,388 jobs between 1990 and 2004. Trade, Transportation and Utilities, while declining in share as other sectors grew at faster rates, continued to lead all sectors with 36.3 percent of all jobs, compared to 5.2 percent for the state and grew by 1,477 jobs. Leisure and Hospitality added 613 new jobs, and Professional and Business Services added 475 new jobs.

### 3.1.2 Location Quotient Analysis

**Table 3-4: Location Quotient Analysis for Dawson County**

Industry	Employment	Location Quotient	(LQ-1)/LQ	Basic Employment	Non-Basic Employment
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	27	0.56	NA	NA	27
Mining	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Utilities	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Construction	462	1.59	0.371	171	291
Manufacturing	564	0.94	NA	NA	564
Wholesale trade	170	0.72	NA	NA	170
Retail trade	1,457	2.31	0.567	826	631
Transportation and warehousing	37	0.22	NA	NA	37
Information	17	0.13	NA	NA	17
Finance and insurance	124	0.51	NA	NA	124
Real estate and rental and leasing	59	0.68	NA	NA	59
Professional and technical services	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Management of companies and enterprises	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Administrative and waste services	345	1.05	0.048	16	329
Educational services	12	0.14	NA	NA	12
Health care and social assistance	197	0.34	NA	NA	197
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	120	1.55	0.355	43	77
Accommodation and food services	591	1.33	0.248	147	444
Other services, except public administration	177	0.99	NA	NA	177
Unclassified	11	1.1	0.091	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,546</b>			<b>1,203</b>	<b>3,343</b>

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2004

Note: Location Quotient is calculated by dividing the % of local employment by the % of U.S. employment for each sector. Basic employment equals the employment total multiplied by the subtracting 1.0 from the Location Quotient and then dividing by the Location Quotient. Non-basic is calculated by subtracting the Basic Employment from the Total Employment

The location quotient analysis shown in Table 3-4 and described below is a ratio that compares the percentage of employment in specified industries in the Dawson County economy to the percentage of employment the same industry constitutes in the national economy. The ratio helps determine basic and non-basic employment. Basic employment represents jobs that produce or sell products or services exported from the county, while non-basic employment represents jobs that produce or sell products or services only for those in the county. Local

economies covet basic industry jobs because they allow generation of revenue from people who live outside of the local economy.

Location quotient analysis indicates which industries have a comparatively larger (or smaller) presence in the local economy. A location quotient of 1.0 means the local share equals the national share and translates into no basic employment. A location quotient greater than 1.0 means the local share exceeds the national share and translates into basic employment. A location quotient less than one means the local share is less than the national share and is likely importing products or services (and does not include basic employment).

Basic employment in Dawson County in 2004 in the specified industries shown in Table 3-4, represented 1,203 jobs, while non-basic employment represented 3,343 jobs. Each basic job supports or helps create the opportunity for non-basic jobs in the county. Basic industries represented in Dawson County include Retail (heavy in clothing, building materials and garden supply and food stores), Accommodation and Food Services (heavy in to food services) and arts, entertainment and recreation.

### 3.1.3 Shift Share Analysis

Table 3-5: Shift Share Analysis for Dawson County

Sector	National Growth Component %	National Growth Component, Jobs	Industrial Mix, Component %	Industrial Mix Component, Jobs	Competitive Share Component, %	Competitive Share Component, Jobs
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	14.9	47	-4.1	-13	431.2	1,354
Leisure and Hospitality	14.9	17	9.5	11	509.5	571
Professional and Business Services	14.9	14	18.6	17	427.7	398
Construction	14.9	14	22.9	22	343.4	330
Education and Health Services	14.9	5	10.3	4	469.1	164
Public Administration	14.9	4	-6.3	-2	316.4	89
Financial Activities	14.9	13	1.4	1	98.9	84
Manufacturing	14.9	.	-31	.	.	.
Other Services	14.9	.	2.6	.	.	.
Natural Resources and Mining	14.9	.	-16.9	.	.	.
Information	14.9	.	-2.8	.	.	.
Total		114		40		2,990

Source: University of Georgia, Georgia Statistics System, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Employment and Wages 2004

A shift-share analysis takes the change in employment from one year to another (for a specific area) and organizes it into the three change-generating sources: national growth component, industrial mix component and competitive share. The shift-share analysis shown in Table 3-5 and described below represents the 10-year period of 1994-2004.

The national growth component explains the growth or contraction in the United States economy and its relationship to the local economy. The national growth component led to the creation of 114 jobs in Dawson County during the studied time period, with the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities sector gaining the largest share of jobs (47 jobs).

The industrial mix component provides insight into the sectors experiencing growth by calculating the percent growth rate for an economic sector at the national level and subtracting from it the national growth component. The industrial mix component increased overall employment by 40 jobs, with the Construction sector gaining the largest share (22 jobs).

The competitive share component represents the employment change left over after accounting for the national and industrial mix components. A positive sector competitive share means that the sector possesses a local advantage in promoting employment growth. The competitive share component increased overall employment by 2,990 jobs, with the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities sector employment gaining the largest share (1,354 jobs).

### 3.1.4 Employment Projections

Table 3-6: Employment Projections

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Jobs</i>
2005	7,963
2010	9,729
2015	11,808
2020	14,170
2025	16,827
2030*	19,982
Growth Rate 2005-2030	150.9%
Avg. Annual Growth Rate	6.0%

*Source: Policy Directions Report: Dawson County Impact Fees, Ross+ Associates 2004*

*\* 2030 projection based on growth rate projected for 2020 to 2025 in report; original projections did not include 2030 and ended with 2025*

As shown in Table 3-6 with projected population growth between 2005 and 2030, the employment is projected to increase to 19,982, an increase of 151 percent, according the Dawson County's Policy Directions Report.

### 3.1.5 Wages

**Table 3-7: Weekly Wages by Industry 2004**

NAICS Sector	Dawson County	State of Georgia	United States	Dawson County Growth Rates		
				Business	Employment	Wage
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$291	\$432	\$429	-20	-27.03	9.81
Construction	\$635	\$739	\$779	13.33	15.75	11.8
Manufacturing	\$1,121	\$798	\$920	0	7.82	43.53
Wholesale Trade	\$743	\$1,084	\$1,025	6.45	42.02	21.8
Retail	\$352	\$464	\$470	0	5.74	4.45
Transportation and Warehousing	\$555	\$870	\$747	9.09	8.82	-0.54
Information	\$724	\$1,180	\$1,168	-20	-19.05	3.43
Finance and Insurance	\$942	\$1,176	\$1,348	-7.14	5.08	5.61
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$846	\$769	\$717	-15.79	-13.24	45.11
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$656	\$1,135	\$1,203	0	-9.73	8.97
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$363	\$528	\$523	32.26	9.18	19.41
Educational Services	\$382	\$705	\$681	16.67	-7.69	4.66
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$523	\$723	\$706	16	3.68	14.95
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$330	\$525	\$531	9.09	-3.23	-45.72
Accommodation and Food Services	\$223	\$270	\$283	10	10.47	2.29
Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$361	\$498	\$484	14.29	26.09	-12.8

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Information and Analysis Division

**Table 3-8: Average Employment Wages for All Industries**

Year	Average Weekly Pay			Average Annual Pay		
	Dawson County	State of Georgia	United States	Dawson County	State of Georgia	United States
2001	\$456	\$676	\$697	\$23,698	\$35,136	\$36,219
2002	\$478	\$687	\$707	\$24,837	\$35,734	\$36,764
2003	\$464	\$704	\$726	\$24,128	\$36,626	\$37,765
2004	\$518	\$728	\$757	\$26,936	\$37,866	\$39,354
% Change 2001-2004	13.6%	7.7%	8.6%	13.7%	7.8%	8.7%
% Annual Change 2001-2004	3.4%	1.9%	2.2%	3.4%	1.9%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2006

**Table 3-9: Average Pay as Percentage of State and Nation**

<i>Pay Period</i>	<i>State of Georgia</i>	<i>United States</i>
Average Weekly Pay (2004)	71%	68%
Average Annual Pay (2004)	71%	68%

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2006*

In contrast to the higher than state and national median income, per capita income, property values and other wealth indicators, the Dawson County average weekly wages for all industries (with the exception of manufacturing) shown in Table 3-7, average weekly wage for all industries combined shown in Table 3-8 and average annual wage for all industries combined shown in Table 3-9 trailed the state and nation. The average weekly wage of \$492 in the county was 68.8 percent of the state average weekly wage of \$722 and 66.2 percent of the national average weekly wage of \$751 in 2005. The average annual pay was 71.1 percent of the state and 68.4 percent of the national average annual pay in 2004 (figures not yet available for 2005).

## **3.2 Labor Force**

### **3.2.1 Participation**

**Table 3-10: Historical Labor Force Size**

<i>Labor Force</i>	<i>Dawson County</i>	<i>State of Georgia</i>	<i>United States</i>
1990	5,252	3,300,000	125,840,000
2000	9,043	4,300,000	142,583,000
2006	10,549	4,656,892	149,686,000
Growth Rate 1990-2000	72.2%	30.3%	13.3%
Average Annual Growth Rate 1990-2000	7.2%	3.0%	1.3%
Growth Rate 2000-2006	16.7%	8.3%	5.0%
Average Annual Growth Rate 2000-2006	2.8%	1.4%	0.8%
Growth Rate 1990-2006	100.9%	41.1%	
Average Annual Growth Rate 1990-2006	3.9%	1.6%	

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Georgia Department of Labor*

**Table 3-11: Labor Force Participation**

Category	Dawson County					State of Georgia		
	1990	% of Total 1990	2000	% of Total 2000	% Change 1990-2000	% of Total 1990	% of Total 2000	% Change 1990-2000
Private Wage and Salary Workers	3,526	74.7%	6,328	77.5%	79.5%	77.4%	78.9%	26.7%
Government Worker	488	10.3%	950	11.6%	94.7%	16.0%	14.9%	15.9%
Self Employed Workers (not incorporated)	667	14.1%	830	10.2%	24.4%	6.2%	5.9%	18.7%
Unpaid Family Workers	38	0.8%	60	0.7%	57.9%	0.4%	0.3%	-24.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The Dawson County labor force grew by 72.2 percent between 1990 and 2000 (as shown in Table 3-10), which is in line with the population growth experienced during the same period (69.7 percent). The number of private wage and salary workers, which makes up the bulk of the labor force, increased by 2,802 workers during the decade at a growth rate of 77.5 percent, as shown in Table 3-11. The government workers grew by 94.7 percent during the decade, the highest growth rate of all of the categories. Government works still only made up 11.6 percent of the labor force in the county compared to 15.9 percent of the statewide labor force.

**Table 3-12: Labor Force Employment by Occupation 2000**

Occupation 2000	Dawson County	City of Dawsonville	State of Georgia
Management, professional, and related occupations	30.0%	26.9%	30.6%
Service occupations	10.6%	21.2%	12.7%
Sales and office occupations	26.9%	25.7%	26.7%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	13.4%	4.9%	11.8%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	18.4%	21.2%	17.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SPF 3) 2000

The share of Dawson County residents in the categories shown in Table 3-12 closely matched the shares for the same categories for the state. Thirty percent of the labor force held management, professional and related occupations.



**Table 3-13: Labor Force Employment by Industry**

Category	Dawson County			City of Dawsonville			State of Georgia		
	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Total Employed Civilian Population	4,719	8,168	73.1%	190	245	28.9%	3,090,276	3,839,756	24.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	292	258	-11.6%	5	10	100.0%	82,537	53,201	-35.5%
Construction	721	1,116	54.8%	34	16	-52.9%	214,359	304,710	42.1%
Manufacturing	976	1,306	33.8%	37	32	-13.5%	585,423	568,830	-2.8%
Wholesale Trade	165	353	113.9%	10	5	-50.0%	156,838	148,026	-5.6%
Retail Trade	752	1,142	51.9%	41	45	9.8%	508,861	459,548	-9.7%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	385	314	-18.4%	14	13	-7.1%	263,419	231,304	-12.2%
Information	NA	369	NA	NA	7	NA	NA	135,496	NA
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	324	450	38.9%	13	3	-76.9%	201,422	251,240	24.7%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	327	669	104.6%	9	16	77.8%	151,096	362,414	139.9%
Educational, health and social services	328	1,188	262.2%	15	31	106.7%	461,307	675,593	46.5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	55	371	574.5%	0	35	#DIV/0!	31,911	274,437	760.0%
Other Services	294	387	31.6%	9	22	144.4%	266,053	181,829	-31.7%
Public Administration	100	245	145.0%	3	10	233.3%	167,050	193,128	15.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

**Table 3-14: Share of Labor Force Employment by Industry**

Category	Dawson County		City of Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	6.2%	3.2%	2.6%	4.1%	2.7%	1.4%
Construction	15.3%	13.7%	17.9%	6.5%	6.9%	7.9%
Manufacturing	20.7%	16.0%	19.5%	13.1%	18.9%	14.8%
Wholesale Trade	3.5%	4.3%	5.3%	2.0%	5.1%	3.9%
Retail Trade	15.9%	14.0%	21.6%	18.4%	16.5%	12.0%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	8.2%	3.8%	7.4%	5.3%	8.5%	6.0%
Information	NA	4.5%	NA	2.9%	NA	3.5%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	6.9%	5.5%	6.8%	1.2%	6.5%	6.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	6.9%	8.2%	4.7%	6.5%	4.9%	9.4%
Educational, health and social services	7.0%	14.5%	7.9%	12.7%	14.9%	17.6%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	1.2%	4.5%	0.0%	14.3%	1.0%	7.1%
Other Services	6.2%	4.7%	4.7%	9.0%	8.6%	4.7%
Public Administration	2.1%	3.0%	1.6%	4.1%	5.4%	5.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

**Table 3-15: Labor Force Employment by Industry Projections**

Category	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	% Change 2000-2030
Total Employed Civilian Population	8,168	10,213	11,197	12,712	14,226	15,741	17,255	111.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	258	254	253	250	247	244	242	-6.2%
Construction	1,116	1,366	1,486	1,671	1,856	2,041	2,226	99.5%
Manufacturing	1,306	1,552	1,671	1,854	2,036	2,219	2,401	83.8%
Wholesale Trade	353	440	482	546	610	674	739	109.3%
Retail Trade	1,142	1,442	1,587	1,809	2,031	2,253	2,476	116.8%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	314	403	446	512	578	644	710	126.1%
Information	369	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	450	580	642	738	834	930	1,026	128.0%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	669	869	965	1,113	1,261	1,409	1,557	132.7%
Educational, health and social services	1,188	1,530	1,694	1,947	2,200	2,453	2,706	127.8%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	371	475	526	603	680	757	835	125.1%
Other Services	387	506	563	651	739	827	915	136.4%
Public Administration	245	303	331	373	416	459	502	104.9%

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3); DCA projections (shaded) prepared with a multiplier of 1.35 to accommodate for the growth estimated in the labor force between 2000 and 2006*

As the labor force of the county grows the number of residents over the age of 16 in each industry will also grow. Table 3-15 shows the projections for the industries that will absorb the new growth. It is important to keep in mind that this information reflects the labor force of Dawson County, and does not reflect the jobs that will actually locate in the county over the next 25 years. Ideally, the county would attract jobs in the high growth industries in order to provide opportunities for new residents to live near their jobs.

### 3.2.2 Unemployment

**Table 3-16: Historical Labor Force Unemployment Rates**

Year	Dawson County	State of Georgia	United States
1990	4.8%	5.5%	5.6%
1991	4.5%	5.0%	6.8%
1992	5.8%	7.0%	7.5%
1993	4.9%	5.8%	6.9%
1994	3.9%	5.2%	6.1%
1995	3.9%	4.9%	5.6%
1996	3.2%	4.6%	5.4%
1997	2.8%	4.5%	4.9%
1998	2.9%	4.2%	4.5%
1999	2.5%	3.8%	4.2%
2000	2.7%	3.5%	4.0%
2001	3.0%	4.0%	4.7%
2002	4.3%	4.9%	5.8%
2003	3.7%	4.8%	6.0%
2004	3.6%	4.8%	5.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The unemployment rate for Dawson County fell behind the same rates for the state and nation from 1990 to 2004, as shown in Table 3-16. The level of unemployment rose to 4.3 percent in 2002 during the national economic recession, but apparently benefited from the economic rebound and dropped precipitously since that time.

### 3.2.3 Commuting Patterns

**Table 3-17: Commuting Patterns – Inside/Outside County**

Category	1990		2000		% Change 1990-2000
Total Civilian Workforce	4,719	100.0%	8,168	100.0%	73.1%
Worked in State of Georgia	4,582	97.1%	8,009	98.1%	74.8%
Worked in Dawson Co.	1,480	31.4%	2,786	34.1%	88.2%
Worked outside of Dawson Co.	3,102	65.7%	5,223	63.9%	68.4%
Worked outside of State of Georgia	10	0.2%	73	0.9%	630.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF1)

**Table 3-18: Employee Commuter Patterns in Dawson County**

Labor Force (employed residents) of Dawson County			Employed Working in Dawson County		
County Where Employed	Number	% of Total	County of Residence	Number	% of Total
Dawson	2,786	34.5%	Dawson	2,786	52.8%
Forsyth	1,628	20.1%	Lumpkin	769	14.6%
Fulton	1,199	14.8%	Forsyth	741	14.0%
Hall	479	5.9%	Hall	360	6.8%
Gwinnett	475	5.9%	Cherokee	95	1.8%
Lumpkin	353	4.4%	White	90	1.7%
Dekalb	267	3.3%	Gwinnett	77	1.5%
Cherokee	231	2.9%	Gilmer	73	1.4%
Other	665	8.2%	Other	286	5.4%
Total Employees	8,083	100.0%	Total Employees	5,277	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000

The commuting patterns shown in Table 3-17 and Table 3-18 begin to explain the contrast between the income and other wealth indicators and the lower average wages (compared to the state and nation). In 2000 a large percentage of the working population went to work in other counties leaving only 2,786 (52 percent of all county workers) to work at the 5,277 reported

jobs. The remaining county employment comes in large part from Lumpkin and Forsyth counties (28.6 percent).

As shown in Table 3-18, 34.5 percent of the Dawson County labor force worked in the county in 2000. More than 47 percent worked in the more suburban and urban counties to the south, with the highest concentration in neighboring Forsyth County (20.1 percent) and Fulton County (14.8 percent).

### **3.3 Economic Resources**

#### **3.3.1 Development Agencies**

The **Dawson County Development Authority** operates with the goal of creating quality jobs for Dawson County citizens. The authority has the ability to offer and provide industrial revenue bonds, lease to purchase assistance, site locations assistance to companies considering a move to Dawson County.

The Dawson County Chamber of Commerce promotes, assists and encourages the development of Dawson County's economic, educational, social, and natural resources in a manner consistent with preserving the county's uniquely desirable quality of life. The nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian organization includes programs for education, membership services, public relations, business development, tourism and government affairs. The chamber staff compiles demographic statistics and works with business prospects on information needs. The chamber has identified the following as issues impacting the economic development of the county: improved road infrastructure, increased job creation to allow more county residents to work locally, secured water source and increased sewer capacity, updated sign regulation, and an updated Economic Development Plan.

### 3.4 Economic Trends

#### 3.4.1 Sector Trends

Table 3-19: Georgia Mountains Region Largest Job Growth Industries

NAICS Code	Industry Title	2002 Base Year Employment	2012 Projected Year Employment	Total Change in Employment	Percent Change in Employment	Projected Annual Growth Rate
6110	Educational Services	16,590	22,520	5,930	35.7%	3.1%
2380	Specialty Trade Contractors	8,290	13,330	5,040	60.9%	4.9%
5610	Administrative and Support Services	6,630	10,670	4,040	60.9%	4.9%
6210	Ambulatory Health Care Services	5,120	8,840	3,720	72.7%	5.6%
7220	Food Services and Drinking Places	11,100	13,880	2,780	25.0%	2.3%
4230	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	4,230	6,790	2,560	60.7%	4.9%
5220	Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	3,400	5,850	2,450	71.9%	5.6%
5410	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4,800	7,220	2,420	50.4%	4.2%
4520	General Merchandise Stores	4,270	6,400	2,130	49.8%	4.1%
6220	Hospitals	5,710	7,780	2,070	36.1%	3.1%
9030	Local Government, except Education and Hospitals	6,940	8,910	1,970	28.4%	2.5%
3110	Food Manufacturing	11,640	13,510	1,870	16.1%	1.5%
6240	Social Assistance	2,120	3,970	1,850	87.0%	6.5%
4440	Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	2,800	4,290	1,490	53.2%	4.4%
4840	Truck Transportation	2,020	3,460	1,440	71.2%	5.5%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

As shown in Table 3-19, educational services, specialty needs contractors and administrative/support services sectors in the Georgia Mountains Region are projected by the Georgia Department of Labor to increase employment in their respective sectors by more than 4,000 jobs between 2002 and 2012. The Georgia Mountains Region includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White Counties.

**Table 3-20: Georgia Mountains Industries with Most Job Decline**

NAICS Code	Industry Title	2002 Base Year Employment	2012 Projected Year Employment	Total Change in Employment	Percent Change in Employment	Projected Annual Growth Rate
3230	Printing and Related Support Activities	2,370	970	-1,400	-59.1%	-8.6%
3130	Textile Mills	6,050	4,820	-1,230	-20.3%	-2.2%
1110	Agriculture, Crop and Animal Production	5,360	4,520	-840	-15.7%	-1.7%
3390	Miscellaneous Manufacturing	2,010	1,630	-380	-18.8%	-2.1%
3350	Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing	920	620	-300	-32.9%	-3.9%
8140	Private Households	1,540	1,430	-110	-7.2%	-0.7%
3140	Textile Product Mills	160	60	-100	-64.3%	-9.8%
5170	Telecommunications	730	670	-60	-8.5%	-0.9%
3340	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	320	260	-60	-18.6%	-2.0%
4820	Rail Transportation	270	220	-50	-17.9%	-2.0%
5150	Broadcasting (except Internet)	190	150	-40	-20.6%	-2.3%
5120	Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	80	40	-40	-50.3%	-6.7%
3260	Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	940	900	-40	-4.2%	-0.4%
4480	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	1,250	1,220	-30	-2.9%	-0.3%
9010	Federal Government, except Postal Service	540	530	-10	-2.5%	-0.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

As shown in Table 3-20, printing and related support activities, textile mills, and agriculture, crop and animal production sectors in the Georgia Mountains Region are projected by the Georgia Department of Labor to see employment losses in their respective sectors of more than 800 jobs between 2002 and 2012.

### 3.4.2 Major Employers

**Table 3-21: Top 10 Employers in Dawson County**

<i>Company</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>No. of Employees</i>
North Georgia Premium Outlets	800 Hwy 400 South	1,000-1,200
Dawson County Board of Education	517 Allen Street (Admin.)	415
Nordson Corporation	12 Nordson Drive	233
Gold Creek Foods	686 Hwy 9 North	200
Dawson County Board of Commissioners	76 Howard Avenue (Admin.)	200
Kroger	6625 Hwy 53 East	116
World Wide Manufacturing Company	16 World Wide Drive	107
Ga. DNR/Amicalola Falls State Park	418 Amicalola Falls Lodge Road	99
The Home Depot	801 Hwy 400 South	90
Ingles Market	118 South Center Lane	90

*Source: Dawson County Chamber of Commerce*

Three of the top 10 employers in Dawson County were not retail establishments and government, as shown in Table 3-21. North Georgia Premium Outlets provides the largest number of jobs for Dawson County, depending on the season, employing between 1,000 and 1,200 employees at more than 140 stores. The shopping center attracted more than five million visitors in 2005, according to *Georgia Trend* magazine.



## 4 Housing

### 4.1 Housing Types and Trends

#### 4.1.1 Housing Types and Mix

**Table 4-1: Types of Housing and Mix for Dawson County**

Category	1980		1990		2000	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Total Housing Units	1,783	100%	4,321	100%	7,163	100%
Single Family	1,390	78.0%	2,971	68.8%	5,599	78.2%
Double Units	3	0.2%	21	0.5%	54	0.8%
Multi-Family	60	3.4%	35	0.8%	305	4.3%
Mobile Home or Trailer	330	18.5%	1,266	29.3%	1,190	16.6%
All Other	0	0.0%	28	0.6%	15	0.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

**Table 4-2: Types of Housing Percent Change**

Category	1980-1990	1990-2000
Single Family	142.3%	88.5%
Double Units	113.7%	157.1%
Multi-Family	600.0%	771.4%
Mobile Home or Trailer	-41.7%	-6.0%
All Other	283.6%	-46.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

Dawson County increased its inventory of housing units more than 300 percent and climbed to a total of 7,163 from 1980 to 2000, as shown in Table 4-1. That represents an average annual growth of 15 percent. Single-family homes dominate the housing market making up more than 78 percent, rising from only 69 percent in 1990. The increase in single family homes also lowered the share of mobile homes from a high of more than 29 percent in 1990 to just below 17 percent in 2000. Multi-family units increased more than 400 percent from 60 units to 305, resulting in a market share increase from less than one percent in 1990 to more than four percent in 2000.

#### 4.1.2 Latest Housing Trends

**Table 4-3: Housing Permit Trends**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total 2001-2004
Number of Structures Permitted	380	466	378	392	1,616
Number of Units Permitted	380	471	378	392	1,621

Source: University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development - UGA, 2004

During the four years following the 2000 Census, Dawson County issued permits for an additional 1,621 housing units, as shown in Table 4-3. Issuance of a building permit does not always translate into new housing units because plans for construction plans often change. The county issued permits for 471 units in 2002, but saw that number dip back below 400 in 2003 and 2004.

**Table 4-4: Housing Unit Trends in Surrounding Counties**

Category	Dawson	Cherokee	Forsyth	Gilmer	Hall	Lumpkin	Pickens
Housing Units 2000	7,162	51,937	36,505	11,924	51,057	8,254	10,687
Housing Units 2004	8,714	67,442	48,580	14,427	58,848	9,722	12,638
% Change 2000-2004	21.7%	29.9%	33.1%	21.0%	15.3%	17.8%	18.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF1); University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development - 2004

According to Census Bureau estimates in 2004 shown in Table 4-4, the county increased its number of housing units 22 percent to 8,714 units from 2000 to 2004. Among the counties surrounding Dawson County, only Forsyth County (33 percent) and Cherokee County (30 percent) saw a higher rate of housing stock growth. All surrounding counties saw increases in their housing stock of more than 15 percent.

## 4.2 Condition and Occupancy

### 4.2.1 Housing Age

**Table 4-5: Age of Housing for Dawson County and Dawsonville**

Category	Dawson County		City of Dawsonville		State of Georgia
	2000	% of Total Housing Units	2000	% of Total Housing Units	% of Total Housing Units
Total Housing Units 2000	7,163	100.0%	231	100.0%	100.0%
Built 1980 +	5,332	74.4%	119	51.5%	45.3%
Built before 1980	1,831	25.6%	112	48.5%	54.7%
Built 1970 - 1979	834	11.6%	31	13.4%	20.3%
Built 1960 - 1969	397	5.5%	10	4.3%	13.8%
Built 1950 - 1959	253	3.5%	25	10.8%	9.4%
Built 1940 - 1949	136	1.9%	11	4.8%	4.8%
Built 1939 or earlier	211	2.9%	35	15.2%	6.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

As shown in Table 4-5, approximately 50 percent of the housing units recorded in 2000 were built after 1990 and 75 percent were built after 1980, yet another testament to the substantial rate of growth taking place in Dawson County. Only 2.9 percent were built prior to 1939.

## 4.2.2 Housing Condition

**Table 4-6: Condition of Housing for Dawson County**

Category	Dawson County		City of Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Complete Plumbing Facilities	99.2%	99.8%	112.6%	98.3%	98.9%	99.1%
Lacking Plumbing Facilities	0.8%	0.2%	1.6%	1.7%	1.1%	0.9%
Complete kitchen facilities	99.7%	99.7%	112.6%	98.3%	99.1%	99.0%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	0.3%	0.3%	1.6%	1.7%	0.9%	1.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

The age of the housing stock greatly contributes to the housing conditions shown in Table 4-6. In each category, Dawson County mirrors the figures for the state.

## 4.2.3 Housing Tenure

**Table 4-7: Tenure of Housing Units for Dawson County**

Category	Dawson County		City of Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Housing Units Built	4,321	7,163	182	231	2,638,418	3,281,737
% Owner Occupied	66.3%	69.0%	52.7%	50.2%	58.2%	61.8%
% Renter Occupied	11.5%	15.7%	47.3%	43.7%	31.5%	29.8%
% Vacant	22.2%	15.3%	14.3%	6.1%	10.3%	8.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

Dawson County recorded a vacancy rate of 15.3 percent in 2000, considerably higher than the state figure of 8.4 percent, as shown in Table 4-7. The rate dropped from 22.2 percent in 1990. Owner-occupied housing increased from 66.3 percent in 1990 to 69 percent in 2000. The county's ownership rate is eight percentage points higher than that of the state, but just under the national average of 70 percent. Renter-occupied housing increased from 11.5 to 15.7 percent between 1990 and 2000. The number is considerably lower than the nearly 30 percent state figures. Few of the renters live in multi-family dwellings due to the lack of the product in the marketplace.

**Table 4-8: Seasonal Housing in Dawson County**

Category	Dawson County 1990	Dawson County 2000	% Change 1990-2000	State of Georgia 2000
Seasonal housing units	426	785	45.7%	33,637
Percent of total housing units classified as seasonal housing units	12.7%	11.0%	N/A	1.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF1)

Seasonal units represent a sizeable portion of the vacant housing units, as shown in Table 4-8. Thirteen percent of Dawson County's housing units were classified as seasonal in 2000. Seasonal units include recreational and/or occasional use. While the share of the total number of units dipped between 1990 and 2000, it remains more than eight times the share of seasonal households for the state. The number of seasonal units increased 45.7 percent from 1990 to 2000.

While it's possible that these seasonal housing units include a small number of migrant workers on the county's farms, most are likely related to recreation and/or second homes.

### 4.3 Special Housing Needs

#### 4.3.1 Elderly

Dawson County currently does not have nursing homes, assisted living centers or hospitals within the county to provide for the needs of the elderly.

#### 4.3.2 Homeless

Dawson County does not provide homeless shelters.

#### 4.3.3 Victims of Domestic Violence

**Table 4-9: Dawson County Sheriff's Actions Related to Domestic Violence**

Action Type	1999	2001	2003
Arrested	23	32	74
Citation	0	0	2
Separation	15	13	70
Mediation	4	3	14
Other	15	17	49
No Action	4	12	38
Total	61	77	247

*Source: Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Family Violence Statistics, 1999, 2001, 2003*

Georgia Bureau of Investigation data shown below in Table 4-9 indicates police actions related to domestic violence have risen dramatically since 1999 along with the population increases, with the latest figures from 2003. This may indicate a need for more support and housing shelters for those impacted by domestic violence in Dawson County. No shelters currently exist in the county. No One Alone (NOA) is located in Dahlonega and is the closest shelter to Dawson County. NOA provides children's services, emergency services and shelter in a 12-bed facility.

#### 4.3.4 Migrant Farm Workers

No record of the number of migrant farm workers.

### 4.3.5 Persons with Disabilities

**Table 4-10: Population with a Disability in Dawson County**

	<i>Dawson County</i>	<i>City of Dawsonville</i>	<i>State of Georgia</i>
Percent Age 21 to 65 with a Disability	21.7%	29.9%	19.9%
Employed	65.7%	60.2%	80.1%
Percent Age 21 to 65 with no Disability	78.3%	70.1%	80.1%
Employed	77.8%	65.6%	77.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3) 2000

**Table 4-11: Type of Disabilities in Dawson County**

<i>Type of Disability</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Physical	19.4%
Mental	13.1%
Sensory	9.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3) 2000

The percentage of county residents with a disability in the 21 to 65 age group hovered just above the percentage for the state at 21.7 percent, as shown in Table 4-10. Of this population, 65.7 percent had employment in 2000 compared to more 80.1 percent in the state. The three most frequent disabilities recorded in 2000 were physical, mental and sensory, as shown in Table 4-11.

### 4.3.6 Persons with HIV/AIDS

Between 1981 and 2005 only four AIDS cases were reported in Dawson County, according to the University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic development. Dawson County does not have special housing options for HIV/AIDS patients. However, due to the small number of cases in the county this does not create a notable unmet housing need for this group.

### 4.3.7 Persons Recovering from Substance Abuse

While reliable numbers of those persons recovering from substance abuse are not attainable, the University of Georgia's Georgia Statistics System estimated a need to provide substance abuse treatment for approximately 1,094 residents or 6.4 percent of the county population in 2001. The Dawson County Health Department identified substance abuse as a big issue facing the county. The county has a need for local facilities that provide drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs.

## 4.4 Housing Costs

### 4.4.1 Median Property Values and Rent

Table 4-12: Median Property Value and Median Rent

Category	Dawson County		City of Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Median property value	\$82,600	\$142,500	\$62,800	\$124,000	\$71,300	\$111,200
Median rent	\$390	\$685	\$310	\$655	\$433	\$613

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

Median property values and median rent maintained a significant advantage over the state from 1990 to 2000, as shown in Table 4-12. The addition of new rental multifamily housing units likely contributed to the average rent increase, which also remained well ahead of the state at \$685.

### 4.4.2 Owner Occupied Housing Values

Table 4-13: Specified Owner-Occupied Units

Property Value	Dawson County	City of Dawsonville	State of Georgia
Less than \$50,000	3.6%	10.4%	9.5%
\$50K to \$99K	20.4%	23.4%	34.2%
\$100K to \$149K	31.1%	16.9%	25.8%
\$150K to \$199K	15.4%	7.8%	13.3%
\$200K to \$299K	15.8%	18.2%	10.2%
\$300K to \$499K	10.5%	23.4%	5.1%
\$500K to \$999K	3.2%	0.0%	1.6%
\$1M or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Median	\$142,500	\$124,000	\$111,200

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 (SF3)

Property values for owner-occupied housing climbed to a median of \$142,500 in 2000, as shown in Table 4-13. Based on the home sales prices shown in Figure 4-11, however, the property value increases since 2000 have most likely moved more housing into higher property value brackets.

### 4.4.3 Home Sale Prices

**Table 4-14: Number of Annual Home Sales and Annual Average Prices for Dawson County**

<i>Sales Year</i>	<i>Number of Sales</i>	<i>Average Sale Price</i>
1997	580	\$92,341
1998	536	\$118,880
1999	519	\$151,160
2000	512	\$171,976
2001	479	\$173,176
2002	518	\$181,200
2003	588	\$204,463

Source: University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development 2005

Annual home sales in the county during the period of 1997 to 2003 ranged from a low of 479 units in 2001 to a high of 588 units in 2003, according to the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development at the University of Georgia (shown in Table 4-14). While the number of units sold each year dipped below 500 before propelling near 600 in 2003, the value of homes in the county showed a steady value increase. Average home sale prices increased 121 percent from 1997 to 2003 and 19 percent from 2000 to 2003. The average home sales price was \$204,463 in 2003.

### 4.5 Cost-Burdened Households

**Table 4-15: Cost-Burdened Households**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Dawson County</i>		<i>City of Dawsonville</i>		<i>State of Georgia</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>
30% - 49%	541	736	27	29	298,998	397,964
50% and greater	NA	431	NA	22	NA	278,401
Not computed	96	192	14	17	54,838	97,216

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

\* Rent 0-30% = Units with gross rent (rent and utilities) that are affordable to households with incomes below 30% of HUD Area Median Family Income. Affordable is defined as gross rent less than or equal to 30% of a household's gross income.

\*\* Value 0-50% = Homes with values affordable to households with incomes at or below 50% of HUD Area Median Income. Affordable is defined as annual owner costs less than or equal to 30% of annual gross income. Annual costs are estimated assuming the cost of purchasing a home at the time of the Census based on reported value of the home. Assuming a 7.9% interest rate and national averages for utility costs, taxes, and hazard and mortgage insurance, multiplying income times 2.9 represents the value of a home a person can afford to purchase. For example, a household with an annual gross income of \$30,000 is estimated to be able to afford an \$87,000 home without having total costs exceed 30% of their annual household income.

Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data Book

**Table 4-16: Percentage of the Total Population in Poverty for Individuals**

Categories	Dawson County		Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Individuals (all individuals below poverty)	12.8%	7.6%	25.6%	11.9%	14.7%	13.0%
Persons 18 years and over below Poverty	11.0%	6.7%	20.9%	11.2%	12.6%	11.5%
Persons 65 years and over	14.0%	8.6%	16.7%	15.7%	20.4%	13.5%
With Related Children Under 18 years	17.2%	8.9%	37.0%	13.3%	19.8%	16.7%
With Related children 5 to 17	14.1%	9.5%	31.6%	4.9%	18.9%	621.1%
With unrelated individuals	27.6%	19.3%	32.7%	20.2%	27.4%	24.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

**Table 4-17: Poverty Status for Families**

Categories	Dawson County		Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Families (all families below poverty line)	11.1%	5.8%	21.7%	12.3%	11.5%	9.9%
With related children under 18	14.8%	8.1%	30.5%	17.6%	16.0%	13.9%
With related children under 5 years	20.4%	7.3%	52.2%	34.1%	19.6%	16.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

**Table 4-18: Poverty Status for Female-headed Households**

Categories	Dawson County		Dawsonville		State of Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Female householder, no husband (all)	39.5%	22.3%	22.6%	45.5%	34.3%	28.5%
With related children under 18 years	56.3%	26.6%	33.3%	57.7%	44.3%	35.3%
With Related children 5 to 17	64.6%	35.9%	70.0%	88.2%	57.4%	45.9%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (SF3)

The percentage of the population living in poverty shrank in each category from 1990 to 2000, based on the Census count. The county showed significant progress in each category listed in Table 4-16, Table 4-17 and Table 4-18. As shown in estimates prepared in 2003 by the Bureau of the Census in, Table 4-17 and Table 4-18. As Table 2-22 on page 2-18, little progress took place between 2000 and 2003 for the population as a whole and children. This occurred even as the population, property values and incomes showed substantial gains overall.



**Table 4-19: Residents Using Public Assistance**

<b>Food Stamps</b>	2000	2004	% Change 2000-2005
Avg. Households/Month	334	521	56.0%
Avg. Recipients/Month	712	1,244	74.7%
% of Population	4.5%	6.5%	44.4%
<b>Medicaid</b>			
Recipients	1927	3,471	80.1%
% of Population	12.0%	18.2%	51.7%
<b>Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)</b>			
Avg. Recipients/Month	50	77	54.0%
% of Population	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%
<b>Supplemental Security Income (SSI)</b>			
Aged Adults	58	39	-32.8%
Blind/Disabled Adults	232	222	-4.3%
Total SSI Recipients	290	261	-10.0%
% 65 +	39.0%	32.2%	-17.4%
% of Population	1.8%	1.3%	-27.8%
<b>Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (Social Security)</b>			
Retirement Beneficiaries	1,235	1,710	38.5%
% 65+	63.8%	66.1%	3.6%
% of Population	11.8%	13.1%	11.0%

Source: Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development - UGA

The percent of the population receiving public assistance in the form of food stamps and Medicaid increased from 2000 to 2004, as shown in Table 4-19. The number of food stamp recipients increased 74 percent, and number of households increased 56 percent during that period, at the same time that property values, average rents and home sales prices soared in the county.

## 4.6 Job-Housing Balance

**Table 4-20: Jobs-Housing Balance for Dawson County**

Category	1990	2000	2004
Population	9,429	15,999	19,064
Average Household Size	2.65	2.31	2.24 (DCA)
Number of Households	3,360	6,069	8,712
Housing Units	4,321	7,162	8,714
Labor Force	4,719	8,168	9,852
Employment	1,151	4,193	5,564
Employment/Population Ratio	0.12	0.26	0.29
Employment/Housing Unit Ratio	0.27	0.59	0.64
Employment/Labor Force Ratio	0.24	0.51	0.56

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and Georgia Department of Labor

An ideal community would provide housing for its labor force near their jobs that give the works transportation choices (e.g. walking, biking, driving, public transit, etc.). Bedroom community suburbs often develop without such balance and require the labor force to use major arterial roads to reach their jobs resulting in congestion and other quality of life challenges. Governments can use two jobs-housing balance ratios to monitor their community's ability to achieve a balance of jobs and housing: employment (jobs)/housing unit ratio and employment/labor force ratio. According to the *Jobs-Housing Balance Community Choices Quality Growth Toolkit* prepared by the Atlanta Regional Commission, an employment (jobs) to housing ratio of between 1.3 and 1.7 implies an ideal balance with 1.5 as the standard target. An employment (jobs) to labor force (employed residents) ratio of between 0.8 and 1.25 implies a balance for that ratio with 1:1 as the standard target.

Table 4-20 shows the employment to housing ratio and employment to labor force ratio for Dawson County. The 2004 ratio of 0.64 falls well below the standard target of 1.5. Figure 4-20 also shows the employment to labor force ratio for the county. The 2004 ratio of 0.29 falls well below the standard target of 1.0. These ratios, while improved from 1990 and 2000, still outline the county's dependence on employment from other counties and emphasize the need to attract employment to the county that appeals to both current and future residents.

**Table 4-21: Correlation of Household Income to Housing Prices for Dawson County Residents**

<i>Annual Household Income</i>	<i>Maximum Annual Income</i>	<i>Maximum Monthly Income for Housing (30 %)</i>	<i>Equivalent House Price *</i>
Less than \$15,000	\$15,000	\$375	\$57,000
\$15,000-24,999	\$25,000	\$625	\$95,000
\$25,000-\$34,999	\$35,000	\$875	\$133,000
\$35,000-\$49,999	\$50,000	\$1,250	\$190,000
\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000	\$1,875	\$285,000
\$75,000-\$99,999	\$100,000	\$2,500	\$380,000
\$100,000-\$149,999	\$150,000	\$3,750	\$570,000
\$150,000-\$249,999	\$250,000	\$6,250	\$950,000
\$250,000-\$499,999	\$500,000	\$12,500	\$1,900,000
\$500,000 or more	NA	NA	NA
Average Household Income			
2000	\$49,024	\$1,226	\$186,291
Median Household Income			
2000	\$48,455	\$1,211	\$184,129
2003	\$49,909	\$1,248	\$189,654

*\* Based on a 95% loan at 7% interest for 30 years*

*Source: Georgia Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau: Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates 1995, 2000 and 2003; Model-based Estimates for States, Counties and School Districts*

**Table 4-22: Correlation of Average Weekly Wages to Housing Prices for Dawson Workers (2003)**

	<i>Average Weekly</i>	<i>Average Monthly</i>	<i>Monthly Income Available for Housing</i>	<i>Equivalent House Price</i>
Agriculture, forestry, & fishing	\$262	\$1,135	\$341	\$51,771
Construction	\$568	\$2,461	\$738	\$112,237
Manufacturing	\$781	\$3,384	\$1,015	\$154,326
Wholesale trade	\$609	\$2,639	\$792	\$120,338
Retail trade	\$336	\$1,456	\$437	\$66,394
Transportation and warehousing	\$555	\$2,405	\$722	\$109,668
Information	\$711	\$3,081	\$924	\$140,494
Finance and insurance	\$892	\$3,865	\$1,160	\$176,259
Real estate and rental and leasing	\$584	\$2,531	\$759	\$115,398
Professional, scientific/tech svcs	\$602	\$2,609	\$783	\$118,955
Administrative and waste svcs	\$303	\$1,313	\$394	\$59,873
Health care and social services	\$456	\$1,976	\$593	\$90,106
Arts, entertainment and recreation	\$606	\$2,626	\$788	\$119,746
Accommodation and food services	\$218	\$945	\$283	\$43,077
Other services (except government)	\$413	\$1,790	\$537	\$81,609
Government	\$498	\$2,158	\$647	\$98,405
All industries - Dawson County 2000	\$434	\$1,881	\$564	\$85,758
All industries - Dawson County 2003	\$464	\$2,011	\$603	\$91,686
All industries - Atlanta MSA	\$812	\$3,519	\$1,056	\$160,451
All industries - State of Georgia	\$704	\$3,051	\$915	\$139,110

*\*Based on a 95% loan at 7% interest for 30 years*

*Source: Georgia Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Table 4-21 and Table 4-22 highlight the income gap between the Dawson County labor force (those who live in Dawson County) and those who actually work in Dawson County. As explained in Section 3.2.3 Commuting Patterns, 65.5 percent of the county labor force in 2000 commuted to jobs in other counties, while 47.2 percent of the jobs in the county were filled by non-Dawson County residents. The residents earn much higher incomes and can afford more easily the housing available on the market. The county's workers have fewer housing choices.

As shown previously in Table 4-14 on page 4-44, the average sale price of homes in Dawson County was \$171,976 in 2000 and jumped to \$204,463 in 2003. The house supported by the county's average annual wage in 2003 was only 44 percent of the total value of the average sale price. The house price supported by the county's median household income in 2003 is 93 percent of the total value of the average sale price in 2003.

In 2000, county residents had an average income of \$49,024, which could support a house price of roughly \$186,291, as shown in Table 4-21. The county median household income of \$48,455 could support a house price of \$184,129. Meanwhile, people who worked in Dawson County earned an average annual wage of \$22, 568 (shown as weekly wage of \$434 in Table 4-22, which can support a house price of roughly \$85,758 based on single-headed household. Obviously, wage earners in households with more than one earner could afford a higher priced home. The labor force and number of jobs have both grown significantly since 2000, but the income gap has not changed significantly.

Updated estimates for median household income in 2003 show that median income has increased to \$49,909, which can support a house price of \$189,654. The average annual wage had increased to \$24,128 (or an average weekly wage of \$463 as shown in Table 4-22, which can support a house price of \$91,686.

To add more perspective to the challenges faced by those who work in Dawson County, the county median income of \$49,909 in 2003 supported a home price of \$189,654. The 2003 average weekly wage would allow for a home priced at \$102,257 (or a monthly rent cost of \$673). Again, the average home price in 2003 was \$204,463, and the average rent in 2000 (which has most surely increased) was \$685. To complicate matters, the county's largest job sector, retail trade, only paid an average weekly wage of \$458, which translates into a home of \$69,555 or a rent of \$437.

Dawson County wages fall considerably lower than the average weekly wage for the 28-county Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta Metropolitan Statistical Area (Atlanta MSA) and the State of Georgia, which provides an explanation for why many of the county's new residents choose not to work in the county. Dawson County's weekly wage in 2003 made up only 57.1 percent of the Atlanta MSA and 65.9 percent of the state average weekly wage number.

Large-acre lot, single-family residential products dominate the Dawson County housing market, as explained in Section 4.1.1. Few multi-family products have come on line to meet the growing demand for housing to support the workforce. These conditions together with the demand to provide higher end housing for Atlanta MSA's growing workforce have created a housing market that cannot provide for all segments of the growing workforce.

## 5 Natural and Cultural Resources

### 5.1 Environmental Planning Criteria

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requires counties and municipalities to establish five environmental protection districts: water supply watersheds, protection of groundwater recharge areas, river corridor protection, wetlands protection and mountain protection. The sections below provide a brief analysis of the Dawson County regulations relating to these districts in addition to an inventory of the location of these districts in the county. The Land Use Element established locations for each of these districts. Water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, river corridor protection and mountain protection are each shown on Map 5-1, located in the Atlas of Maps Appendix. Wetlands are shown on Map 5-2 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

#### 5.1.1 Water Supply Watersheds

Water establishes buffer requirements, impervious surface setbacks, and overall impervious surface limitations for watersheds. This district establishes protection criteria which apply upstream of the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority's intake on the Etowah River (just below SR 53).

The Department of Natural Resources defines water supply watershed as the land area upstream of a governmentally owned public drinking water intake. In response to O.C.G.A. 12-2-8, the DNR, and EPD's Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria Chapter 391-3-16, Dawson County has adopted regulations to implement these state planning criteria. These criteria allow for the development of a water supply watershed while maintaining the integrity of the water source to a point where it can be treated to meet drinking water standards. The ordinance places limitations for the permitting of new landfills, agricultural activities, the storage of fuels and hazardous materials. In addition, all impervious surfaces, structures, septic tanks, and drain fields must have a 150-ft setback from the shoreline.

#### 5.1.2 Protection of Groundwater Recharge Areas

As described in Georgia Geologic Survey Hydrologic Atlas 18: "Most Significant Ground-Water Recharge Areas of Georgia," published in 1989, mapping of the recharge areas was based on outcrop area, lithology, soil type and thickness, slope, density of lithologic contacts, geologic structure, the presence of karst, and potentiometric surfaces. One groundwater recharge area of potential significance has been identified within Dawson County. This recharge area is a long, narrow area straddling the Forsyth County-Dawson County line west of SR 9. Within this area, lot sizes are established for on-site septic use to provide groundwater protection.

In response to O.C.G.A. 12-2-8, the DNR, and EPD's Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria Chapter 391-3-16, Dawson County has adopted regulations to implement the state planning criteria as it pertains to the protection of groundwater recharge areas. These criteria would place restrictions on new sanitary landfills, use of hazardous wastes, use of above ground storage tanks, agricultural activities, and a minimum lot size for those areas requiring septic tank systems. These criteria would allow for development in a water supply watershed while maintaining the integrity of the water source to a point where it can be treated to meet drinking water standards.

### 5.1.3 Wetlands Protection

Wetlands provide flood and storm damage protection, erosion control, water supply and groundwater recharge. The temporary storage of stormwater is especially important in Dawson County due to the poor, non-porous soils that fail to absorb the rainwater.

The State of Georgia does not currently have in place laws protecting freshwater wetlands located in the interior of the state. Only coastal wetlands have such protection. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) does have limited authority to regulate the discharge of dredge or fill material into freshwater wetlands in the U.S. under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; however, the Supreme Court ruled in 2001 that the USACE jurisdiction is limited only to those wetlands connected to a navigable water body. As a result, isolated wetlands are no longer federally protected areas. Many of the wetlands identified within Dawson County are isolated, as shown in Map 5-2. State criteria do not specify regulations to be adopted, but they require local governments and to identify wetlands within their jurisdiction assess the impacts of the land use plan on these areas.

In accordance with EPD's Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria Chapter 391-3-16, Dawson County has adopted regulations to protect areas designated as wetlands within county lines, and implement criteria that would allow for land development in these areas without long-term impairment. These regulations are outlined in the City of Dawsonville Land Use & Zoning Ordinance (Articles 23 and 24), adopted July 2004. They include specifications on the preservation and maintenance of such areas, as well as yard and lot size requirements road specifications, building requirements, and flood area regulations.

### 5.1.4 River Corridor Protection

River corridors are strips of land that flank major rivers. These corridors are important due to their role as wildlife habitat, recreational areas, and buffers that protect the quality of river water. River corridors also help to control erosion and river sedimentation.

Included in Dawson County are parts of the Etowah River, which is an important natural resource for the county. The Etowah River is part of the Coosa River basin that converges with the Oostanaula River near Rome to form the Coosa River. The Etowah River reaches the regulatory threshold of 400 cubic feet per second (cfs) below SR 9 between Shoal Creek and Lake Allatoona, thereby making the Etowah a protected river and subject to O.C.G.A. 12-8-8 and EPD's rules for Environmental Planning Criteria Chapter 391-3-16.

While not required by state rules, the land use element update established the entire Etowah River in Dawson County as "protected," given the sensitivity of this corridor with regard to habitat for sensitive or endangered species. Dawson County has adopted regulations to implement the state environmental planning criteria as it applies to the portion of the river requiring compliance. These criteria establish a minimum two-acre lot size and a 100-foot buffer on both sides of the river as means of preserving the river's integrity as a source of drinking water for the county. In addition, the future land use plan designates the west side of the Etowah River as an agricultural belt.

### 5.1.5 Mountain Protection

Mountain protection applies to land areas with an elevation of 2,200 or more, and with slopes of 25 percent or more, including ridges and crests above. Generally, such areas are found mostly within national forest lands. Development criteria place limits on building heights, establish lot size minimums and multi-family density maximums, and require reforestation and landscaping plans in some instances. The highest elevation in Dawson County occurs at Black Mountain at 3,741 feet above sea level. The lowest point occurs along the Etowah River near the Forsyth

County. Dawson County has adopted regulations to implement these state environmental planning criteria.

### **5.1.6 Other Ongoing Protection Plans**

Several plans are currently being drafted that will further protect the natural resources of Dawson County from degradation while allowing for growth and development within the community. These plans include the Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the Statewide Water Management Planning Act, and the Tree Conservation Plan.

The cities and counties of the Etowah Basin, including Dawson County and Dawsonville, are working hard to protect imperiled aquatic species in the basin through a provision of the Endangered Species Act that allows them to write a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP is a regional planning effort involving the local governments that withdraw water from the Etowah River and several regional, state and national ecological research and resource management agencies. The regional HCP would be designed to protect threatened and endangered species of darter fish, while allowing continued economic growth and development. Requirements of the HCP may include riparian buffers adjacent to streams (in areas that do not already have them) and stormwater management ordinances to reduce the level of pollutants in runoff. The use of a regional HCP, rather than individual HCPs, is expected to streamline the permitting and application process in environmentally sensitive areas.

Georgia EPD and the DNR Water Council are currently developing the first Statewide Comprehensive Water Plan to be provided to the Georgia Water Council in January 2007. This initial statewide plan will focus on policy framework and an array of tools necessary for developing the region-specific management strategies to be developed for subsequent editions of the statewide plan. The goals of the Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Planning Act are to protect public health and environmental quality, and meet future needs while protecting aquifers, in-stream uses and downstream users. The statewide water planning process presents local governments the opportunity to comprehensively evaluate and adjust the statutes, regulations, and management programs to achieve sustainable management of our water resources. The Act does not define the mechanisms by which the state is to achieve its vision for water management; however, Georgia EPD and the Water Council of the DNR have prioritized four major water management objectives to guide the research and planning strategies for the initial plan development: 1) minimize withdrawals of water by increasing conservation, reuse, and efficiency; 2) maximize returns to the basin through managing inter basin transfers and uses of on-site sewage disposal systems; 3) meet in-stream and off stream demands for water through surface storage, aquifer management and reducing water demands; and 4) protect water quality by reducing discharges of pollutants to streams and runoff from land. The first iteration of the plan will identify and fill the "gaps" that may exist in Georgia's current array of water laws, regulations, and policies that may impede progress toward the four water management objectives.

A Tree Conservation Plan has also been adopted by both Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville. These plans outline the conditions and regulations for replacing trees removed during construction activities, including specifications on trunk thickness, density of coverage and species diversity.

## **5.2 Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

Dawson County lies between two physiographic provinces. The north and southwest corner fall within the Blue Ridge Mountain province with the remainder located in the Piedmont Plateau.



## 5.2.1 Public Water Supply Sources

Dawson County has limited access to water resources located within its boundaries. The county obtains most of its drinking water from the Etowah River; however, the county obtains additional drinking water from both Cherokee and Forsyth Counties to help meet the needs of the county's residents. For the last several years, EWSA, has been aggressively pursuing various options to secure water from Lake Lanier. This was done with the encouragement of the State EPD. According to EWSA, a permit to withdraw 10 million gallons per day (MGD) of water from Lake Lanier, which borders Dawson County on the east, was submitted to the EPD and USACE in 1999 and again in 2002. The permit was denied by USACE in March 2003. USACE was not authorized to permit any additional permits to withdraw water from Lake Lanier due to recent filings in federal court by Alabama and Florida. Various approaches to circumventing this policy were discussed, and the Corps has rejected each one. EWSA continues to work with EPD in obtaining a permit from the USACE, however, all attempts so far have been denied.

## 5.2.2 Steep Slopes

A significant portion of northern Dawson County contains steep slopes. The county is currently drafting regulations for hillside and steep slope protection. A slope map will serve as a de-facto overlay district, within which certain development regulations apply. Dawson County's steep slopes are shown on Map 5-3 of the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

## 5.2.3 Flood Plains

Flooding is the temporary covering of soil with water from overflowing streams and by runoff from adjacent slopes. Water standing for short periods after rainfalls is not considered flooding, nor is water in swamps. Feasibility of rated in general terms which describe the frequency and duration of floods and the time of year when flooding is most likely to occur. Dawson County's 100 and 500-year floodplains are shown on Map 5-4 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

Floodplains in their natural or relatively undisturbed state are important water resources areas. They serve three major purposes: natural water storage and conveyance, water quality maintenance, and groundwater recharge. Unsuitable development can destroy their value. For example, any fill material placed in the floodplain eliminates essential water storage capacity causing water elevation to rise and resulting in the flooding of previously dry land.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified and mapped the areas of Dawson County prone to flooding in order to establish actuarial flood insurance rates and promote a sound flood plains management plan. A management plan has been established for areas having high development potential and/or prone to a one percent annual chance (100-year) flood, primarily the flooding caused by overflow of the Etowah River, Mill Creek and Black Mill Creek. Approximate analysis has been used for areas having low development potential or minimal flood hazards and other areas were previously studied. However, development in these areas should be carefully monitored to protect the functional integrity floodplains as well as the health, safety, and property in the County.

## 5.2.4 Soils

**Table 5-1: Soils of Dawson County**

<i>Soil Association</i>	<i>Descriptions</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Percent Slope</i>
Cartecay-Tocca-Congaree	Deep, somewhat poorly drained to well drained soils of the flood plains	Adjacent to streams, creeks and rivers	0 to 2%
Hayesville-Fannin-Wickham	Moderately deep to deep well drained soils of the uplands and mountain foothills, on very gently sloping moderately wide ridge tops, and gently sloping hillsides	Located throughout the county along ridge tops including most of Ga. 400, portions of Ga. 53	2 to 10%
Hayesville-Rabun-Hiwassee	Moderately deep to deep, well drained soils of mountain foothills and high ridges on very gently sloping, broken ridge tops and gently sloping, irregular hillsides	Limited amounts in the county	2 to 10%
Hayesville-Fannin-Edneyville	Moderately deep, well drained, soils of the uplands and high ridges on sloping, broken, ridge tops and steep irregular hillsides	Large portion of the county made up of these soils	10 to 60%
Tallapoosa-Musella	Shallow to moderately shallow somewhat excessively-drained soils of the mountains and high on narrow, gently sloping, irregular, ridge tops and sloping to steep hillsides	Large swath that cuts southwest to northeast through the south half of the county to the west of the Etowah River	10 to 60%
Edneyville-Porters-Ashe	Shallow to somewhat shallow, well drained to somewhat excessively drained soils of the mountains and high ridges on sloping, rounded broken ridge tops and strongly sloping to steep hillsides	Found in the northwest corner of the county	10 to 60%
Rabun-Hayesville-Hiwassee	Moderate deep to deep, well-drained soils of the uplands and high ridges on irregular, narrow ridge tops and steep broken hillsides	Limited to small areas along the county border with Forsyth County.	10 to 60%

*Source: General Soil Map of Dawson, Lumpkin and White Counties, GA 1972 - U.S. Department of Agriculture; National Resources Conservation Service*

Soil is the product of parent material (underlying geology), topography, climate, plant and animal life, and time. The nature of the soil at any given place depends on the combination of these five factors. Each factor acts on the soil and each modifies the effect of the other four. Because of this interaction, a knowledge of soil types in an area provides a good indication of topography (slope), erosion patterns, the presence and depth of rock, and the presence of water, as in wetland or floodplain areas. Soil types are also useful in estimating runoff from precipitation, which is essential in developing stormwater management programs.

The soils in Dawson County are generally red in color and, with the exception of those found in floodplain areas, are well drained. These soils were formed from metamorphic and igneous rocks and range in texture from stony, gravelly and sandy barns to clay barns. Much of the original topsoil has been eroded away, leaving red clay subsoil exposed in some areas. Soils of the uplands that have slopes of less than 15 percent are generally thicker and have more distinct horizons than more strongly sloping soils. Soils with slopes of 15 to 40 percent are subject to geologic erosion which removes soil material almost as fast as it forms.

Soils in Dawson County and Dawsonville fall into seven associations as interpreted in Table 5-1.

### 5.2.5 Plant and Animal Habitats

Abbreviations below are defined for use with Table 5-2, Table 5-3 and Table 5-4 and indicate the legal status of federally-protected plants and animals or those proposed for listing as established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (only lists categories relevant to Dawson County).

- Listed as Endangered (LE) - most critically imperiled species; a species that may become extinct or disappear from a significant part of its range if not immediately protected.
- Listed as Threatened (LT) - The next most critical level of threatened species. A species that may become endangered if not protected.
- Candidate (C) - species presently under status review for federal listing for which adequate information exists on biological vulnerability and threats to list the taxa as endangered or threatened.

**Table 5-2: Federal- and State-Listed Endangered and Threatened Species – Birds**

<i>Species</i>	<i>Federal Status</i>	<i>State Status</i>	<i>Habitat</i>
Bald eagle, <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Threatened	Endangered	Inland waterways and estuarine areas in Georgia.

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services: Georgia Ecological Services Athens, Brunswick and Columbus - May 2004 Updated

**Table 5-3: Federal- and State-Listed Endangered and Threatened Species - Animals**

<i>Species</i>	<i>Federal Status</i>	<i>State Status</i>	<i>Habitat</i>
Amber darter <i>Percina antesella</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Gentle riffle areas over sand and gravel substrate that becomes vegetated (primarily with <i>Podostemum</i> ) during summer; last taken in Etowah River in 1980; historic population in Shoal Creek probably extirpated by construction of Allatoona Reservoir in 1950
Bluestripe shiner <i>Cyprinella callitaenia</i>	No Federal Status	Threatened	Brownwater streams
Cherokee darter <i>Etheostoma scotti</i>	Threatened	Threatened	Shallow water (0.1-0.5 m) in small to medium warm water creeks (1-15 m wide) with predominantly rocky bottoms. Usually found in sections with reduced current, typically runs above and below riffles and at ecotones of riffles and backwaters.
Etowah darter <i>Etheostoma etowahae</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Shallow riffle habitat, with large gravel, cobble, and small boulder substrates. Usually found in medium and large cool water creeks or small rivers (15-30 m wide) with moderate or high gradients and rocky bottoms.
Frecklebelly madtom <i>Noturus munitus</i>	No Federal Status	Endangered	Rivers with moderate to swift current over substrates ranging from coarse gravel to boulders, submerged trees, and brush.
Holiday darter <i>Etheostoma brevirostrum</i>	No Federal Status	Threatened	Rocky streams

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services: Georgia Ecological Services Athens, Brunswick and Columbus - May 2004 Updated

**Table 5-4: Federal- and State-Listed Endangered and Threatened Species - Plants**

<i>Species</i>	<i>Federal Status</i>	<i>State Status</i>	<i>Habitat</i>
Golden seal <i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>	No Federal Status	Endangered	Rich woods and cove forests in the mountains
Manhart sedge <i>Carex manhartii</i>	No Federal Status	Threatened	Middle elevation (2000-4000') in slightly acidic to circumneutral soils supporting cove hardwoods of basswood, yellow buckeye, and silverbell
Piedmont barren strawberry <i>Waldsteinia lobata</i>	No Federal Status	Threatened	Rocky acedic woods along streams with mountain laurel; rarely in drier upland oak-hickory-pine woods

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services: Georgia Ecological Services Athens, Brunswick and Columbus - May 2004 Updated

**Table 5-5: Special Concern Animal Species**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat
Amber Darter	<i>Percina antesella</i>	E	E	Riffles & runs of medium-sized rivers
Bronze Darter	<i>Percina palmaris</i>			Moderate to swift riffles over rocky substrates in streams and rivers
Cherokee Darter	<i>Etheostoma scotti</i>	T	T	Small to medium-sized creeks with moderate current and rocky substrates
Coosa Darter	<i>Etheostoma coosae</i>			Medium-sized streams to rivers in flowing runs or riffles over gravel to cobble substrate
Etowah Darter	<i>Etheostoma etowahae</i>	E	T	Small to medium-sized streams over cobble to gravel in areas of swift current
Frecklebelly Madtom	<i>Noturus munitus</i>		E	Shoals and riffles of moderate to large streams and rivers
Holiday Darter	<i>Etheostoma brevirostrum</i>		T	Small creeks to moderate sized rivers in gravel and bedrock pools
	<i>Macrhybopsis sp. 1</i>			Swift currents over gravel substrates
Northern Pine Snake	<i>Pituophis melanoleucus melanoleucus</i>			Dry pine or pine-hardwood forests
Pygmy Shrew	<i>Sorex hoyi</i>			Mountain bogs; grassy openings in high elevation forests
Rainbow Shiner	<i>Notropis chrosomus</i>			Small clear streams with moderate current over sand to gravel substrates
Riffle Minnow	<i>Phenacobius catostomus</i>			Swift riffles in large streams or rivers over rocky substrates
Rock Darter	<i>Etheostoma rupestre</i>			Swift rocky riffles often associated with attached vegetation such as Podostemum
Silverstripe Shiner	<i>Notropis stilbius</i>			Medium-sized streams and rivers in flowing pools over sandy to rocky substrates
Southern Brook Lamprey	<i>Ichthyomyzon gagei</i>			Creeks to small rivers with sand or sand and gravel substrate

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Natural Heritage Program 2004

These lists are for rare species and natural communities that are known to occur in a given county and which we have records of locations in our databases. Our special concern lists include federally protected, state protected and other rare or imperiled plants, animals, and natural communities tracked by the Georgia Natural Heritage Program

Abbreviations below are defined for use with Table 5-5 and Table 5-6 and indicate the legal status of state-protected plants and animals or those proposed for state-protection in Georgia as established by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (only lists categories relevant to Dawson County).

- Listed as Endangered (E) – A species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or part of its range
- Listed as Threatened (LT) – A species which is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future throughout all or parts of its range.
- Listed as Rare (R) – A species which may not be endangered or threatened but which should be protected because of its scarcity.
- Listed as Unusual (U) – (and thus deserving of special consideration). Plants subject to commercial exploitation would have this status.

**Table 5-6: Special Concern Plant Species**

Common Name Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat
Broad-toothed Hedge- nettle <i>Stachys latidens</i>			Cove hardwoods and mesic forests
Dwarf Ginseng <i>Panax trifolius</i>			Mesic hardwood-coniferous forests
Eastern Turkeybeard <i>Xerophyllum asphodeloides</i>		R	Xeric oak-pine forests
Fraser's Sedge <i>Cymophyllum fraserianus</i>		T	Mixed hardwood-hemlock forests
Georgia Aster <i>Aster georgianus</i>	C		Upland oak-hickory-pine forests and openings; sometimes with <i>Echinacea laevigata</i> or over amphibolite
Goldenseal <i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>		E	Rich woods in circumneutral soil
Large-flowered Yellow Ladyslipper <i>Cypripedium parviflorum var. pubescens</i>		U	Upland oak-hickory-pine forests; mixed hardwood forests
Manhart's Sedge <i>Carex manhartii</i>		T	Cove hardwood forests; other mesic deciduous forests
Meagre Hop Flatsedge <i>Cyperus lupulinus ssp. macilentus</i>			Dry, open pinelands?
Naked-fruit Rush <i>Juncus gymnocarpus</i>			Seepy streambanks; open swamps; mountain bogs
Phlox-leaved Aster <i>Aster phlogifolius</i>			Mesic hardwood forests over basic soil
Piedmont Barren Strawberry <i>Waldsteinia lobata</i>		T	Stream terraces and adjacent gneiss outcrops
Pink Ladyslipper <i>Cypripedium acaule</i>		U	Upland oak-hickory-pine forests; piney woods
Small-flowered Yellow Ladyslipper <i>Cypripedium parviflorum var. parviflorum</i>		U	Upland oak-hickory-pine forests; mixed hardwood forests
Thyrsoid Flatsedge <i>Cyperus thyrsoiflorus</i>			Wet streambanks and swamps
Whiteedge Flatsedge <i>Cyperus flavicomus</i>			Moist to wet ditches; marshes
Willow-leaf Aster <i>Aster praealtus</i>			Lowland forests over limestone
Wretched Sedge <i>Carex misera</i>		T	Grassy balds

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Natural Heritage Program 2004

## 5.3 Significant Natural Resources

### 5.3.1 Scenic Areas

Dawson County has a wide range of scenic attractions, lofty mountains, clear streams and lakes, deep gorges and valleys, and significant historic sites. A five-mile connector to the famous Appalachian Trail is located near the northern section of the Chattahoochee National Forest. One of the most picturesque waterfalls in the region and the state is located in the Amicalola Park.

Several mountains ridges offer almost unlimited opportunities for hiking, climbing, and sight-seeing. The rolling hills, even along the state routes, offer spectacular scenery of forest covered valleys.

Cold, clear streams, well known for excellent fishing, flow through many areas of Dawson County. Lake Lanier, in the southern portion of the County, offers a state-wide attraction for water oriented activities and all kinds of camping, swimming, boating, and panoramic views.

Dawsonville has limited scenic views and sites within its boundaries, however, some historic sites exist as described under the historic resources section. Adequate identification and protection of scenic resources and improving public awareness and appreciation of natural scenic values will stimulate better design, protection and use of the scenic areas.

There are four basic kinds of scenic resources:

- Landscape vistas
- Botanical and animal life
- Unique sites
- Sites of activities with contemporary significance

### 5.3.2 Agricultural Land and Significant Soil

*Prime farmland* is defined by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as land best suited for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained good yields of crops economically if treated and managed, including water management, according to modern farming methods. *Additional farmland of statewide importance* is defined as land that is important for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. It economically produces good yields if the soils are drained or are drained and protected against flooding, if erosion control practices are installed, or if additional water is applied to overcome drought. Prime agricultural land is located primarily in the relatively flat areas of thick soil along the Etowah River in southern portions of the county in addition to portions in the northeast central portion of the county covering 14.7 percent of the county, as shown on Map 5-5 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

### 5.3.3 Forests, Parks, Recreation and Conservation

Dawson County forest land, parks and recreation land and Conservation areas are shown on Map 5-6 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix. Significant numbers of federal, state, regional and county park and recreation areas exist in Dawson County. Section 6.3.3 provides an inventory and analysis of these areas. These areas include the Chattahoochee National Forest, Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area and Amicalola River Park. Forest land covers 38 percent of the county's land, while park, recreation and conservation areas make up 28.9 percent of the county's land. Together, these areas take up nearly 67 percent of the county.



## 5.4 Significant Cultural Resources

### 5.4.1 Local History

Dawson County was created by a legislative Act on December 3, 1857, primarily out of Lumpkin County and small parts of Gilmer, Pickens and Forsyth counties. The county was named for William C. Dawson, who served in Congress from 1836 to 1842 and in the U.S. Senate from 1849 until 1855.

Prior to the creation of Dawson County, the area enjoyed a rich history. Originally settled by the Cherokee Indians at about the time of the American Revolution, the river valleys were dotted with farms, orchards and numerous modern log structures. Native Americans thrived in the area until the discovery of gold in 1829. By 1832, prospectors had overrun much of the area and Georgia claimed the region as a new territory. During 1838, those Native Americans who had not voluntarily moved west were forcibly removed to Oklahoma along the Trail of Tears.

Although absent as a people from the area for more than 150 years, the legacy of the Cherokee remains in many names found throughout Dawson County: Amicalola, which means "tumbling waters", Etowah, Toto Creek - named for the Cherokee Toter family, and a host of other local names.

Throughout the 1830's and 1840's the area that was to become Dawson County was in the midst of the first gold rush in America. Numerous mines and mining operations - some within the city limits of Dawsonville - were located throughout the area. Remnants of these mines and small mining projects can still be found within the county.

Soon after the creation of the county, the Civil War brought about great division among the citizens. Indeed, Dawson County provided both Confederate and Union units during the war while divided loyalties separated churches and communities alike.

During and after the 1880's, large commercial gold mining operations were established in the area; however the population continued to decline as citizens fled the mountains for factory jobs in Atlanta. Between 1880 and 1980, declining farm profits and increasing industrial employment opportunities elsewhere caused an out-migration of over one thousand people.

A tremendous economic boost for Dawson County came with the introduction of the poultry industry in the area. It became the largest sector of the County's economy with chicken fertilizer also helping the County's farming prosperity. The Rural Electrification Act of Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's also boosted the prosperity and growth of Dawson County. Howser's Mill served as Dawsonville's first source of electricity generated by water power from its turbine water wheel. The development of Lake Lanier in the 1950's to the present has also had a large impact on the land values and economy of Dawson County with the creation of second homes for retirees and vacationers. The most recent impact on Dawson County's physical development has been the construction of Highway 400 running northeast through the lower southeast section of the County from Atlanta to Dahlonega.

### 5.4.2 National Register of Historic Places Listings

Dawson County has two properties on the National Register of Historic Places list. Both properties, the Dawson County Courthouse and the Dawson County Jail, are located in Dawsonville in the historic town center and shown on Map 5-7 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix:

- **Dawson County Courthouse.** The Dawson County Courthouse, dating from 1857-1860 is a two-story brick cross-plan structure located on the highest point in the center of Dawsonville. The courthouse is one of the two structures in the County listed on the National Register of Historic Places in a thematic listing of all of Georgia's historic

courthouses, The courthouse, recently rehabilitated, exhibits architectural characteristics including pre-Civil War masonry work, wide cornices, and the retention of much of the historic interior plan. Obviously, the courthouse is significant historically as a center of Dawson County life for over 130 years.

- **Dawson County Jail.** The historic Dawson County jail is the other structure in Dawson County listed on the National Register of Historic Places besides the Courthouse. The former jail, constructed circa 1881 was the County's third jail and is a brick structure with vernacular Italianate features such as quoins, brackets, and a central front door with a transom above. The structure formerly contained a central hall with rooms on either side. The jail is significant as an important historical institutional building still existing in Dawson County.

### 5.4.3 Potentially Eligible National Register Sites

A variety of historic landmark community buildings exist in Dawson County. Community landmark buildings house or once housed community institutions such as local governments, educational programs, and civic organizations; or they are architecturally or historically significant structures that are particularly important to the County as a whole. These buildings range in appearance from the very simple such as the Lumpkin Campground Arbor to the more ornate, such as the Silas Palmour House. All noted landmarks have the potential for listing (or are listed)

- **Howser's Mill** is a former mill building is important as an example of a typical late 19th century mill building once common in Dawson County. The mill was also the site of Dawson County's first source of electricity generated by water power from its turbine water wheel.
- **Silas B. Palmour House** is a two-story eclectic residence that was the home of Silas Palmour, an important 19th century resident and is believed to have been constructed circa 1880.
- **Lumpkin Campground** was established in 1832 with a brush arbor surrounded by 100 "tents" or crude cottages - 35 cottages remain.
- **Rock Building** on the grounds of the Dawson County High School, built with WPA funds in 1941
- **McClure House**, a Craftsman bungalow near the corner of Academy Avenue and East Second Street which now houses the Dawsonville Veterinary Clinic;
- **Turner House**, a two-story Victorian-era residence which is suffering from "demolition-by-neglect" across from the McClure Store on Georgia 53;
- **McClure Store**, the most architecturally and historically significant commercial building in Dawsonville on Georgia 53;
- **Burt-Vandiver House**, a two-story Victorian-era residence, in the process of restoration and moved to a site across from the new County Courthouse, making it ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Victorian-Era Cottages located on **Burt Creek Road** near the northern City Limits;
- **Gillespie House**, circa 1930, a Craftsman style bungalow located on Georgia 9 near the southern City Limits;
- **Homer Palmour House**, circa 1860's, an I-House located at the corner of Maple Street and Palmour Drive.

Historic districts contain a number of historic structures that relate to one another historically and architecturally. Many structures that could qualify as landmarks are included in historic districts as well as less significant structures. The Savannah area, the Harmony area, Dahlenega Road and downtown Dawsonville exhibit several historically and physically-related historic structures. These districts have the potential for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

- **Savannah**, the area along the Etowah River Valley, contains most of the high style or more ornate historic structures in Dawson County. This area contains a number of residential structures dating from the mid-19th century. These structures are some of the more elaborate in the County and share common historical associations.
- **Harmony** is now divided by Highway 400 but architectural and historic associations are strong on both sides of the corridor. The district includes a log structure which supposedly harbored the Stowers family which originally settled the area sometime before the Civil War. The district also contains one of the most significant agricultural outbuilding complexes in the County.
- **Dahlonaga Road** from the high school to the Dawsonville city limits is a potential historic district. The district consists of bungalow residences constructed in the 1930's and 1940's in a variety of materials, including wood, brick, and marble.
- **Downtown Dawsonville** includes a concentrated number of structures, but many of the mostly commercial buildings, while age-eligible, have lost much of their architectural integrity with renovations, additions and other alterations over the years. A multiple property National Register nomination of Dawson County could incorporate all of Dawsonville's landmarks and the Dahlonaga Road District.

#### 5.4.4 Archeological Landmarks

A formal county-wide survey of Dawson County's archaeological resources has not been undertaken. Knowledge of such resources consists of information gathered by a variety of means. They range from formal surveys of varying scale and age to reported sightings of individual collectors and professionals.

The Amicalola Creek watershed exhibits a high potential for containing prehistoric archaeological resources. Based on knowledge of resources in the area, the Etowah River and Amicalola Creek drainages repeat environments similar to those of known resources. Similar environments afford access to similar resources needed by a people. Additionally, the mountain-piedmont transition offers access to a greater diversity of natural resources, enhancing the area's potential for human historic archaeological resources, they also occur in the watershed. The historic Hays Bridge (steel truss) crossing the Etowah River indicates a corridor of traffic and associated settlement. Road names such as "Mill" and "Ram" reflect functions associated with the corridors. A nearby gold mine probably brought much activity. Steele's covered bridge on Amicalola Creek, which was recently destroyed, marks another area of historic resource potential. Another bridge prior to Steele's (1897) existed at the crossing. Intersections of land and water corridors often drew milling functions because of the energy source and customer access. Also, bridge and road maintenance required frequent attention by someone living nearby.

A prehistoric and historic archaeological resource potential is indicated by features of the present cultural and natural environment of the Amicalola Creek watershed. Appropriate management should incorporate an archaeological survey of the properties as an initial stage of resource planning. Such inventory would provide a basis on which to plan development and evaluate research potential for addressing questions about the past.

#### 5.4.5 Archeological Sites

The following were determined in a study entitled, "Georgia Mountains Natural Resource Atlas," which was conducted by the Georgia Mountains Area Planning and Development Commission in 1975. It is by no means comprehensive, but provides some information for lack of a more comprehensive archaeological survey.

- Old Holden Residence

- Goshen Baptist Church (established in 1832)
- Pleasant Union Church and cemetery
- Old Reece Place (residence)
- Amicalola Baptist Church
- Old Blackwell residence and store
- Old Stansell place (residence)
- Mt. Vernon Church and cemetery
- Castleberry residence
- Steele's Bridge, listed on the National Register, March 19, 1975 destroyed by arsonist March 20, 1977
- McKee's Chapel
- Kay residence
- Juno Baptist Church and cemetery
- Dangrower residence
- Juno Post Office
- Harben residence
- New Hope Baptist Church and cemetery

## **6 Community Facilities and Services**

### ***6.1 Water Supply and Treatment***

#### **6.1.1 Water Service Area and Distribution**

Water services for the residents of Dawson County are primarily supplied by the Etowah Water & Sewer Authority (EWSA). EWSA maintains approximately 157 miles of water pipes within the county, and distribution of water resources occurs over 65.7 square miles to approximately 12,000 residents. The City of Dawsonville provides water service for residents of the city and residents adjacent to the city. However, the city buys its water from EWSA. Water service area for Dawson County is shown on Map 6-1 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

#### **6.1.2 Water Supply**

The main water supply for Dawson County is obtained from the Etowah River. Currently, the county is permitted to withdraw 3 MGD from the Etowah River. Additional sources of water are supplied by Forsyth Co. Water (300,000 gpd) and Cherokee County Water (750,000 gpd) for the Crystal Falls development. EWSA provides the majority of water to the residents of Dawson County. According to the EWSA, the daily water supply production capacity is 2.12 MGD with a current water storage capacity of 1.75 MGD.

#### **6.1.3 Future Water Demand Projections**

According to EWSA, water demands through 2015 will be met with a planned plant expansion and new withdrawal permit of 5.5 MGD (peak demand as shown in the recent 2005 Needs Analysis. Demands through 2050 will be met through ongoing future projects, which include the use of groundwater, and a proposed reservoir project.

### ***6.2 Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment***

EWSA provides sewage services for the south and southeastern portions of Dawson County near the GA 400 corridor and for the City of Dawsonville. Water treatment in the county is provided by the EWSA Wastewater plan and the City of Dawsonville Plant. EWSA reports a current permitted sewer capacity of 0.18 MGD with an average use of 0.170 MGD. The excess capacity is 0.10 MGD. The facility has an overall capacity of 0.5 MGD and is expected to meet demands through 2007. The City of Dawsonville Plant reports a current permitted sewer capacity of 0.12 MGD. The average use is 0.05 MGD. The excess capacity is 0.07 MGD. Sewer service areas are shown on Map 6-2 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

#### **6.2.1 Septic Systems**

Technology has transformed the septic system from a temporary method of disposal to a permanent fixture. As with any tool of continuous operation, a septic system must have ongoing repair, maintenance and sensible use in order to function properly and not cause adverse environmental concerns. The Dawson County Health Department's Environmental Health Division reported that with the exception of the City of Dawsonville sewer customers, one partial street in Country Crossing subdivision and Chestatee golf course community, all residences in Dawson County are on individual on-site sewage disposal systems. The new minimum lot size required for Dawson County is 0.75 acres for public water and septic system and 1.5 acres for individual water and septic system. These areas are exclusive of easements, right of way,

setbacks, flood plains, unsuitable soils or similar limiting factors. All subdivision lots approved currently are to have an area reserved for a full conventional length repair area as per the Georgia On-Site Sewage Management Manual, according the health department. The health department requires a Level III soil analysis for all new on-site sewage disposal systems and test pits or Level III soil analysis of all failing sewage systems. Follow up and inspections are implemented for all installations or repairs. The current needs for septic systems are a mandatory septic tank maintenance program in place and an existing inventory and condition assessment of private septic systems.

## **6.3 Other Facilities and Service**

### **6.3.1 Fire Protection**

Dawson County Emergency Services Department provides fire protection, emergency medical services and emergency management services to all Dawson County residents. The department employs six full-time fire fighters who are assisted by 64 volunteer fire fighters, which translates into 0.3 full-time fire fighters per 1,000 residents and 3.2 volunteer fire fighters per 1,000 residents. The national standard is 1.65 fire fighters per 1,000 residents).

Fire protection equipment at seven stations includes 26 heavy vehicles. Among these vehicles are eight tanker trucks, three air light units and one ladder that can serve up building heights of up to 45 feet. Fire fighters serve at the following seven fire stations throughout the county, which are shown on Map 6-3 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix:

- Station No. 1 393 Memory Lane
- Station No. 2 8388 Hwy 53 East
- Station No. 3 951 Harmony Church Road
- Station No. 4 245 Emma Terrace
- Station No. 5 8573 Kelly Bridge Road
- Station No. 6 2145 Hubbard Road
- Station No. 7 170 Dawson Forest Road West

Emergency medical service includes 25 full-time and 18 part-time EMS-certified personnel located at three substations. One medical unit was added in 2006

Planning for future fire safety needs include additional stations, availability of fire fighting equipment, location of fire stations, fire hydrants, access to sites and structures, and the availability of an adequate water supply.

The Policy Directions Report: Dawson County Impact Fee Program Report completed in July 2004 analyzed the existing conditions of the county fire protection services. The study focused on the square footage and heavy vehicles that an impact fee could fund. The study found that due to the projected population growth, fire services would need to expand its square footage from 35,580 square feet to 59,705 square feet by 2025. The increase in square footage amounts to adding four new stations (approximately 5,000-6,000 square feet for each station). The report also found the need to expand the heavy vehicle feet from 26 to 45. The existing condition totals do not include proposed capital improvements already in the pipeline.

Plans for capital improvements already in the pipeline include adding an eight fire station; constructing a new Station No. 2 to replace existing circa 1975 station; renovation of the circa 1991 Station No. 4 that includes adding living quarters; renovation of circa 1986 Station No. 5 that would add living quarters and provide for other expansion needs; two new trucks (one for Station No. 8 and an additional truck for Station No. 2); and other equipment needed to support the new stations. The three additional stations outlined by the Policy Directions Report are also on the long range drawing board. Each station would also require a new truck.

A major issue facing the fire protection in Dawson County is the number of available volunteer fire fighters. The county has depended heavily on volunteers to man its fire stations and provide fire protection to its citizens. As population continues to grow, the number of volunteers has decreased dramatically from 103 in 2004 to 68 in 2006. The county will need to consider ways to encourage more volunteer fire fighters to stick with the department or commit to hiring more full-time fire fighters to meet the demand.

### **6.3.2 Public Safety**

The Dawson County Sheriff's Department provides law-enforcement for both unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville. The Sheriff's Department includes divisions for Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Communication/Emergency 911, Civil Warrants, Court Services and the Detention Center. Additional services include Animal Control, with headquarters located at 189 Highway 53 West in Dawsonville. Sheriff's Department facilities are shown on Map 6-3 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

The Patrol Division provides law enforcement services. Nineteen P.O.S.T.-certified deputies respond 24 hours a day, to emergency calls for service, enforce the state traffic laws, and conduct crime prevention patrols. Dawson County is divided into four different patrol zones with one Deputy assigned to each zone. The division also coordinates the Reserve program. These Deputy Sheriff's donate their time to assist the Sheriff's Office with special events that require more manpower. These Reserve Officers are former full-time employees of the Dawson County Sheriff's Office. Patrol officers responded to 6,410 reports in 2005 (up from 5,420 in 2004) and conducted 7,057 traffic stops that resulted in 2,115 citations.

The Criminal Investigations Division conducts investigations of crimes committed in Dawson County. The division also investigates crimes that may have occurred elsewhere, but affect the citizens of Dawson County. They are also tasked with various other duties that support the daily operation of the sheriff's office. The Criminal Investigations unit also includes School Resource Officers, (SROS), which provide instruction and immediate security for each school campus in the Dawson County School System. The Narcotics Unit also falls under the Criminal Investigation Unit. The division investigated 1,612 cases in 2005 that resulted in 629 arrests.

The Communication Division receives and dispatches both emergency and non-emergency requests for service in Dawson County. The center dispatches for law enforcement and Dawson County Fire/Rescue and EMS and employs 10 certified communications officers.

The Civil/Warrants Division consists of an Administrative Clerk, and two Officers. These officers provide civil paper, subpoena, and warrant service along with transport duties such as warrant pickup from other agencies, Mental Health admissions, Keep the Peace, Georgia Department of Corrections pick-ups for court, and extraditions from other states. The division served 1,511 warrants, 1,554 civil papers and 1,921 subpoenas in 2005.

Court Services Division consist of four officers who provide court room security for Magistrate, Juvenile, Probate and Superior Courts, along with transporting inmates to doctor appointments from other agencies and to the Hall County Court House for special hearings. In the year 2001, Court Services will provide approximately 3000 hours of court room security in both Dawson County Court Houses and approximately 600 hours transporting inmates.

The Dawson County Animal Control Officer also works under the umbrella of the Sheriff's Department. The animal control officer, with support from the Dawson County Health Department, provides enforcement of the Animal Control Ordinance and responded to 1,391 calls in 2005 that resulted in 159 written warnings and 12 citations.

The Sheriff's Department operates the Dawson County Detention Center. The detention center capacity reached 168 inmates following the addition of 48 beds in 2004. The Sheriff's office

booked 2,118 inmates and held a daily average population of 168 in 2005. The detention center houses inmates from Dawson County and other surrounding counties. The jail housed 282 inmates from other counties in 2005. Dawson County plans to open a new detention center by the end of 2007. The new 192-bed, state-of-the-art facility will front Tucker Street next to the county courthouse. The facility will also house the operational offices of the Sheriff's Department. Dawson County voters approved an allocation of the SPLOST to help finance the new facility.

In addition to the Dawson County Sheriff's Department, the Georgia State Patrol also patrols state highways. Troop B, Post 37, headquartered in Cumming covers Dawson, Forsyth and Lumpkin counties.

### 6.3.3 Parks and Recreation

The county has a variety of recreational resources within its boundaries including county, state and federally owned properties. Residents and visitors can take advantage of both active and passive parks with recreational options ranging from camping and hiking at Amicalola Falls State Park to little league baseball games on the ball fields at Rock Creek Sports Complex. The county's parks are plotted on Map 6-3 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

#### Dawson County Recreation Department

The Dawson County Recreation Department owns and operates two parks with plans to add two new parks. In addition, the county uses recreational facilities located on public school campuses for various sports programs.

Dawson County completed a long range recreation plan called the *System-wide Recreation Master Plan* in 2005. The plan identified county-wide needs for both active and passive recreation pursuits and developed a 10-year implementation program to meet the needs identified. In addition to improvements to existing parks, the implementation program included buying land for and developing two new 70-acre community parks.

The Recreation Department's *Dawson County Park* sits on 40 acres approximately two miles north of Dawsonville on SR 9. The well-maintained park, which the county built in 1975, includes six lighted ball fields, two lighted tennis courts, a basketball court, beach volleyball area, playgrounds, pavilions/picnic facilities and a swimming pool. The park also includes a recreation center with two basketball courts built in 1992. Future plans call for ball field upgrades and the renovation of an existing pavilion. The *System-wide Recreation Master Plan* calls for a new one-mile walking trail, a new pavilion, a spray ground and a new concessions/restroom building.

The county's second park, *Rock Creek Sports Complex*, opened in 2002 on 52 acres on Martin Road, just to the west of SR 9 in south central Dawson County. The complex offers a wide range of recreational opportunities with 10 lighted athletic fields, two lighted basketball courts and four lighted tennis courts, a playground, playfields, pavilions with picnic facilities, horseshoes, a walking trail, maintenance building and support facilities. A recreation center opened in 2006 and contains two gymnasiums, a banquet hall and offices. Future plans call for drainage improvements for the ball fields. The *System-wide Recreation Master Plan* calls for adding playground equipment, lighting for the soccer fields, new batting cages, a skate park, concessions/restroom building at the soccer fields and restrooms and a covered pavilion with playground at the tennis courts

In addition to operating the two parks, the Recreation Department offers basketball programs at Dawson County Middle School thanks to a joint-use agreement in place with Dawson County Schools. The gymnasium at Riverview Middle School will be used for the same purpose upon completion.



The *System-wide Recreation Master Plan* calls for the county to develop the first new planned park, east central community park, during the first half of the implementation period. It identified property northwest of the Etowah River between SR 136 and SR 53. The park would include lighted ball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, a dog park, playgrounds, picnic areas with pavilions, open grassed playfields, walking trails, a recreation center similar to Rock Creek's and 1,200 parking spaces.

The *System-wide Recreation Master Plan* calls for the county to develop the second new planned park, central community park, at the end of the implementation period on property northwest of Dawsonville between SR 136 and SR 183. The park would among other facilities a 10,000-square-foot community center, a botanical garden, a nature trail with interpretive stations, a walking trail, open grassed playfields, practice fields, a festival field with amphitheater for organized activities, a disc golf course, an archery range, a day camp, primitive camping facilities and 800 parking spaces.

Dawson County presently owns an 88-acre site proximate to Burt Creek Road. A preliminary master plan has been prepared for the site to include a village containing various county offices, a driver training and sheriff training center, open space and a small park. The portion of the site being considered for a park consists of approximately 20 acres, but a final decision has not been reached.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns and operates many parks and recreational facilities adjacent to Lake Lanier in the southeast portion of the county. Dawson County presently has in place a challenge cost-sharing agreement with the Corps for the use of War Hill Park and the possibility exists for more such agreements at other Corps' parks. The following presents a summary of facilities within each of these parks.

- *Nix Bridge Park* (15 acres) includes a boat dock, boat ramp, lakeside picnic facilities and restrooms
- *Pea Ridge Park* (267 acres) is currently an undeveloped parcel
- *Thompson Creek Park* (14 acres) includes a boat ramp, open air pavilion with picnic tables and grills, unpaved trail and open grass playfield
- *Toto Creek Park* (65 acres) is a passive park with primitive campsites, small beach, picnic sites with grills, boat ram, boat dock
- *War Hill Park* (108 acre) includes primitive campsites, boat ramps, a pier, swimming beach, and picnic areas with tables and grills.

### **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources operates the Amicalola Falls State Park and the Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area in Dawson County.

*Amicalola Falls State Park* sits within the Chattahoochee National Forest in northwest Dawson County 829 acres located 15 miles northwest of Dawsonville on SR 52. The 729-foot high Amicalola Falls severs as the parks main attraction. The park includes campsites, a conference center, a lodge and picnic shelters.

The Department of Natural Resources' Game and Fish Division manages the *Amicalola River Park*, a 31-mile river corridor that begins approximately 10 miles south of Amicalola Falls State Park and includes 4,474 acres along the river. The corridor falls within the Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area.

*Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area* sits on 10,130 acres in Dawson County and is owned by the Atlanta Airport Authority. The Georgia Forestry Commission manages the forest area with

headquarters located approximately three miles southeast of Dawsonville off SR 53. The Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division also manages the area as a Wildlife Management Area. The area provides hunting and fishing opportunities as well as a recreation trail program that maintains 23 miles of horse/bike trails. The forest includes Hightower Educational Forest that provides natural resource educational programs to many schools.

#### **U.S. Forest Service**

The Chattahoochee National Forest, a segment of which is located in northern Dawson County, provides opportunities for camping, hiking fishing, picnicking and horseback riding. The forest is owned by the U.S. Forest Service.

### **6.3.4 Stormwater Management**

Stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces associated with land development presents a significant threat to water resources and threatened fish in the Etowah River Basin. One of the objectives of the Etowah Habitat Conservation Plans is to minimize the impacts from stormwater runoff. This is accomplished by the Runoff Limit (RL) program which designates Priority Areas based on the presence of protected species or habitat that supports these species. Most of Dawson County is a Priority 1 area, and therefore, has the strictest runoff limits. This program has specific limits on the post-development runoff volume resulting from storms equal to the regional two-year, 24 hour storm, known as the Runoff Limit Performance Criteria (RLPC). This volume is calculated based on the land cover, soil conditions, and precipitation in the area.

As a response to the RL Program, the city of Dawsonville enacted a Storm Water Management ordinance in 2006 to provide reasonable guidance for the regulation and control of stormwater runoff. This ordinance is applicable for all new land development and redevelopment involving the creation of 5,000 square feet or more of impervious cover, or that includes other land development activities of one-acre or more. Also included in this ordinance is any land development, regardless of size, that is considered a "hot spot" development. A "hotspot" development is an area of land that has the potential to generate highly contaminated runoff, with concentrations of pollutants in excess of those typically found in stormwater. These areas include, but are not limited to, fueling stations and golf courses. Individual single-family homes, not part of a larger development, are exempt from this ordinance. The purpose of this ordinance is to protect the local water resources from degradation.

### **6.3.5 Solid Waste Management**

Dawson County operates a solid waste transfer station and recycling drop off point for the citizens of Dawson County at 946 Burt Creek Road. Solid waste from the transfer station is transported to and disposed of at Eagle Point Landfill in Forsyth County by a private contractor. Eagle Point Landfill is located at 8880 Old Federal Road, Ball Ground, approximately 16 miles from the transfer station. In addition, the transfer station accepts scrap metal. Currently the transfer station generates approximately three 120 cubic yard trailer loads per week of solid waste. Dawson County has a fee agreement with Eagle Point Landfill for dumping. Construction and demolition debris and hazardous wastes are not handled at the transfer station.

### **6.3.6 Education**

#### **Public Schools**

The Dawson County School System enrolled 3,284 students during the 2005-2006 on six campuses throughout the campus including one high school, one middle school, three elementary schools and one alternative school. Each school currently operates below capacity, as shown in Table

6-1. The system plans to open a new middle school and a complete a new facility for the alternative school in 2008 in addition to adding new classrooms at two elementary schools.

**Table 6-1: Dawson County School System (2005-2006 School Year)**

<i>School</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Max Student Capacity</i>	<i>% of Capacity in 2005-06</i>	<i>Number of Teachers</i>	<i>Future plans, Expansion plans, needs, etc.</i>
Dawson County High School	891	1,100	81.0%	61	None
Dawson County Middle School	0	875	0.0%	0	Opens Fall 2008
Riverview Middle School	777	875	88.8%	50	None
Robinson Elementary School	696	850	81.9%	57	None
Black's Mill Elementary School	466	675	69.0%	37	Adding 5 classrooms in 2008
Kilough Elementary School	414	625	66.2%	36	Adding 5 classrooms in 2008
Crossroads Alternative School	40	40	100.0%	4	New facility in 2008
Total (2005-2006 School Year)	3,284	4,165	78.8%	234	

Source: Dawson County School System 2006

Note: Total % of Capacity does not include the capacity of the facilities planned for 2008 openings

**Table 6-2: Dawson County Public School General Information**

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Dawson County</i>	<i>State of Georgia</i>
General Fund Expenditures per Pupil (FY2007)	\$8,563	\$6,478
Percent of Economically Disadvantaged (qualify for free/reduced lunch)(FY2006)	31.0%	46.4%
High School Dropout Rate per 100 enrolled	5.7	5.1
Percent White	96.7%	50.6%
Percent Black	0.1%	37.9%
Percent Hispanic	2.2%	6.9%

Source: Dawson County School System and Georgia County Guide, 2005-2006, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

The school system currently spends more per student than the state average, as shown in Table 6-2. The percent of students from economically disadvantaged homes falls well below the share for the state as a whole (31 percent and 46.4 percent respectively). The county drop-out rate is slightly higher than the state at 5.7 percent

Dawson County Schools employs more than 460 people, which makes it the county's largest single employer. The system employs a well-qualified, experienced staff. Almost 67 percent of the staff holds a master's degree or beyond and have an average 13 years of professional experience. A staff of more than 200 classified employees provides support to the certified staff in positions such as paraprofessionals, bus drivers, school nutrition workers, clerical staff, bookkeepers, custodians and maintenance workers, etc.

The five-member Dawson County Board of Education governs the system. Four of the elected members represent voters in four geographic areas of the county. The remaining member

represents the county at-large. The Board sets the school system's annual budget and secures the funding necessary for operating the schools. While board members represent districts, the voters elect them at-large for four-year terms.

### **Private Schools**

One K-12 private school operates in Dawson County. War Hill Christian Academy is a small Christian school with fewer than 100 students located east of Dawsonville on Georgia 53 and is operated by War Hill Christian Fellowship Church at the same location.

### **Technical Colleges**

Lanier Technical College Dawson Campus opened recently in the newly renovated technology building of the former Dawson County High School in downtown Dawsonville. The campus is one of the college's five campuses that also include a main campus in Oakwood and additional campuses in Winder, Cumming and Commerce. It also operates literacy centers in seven counties.

The college serves the workforce development needs of eight counties in Northeast Georgia: Banks, Barrow, Dawson, Forsyth, Hall, Jackson, Lumpkin, and North Fulton. The mission of the college is to enhance students' educational opportunities, help create a competent and competitive workforce, and support economic development for the area.

As part of its strategic planning process, the college has identified initiatives to help meet the demands of students, communities, and business partners in the future. Lanier Technical College plans to continue to offer a comprehensive range of programs and to respond to the area's critical needs by emphasizing the following eight strategic initiatives: high-performance technology training, healthcare programs, public safety programs, industrial/technical training, business incubation, international outreach, and independent learning resources.

Although credit programs represent the core mission of the college, serving 5,282 students in these programs, the economic development and adult literacy noncredit programs serve large numbers of individuals. The adult literacy program served 7,026 students in 2005, and the economic development program provided instruction and training for 15,048 students in customized noncredit classes during the same year.

The Dawson Campus offers 17 certificate programs and six diploma programs in a 15,860-foot-building that provides four general classroom/computer labs for management, accounting, business office technology, CNA, and general core classes. In addition the campus includes labs for the various welding, automotive, plumbing, and electrical construction certificate and diploma programs. The campus also includes an electronic media center and indoor and outdoor lounge areas.

### **Colleges and Universities**

Southern Catholic College started in 2005-2006 school year with 74 students from 16 states on 10 acres next to the Gold Creek Resort on Gold Creek Parkway. The college plans to have 400 to 500 students by 2009, 1,000 students by 2015 and 3,000 students by 2025.

## **6.3.7 Libraries**

The Chestatee Regional Library System serves the residents of Dawson County. Hall and Lumpkin counties established the two-county system in 1953 and added Dawson County in 1994. Hall County withdrew from the system in 1997 leaving a two-county service area that includes 495 square miles and an estimated population of 43,000 in 2005. The system includes two facilities –

the Dawson County Library at 342 Allen Street in Dawsonville and the Lumpkin County Library in Dahlonega.

According to information provided to the public by the library system on its website, the system employees just under 22 full-time equivalent employees, holds 89,112 print and non-print volumes (43,605 of which are in Dawsonville), provides interlibrary loans through the PINES network, telephone and walk in information service, public internet access, programs for preschool children, photocopiers for public use, free meeting facilities, vacation reading programs for children and teens, rotating exhibits and displays hobbies, art works, etc.

The system registered 8,465 borrowers, processed 149,455 checkouts, provided for 11,260 internet logins, attracted 83,814 visits and answered 4,560 reference questions during fiscal year 2005.

### 6.3.8 Health Care

**Table 6-3: Dawson County Health Care Facility General Information**

<b>Hospitals</b> (none in Dawson County -nearby hospitals listed)	
Chestatee Regional Hospital (49 beds)- Dahlonega	surgery, emergency, maternity & imaging services
Northeast Georgia Medical Center (418 beds)- Gainesville	maternity, general & surgical, MH services,
Northside Forsyth Hospital (78 beds) - Cumming	general & surgical, emergency
<b>Emergent Care Clinic</b>	
Chestatee Emergent Medical Center - Dawsonville	24-hour-a-day walk in clinic treats emergency and non emergency situations
<b>Public Health Clinic</b>	
Dawson County Health Department	WIC, Women's Health, Child Health, Immunizations, Prenatal Case Management, TB, STD, and General Lab programs
<b>Outpatient Clinics</b>	
Number of Primary Care Offices	3
Number of Pediatric Care Offices	1

Source: Dawson County Health Department

Table 6-3 shows an outline of the basic health care facilities in Dawson County. While without a hospital, the county does have one emergent care facility. Hospitals in Dahlonega, Gainesville and Cumming currently provide the nearest hospital services. The Dawson County Health Department provides a variety of services to residents of the county.

## 6.4 Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy

**Table 6-4: Dawson County Service Delivery Strategy Summary**

<i>Services Provided</i>	<i>Dawson County Service Delivery Strategy</i>	<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
Planning and Zoning	Dawson County provides this service for unincorporated Dawson County. The City of Dawsonville provides this service for the City with assistance from the County. The County assists the City with paperwork that includes public notices, posting of specific property, notification requirements to adjoining land owners, etc.	Countywide	The City of Dawsonville is preparing its own land use plan and comprehensive plan. The strategy should reflect that the County no longer provides this particular planning service to the City.
Solid Waste Management	Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville offer this service by contracting with a private company to transfer solid waste to a given location and the subsequent disposal thereof	Countywide	
Emergency Management Service	Dawson County offers this service to unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville	Countywide	
Storm Water Management	Dawson County provides storm water management services	Countywide	
Streets and Roads (repairs, maintenance, street cleaning)	Dawson County offers this type of service for unincorporated Dawson County; The City of Dawsonville offers this type of service for the City of Dawsonville.	Countywide	
Fire Protection	Dawson County offers this service to unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville	Countywide	
Police Protection	Dawson County offers this service to unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville	Countywide	
Soil Erosion Permitting and Enforcement	Dawson County offers this service to unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville	Countywide	
Building Permitting and Inspections	Dawson County offers this service to unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville	Countywide	
Water Supply/Distribution	Etowah Water and Sewerage Authority offers this service to much of unincorporated Dawson Count; The City of Dawsonville offers this service within the City of Dawsonville corporate limits and to a limited area adjacent to the corporate limits.	Countywide	
Sewerage Collection/Disposal	Etowah Water and Sewerage Authority offers this service to unincorporated Dawson County and the City of Dawsonville (limited areas serviced)	Countywide	

Source: Dawson County Service Delivery Strategy Summaries of Service Deliver Arrangements

## 7 Transportation System

### 7.1 Introduction

The goal of the Dawson County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element (CPTe) is to ensure that the County's transportation needs are met both now and in the short, intermediate, and long-term future. Once completed, the CPTe will provide sufficient data and analysis to determine long-range transportation costs to support the Advanced Level requirements. Based on discussions with local officials, preliminary field review, and data collection activities, the following provides an inventory and existing conditions on the transportation infrastructure and facilities throughout the county.

Dawson County's transportation system consists of highways, as well as other modes of transportation. An inventory of existing conditions was performed based on available data and a windshield survey of the county. The inventory of existing conditions was developed with information (field verified, where appropriate) from Dawson County, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Commission (GMRDC), and the Dawson County 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

### 7.2 Road Network

SR 400/US 19 traverses the southeast portion of the county north to south and opens a gateway to all points south, including employment centers in the Atlanta region, as well as Lumpkin County to the north. In addition to SR 400, roads important to the development of Dawson County include SR 9, SR 52, SR 53, SR 136 and SR 183. There are no interstate highways in Dawson County. Map 7-1, located in the Atlas of Maps Appendix, shows the road network for Dawson County.

#### 7.2.1 Functional Classification

In order to determine the adequacy of a highway system, it is necessary to inventory roadways according to how they fulfill two purposes: movement of traffic and access to property. By assessing the degree to which a particular roadway serves each of the two basic functions, a functional classification can be determined. GDOT is responsible for classifying all roads in the public road system by their geographic location in rural, small urban or urban areas according to their character of service. Functional classification was determined for each road in the network using GDOT's classification system in order to accurately identify service characteristics. All roads in the County have been grouped into the following four functional classifications that are listed in Table 7-1 and shown on Map 7-2 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix:

- **Interstates** - Defined as significant highways that feature limited access and continuous, high-speed movements for a wide variety of traffic types. There are no Interstate roadways in Dawson County.
- **Arterials** - Classified as major and minor, are roads that connect activity centers and carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds. The arterial system in Dawson County totals approximately 30 miles (26 major, four minor), eight percent of its total roadway miles. Examples of arterials in Dawson County are SR 53 and SR 400. The average annual daily traffic (AADT) on arterial roadways in Dawson County is 11,465 vehicles. The arterial system is significant because it accommodates a substantial share of the volume (an average of 11,465 vehicles per day, five times the rate of the collector system) yet constitutes only 8.1 percent of the existing roadway system.
- **Collectors** - Also classified as major and minor, collectors typically allow access to activity centers from residential areas. Their purpose is to collect traffic from streets in

residential and commercial areas and distribute the traffic to the arterial system. The collector system in Dawson County incorporates 111 miles (88 major, 23 minor), 30 percent of the total roadway system, and has an average annual daily traffic (AADT) of 2,033 vehicles. Examples of collectors in Dawson County are SR 52, SR 136, SR 183, SR 9 and Sweetwater Juno Road.

- **Local Streets** - Feed the collector system from low volume residential and commercial areas. Usually local streets are found in subdivisions and rural areas. There are approximately 229 miles, 62 percent of roads classified as local in Dawson County. The AADT on collector roadways in Dawson County is 599 vehicles.

**Table 7-1: County Functional Classification**

Road	Number of Lanes	Functional Classification
SR 9	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
Etowah River Road	1	(9) Rural Local Rd
SR 52	1	(7) Rural Major Collector
SR 9 (Dawsonville to Pickens Co. Line)	1	(6) Rural Minor Arterial
SR 53	1	(2) Rural Major Arterial
Thompson Road	1	(9) Rural Local Rd
SR 136	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
Dawson Forest Road	2	(9) Rural Local Road
SR 183	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
War Hill Park Road	1	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Burt Creek Road	1	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Lumpkin Campground Road	1	(9) Rural Local Rd
SR 400	2-4	(2) Rural Major Arterial
Cowart Road	1	(9) Rural Local Rd

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Road Characteristics (RC) File

## 7.2.2 National Highway System

The National Highway System (NHS) was established by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 to serve as a network of highways that could link together different modes of transportation such as: major shipping ports, airports, intermodal facilities, and public transportation. The linking of these transportation systems allows the NHS to form a quality system important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. There are no NHS routes in Dawson County.

## 7.2.3 Speed Limits

Speed limits and functional classification of roads are related. Posted speed limits throughout Dawson County range from 15 miles per hour (mph) to 65 mph. Approximately 3.1 percent of roadway lane miles in Dawson County are signed for 65 miles per hour (mph) speed limit, 26.2 percent have a speed limit of 55 mph, and 70.7 percent of roadway lane miles have a speed limit less than 50 mph.



## 7.2.4 Existing Traffic Volumes

**Table 7-2: County Traffic Volumes**

Road/Route	Count Location	2000-02 AADT	2003-5 AADT	% Change
SR 9	South of Dawson Forest Road	4,340	5,440	25%
SR 9	North of Thompson Road	2,681	3,550	32%
SR 52	North of Ridge Road	1,198	1,110	-7%
SR 53	West of Sweetwater Church Road	2,530	2,970	17%
SR 53	East of Thompson Road	10,900	12,080	11%
SR 136	Shared section of SR183/SR 136	2,630	2,460	-6%
SR 136	West of Hall County Line	2,890	2,800	-3%
SR 183	North of Rowland Road	1,556	1,850	19%
SR 400	North of Forsyth County Line	22,530	26,680	18%
SR 400	South of Lumpkin County Line	13,490	17,220	28%

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Traffic Count Data

GDOT prepares existing traffic volume field counts and reports annual average daily traffic counts throughout the County. Historic traffic count data was reviewed to determine what changes have occurred in the recent past. Due to variations in the yearly counts, three-year rolling averages were computed in order to aid in trend identification. The three-year two-way traffic volume average from 2003 through 2005 was compared to the average of 2000 through 2002. The highest traffic volume changes occurred near county lines with Forsyth and Lumpkin Counties along SR 400. There were also significant changes on SR 53 east of Thompson Road and west of Sweetwater Church Road. The range of growth was from 35 to 117 percent. Overall, the greatest daily volumes are found on SR 400. Table 7-2 summarizes various traffic volume changes throughout Dawson County. Map 7-3 located in the Atlas of Maps Appendix shows the traffic counts and locations.

## 7.2.5 Number of Lanes

**Table 7-3: County Roadway Lanes Inventory**

Road	County Route/State Route	No. of Lanes (in each direction)
SR 9	State Route	1
Etowah River Road	County Route	1
SR 52	State Route	1
SR 53	State Route	1
Thompson Road	County Route	1
SR 136	State Route	1-2
Dawson Forest Road	County Route	1-2
SR 183	State Route	1
Lumpkin Campground Road	County Route	1
SR 400	State Route	2-3
Cowart Road	County Route	1

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Road Characteristics (RC) File

Of the 370 total roadway lane miles in Dawson County, 89.5 percent are two-lane roads while 4.8 percent are four-lane roads, and the remaining 5.6 percent of roadways represent other various lane configurations. The existing roadway inventory with the number of lanes for each facility is shown in Table 7-3.

## 7.2.6 Traffic Conditions

In 2000, over 2,786 of the 8,082 (52 percent) Dawson County residents age 16 and over worked in the County, while approximately 2,491 workers from neighboring counties traveled to Dawson for work. Of the approximately 5,296 Dawson residents working in neighboring counties, the

majority (approximately 47 percent) commuted to Forsyth, Fulton, Hall and Gwinnett Counties. Daily work trips are especially important to the overall transportation system and its efficiency because the majority of work-related travel occurs during peak demand periods.

**Table 7-4: Means of Transportation to Work for Workers 16 Years and Over (Universe Workers 16 years and over)**

	<i>Dawson County</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Total:	8,082	
Car, truck, or van:	7,590	94%
Drove alone	6,376	79%
Carpooled	1,214	15%
Public transportation:	0	
Bus or trolley bus	0	
Streetcar or trolley car (publico in Puerto Rico)	0	
Subway or elevated	0	
Railroad	0	
Ferryboat	0	
Taxicab	0	
Motorcycle	0	
Bicycle	0	
Walked	126	2%
Other means	27	.3%
Worked at home	339	4%

Source: Bureau of the Census 2000

Analysis of the various modes used to commute to work is valuable for planning. Dawson County's mode split, shown in Table 7-4 follows state trends. Higher percentages of workers are driving alone and working at home, while fewer person are carpooling and walking.

**Table 7-5: Travel Time to Work for Workers 16 Years and Over (Universe: Workers 16 years and over)**

	<i>Dawson County</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Total:	8,082	
Did not work at home:	7,743	96%
Less than 5 minutes	225	3%
5 to 9 minutes	640	8%
10 to 14 minutes	594	7%
15 to 19 minutes	744	9%
20 to 24 minutes	780	10%
25 to 29 minutes	601	7%
30 to 34 minutes	1,271	16%
35 to 39 minutes	282	3%
40 to 44 minutes	286	4%
45 to 59 minutes	1,075	13%
60 to 89 minutes	918	11%
90 or more minutes	327	4%
Worked at home	339	4%

Source: Bureau of the Census 2000

Mean travel time to work increased at a similar percentage as statewide, as shown in Table 7-5, but the total number of workers in Dawson increased by 76 percent as opposed to the statewide average (23.4 percent). Predominate use of single occupancy vehicles (SOV) generally increases congestion.

### 7.2.7 Overview of the Road Freight Conditions

Several state highways serve Dawson County. A number of these are suitable for 'over the road' freight movement (Trucks). GA 400 serves as the primary freight route through the County and is designated as an oversized truck route by GDOT. Other facilities in the County designated as oversized truck routes include the following that are also shown on Map 7-4 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix:

- SR 53 from the western County line to the southern County line
- SR 136 along the northern portion of the County
- SR 183 along the central portion of the County
- SR 9 from the southern County line to SR 53

## 7.2.8 Bridge Inventory and Conditions

**Table 7-6: County Bridges in Unsatisfactory Condition**

County ID	Bridge Serial Number	Location ID	Location	Route	Facility Name	Sufficiency	Year Const.
085	085-0024-0	085-00994F-001.01N	Just northwest of Dawsonville	00994	Shoal Creek Road	48.43821	1959
085	085-5007-0	085-00057X-002.25S	9 miles west of Dawsonville	00057	Hubbardsville Road	34.29137	1992
085	085-0001-0	085-00009D-001.73N	4.5 miles south of Dawsonville	00009	SR 9	42.4533	1930
085	085-0018-0	085-00136D-023.00E	5.7 miles east of Dawsonville	00136	SR 136	47.736	1965
085	085-0019-0	085-00136D-025.95E	7.6 miles southeast of Dawsonville	00136	SR 136	60.62318	1956
085	085-0020-0	085-00136D-026.96E	8.3 miles southeast of Dawsonville	00136	SR 136	10.71283	1956
085	085-5002-0	085-00006X-001.12E	3 miles northwest of Dawsonville	00006	Cleve Wright Road	29.18122	1956
085	085-0021-0	085-00183D-004.86N	6 miles northwest of Dawsonville	00183	SR 183	50.55103	1940
085	085-5010-0	085-00060X-001.82N	7 miles southwest of Dawsonville	00060	Holcomb Road	26.34645	1952

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Bridge Inventory

Bridge inventory data were obtained from GDOT for Dawson County. The overall bridge rating is indicated by its sufficiency rating, where a sufficiency rating greater than 50 is considered satisfactory and a rating less than 50 is considered unsatisfactory (i.e. needing replacement). A total of 46 bridge reports were reviewed. This review indicated that 9 bridges (20 percent) of the bridges are considered to be in unsatisfactory condition. Table 7-6 provides a list of the location and condition of bridges that are considered to be in unsatisfactory condition. These bridges may need to be reconstructed or replaced. For the bridges in satisfactory condition, some routine maintenance will still be needed to preserve their condition.

## 7.3 Alternative Modes

### 7.3.1 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Currently, the Statewide Bicycle Route Network has one State Bicycle Route in Dawson County. State Bicycle Route 90 runs East-West through the northern portion of Dawson County. The 210-mile Mountain Crossing Route runs across the mountains of north Georgia between Walker County, south of Chattanooga and Rabun County, in the northeast corner of the state. The Mountain Crossing Route runs common with SR 52 in Dawson County.

The locations of sidewalk facilities were determined during a windshield survey of the County. There are limited sidewalks provided in unincorporated Dawson County; most of the sidewalks in the county are in the city of Dawsonville and connect downtown areas with businesses, government centers and some community facilities.

### 7.3.2 Public Transportation and Services

Dawson County has no urban or rural public transportation services that are available to the general public. However, GDOT currently operates demand response services using two vans.

This service is generally used for the elderly and/or ADA community for their health related needs and some job access.

As Dawson County continues to grow, there may be opportunities to partner with other agencies, such as the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), to provide express bus service to downtown Atlanta. The County will look at future potential for coordinating with regional express bus service via a park & ride lot.

## **7.4 Parking**

In the unincorporated portions of Dawson County, parking has not been a significant issue. Most of the local commercial and business areas are in the unincorporated portions of the County such as along the GA 400 corridor (i.e., North Georgia Premium Outlet Stores), and there is free off-street parking located within these areas. Due to parking requirements in the county zoning regulations, local businesses and public facilities are currently adequately served.

## **7.5 Railroads and Airports**

### **7.5.1 Freight Railroads**

There is currently no freight railroad facility in Dawson County.

### **7.5.2 Passenger Railroads**

There is currently no passenger railroad service in Dawson County.

### **7.5.3 Airports**

Dawson County does not have a general aviation airport. An Airport feasibility study was recently completed, but due to public opposition, there is no decision to further study a future general aviation airport in the county.

## **7.6 Transportation and Land Use Connection**

As described above "Traffic Conditions" and as illustrated in most of the congested roadways in Dawson County are located in the southeastern half of the county where significant land use changes have occurred over the past ten years. Most of this growth has primarily been related to the development of commercial use (retail) and single-family subdivisions, which have increased at a scale that has outpaced improvements in infrastructure and other transportation improvements. This is the type of inconsistency in transportation/land use coordination that will eventually lead to significant traffic congestion.

This recent explosion in commercial and residential development has increased the utilization of all existing transportation facilities (street, roads) but has shown evidence of the need for alternative measures such as sidewalks and bike lanes and other amenities. In terms of the less developed areas of the county, such as in the western and extreme northwestern portions of the county, the travel volumes are typically well below the capacity levels. The development patterns in these areas are in stark contrast to the east/southeast of the county and as a result have a much lower demand for transportation and infrastructure improvements for congestion.

Following is a brief overview of the transportation improvements currently programmed that may address some of the aforementioned land use & transportation issues. As a result of past and current transportation planning efforts, transportation improvements in Dawson County are in local (Construction Work Program/CIP), state (GDOT STIP) and regional (GMRDC) plans.

## 7.6.1 Local Projects

**Table 7-7: County Local Projects**

<i>Project</i>	<i>Deficiency</i>	<i>Implementation Period</i>	<i>Selected Strategy, Program or Project</i>
Cowart Road from SR 53 to the Cherokee County line.	Congestion > 0.7	2021-2030	Widening
Gold Mine Road at Sweetwater Juno Road	Congestion > 0.7	2011-2020	Intersection and Operational Improvements
SR 53 from the Forsyth County line to East Bypass/Perimeter Road	Intermittent Congestion	2011-2020	Widening and Completion of Perimeter Road/Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9 (State Aid Project)
SR 53 from West Bypass/Perimeter Road to Cowart Road	Intermittent Congestion	2021-2030	Widening and Completion of Perimeter Road/Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9 (State Aid Project)
SR 400 from the Forsyth County line to Lumpkin Camp Ground Road	Congestion > 0.7	2011-2020	Widening
Interchange at SR 400 and SR 53	Congestion > 0.7	2006-2010	Interchange
Dawson Forest Road from Lumpkin Camp Ground Road to SR 400	Congestion < 0.7	2011-2020	Widening
SR 52: two westbound passing lanes between Gilmer and Lumpkin Counties	Congestion	2011-2020	Reconstruction, Passing Lanes
SR 9 passing lanes from Thompson Road to Jenkins Road	Congestion	2011-2020	Reconstruction, Passing Lanes
Lumpkin Campground Road from Forsyth County line to Kilough Church Road	Congestion	2021-2030	Widening
Kilough Church Road from Lumpkin Campground Road to SR 53 (new location between Kilough Church Road and SR 53)	Congestion	2021-2030	Widening, New location Roadway
Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9	Congestion	2011-2020	New Construction Roadway

Source: Dawson Count Planning Department

There are currently 12 local projects planned within Dawson County. These projects are funded by two funding sources, a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and Dawson County's general fund. . These projects are shown in Table 7-7.

## 7.6.2 State Transportation Improvement Program Projects (STIP)

Dawson County does have a few projects that have been incorporated into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Once a project on the list is approved and guaranteed funding from the state, the project obtains status on the STIP list of projects that covers the period from 2006 to 2006. Dawson County's STIP projects are shown on Map 7-5 in the Atlas of Maps Appendix.

**Table 7-8: County Short Range Projects**

Project No.	Description
132790	SR 400 interchange at SR 53/corr A1 (right-of-way acquisition)

\* Short Range Projects include all projects in the GDOT 2004-2006 STIP with right-of-way acquisition or construction in or before 2006. Projects included are not yet awarded for construction

\*Dawson County is looking at the feasibility of access roads/frontage roads around this interchange

**Table 7-9: County Long Range Projects\***

Project No.	Description
0001770	CR 223/Lumpkin Campground Road @ CR 252/Dawson Forest Road – Intersection Improvement
0000296	SR 52: two westbound passing lanes between Gilmer and Lumpkin Counties
0003627	SR 9 passing lanes from Thompson Road to Jenkins Road
State Aid Project	Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9
M003076	SR 136 @ Chestatee River & @ Etowah River – Bridge Rehabilitation

\* Long Range Projects include all projects programmed for right-of-way acquisition beyond 2006.

\* SR 53 Widening (East of the City) should be included in STIP

The GDOT STIP short and long range projects in Dawson County follow. The most important project to them is the SR400/SR53 interchange project; check the status of this to make sure we know when all phases are programmed. Status as of April 2006 is shown for short-range projects in Table 7-8 and for long range projects in Table 7-9.

### 7.6.3 Issues and Opportunities

Current and future needs are identified through two processes: a quantitative effort by examining transportation performance measures and determining deficiencies and needs and through qualitative efforts, primarily public outreach through meetings with stakeholders and the general public. The ongoing *Dawson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan*, as well as the *2030 Dawson County Long Range Transportation Plan* has generated significant input from public and community leaders regarding transportation needs and potential solutions. During this process, some of the transportation issues raised were:

- Complete dependence on the private automobile for transportation
- GA 400/GA 53 intersection improvements
- Few sidewalks and walking trails
- Little street connectivity
- No street grid providing alternative routes for moving around the GA 400 area
- GA 400 divides the area physically and doesn't provide for safe pedestrian crossing
- No collector street plan to ensure that new development connects to other neighborhood and nearby services
- Need alternative forms of transportation
- Need better overall traffic safety statistics
- Need to look at the 'technological impacts' of traffic (ATMS, ITS, Traffic Cameras, etc.)
- Need to foster more GDOT coordination
- Need to look at Context Sensitive Design for the County
- The County Road Improvement Program is under-funded

Overall transportation network operations in Dawson County were examined to determine existing system deficiencies and potential future needs. The assessment focused on potential opportunities to improve traffic operations and multi-modal access within the study area. The

following findings aided in the identification of appropriate opportunities and infrastructure features for implementation in Dawson County, as follows:

- Installation of off-road bike trails and multi-use paths
- Opportunity for a park-n-ride lot
- Pedestrian enhancements at major intersections (crosswalks, signals, medians, etc.)
- Coordinate all future developments (DRI's, PUD's) with transportation
- Scenic By-ways designation
- Extension of GRTA's Express Bus from Forsyth County in Dawson County
- Establish an alternative, better connected street system in growing areas
- Opportunity for access management techniques
- Ensure that all roadway cross-section and intersection treatments should reflect the functional classification of the roadway and relative needs for access and pedestrian flow versus circulation.



## Appendix: Atlas of Maps

Map 5-1: Environmental Planning Criteria – Supply Watersheds, Groundwater Recharge Areas, Protected Rivers and Stream and Protected Mountains

Map 5-2: Environmental Planning Criteria – Wetlands

Map 5-3: Slope

Map 5-4: Floodplains

Map 5-5: Soils of Statewide Importance

Map 5-6: Forests, Recreation, Conservation Areas

Map 5-7: Historic Sites and Landmarks

Map 6-1: Approximate Water Service Areas

Map 6-2: Approximate Sewer Service Areas

Map 6-3: Community Facilities

Map 7-1: Road Network

Map 7-2: Functional Classification

Map 7-3: Daily Traffic Counts

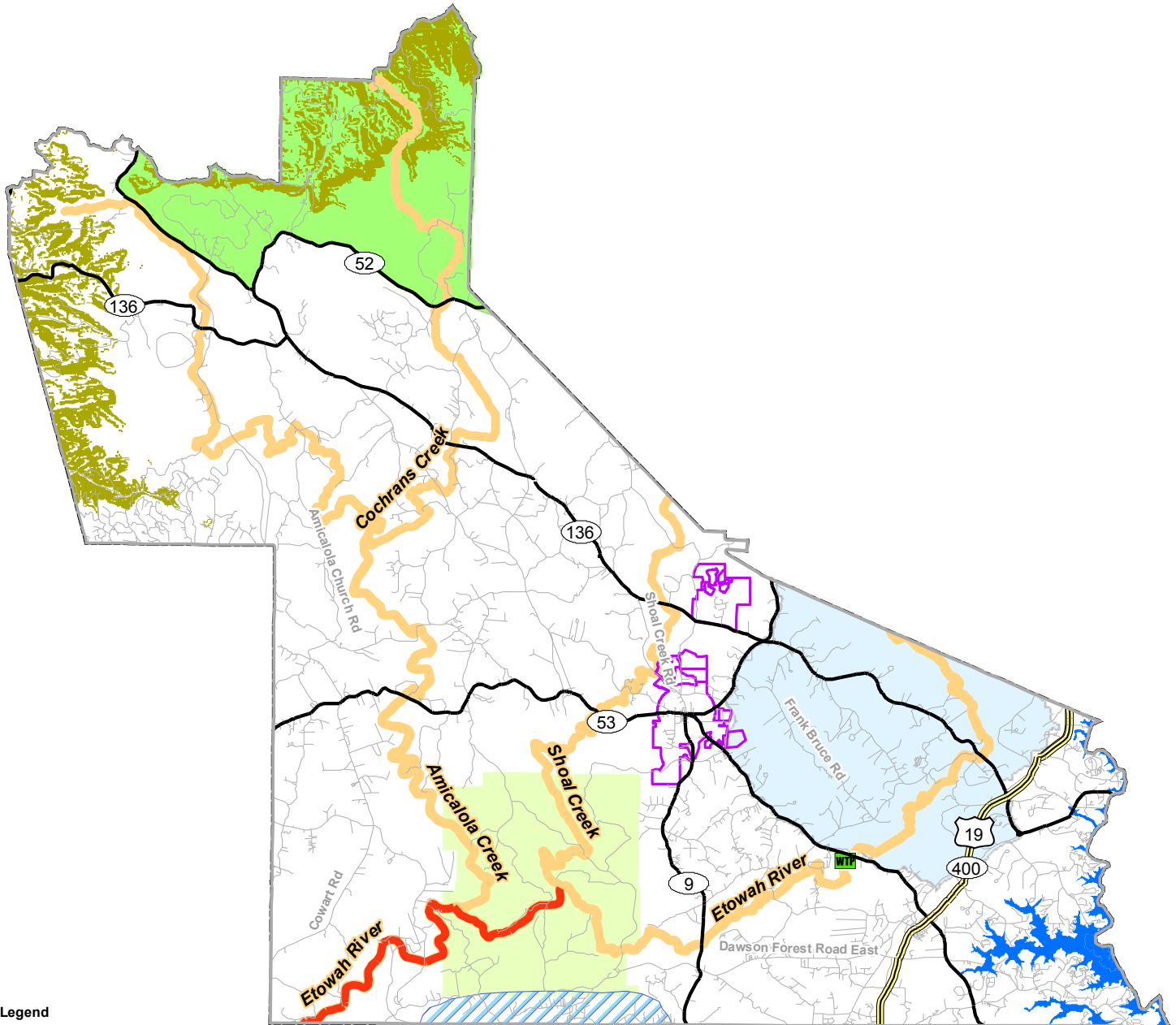
Map 7-4: Truck Routes and Alternative Modes of Transportation

Map 7-5: State Transportation Improvement Plan Projects

Map 7-6: Traffic Accident Types

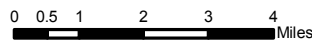
# Environmental Planning Criteria:

- Water Supply Watersheds
- Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Protected River/Streams
- Protected Mountains



**Legend**

- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- ROADS
- CITY LIMITS
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY
- WTP ETOWAH WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY TREATMENT PLANT
- PROTECTED RIVER
- HIGH PRIORITY STREAM
- ETOWAH RIVER
- PROTECTED MOUNTAIN
- GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREA
- WATER SUPPLY WATERSHED
- FOREST
- DAWSON FOREST WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



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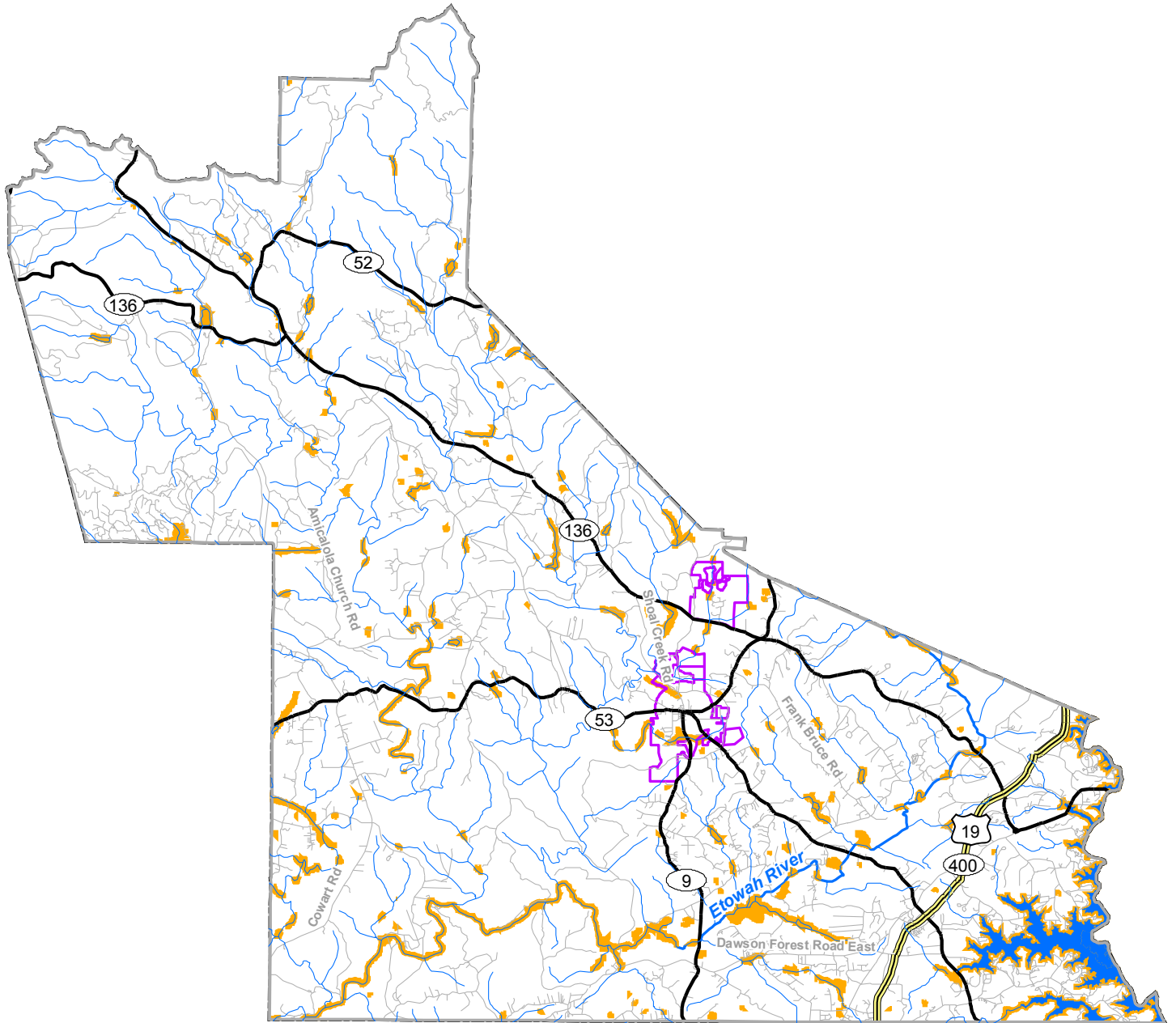
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2006 - 2026

Prepared by:  
THP  
Prepared by:  
MAS  
Project Number:  
6311060011

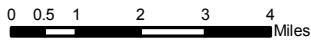
Map Number:  
5-1

# Environmental Planning Criteria

## Wetlands



- Legend**
- GEORGIA 400
  - STATE ROUTE
  - ROADS
  - CITY LIMITS
  - ETOWAH RIVER
  - LAKE LANIER
  - COUNTY BOUNDARY
  - NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY
  - RIVERS / STREAMS



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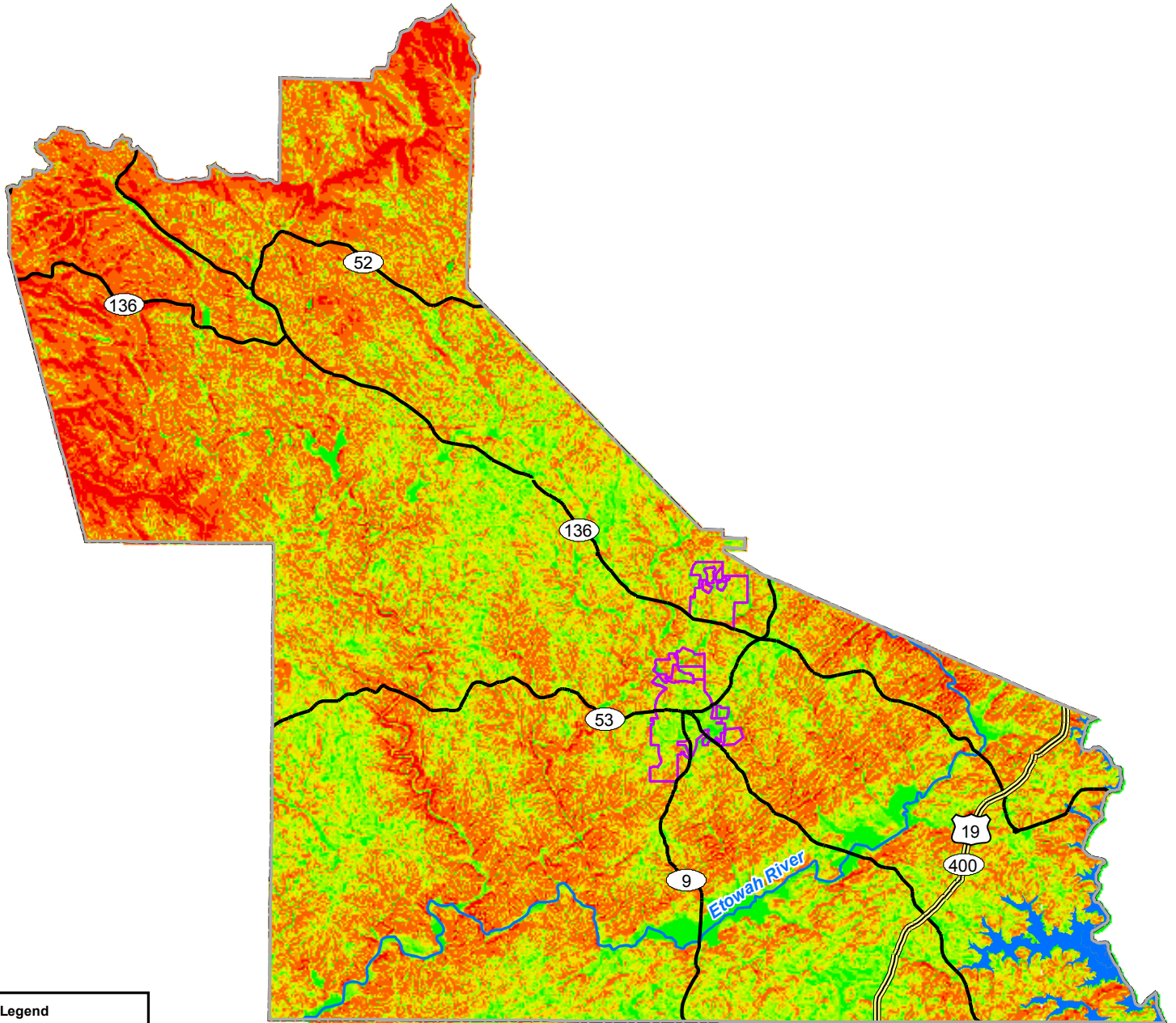


*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
2006 - 2026

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THP  
Prepared by:  
MAS  
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Map  
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5-2

# Slope

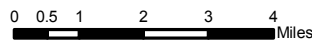


**Legend**

- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY

**PERCENT SLOPE**

- 0-5%
- 5-10%
- 10-15%
- 15-20%
- 20-25%
- 25-30%
- 30-50%
- >50%



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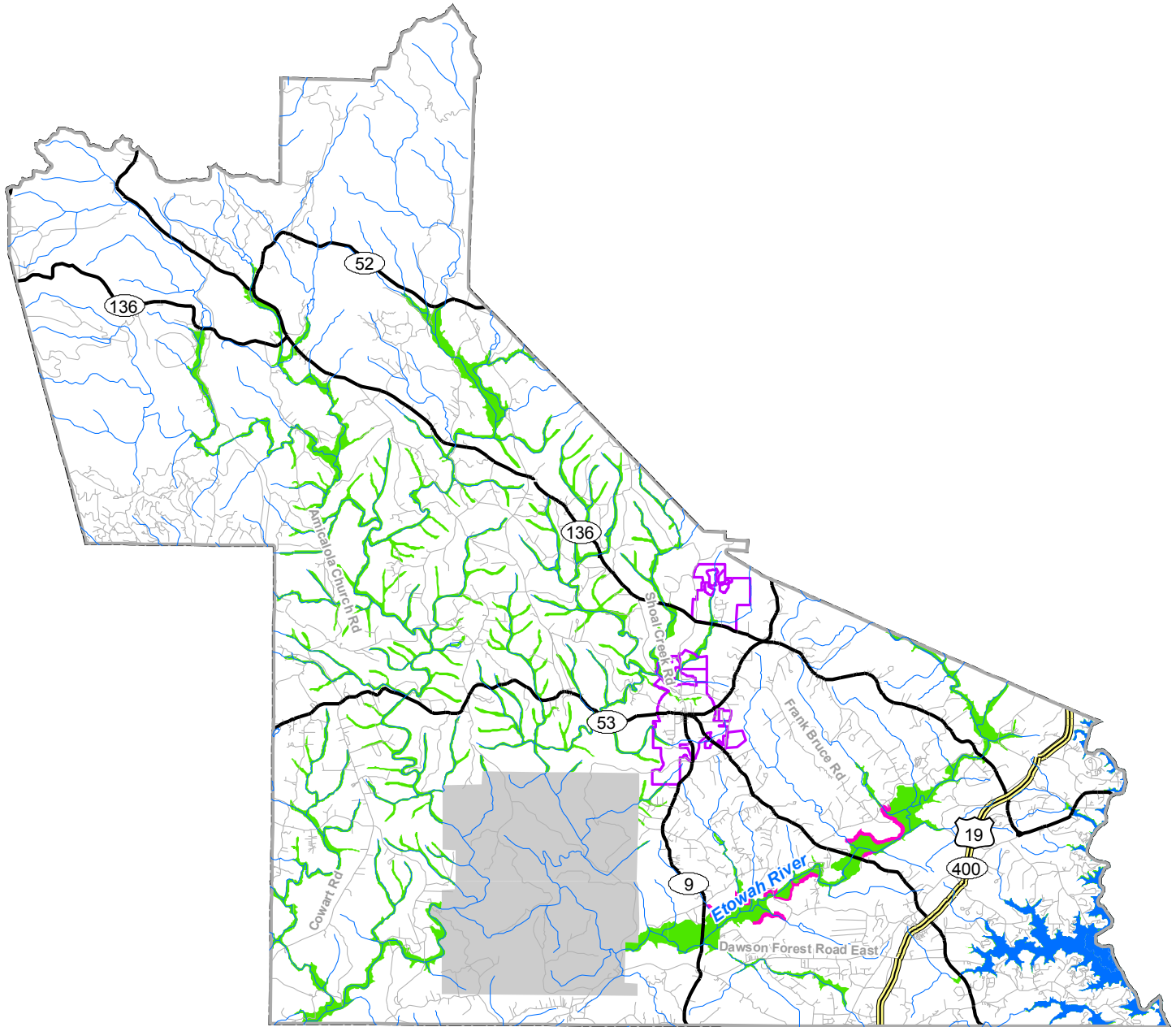


*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
2006 - 2026











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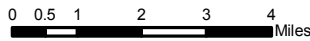
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5-3

# Flood Plains



### Legend

-  GEORGIA 400
-  STATE ROUTE
-  ROADS
-  RIVERS / STREAMS
-  CITY LIMITS
-  LAKE LANIER
-  COUNTY BOUNDARY
-  UNDETERMINED FLOOD HAZARD
-  100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN
-  500 YEAR FLOODPLAIN



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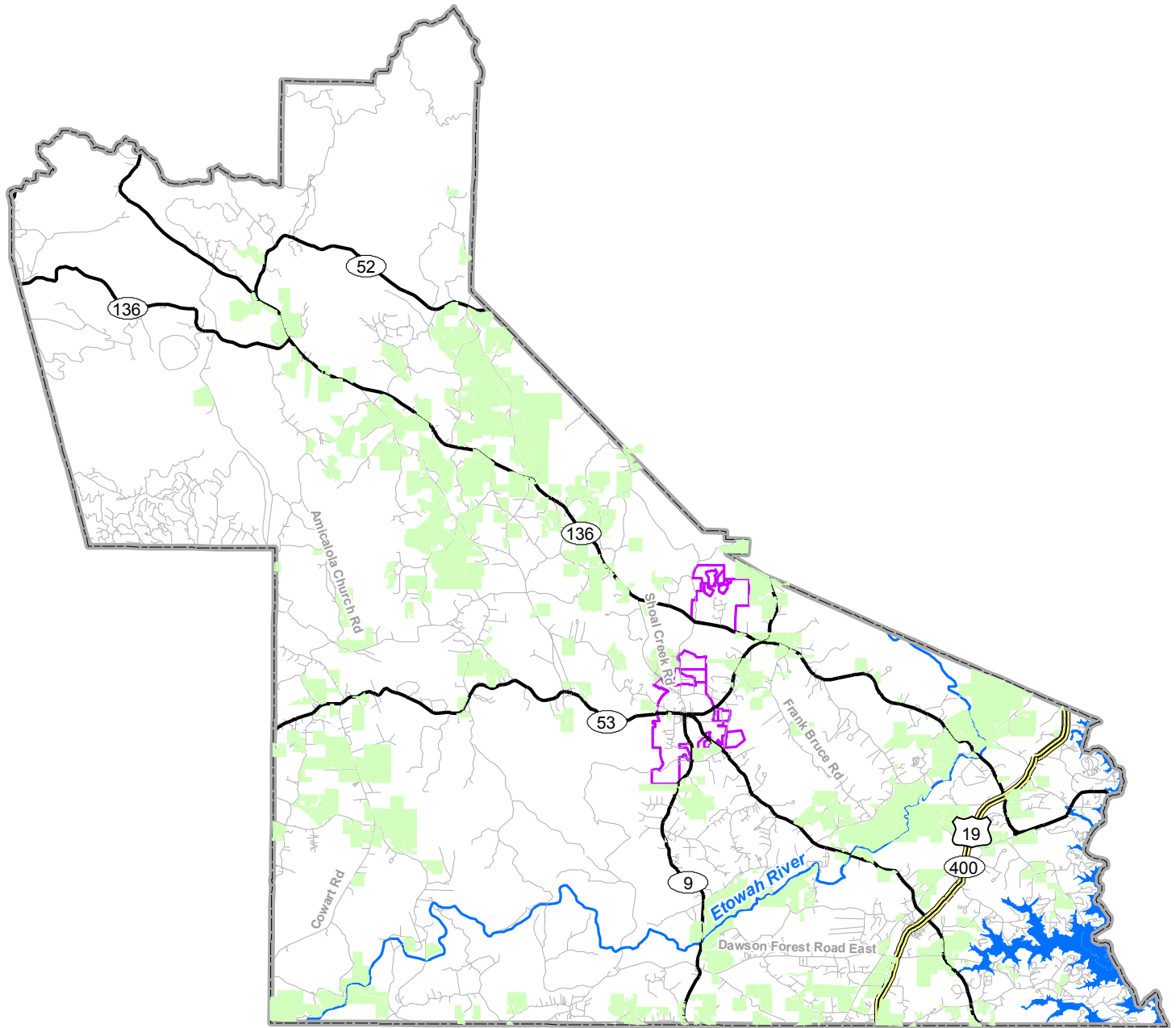
*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
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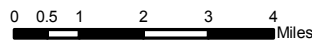
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5-4



# Soils of Statewide Importance



- Legend**
- GEORGIA 400
  - STATE ROUTE
  - ROADS
  - CITY LIMITS
  - ETOWAH RIVER
  - LAKE LANIER
  - COUNTY BOUNDARY
  - AGRICULTURE



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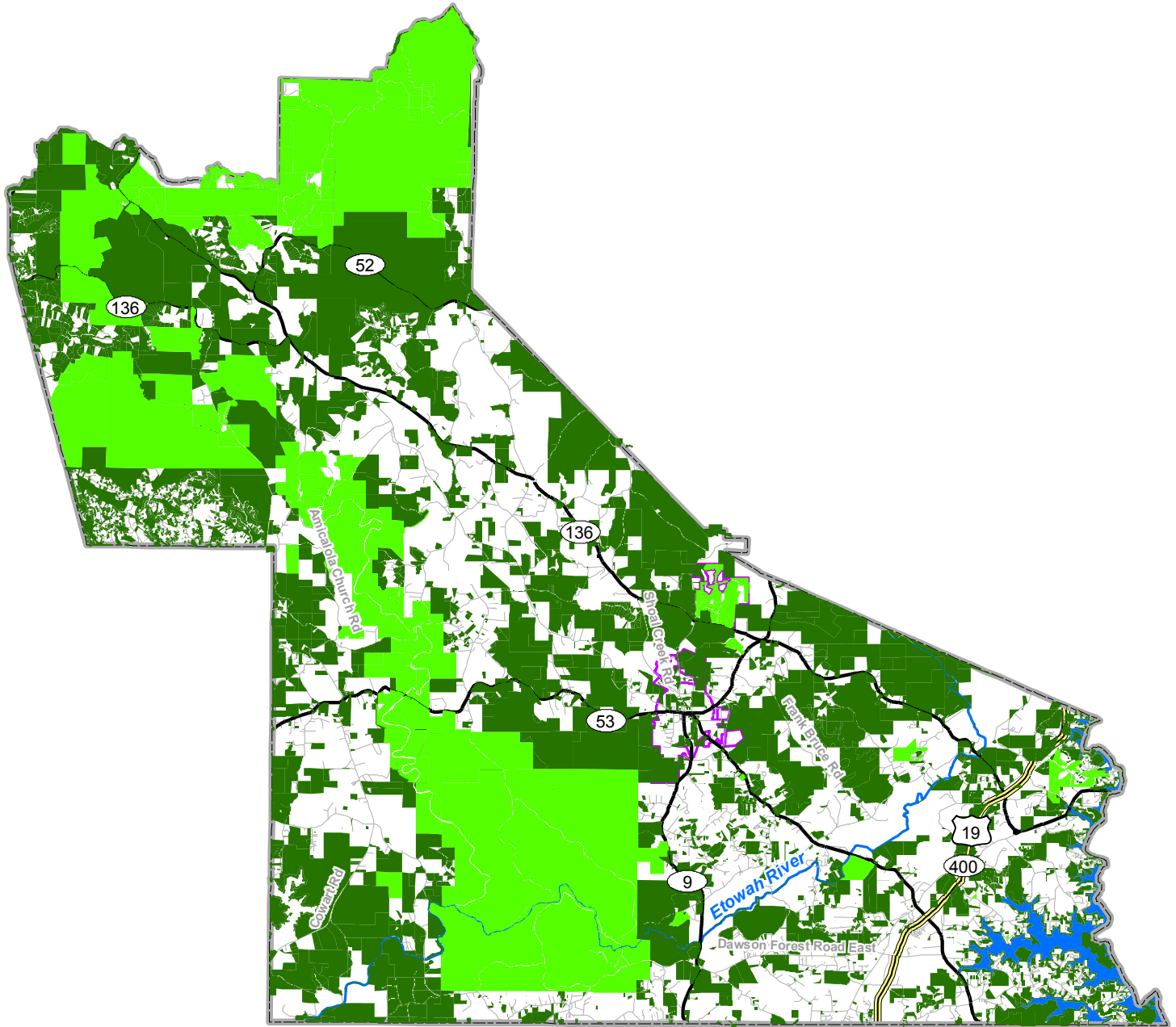


*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
2006 - 2026

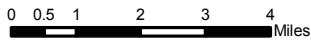
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Map  
Number:  
5-5

# Forests, Recreation, Conservation Areas



- Legend**
- GEORGIA 400
  - STATE ROUTE
  - ROADS
  - CITY LIMITS
  - ETOWAH RIVER
  - LAKE LANIER
  - COUNTY BOUNDARY
  - PARKS, RECREATION, CONSERVATION
  - FOREST



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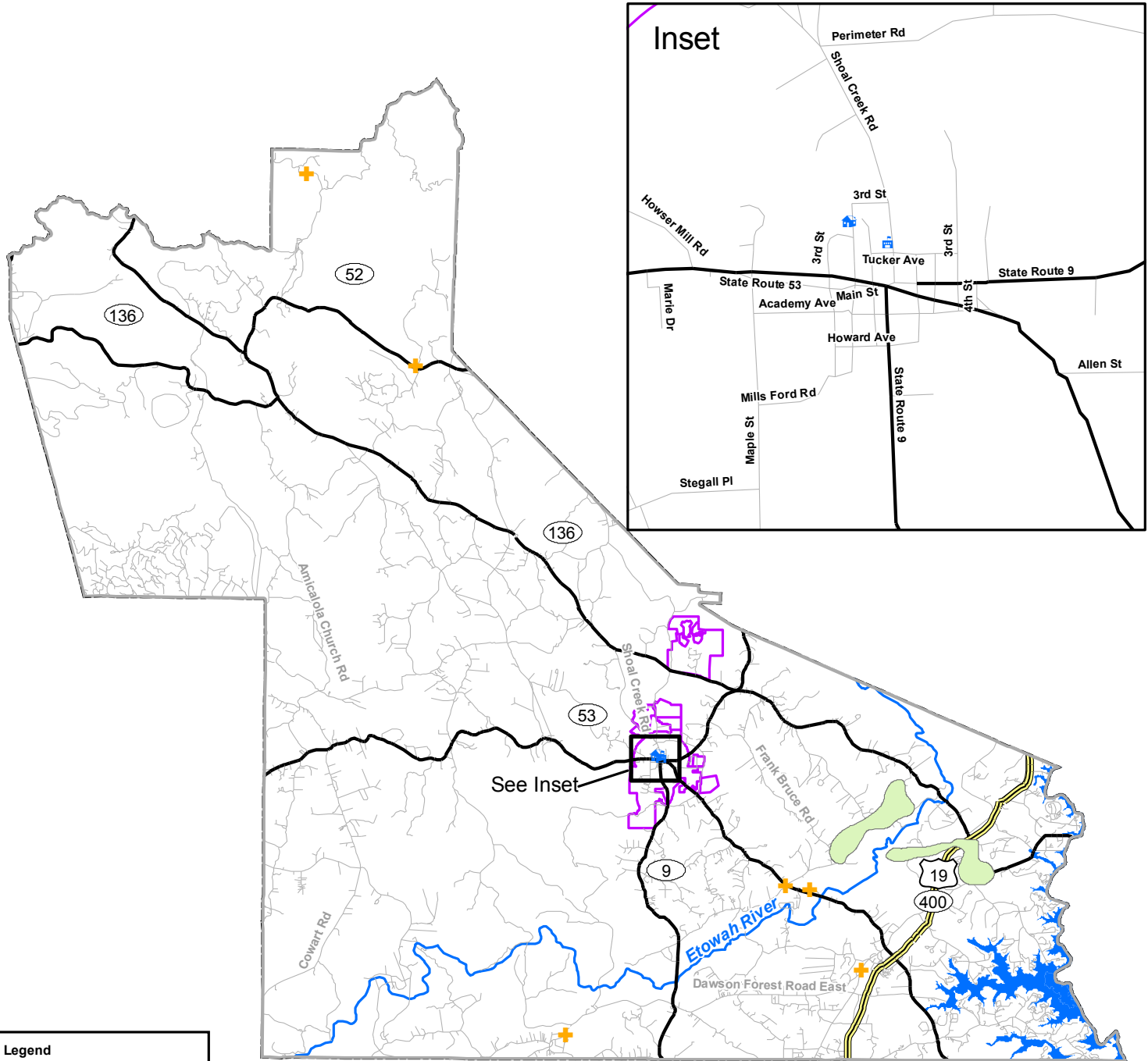


*Dawson County Comprehensive Plan*  
2006 - 2026

Prepared by: THP
Prepared by: MAS
Project Number: 6311060011

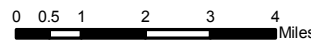
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5-6

# Historic Sites and Landmarks



**Legend**

- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- ROADS
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY
- HISTORIC SITES**
- DAWSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
- DAWSON COUNTY JAIL
- CEMETERY
- HISTORIC DISTRICT



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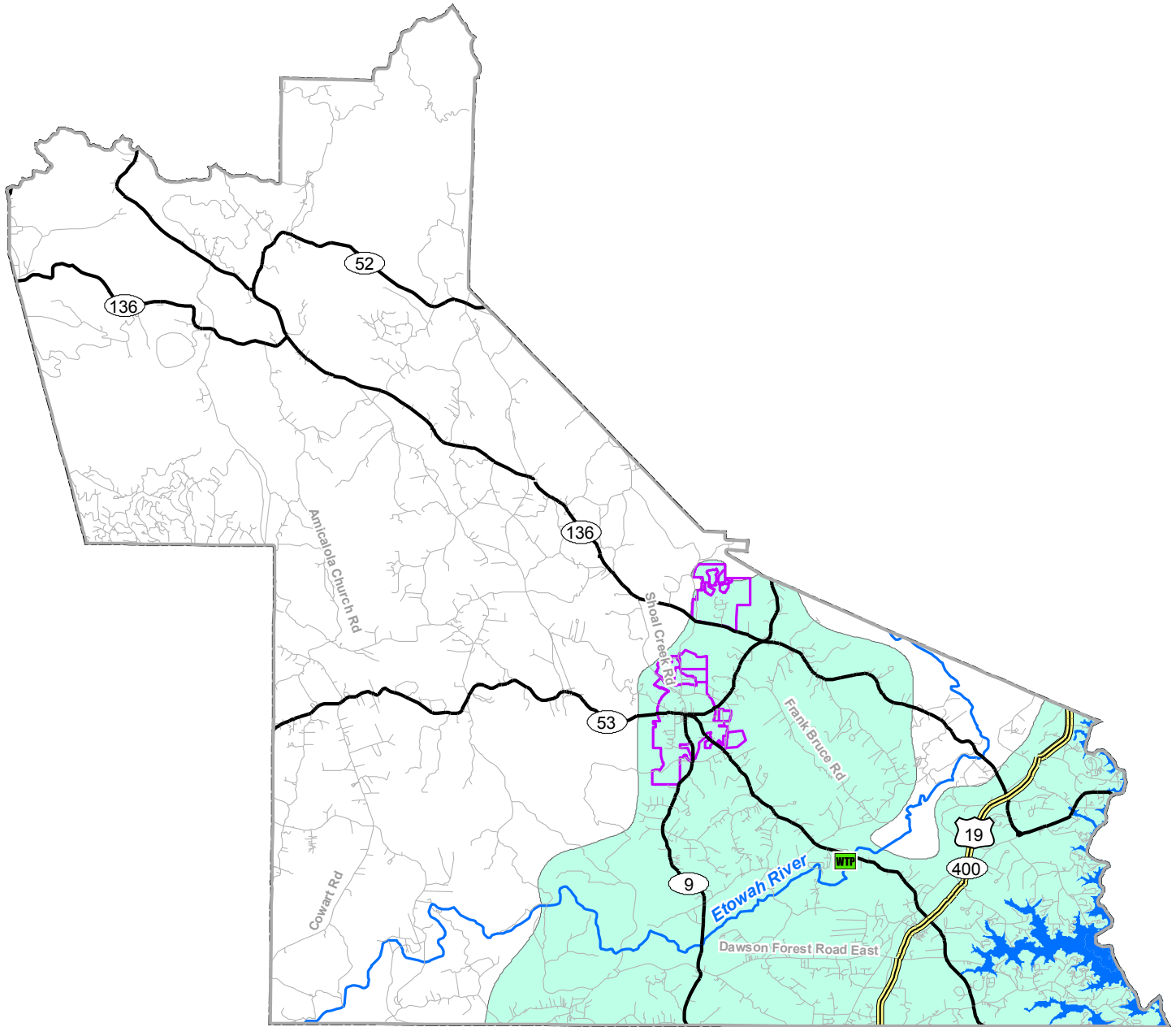
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MAS  
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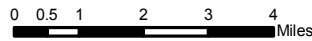


# Approximate Water Service Areas



**Legend**

-  GEORGIA 400
-  STATE ROUTE
-  ROADS
-  CITY LIMITS
-  ETOWAH RIVER
-  LAKE LANIER
-  COUNTY BOUNDARY
-  ETOWAH WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY TREATMENT PLANT
-  APPROXIMATE WATER SERVICE AREA



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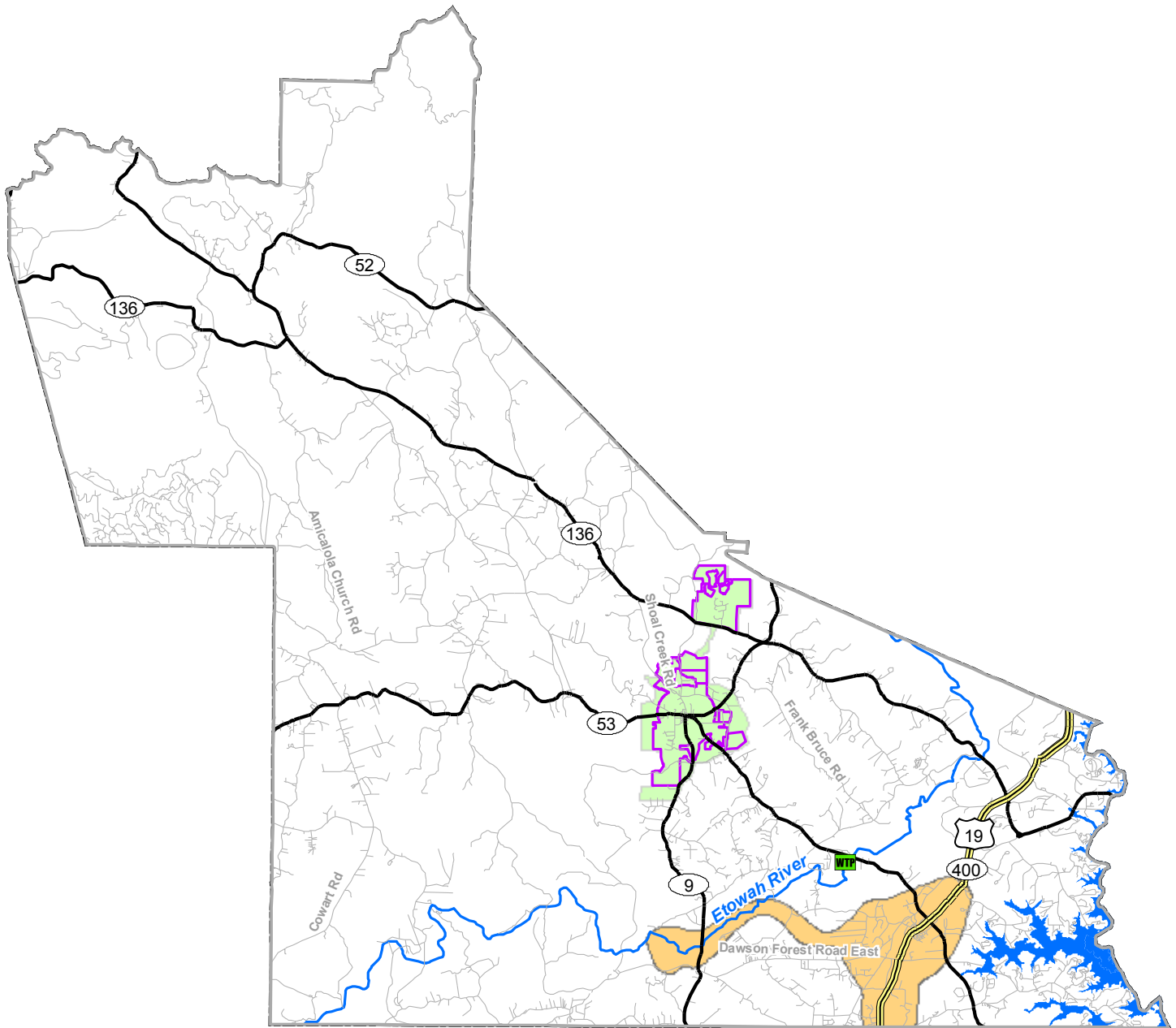


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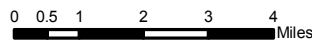
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6-1

# Approximate Sewer Service Areas



### Legend

-  GEORGIA 400
-  STATE ROUTE
-  ROADS
-  CITY LIMITS
-  ETOWAH RIVER
-  LAKE LANIER
-  COUNTY BOUNDARY
-  ETOWAH WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY TREATMENT PLANT
-  APPROXIMATE EWSA SEWER SERVICE
-  APPROXIMATE DAWSONVILLE CITY SEWER SERVICE



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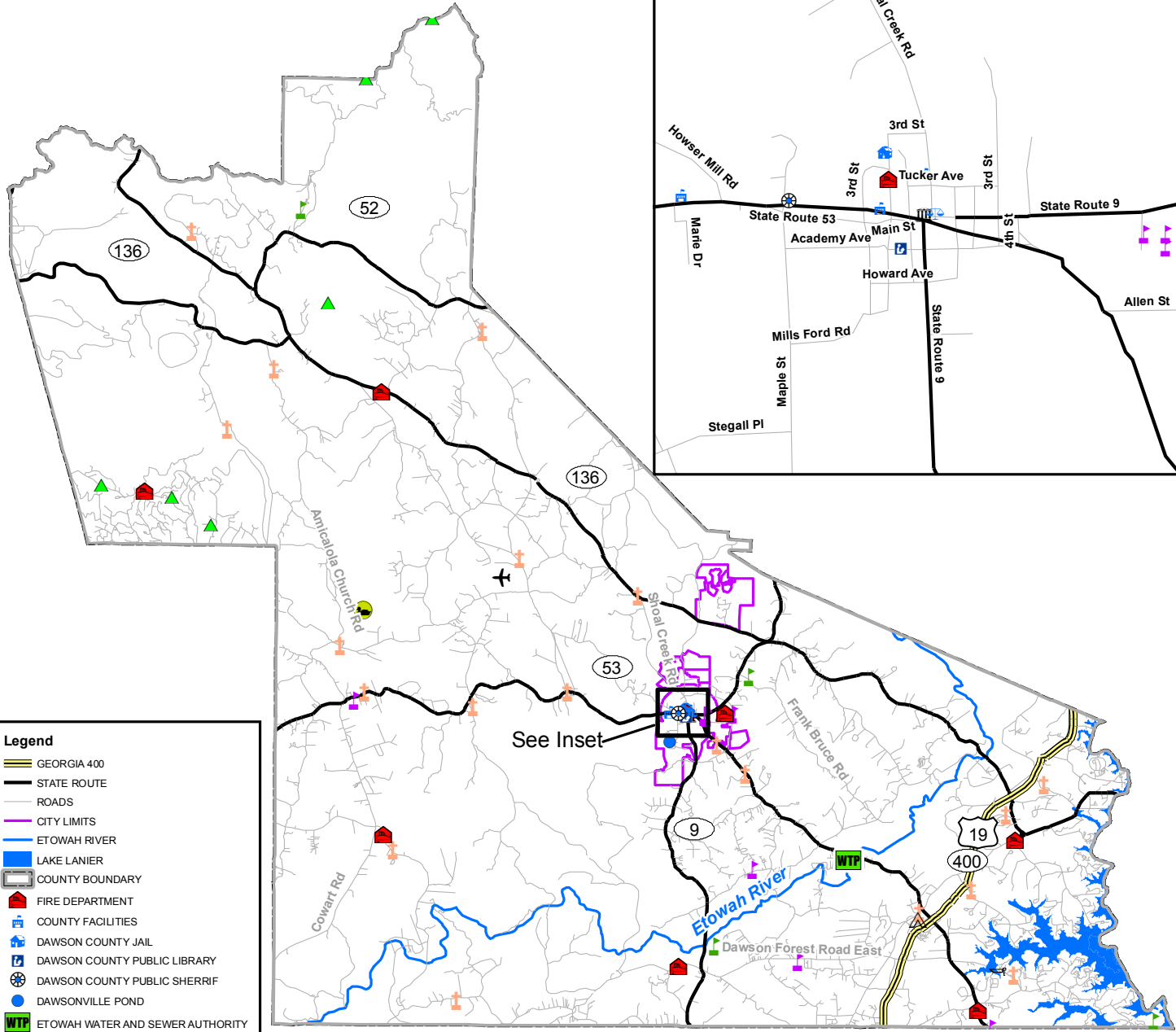
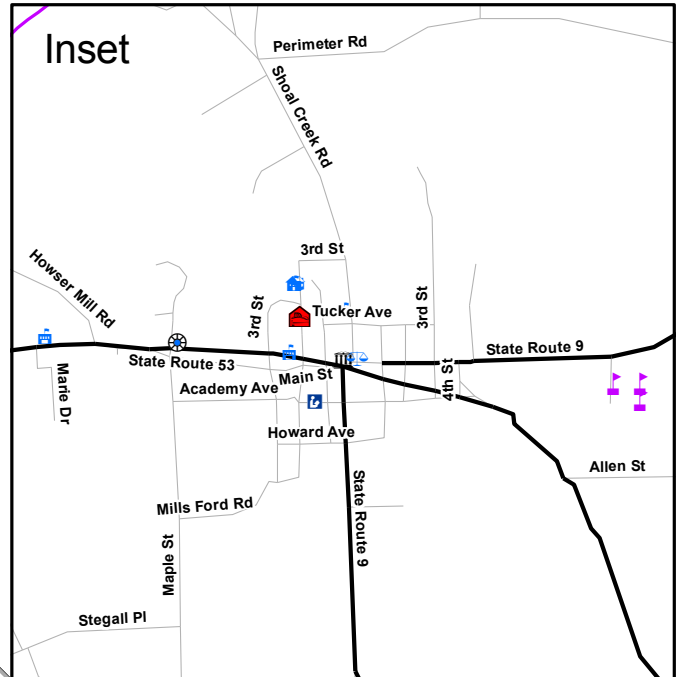


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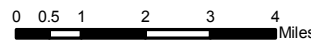
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THP  
Prepared by:  
MAS  
Project Number:  
6311060011

Map  
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6-2

# Community Facilities



- Legend**
- GEORGIA 400
  - STATE ROUTE
  - ROADS
  - CITY LIMITS
  - ETOWAH RIVER
  - LAKE LANIER
  - COUNTY BOUNDARY
  - FIRE DEPARTMENT
  - COUNTY FACILITIES
  - DAWSON COUNTY JAIL
  - DAWSON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
  - DAWSON COUNTY PUBLIC SHERIFF
  - DAWSONVILLE POND
  - ETOWAH WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
  - ELLIOTT FIELD
  - CAMP/CAMPGROUND
  - CHURCH
  - COUNTY SEAT
  - COURTHOUSE
  - LANDING/DOCK
  - PUBLIC PARK
  - SCHOOL
  - WILDLIFE AREA
  - SUMMIT



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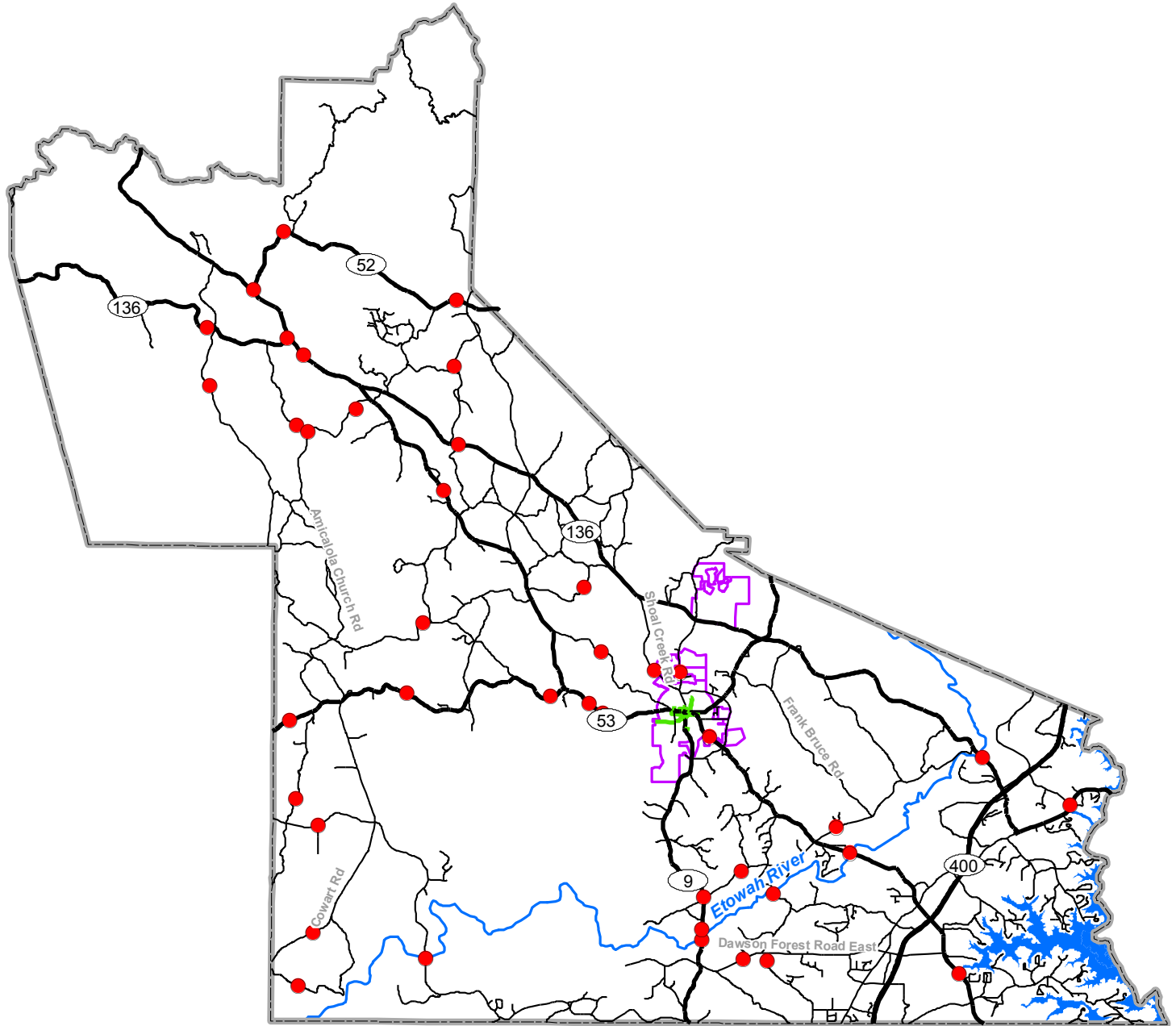


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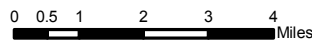
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Prepared by:  
MAS  
Project Number:  
6311060011

Map Number:  
6-3

# Road Network



- Legend**
- BRIDGES
  - STATE ROUTE
  - CITY STREET
  - COUNTY ROAD
  - CITY LIMITS
  - ETOWAH RIVER
  - LAKE LANIER
  - COUNTY BOUNDARY



Map Document: (P:\gis\Projects2006\Dawson\_County\REVISED\mxd\County\_road\_network.mxd) 6/14/2006 - 3:28:19 PM

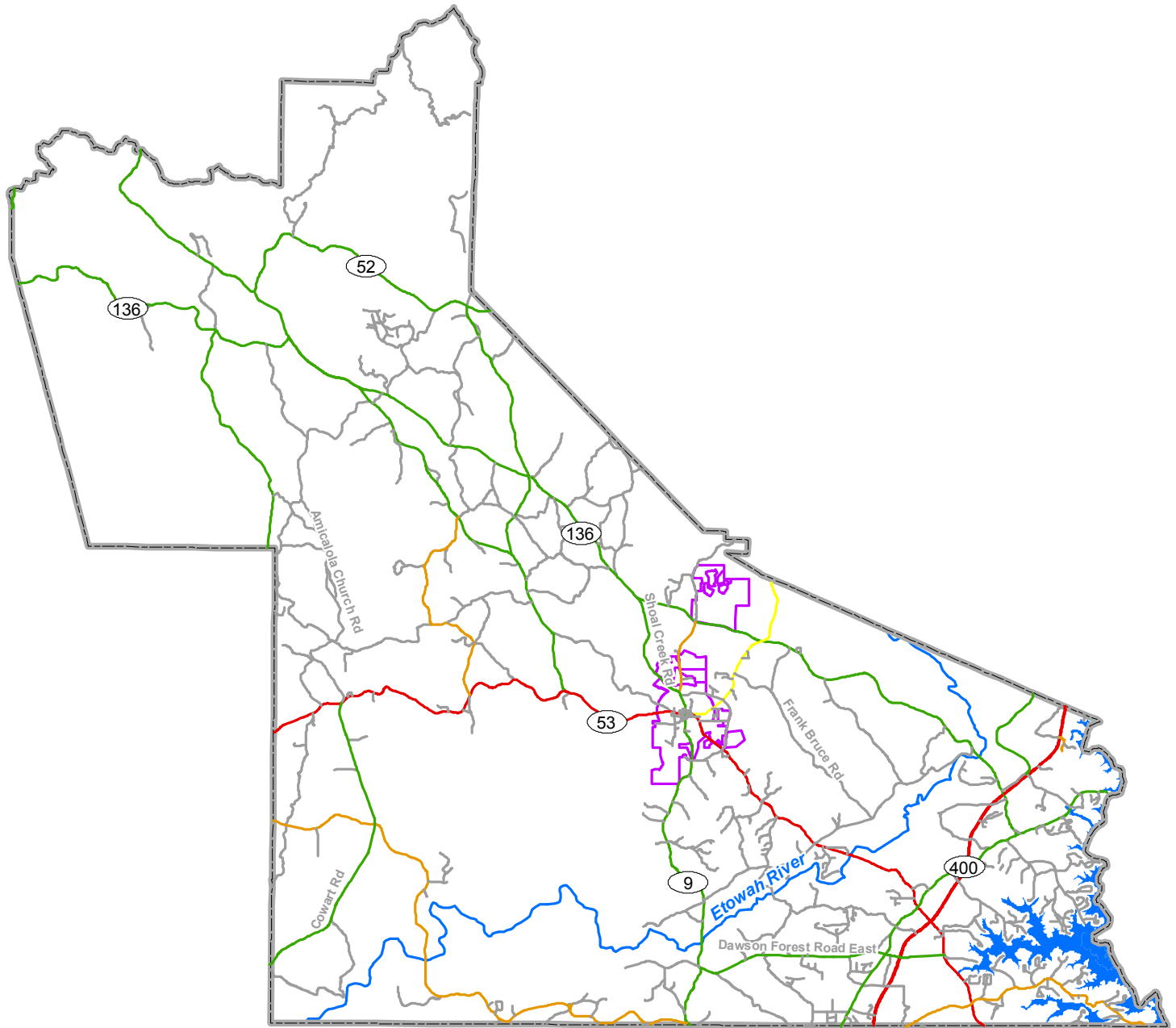


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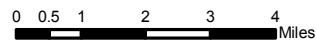
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SLW  
Prepared by:  
MAS  
Project Number:  
6311060011

Map  
Number:  
7-1

# Functional Classification



Legend	
<b>COUNTY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION</b>	
	MAJOR ARTERIALS
	MINOR ARTERIALS
	MAJOR COLLECTORS
	MINOR COLLECTORS
	LOCAL ROADS
	CITY LIMITS
	ETOWAH RIVER
	LAKE LANIER
	COUNTY BOUNDARY



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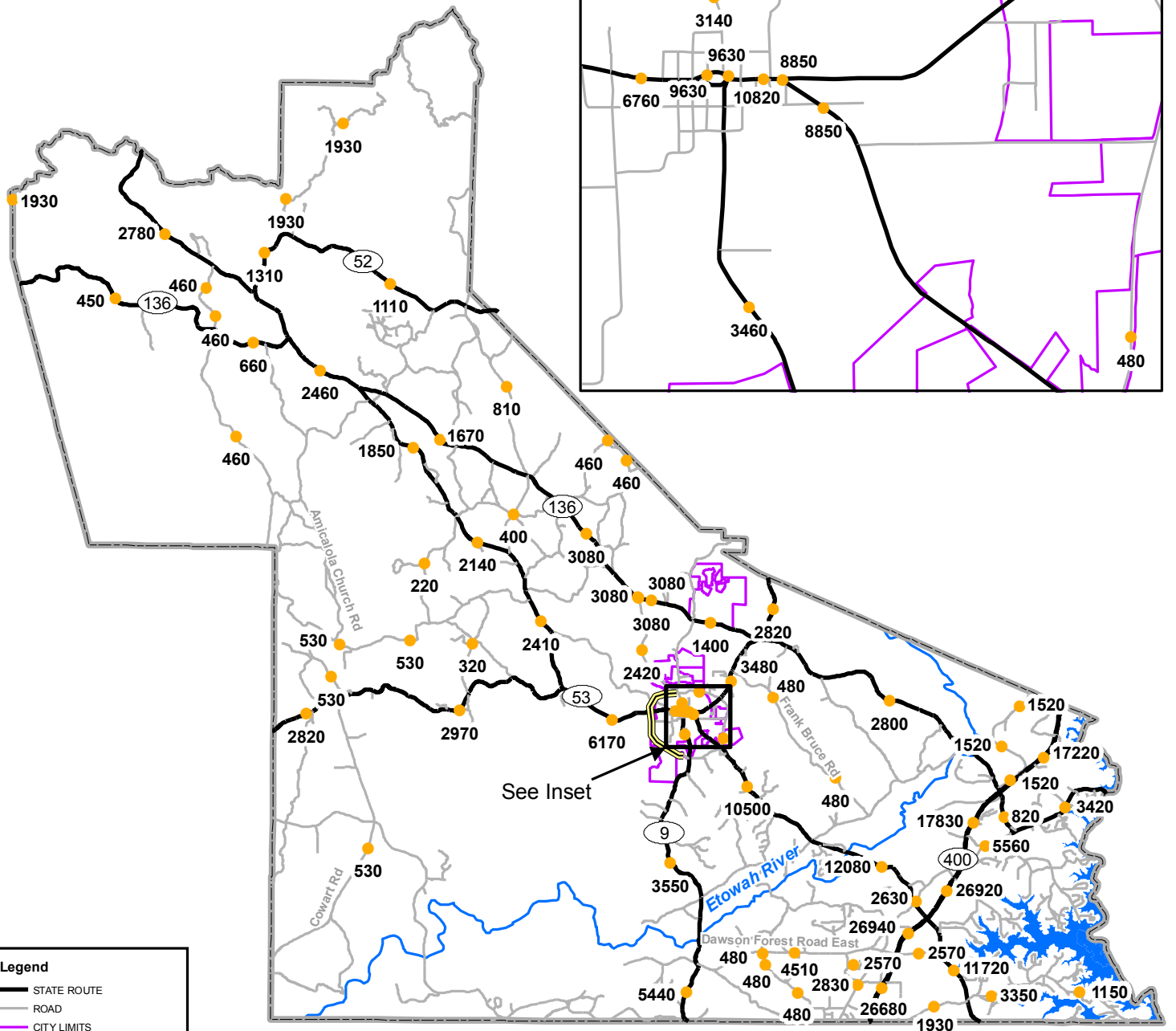
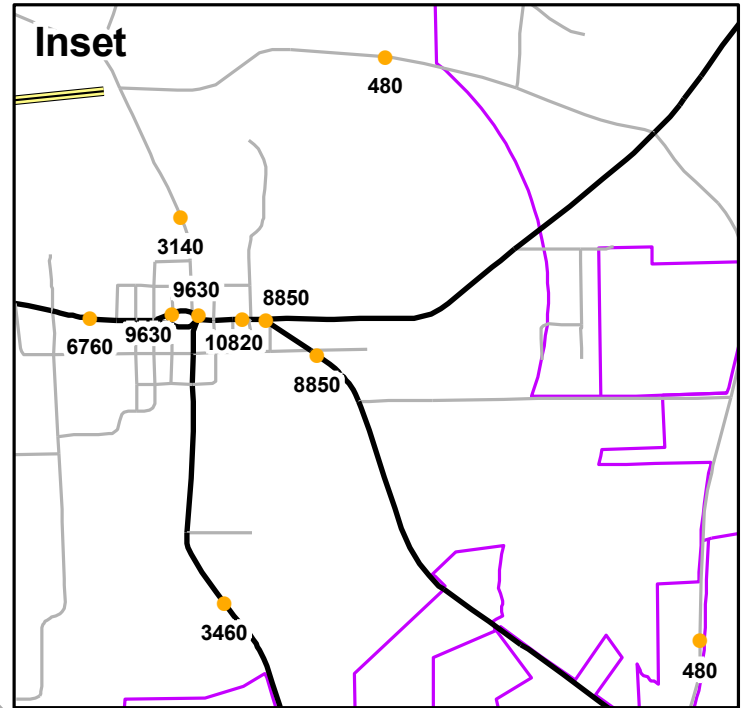


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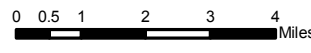
Map Number:  
7-2

# 2004-2005 Daily Traffic Counts



**Legend**

- STATE ROUTE
- ROAD
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY
- BYPASS
- TRAFFIC COUNT LOCATIONS



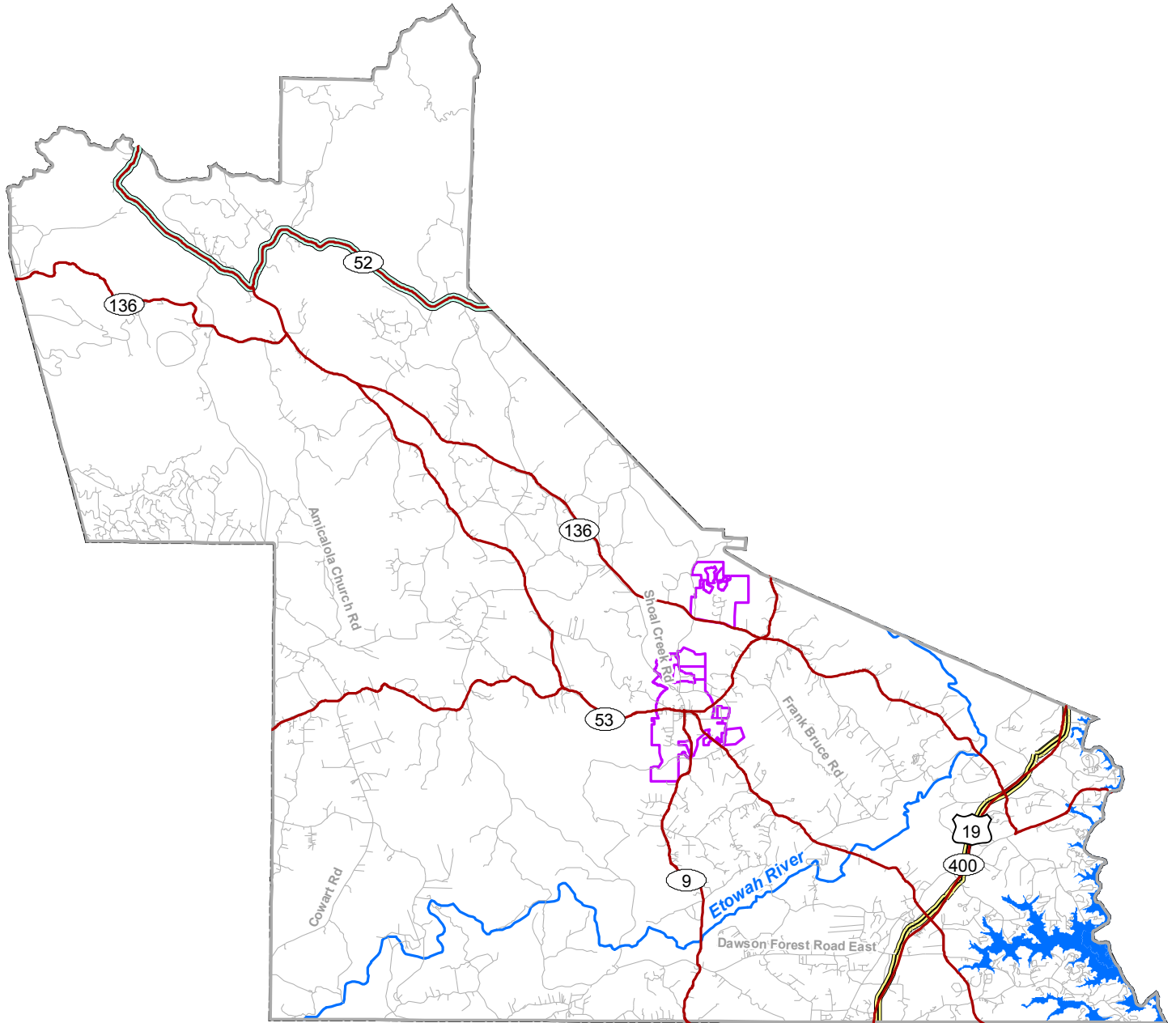
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Prepared by:	MAS
Project Number:	6311060011

Map Number:  
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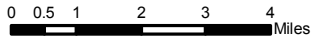


# Truck Routes and Alternative Modes of Transportation



**Legend**

- TRUCK / FREIGHT ROUTES
- n/a PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES
- BICYCLE ROUTES
- GEORGIA 400
- STATE ROUTE
- ROADS
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY



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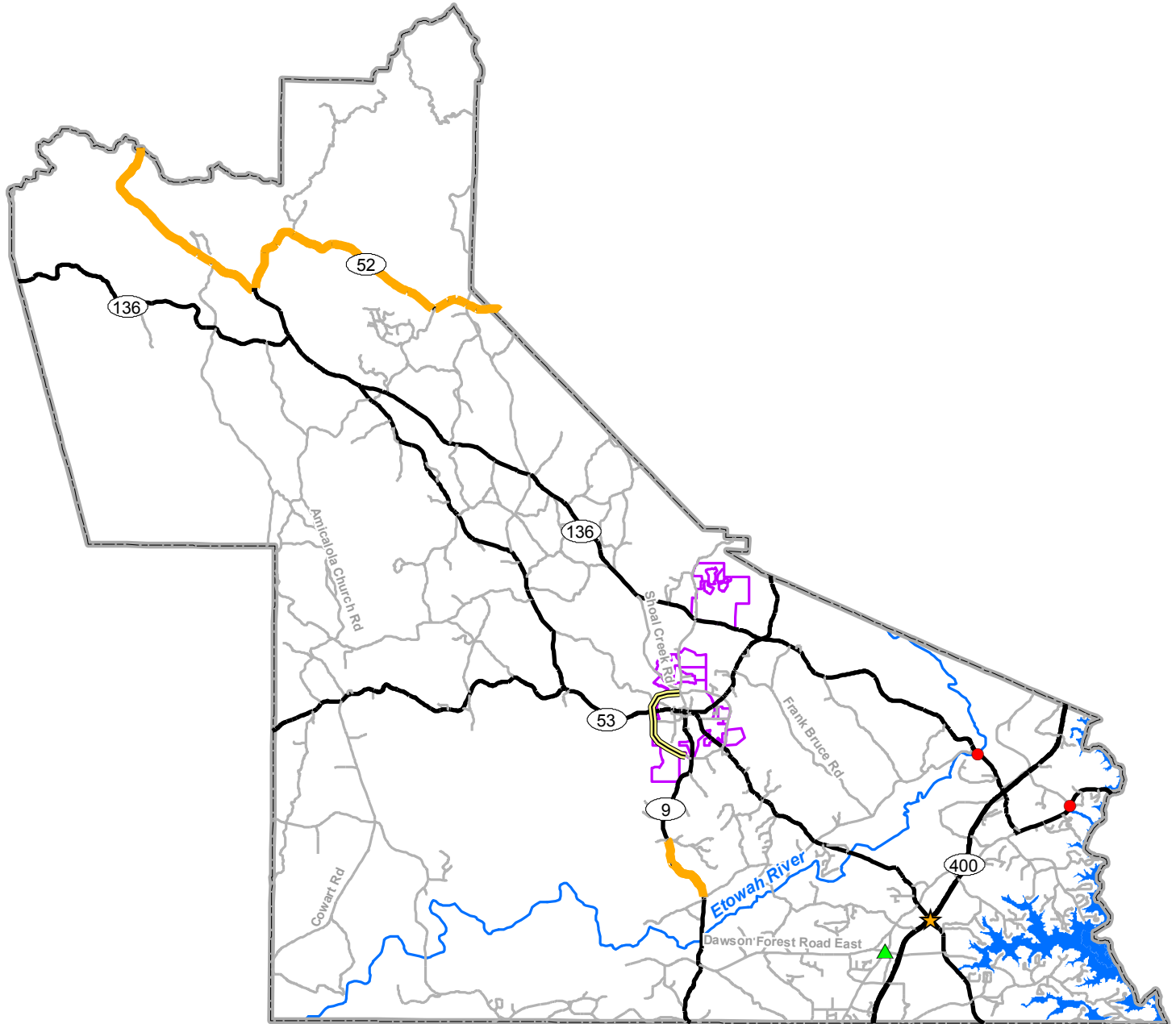


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2006 - 2026

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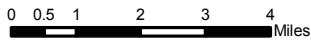
Map  
Number:  
7-4

# GDOT State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) Projects



**Legend**

- STATE ROUTE
- ROAD
- INSTALL PASSING LANE
- CITY LIMITS
- ETOWAH RIVER
- LAKE LANIER
- COUNTY BOUNDARY
- BYPASS
- BRIDGE REHAB PROJECT
- ★ INTERCHANGE RECONFIGURATION
- ▲ INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT



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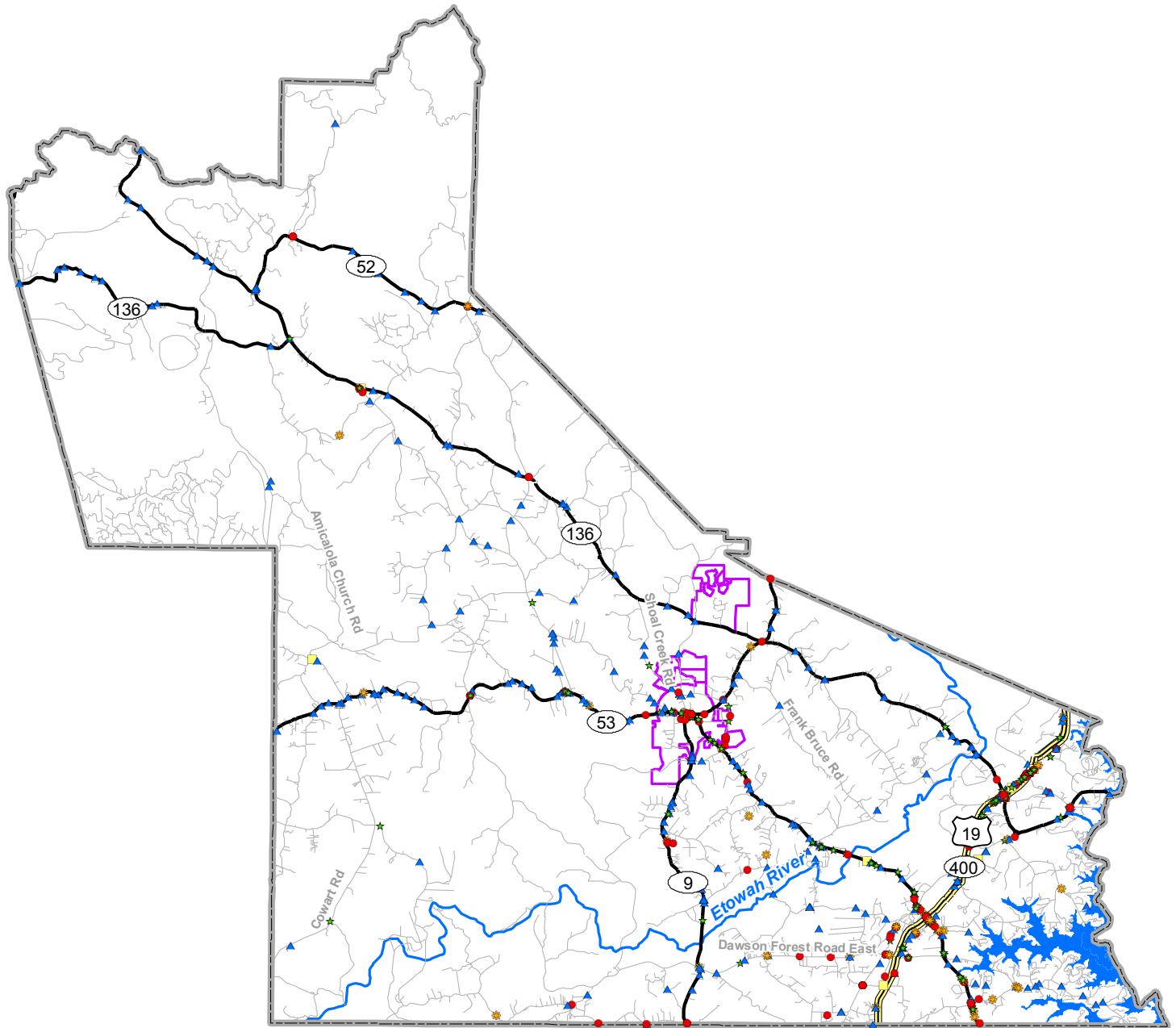
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7-5

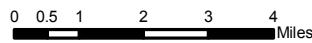


# 2003-2005 Traffic Accident Types

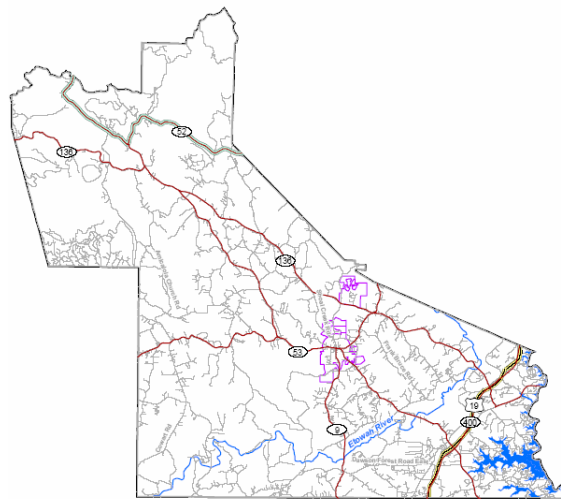


### Legend

- ACCIDENT TYPES**
- ANGLE
  - HEAD ON
  - ▲ NON-VEHICLE
  - ★ REAR END
  - ★ SIDESWIPE
- GEORGIA 400  
 STATE ROUTE  
 ROADS  
 CITY LIMITS  
 ETOWAH RIVER  
 LAKE LANIER  
 COUNTY BOUNDARY



**Transportation Element**  
*of the*  
***Dawson County Comprehensive Plan***  
**2006 - 2026**



**Prepared for**  
**MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, Inc.**

**May 5, 2007**

Prepared by:



## Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction ..... 1
- 2. Area Transportation Issues..... 4
- 3. Existing Conditions..... 6
  - 3.1. Roads and Bridges ..... 6
    - 3.1.1. Roads..... 6
    - 3.1.2. Bridges ..... 17
  - 3.2. Alternative Modes ..... 17
    - 3.2.1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities ..... 17
    - 3.2.2. Public Transportation and Services ..... 18
  - 3.3. Airports ..... 18
- 4. Travel Characteristics and Deficiencies ..... 20
  - 4.1. Travel Characteristics..... 20
    - 4.1.1. Model Development ..... 20
  - 4.2. Existing and Future Deficiencies ..... 21
- 5. Improvement Program..... 25
  - 5.1. Potential Funding Sources..... 28
- 6. Prepare Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates ..... 30
- 7. Alternatives Evaluation..... 33
  - 7.1. Air Quality ..... 33
  - 7.2. Wetlands and Environmentally-Sensitive Watersheds..... 33
  - 7.3. Acceptability to the Community (leaders, citizens, and merchants) ..... 34
  - 7.4. Demand for Alternative Modes Beyond the Existing Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Facilities (Connectivity Plan) ..... 34
  - 7.5. Compatibility with Land Use and Other Local Policies..... 34
- 8. Conclusion ..... 37

## List of Tables

- Table 1. Dawson County Functional Classification ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Table 2. Dawson County Traffic Volumes..... 10
- Table 3. Dawson County Roadway Inventory..... 10
- Table 3. Dawson County Functional Classification ..... 13
- Table 4. Dawson County Modal Split – Commute to Work Trips ..... 15
- Table 5. Dawson County Travel Time to Work Data..... 16
- Table 6. Dawson County Bridges in Unsatisfactory Condition..... 17
- Table 7. Transportation Implementation Program..... 31

## List of Figures

- Figure 1. Dawson County Road Network ..... 8
- Figure 3. Dawson County Traffic Counts..... 12
- Figure 4. Dawson County Truck Routes & Alternative Modes..... 19



Figure 5. Dawson County 2000 Base Year V/C Ratios ..... 22  
Figure 6. Dawson County 2030 V/C Ratios (E+C) ..... 23  
Figure 7. Dawson County 2030 V/C Ratios (Build)..... 24  
Figure 8. Dawson County Potential Connectivity Routes..... 36



## 1. Introduction

Located northeast of the metropolitan Atlanta region, Dawson County encompasses approximately 211 square miles in northeastern Georgia. Dawson County is bordered by Forsyth County to the south, Cherokee County to the southwest, Hall County to the southeast, Pickens County to the west, Gilmer County to the northwest, Fannin County to the north and Lumpkin County to the east. The City of Dawsonville, the County seat, is the sole municipality and is located in the southern portion of Dawson County.

Dawson County is home to many natural resource attractions such as Amicalola Falls State Park, the approach trail to the start of the Appalachian Trail on Springer Mountain, and the 23,000-acre Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area. These features make the county an ideal location for hunting, hiking, bird watching, camping, and fishing opportunities for those both within and outside the county. The significant inflow of recreational traffic contributes to the growth of Dawson County.

Dawson County faces many unique and difficult transportation planning and policy concerns. Most importantly, the county has experienced significant growth. Dawson County's total population has grown steadily since 1960, ranging from a 1 to 70 percent total growth per decade. According to the U.S. Census, Dawson has tripled in population since 1980 from 4,774 to 15,999 in 2000. In the decade from 1990 to 2000, the population increased by 6,570 or 70 percent. This is over 2.5 times the statewide growth of 26 percent. Growth rates experienced by Dawson County are commensurate with those in adjacent counties. In 2000, Dawson County ranked 95<sup>th</sup> out of the 159 Georgia counties in population. Future year forecasts by the Dawson County planning staff project that by 2030 Dawson County's population will grow to 71,600 (population used in the Comprehensive Plan Update), a 348-percent increase over the 30-year period between 2000 and 2030.

This growth is creating new, complex challenges to adequately address citizen and business mobility needs; these needs have motivated county officials to put additional emphasis on future transportation and infrastructure planning.

The county is not contained in the Atlanta Metropolitan area or the air quality nonattainment area and subsequently is not subject to federal transportation planning and air quality requirements. While Dawson County was not included in the 2003 nonattainment area recommendation, it is possible that it could be in the future. If that were to occur, the county would have to follow the same policies and procedures as the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) (demonstrating air quality conformity) and may add to the existing transportation challenges for Dawson County.

In 2004, Dawson County was included in the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) Multi-County Study. The County and GDOT partnered to develop a transportation planning process that addresses the unique and complex issues facing the county. In this study, GDOT introduced Dawson County to the same needs-based planning process used by other urbanized and nonattainment jurisdictions. By having this coordinated transportation planning process



already in place, Dawson County has the tools and structure to address challenges with any future federal regulations if the county was included in an urbanized/nonattainment area.

To be consistent, the goal of the Dawson County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element (CPTE) is to ensure that the county's transportation needs are met now and in the short-, intermediate-, and long-term future. The goals of this document are very similar to the goals from the 2004 GDOT Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):

Goal 1 - Improve safety, environment, and quality of life.

Goal 2 - Provide accessibility and mobility of people and goods.

Goal 3 - Promote the attainment of air quality in conjunction with neighboring counties.

Goal 4 - Integrate land use decisions with transportation analysis and planning.

Goal 5 - Develop alternative modes of transportation.

Once completed, the CPTE will provide sufficient data and analysis to determine long-range transportation costs to support any future transportation plans. Based on discussions with local officials, preliminary field review, and data collection activities, the following provides an inventory and existing conditions on the transportation infrastructure and facilities throughout the county.

Dawson County's transportation system consists of highways, as well as other modes of transportation. An inventory of existing conditions was performed based on available data and a windshield survey of the county. A discussion of the following transportation elements is included in this document:

- Public Involvement
- Data Collection/Existing Conditions Evaluation
- Roadway system/network
- Travel Demand Management
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities
- Land Use Coordination
- Funding Alternatives
- Functional Classifications of Roadways
- Traffic Volumes/Level of Service
- Freight Conditions
- Bridge Ratings
- Parking Facilities
- Public Transportation and Services
- Freight Movements
- Railroads



- Airports

The inventory of existing conditions was developed with information (field verified, where appropriate) from Dawson County, GDOT, Georgia Mountains Regional Development Commission (GMRDC), and the Dawson County 2030 LRTP.



## 2. Area Transportation Issues

Current and future needs for Dawson County were identified through two processes: (1) a quantitative effort examining transportation performance measures and determining deficiencies and needs and (2) a qualitative effort, primarily involving public outreach through meetings with stakeholders and the general public.

The Dawson County Comprehensive Plan (and related CTPE), as well as the 2030 Dawson County LRTP has generated significant input from public and community leaders regarding transportation needs and potential solutions. During this process, transportation issues included:

- Complete dependence on the private automobile for transportation;
- GA 400/SR 53 intersection improvements;
- Few sidewalks and walking trails;
- Little street connectivity;
- No street grid providing alternative routes for moving around the GA 400 area;
- GA 400 divides the area physically and doesn't provide for safe pedestrian crossing;
- No collector street plan to ensure that new development connects to other neighborhoods and nearby services;
- Need alternative forms of transportation;
- Need better overall traffic safety statistics;
- Need to look at the 'technological impacts' of traffic (ATMS, ITS, Traffic Cameras, etc.);
- Need to foster more GDOT coordination;
- Need to look at context-sensitive design for the county;
- The County Road Improvement Program is under-funded;
- Dawson Forest Road Corridor, from SR 9 west to County Line needs to be studied;
- A connector route needs to be in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in the northeast quadrant of SR 53/GA 400 intersection;
- Need for a county specific transportation plan and model; and
- Need to look for alternative funding.

In addition, the public/stakeholder coordination provided an assessment of the overall transportation network operations and opportunities in Dawson County. The assessment focused on potential opportunities to improve traffic operations and multi-modal access within the study area. The following assisted in the identification of appropriate opportunities and infrastructure features for implementation in Dawson County:

- *Installation of off-road bike trails and multi-use paths* – The 2004 LRTP as well as current stakeholder involvement has indicated the need for non-motorized alternatives in





Dawson County. Paths and off-road trails connecting to river corridors in the county would serve both a recreational and transportation purpose.

- *Extension of GRTA's Express Bus from Forsyth County into Dawson County/Opportunity for a park-and-ride lot* – Another feature of both current public involvement and the 2004 LRTP was the potential for express bus transportation to reach Dawson County. The GRTA Express Bus service currently ends in Forsyth County and, since many Dawson residents work in Forsyth, the extension of service in Dawson County via a park-and-ride lot is feasible.
- *Pedestrian enhancements at major intersections (crosswalks, signals, medians, etc.)* – This will should be a major part of any sidewalk improvement plan in the county. To meet the local residents' and stakeholders' expressed need for safer alternative transportation, pedestrian amenities are necessary. Specific locations for these enhancements are the major intersections along GA 400.
- *Coordinate all future developments (Developments of Regional Impact-DRI's, Planned Unit Developments-PUD's) with transportation* – Due to recent large-scale residential developments in the County, this measure is critical to having an efficient transportation network.
- *Scenic By-ways designation* – The County has one route on the state bicycle plan but still has several opportunities for this designation due to the many scenic features on county roads in the less populated areas. Coordinating with the state (GDOT) will be important in achieving this designation.
- *Establish an alternative, better-connected street system in growing areas* - The County can set connectivity standards for access points between land uses in developing to increase the overall efficiency of the street system by providing shorter, more direct routes.
- *Opportunity for access management techniques* – Access management helps to ensure that the relationship between traffic flow and the surrounding land use is efficient. It can also increase pedestrian safety and reduce collisions by the consolidation of driveways and curb-cuts.
- *Ensure that all roadway cross-section and intersection treatments should reflect the functional classification of the roadway and relative needs for access and pedestrian flow versus circulation* – Similar to access management techniques; this can facilitate a more efficient traffic flow and increase pedestrian safety.
- *Bypass/truck route needed around Dawsonville* – Discussed by the city and county, plans for this route are moving forward.

Another major issue discussed with the public/stakeholders and staff during several meetings involved the existence of recent and planned developments in the county. The concern was the status of the developments and how they will impact mobility in the county. The recent and planned developments include:

- Crystal Falls – 400-unit development located in the west of the county;



- Highland Point (off Carlisle Road), 150 +/- acres;
- 300-400-unit development on Dawson Forest Road;
- Sembler Retail Development; and
- Temple Inland Development

### 3. Existing Conditions

#### 3.1. Roads and Bridges

As mentioned earlier, Dawson County is located in the North Georgia Mountains and is bordered by Gilmer, Fannin, Lumpkin, Hall, Forsyth, Cherokee, and Pickens Counties. There is only one city in the county, Dawsonville, which is the county seat. GA 400/US 19 traverses the southeast portion of the county north to south and opens a gateway to the Atlanta region to the south, as well as Lumpkin County to the north.

From a regional context, Georgia GA 400 goes from Atlanta, at I-85, through Buckhead, Sandy Springs, Roswell, Alpharetta, Forsyth County, Dawson County, and Dahlonega. Like the interstate highways, it is a limited access road (with exit ramps instead of intersections), but unlike the interstates (which were renumbered by the Georgia Department of Transportation-GDOT in 2000), the exit numbers do not indicate mileage: they still go up sequentially. Once GA 400 passes exit 17 (SR 306), it changes from a limited access highway into an at-grade divided highway.

The southern section of GA 400 (from I-285 to I-85) was the last section to be constructed. It is the only active toll road in Georgia, after the F.J. Torras Causeway toll between Brunswick and St. Simons Island in southern Georgia was removed in 2003.

In addition to GA 400, roads important to the development of Dawson County include SR 9, SR 52, SR 53, SR 136 and SR 183. There are no interstate highways in Dawson County.

#### 3.1.1. Roads

##### 3.1.1.1. Functional Classifications

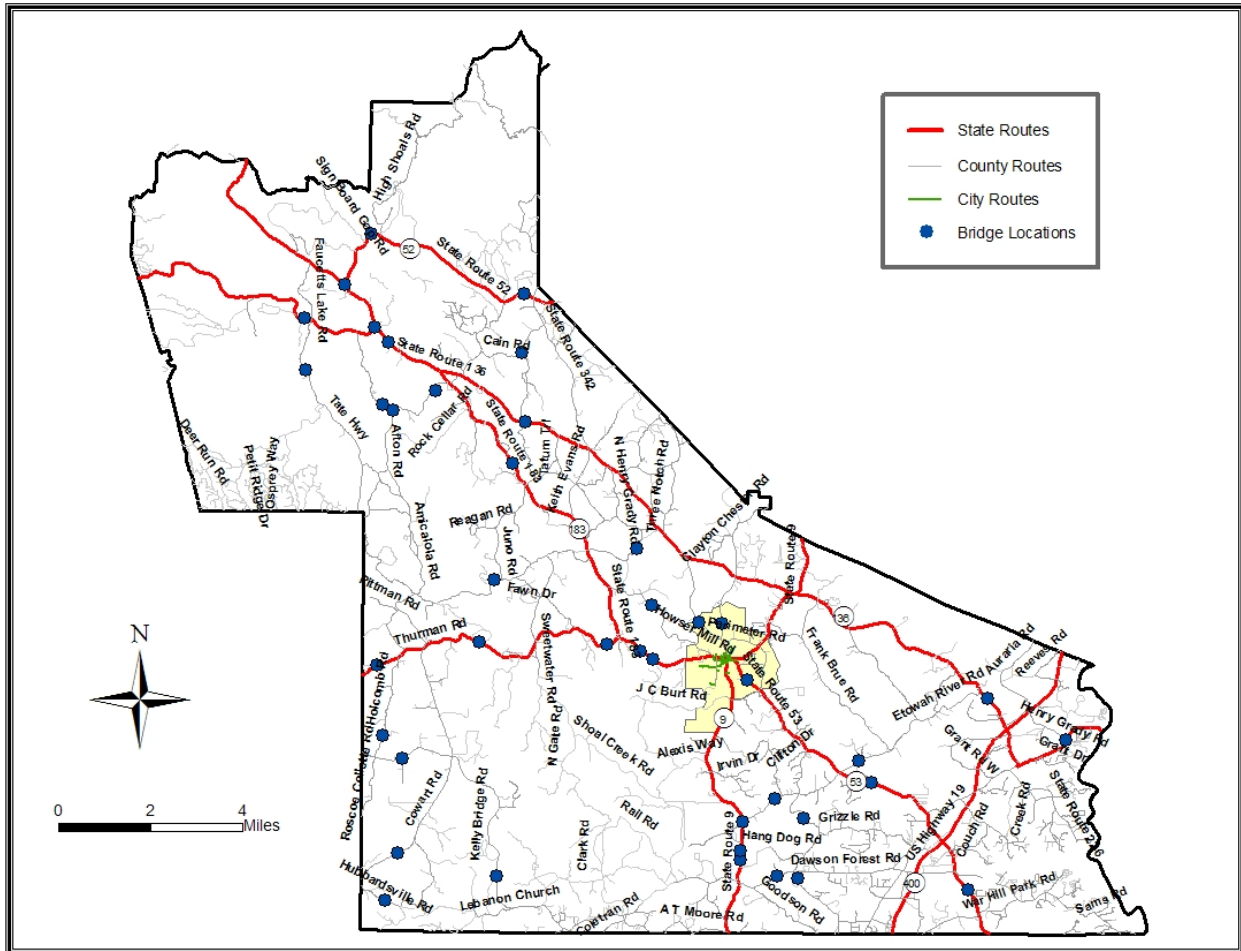
In order to determine the adequacy of a highway system, it is necessary to inventory roadways according to how they fulfill two purposes: (1) the movement of traffic and (2) the access to property. By assessing the degree to which a particular roadway serves each of the two basic roles, a functional classification can be determined. GDOT is responsible for classifying all roads in the public road system by their geographic location in rural, small urban or urban areas according to their character of service. Functional classification for each roadway in the network was obtained by using GDOT's classification system in order to accurately identify service characteristics. Using the 2004 LRTP as a basis, all roads in the county have been grouped into the following four functional classifications and are shown on **Figures 1 and 2** below.



- *Interstates* - Defined as significant highways that feature limited access and continuous, high-speed movements for a wide variety of traffic types. There are no interstate roadways in Dawson County.
- *Arterials* - Classified as major and minor, are roads that connect activity centers and carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds. The arterial system in Dawson County totals approximately 30 miles (26 major, 4 minor), 8 percent of its total roadway miles. Examples of arterials in Dawson County are SR 53 and SR 400. Arterials provide a high level of mobility and a greater degree of access control. The average annual daily traffic (AADT) on arterial roadways in Dawson County is 11,465 vehicles. The arterial system is significant because it accommodates a substantial share of the volume (an average of 11,465 vehicles per day, five times the rate of the collector system) yet constitutes only 8.1 percent of the existing roadway system.
- *Collectors* - Also classified as major and minor, collectors typically allow access to activity centers from residential areas. Their purpose is to collect traffic from streets in residential and commercial areas and distribute the traffic to the arterial system; they provide a balance between mobility and land access. The collector system in Dawson County incorporates 111 miles (88 major, 23 minor), 30 percent of the total roadway system, and has an AADT of 2,033 vehicles. Examples of collectors in Dawson County are SR 52, SR 136, SR 183, SR 9, and Sweetwater Juno Road.
- *Local Streets* - Feed the collector system from low volume residential and commercial areas. Local facilities provide a high level of access to adjacent properties but a low level of mobility. Usually local streets are found in subdivisions and rural areas. There are approximately 229 miles, 62 percent of roads, classified as local in Dawson County. The AADT on collector roadways in Dawson County is 599 vehicles.



Figure 1. Dawson County Road Network



### 3.1.1.2. National Highway System

The National Highway System (NHS) was established by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 to serve as a network of highways that could link together different modes of transportation such as: major shipping ports, airports, intermodal facilities, and public transportation. The linking of these transportation systems allows the NHS to form a quality system important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. There are no NHS routes in Dawson County.

### 3.1.1.3. Speed Limits and Number of Lanes

Speed limits and functional classification of roads are related. Posted speed limits throughout Dawson County range from 15 mph to 65 mph. Approximately 3.1 percent of roadway lane miles in Dawson County are signed for 65 mph speed limit, 26.2 percent have a speed limit of 55 mph, and 70.7 percent of roadway lane miles have a speed limit less than 50 mph.

Of the 370 total roadway lane miles in Dawson County, 89.5 percent are two-lane roads while 4.8 percent are four-lane roads; the remaining 5.6 percent of roadways represent other various lane configurations.

### 3.1.1.4. Existing Traffic Volumes

GDOT prepares existing traffic volume field counts and reports annual average daily traffic counts throughout the county. Historic traffic count data was reviewed to determine what changes have occurred recently. Due to variations in the yearly counts, three-year rolling averages were computed to aid in trend identification. The three-year, two-way traffic volume average from 2003 through 2005 was compared to the average of 2000 through 2002. The highest traffic volume changes occurred near county lines with Forsyth and Lumpkin Counties along GA 400. There were also significant changes on SR 53 east of Thompson Road and west of Sweetwater Church Rd. The range of growth was from 35 to 117 percent. Overall, the greatest daily volumes are found on GA 400. **Figure 3** and **Table 2** summarize various traffic volume changes throughout Dawson County.



**Table 2. Dawson County Traffic Volumes**

<i>Road/Route</i>	<i>Count Location</i>	<i>2000-02 AADT</i>	<i>2003-5 AADT</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
SR 9	South of Dawson Forest Rd.	4,340	5,440	25%
SR 9	North of Thompson Rd.	2,681	3,550	32%
SR 52	North of Ridge Rd.	1,198	1,110	-7%
SR 53	West of Sweetwater Church Rd.	2,530	2,970	17%
SR 53	East of Thompson Rd.	10,900	12,080	11%
SR 136	Shared section of SR183/SR 136	2,630	2,460	-6%
SR 136	West of Hall County Line	2,890	2,800	-3%
SR 183	North of Rowland Rd.	1,556	1,850	19%
SR 400	North of Forsyth County Line	22,530	26,680	18%
SR 400	South of Lumpkin County Line	13,490	17,220	28%

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Traffic Count Data

The existing roadway inventory with the number of lanes for each facility is shown in below.

**Table 3. Dawson County Roadway Inventory**

<i>Road</i>	<i>County Route/State Route</i>	<i>Number of Lanes (in each direction)</i>
SR 9	State Route	1
Etowah River Road	County Route	1
SR 52	State Route	1
SR 53	State Route	1
Thompson Road	County Route	1
SR 136	State Route	2
Dawson Forest Road	County Route	2
SR 183	State Route	1
Lumpkin Campground Road	County Route	1
SR 400	State Route	2-3
Cowart Road	County Route	1

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Road Characteristics (RC) File

3.1.1.5. Functional Classifications

Roadways can be classified according the function they serve with respect to accessibility and movement of vehicles. Functional classification is the process by which streets and highways



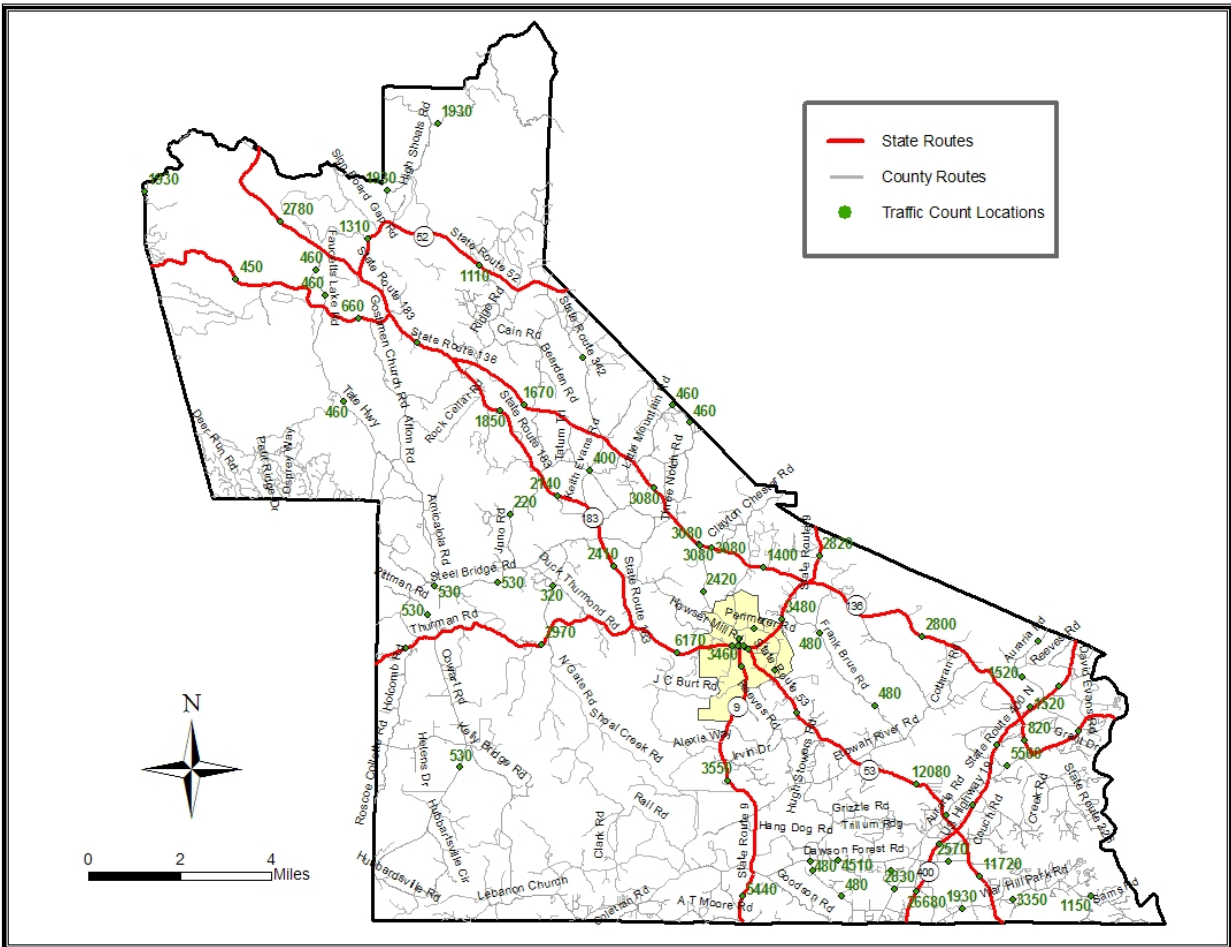
are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of traffic service that they are intended to provide. There are three highway functional classifications: arterial, collector, and local roads and all streets and highways are grouped into one of these classes, depending on the character of the traffic (i.e., local or long distance) and the degree of land access that they allow.

There is a basic relationship between functionally classified highway systems in serving traffic mobility and land access. Arterials provide a high level of mobility and a greater degree of access control, while local facilities provide a high level of access to adjacent properties but a low level of mobility. The collector roadways provide a balance between mobility and land access. The table (Table 3) and map (Figure 3) below shows the functional classifications for the roadways in Dawson County.





Figure 3. Dawson County Traffic Counts





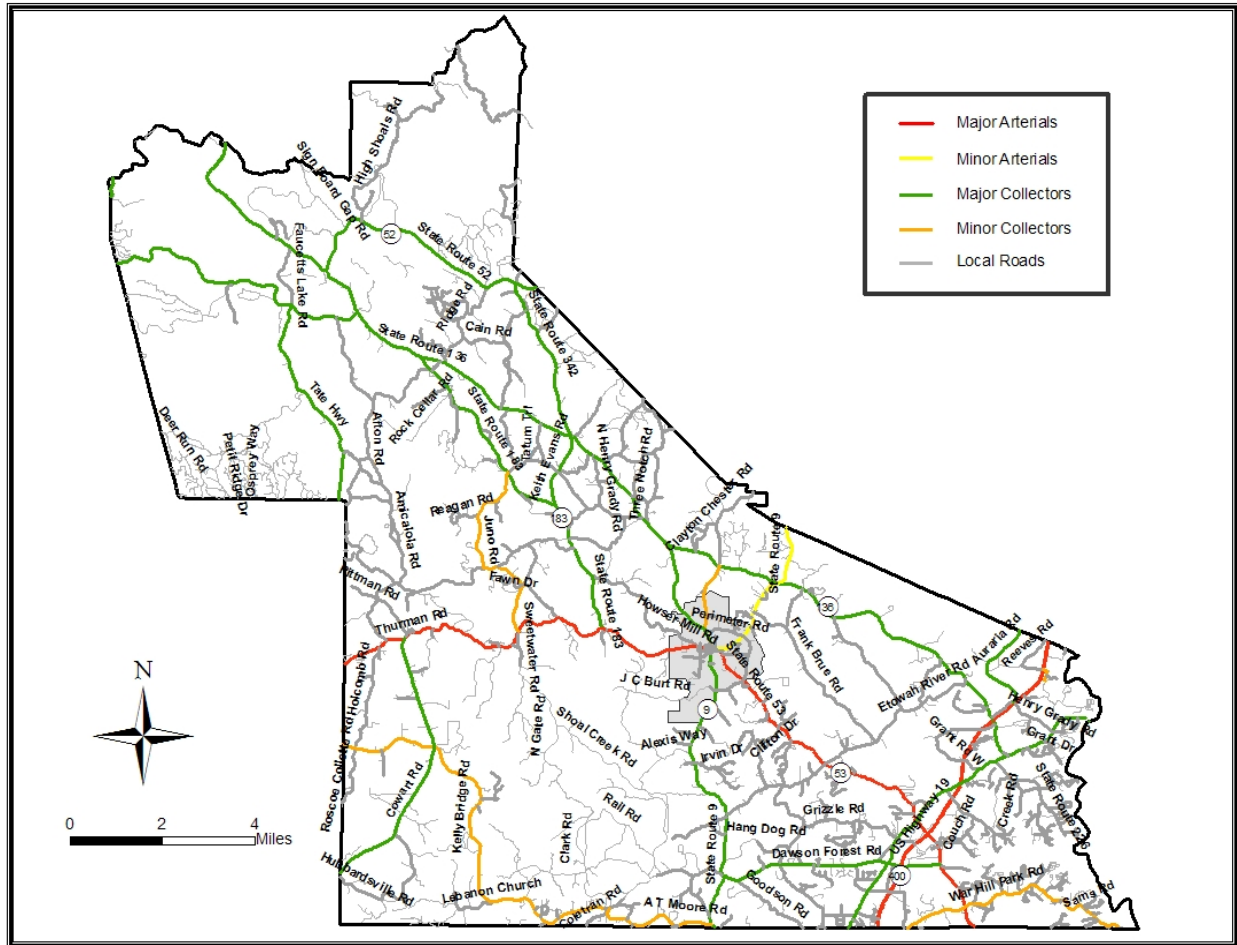
**Table 1. Dawson County Functional Classification**

<i>Road</i>	<i>Number of Lanes</i>	<i>Functional Classification</i>
SR 9	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
Etowah River Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
SR 52	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
SR 9 (Dawsonville to Pickens Co. Line)	2	(6) Rural Minor Arterial
SR 53	2	(2) Rural Major Arterial
Thompson Road	2	(9) Rural Local Rd
SR 136	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
Dawson Forest Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
SR 183	2	(7) Rural Major Collector
War Hill Park Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Burt Creek Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Lumpkin Campground Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
SR 400	4	(2) Rural Major Arterial
Cowart Road	2	(9) Rural Local Rd
Steve Tate Highway	2	(7) Rural Minor Arterial
A.T. Moore Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Bailey Waters Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Blue Ridge Overlook	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Grizzle Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Henry Grady Highway	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Hubbard Highway	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Industrial Park Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Keith Evans Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Kelly Bridge Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Kilough Church Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
New Hope Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Nix Bridge Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Perimeter Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Shoal Creek Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Sweetwater Juno Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector
Thompson Creek Park Road	2	(8) Rural Minor Collector

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation Road Characteristics (RC) File & Dawson County Transportation Improvement Plan (HDR/W.L. Jorden, 2000)



Figure 2. Dawson County Functional Classification



3.1.1.6. Traffic Conditions

According to the 2000 Census, over 2,786 of the 8,082 (52 percent) Dawson County residents age 16 and over worked in the county; approximately 2,491 workers from neighboring counties traveled to Dawson for work. Of the approximately 5,296 Dawson residents working in neighboring counties, the majority (approximately 47 percent) commuted to Forsyth, Fulton, Hall, and Gwinnett Counties. Daily work trips are especially important to the overall transportation system and its efficiency because the majority of work-related travel occurs during peak demand periods.

Analysis of the various modes used to commute to work is necessary to plan accordingly. As demonstrated in Tables 4 and 5 below, Dawson County’s mode split follows state trends. Higher percentages of workers are driving alone and working at home, while fewer persons are carpooling and walking. Mean travel time to work increased at a similar percentage as statewide, but the total number of workers in Dawson increased by 76 percent as opposed to the statewide average (23.4 percent). Predominate use of single occupancy vehicles (SOV) generally increases congestion.

**Table 4. Dawson County Modal Split – Commute to Work Trips**

	<i>Georgia 1990</i>	<i>Georgia 2000</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Dawson 1990</i>	<i>Dawson 2000</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Workers 16 years and over	3,106,393	3,832,805	23.4%	4,592	8,082	76%
Drove alone	76.6%	77.5%	1.2%	75.4%	78.9	4.6%
Carpooled	15.1%	14.5%	-4.0%	18.6%	15.0%	-19.4%
Public transportation	2.8%	2.3%	-17.9%	0.5%	0.0%	-100%
Bicycled or Walked	2.5%	1.9%	-24.0%	1.3%	1.6%	23.1%
Motorcycle or Other	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.3%	-70%
Worked at home	2.1%	2.8%	33.3%	3.2%	4.2%	31.3%
Mean travel time to work (min.)	22.7	27.7	22%	32.4	34.0	4.9%

Source: US Census 1990 and 2000



**Table 5. Dawson County Travel Time to Work Data**

	<i>Dawson County</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8,082</b>	
Did not work at home:	7,743	96%
Less than 5 minutes	225	3%
5 to 9 minutes	640	8%
10 to 14 minutes	594	7%
15 to 19 minutes	744	9%
20 to 24 minutes	780	10%
25 to 29 minutes	601	7%
30 to 34 minutes	1,271	16%
35 to 39 minutes	282	3%
40 to 44 minutes	286	4%
45 to 59 minutes	1,075	13%
60 to 89 minutes	918	11%
90 or more minutes	327	4%
Worked at home	339	4%

*Note: Travel Time to Work for Workers 16 Years and Over [15] - Universe: Workers 16 years and over  
Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census*

*3.1.1.7. Road Freight*

Several state highways serve Dawson County. A number of these are suitable for over-the-road freight movement (trucks). GA 400 serves as the primary freight route through the county and is designated as an oversized truck route by GDOT. Other facilities in the county designated as oversized truck routes include:

- SR 53 from the western county line to the southern county line
- SR 136 along the northern portion of the county
- SR 183 along the central portion of the county
- SR 9 from the southern county line to SR 53

**Figure 4** gives an illustration of these truck routes in the county.

*3.1.1.8. Parking*

In the unincorporated portions of Dawson County, parking has not been a significant issue. Most of the local commercial and business areas are in the unincorporated portions of the county such as along the GA 400 corridor (i.e., North Georgia Premium Outlet Stores), and there is free off-street parking located within these areas. Due to the parking requirements in



the county zoning regulations, local businesses and public facilities are currently adequately served.

### 3.1.2. Bridges

GDOT provided bridge inventory data for Dawson County. The overall bridge rating is indicated by its sufficiency rating, where a sufficiency rating greater than 50 is considered satisfactory and a rating less than 50 is considered unsatisfactory (i.e. needing replacement). A total of 46 bridge reports were reviewed. This review indicated that nine bridges (20 %) of the bridges are considered to be in unsatisfactory condition. The following table shows the location and condition of bridges considered to be in unsatisfactory condition. These bridges may need to be reconstructed or replaced. For the bridges in satisfactory condition, some routine maintenance will still be needed to preserve their condition.

**Table 6. Dawson County Bridges in Unsatisfactory Condition**

<i>County Id</i>	<i>Bridge Serial Num</i>	<i>Location ID</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Facility Name</i>	<i>Sufficiency</i>	<i>Yr Const</i>
085	085-0024-0	085-00994F-001.01N	Just NW of Dawsonville	00994	Shoal Creek Rd	48.43821	1959
085	085-5007-0	085-00057X-002.25S	9 mi W of Dawsonville	00057	Hubbardsville Rd	34.29137	1992
085	085-0001-0	085-00009D-001.73N	4.5 mi S of Dawsonville	00009	SR 9	42.4533	1930
085	085-0018-0	085-00136D-023.00E	5.7 mi E of Dawsonville	00136	SR 136	47.736	1965
085	085-0020-0	085-00136D-026.96E	8.3 mi SE of Dawsonville	00136	SR 136	10.71283	1956
085	085-5002-0	085-00006X-001.12E	3 mi NW of Dawsonville	00006	Cleve Wright Rd	29.18122	1956
085	085-0021-0	085-00183D-004.86N	6 mi NW of Dawsonville	00183	SR 183	50.55103	1940
085	085-5010-0	085-00060X-001.82N	7 mi SW of Dawsonville	00060	Holcomb Rd	26.34645	1952

Source: GDOT Bridge Inventory

### 3.2. Alternative Modes

#### 3.2.1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Currently, the Statewide Bicycle Route Network has one state bicycle route in Dawson County. State Bicycle Route 90 runs East-West through the northern portion of Dawson County. The 210-mile Mountain Crossing Route runs across the mountains of north Georgia between Walker County, south of the city of Chattanooga and Rabun County, in the northeast corner of the state. The Mountain Crossing Route runs common with SR 52 in Dawson County.



The locations of sidewalk facilities were determined during a windshield survey of the county. There are limited sidewalks provided in unincorporated Dawson County; most of the sidewalks are in the city of Dawsonville and connect downtown areas with businesses, government centers and some community facilities. **Figure 4** illustrates the current bike/ped facilities in Dawson County.

### 3.2.2. Public Transportation and Services

Dawson County has no urban or rural public transportation services that are available to the general public. However, GDOT currently operates demand response services using two vans. This service is generally used for the elderly and/or disabled community for their health related needs and some job access.

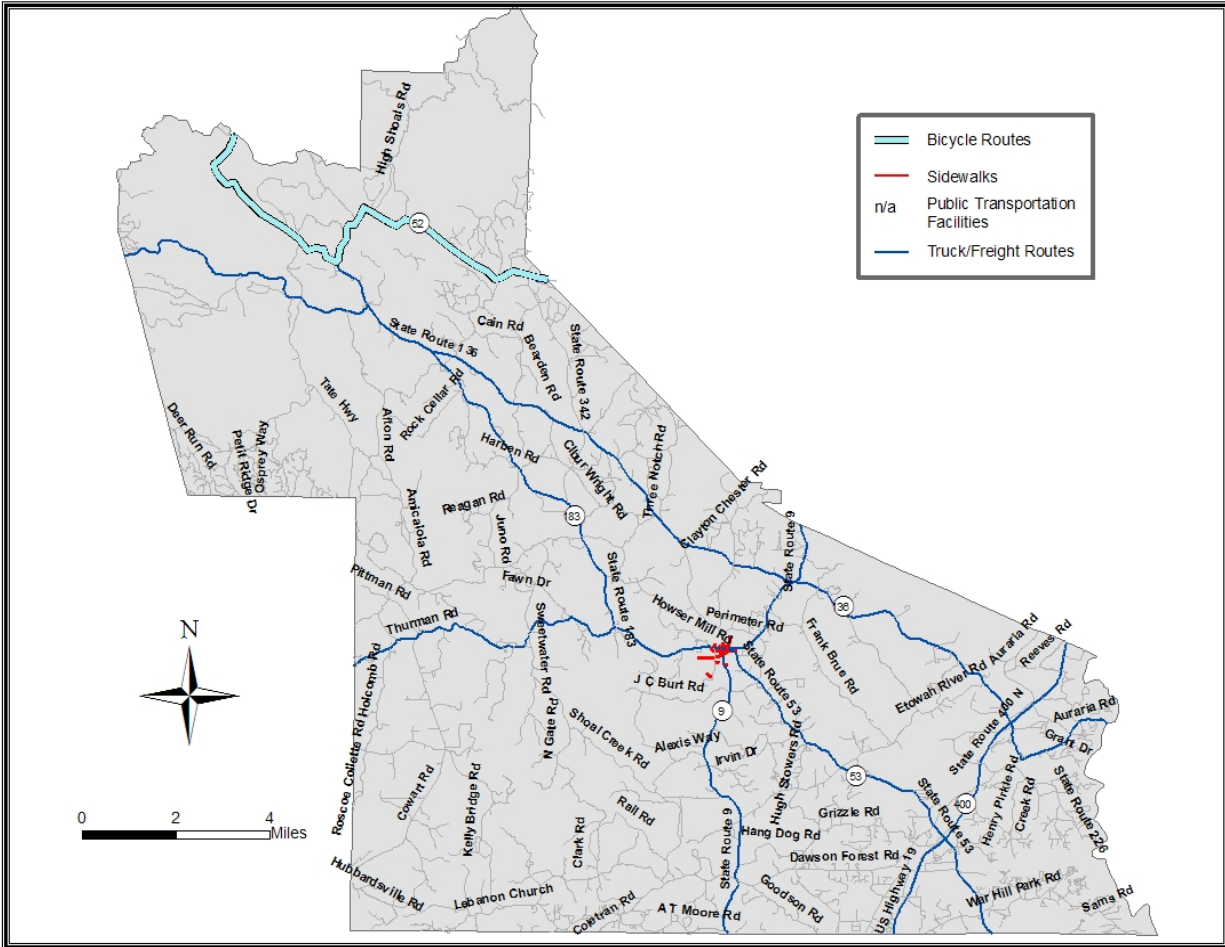
As Dawson County continues to grow, there may be opportunities to partner with other agencies, such as the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), to provide express bus service to downtown Atlanta. The County will look at future potential for coordinating with regional express bus service via a park-and-ride lot.

### 3.3. Airports

Dawson County does not have a general aviation airport. An airport feasibility study was recently completed, but due to public opposition, there is no decision to further study a future general aviation airport in the county.



Figure 4. Dawson County Truck Routes & Alternative Modes





## 4. Travel Characteristics and Deficiencies

According to the 2004 LRTP, understanding the travel characteristics of a community is crucial to developing a transportation plan that meets travel needs. Development of an assessment of needs is based partially on the inventory of the condition of the existing transportation system. To identify deficiencies related to current and future congestion, travel demand modeling is a useful tool.

### 4.1. Travel Characteristics

#### 4.1.1. Model Development

As stated earlier, Dawson County completed a 2030 LRTP in 2004. The purpose of the plan was to address the transportation challenges incurred from growth and development in the county. The plan proposed a program of projects and strategies to meet future transportation needs and provided a framework for future infrastructure decisions and investments.

The travel demand model is a tool to assist in identifying existing and future congestion on transportation network facilities. The regional model, which is based on an expansion of ARC's 2000 transportation model, incorporates additional traffic analysis zones and facility detail to provide more information regarding county characteristics. Data requirements for the model included household and employment information, as well as existing and future land use data and policies from the county's comprehensive plan and other planning documents.

The model provides travel statistics for the 2000 base year and the year 2030 existing plus committed (E+C) scenario. The E+C scenario offers a tool to identify needs and prioritize transportation improvements. The 2030 E+C network was evaluated to assess transportation network conditions and the impact of no additional capacity projects (beyond those programmed for right-of-way acquisition or construction by 2006). In essence, the E+C scenario showed the effect on the network if no additional projects beyond 2006 are added as population and employment grow.

Performance measures were used to compare year 2000 model conditions against year 2030 E+C conditions. Fundamental system wide performance measures included projected traffic volumes, volume to capacity ratio, vehicle miles and vehicle hours of travel, percent of vehicle miles of travel over capacity, and average speed. The average speed on freeways, arterials, and collector roadways will decrease over time if no improvements are made to the roadway network.

In developing the 21-county model, Dawson County arterial roadways were categorized as Class I, Class II, or Class III, according to the system followed by ARC. Class I arterials are major arterials with four or six lanes, typically with a raised median and turn lanes at most intersections. Speed limits on Class I arterials vary from 45 to 55 mph and traffic signals average no more than two per mile. Class II arterials are medium arterials with four lanes, either with or without a median. Speed limits range from 35-50 mph, with turn lanes available at some intersections. Typically, there are two to five signals per mile. Class III arterials are





minor arterials usually with two (sometimes with four) lanes and without a median. Turn lanes are available at most signalized intersections. Speed limits vary from 35 to 55 mph and the number of signals varies by area type.

The E+C scenario identifies future congested areas which assist in prioritizing future transportation improvements. Analysis of specific performance measures in the scenario follows.

#### *4.2. Existing and Future Deficiencies*

In addition to future land use forecasts, understanding the travel characteristics of a community is crucial to developing a transportation plan that meets travel needs. Development of an assessment of needs is based partially on the inventory of the condition of the existing transportation system. In an earlier section, Dawson County's existing transportation system was analyzed in the areas of current and future congestion and identified deficiencies based on traffic volumes. According to the recent GDOT RC Data Files, the highest traffic volume changes occurred near county lines with Forsyth and Lumpkin Counties along GA 400. There were also significant changes on SR 53 east of Thompson Road and west of Sweetwater Church Rd. Overall, the greatest daily volumes are found on GA 400. Also, the model used in the 2004 LRTP shows that the traffic volume on GA 400 is expected to increase by almost 90% by 2030 while other locations with increasing volumes in 2030 are SR 53 and SR 9.

The identification of congested facilities is further analyzed by using daily volume to capacity (v/c) ratios. The v/c ratio compares the traffic volumes on a facility to the capacity of that facility. A lower v/c ratio indicates less congestion while a higher v/c ratio indicates more. According to the 2004 LRTP, a v/c ratio of 1.0 would mean that the road is carrying its full capacity of traffic volume, while a v/c ratio of 0.5 would indicate it is carrying half its capacity volume. Generally, a v/c ratio of 0.7 or less is considered to be an acceptable level of traffic congestion on a segment of roadway. The closer the v/c ratio gets to 1.0, the more congested the roadway segment.

The base year model indicates that the current year v/c ratios on the county's network are all below 1.0 (.7/.8); therefore, the system is currently operating efficiently. The forecasted v/c ratios indicate several roadways with ratios closer to 1.0. In 2030, 14 percent of the total roadway miles are projected to have v/c ratios warranting attention, specifically SR 136, SR 53, SR 9, and GA 400 along with Cowart Road and Kelly Bridge Road.

The analysis of future v/c ratios in the 2030 E+C model revealed the need to develop strategies to reduce travel or add capacity along some of the aforementioned travel corridors in Dawson County. In particular, the high level of congestion on SR 53 and other arterial roadways indicates that, while strategies such as Transportation Demand Management (TDM), bus transit, bike/ped alternatives, and other methods to reduce SOV (Single Occupancy Vehicle) travel will be important, capacity additions will still be needed for the congested roadway



facilities. Figures 5-7 show the v/c from the 2004 LRTP for the 2000 Base Year, 2030 E+C, and 2030 Build projects.

Figure 5. Dawson County 2000 Base Year V/C Ratios

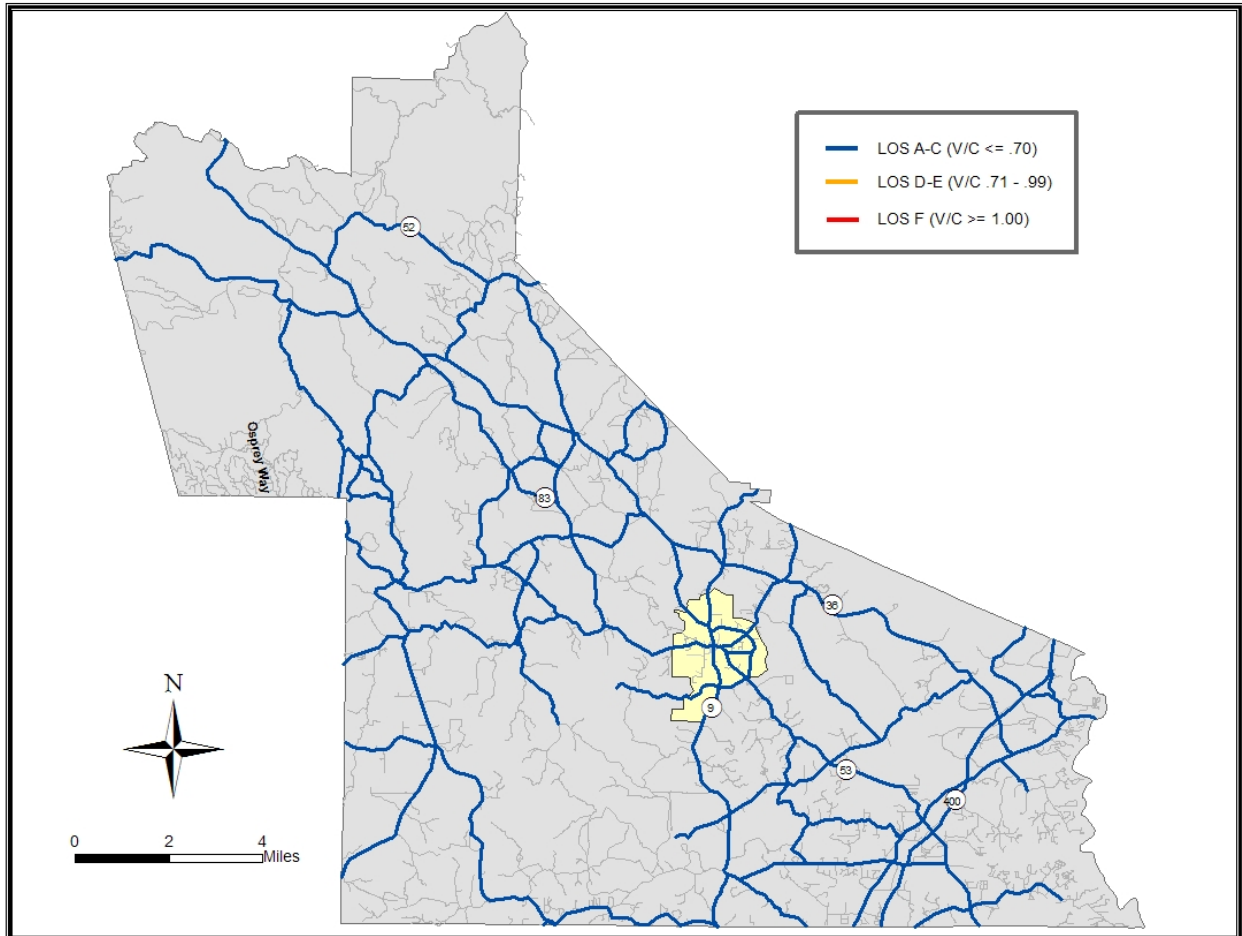


Figure 6. Dawson County 2030 V/C Ratios (E+C)

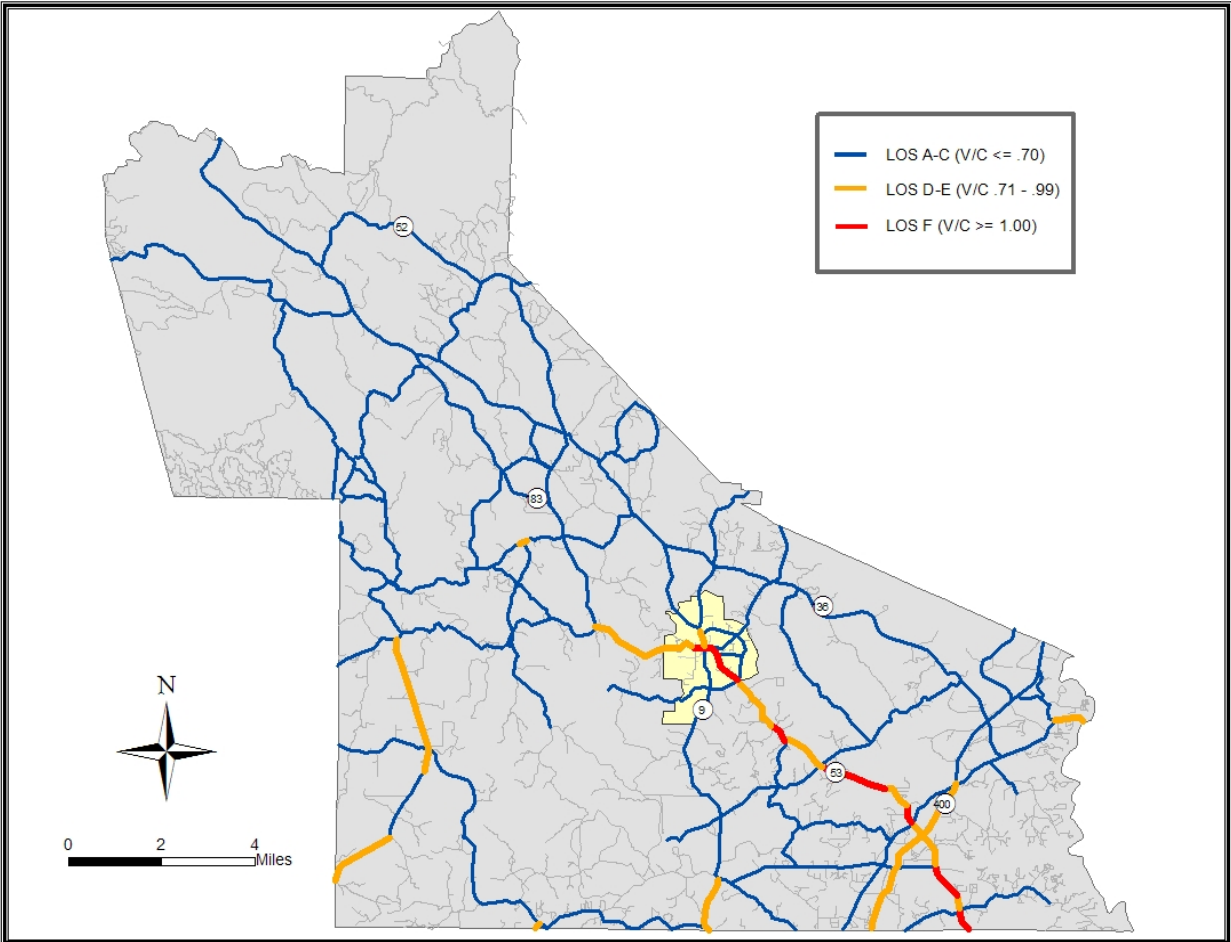
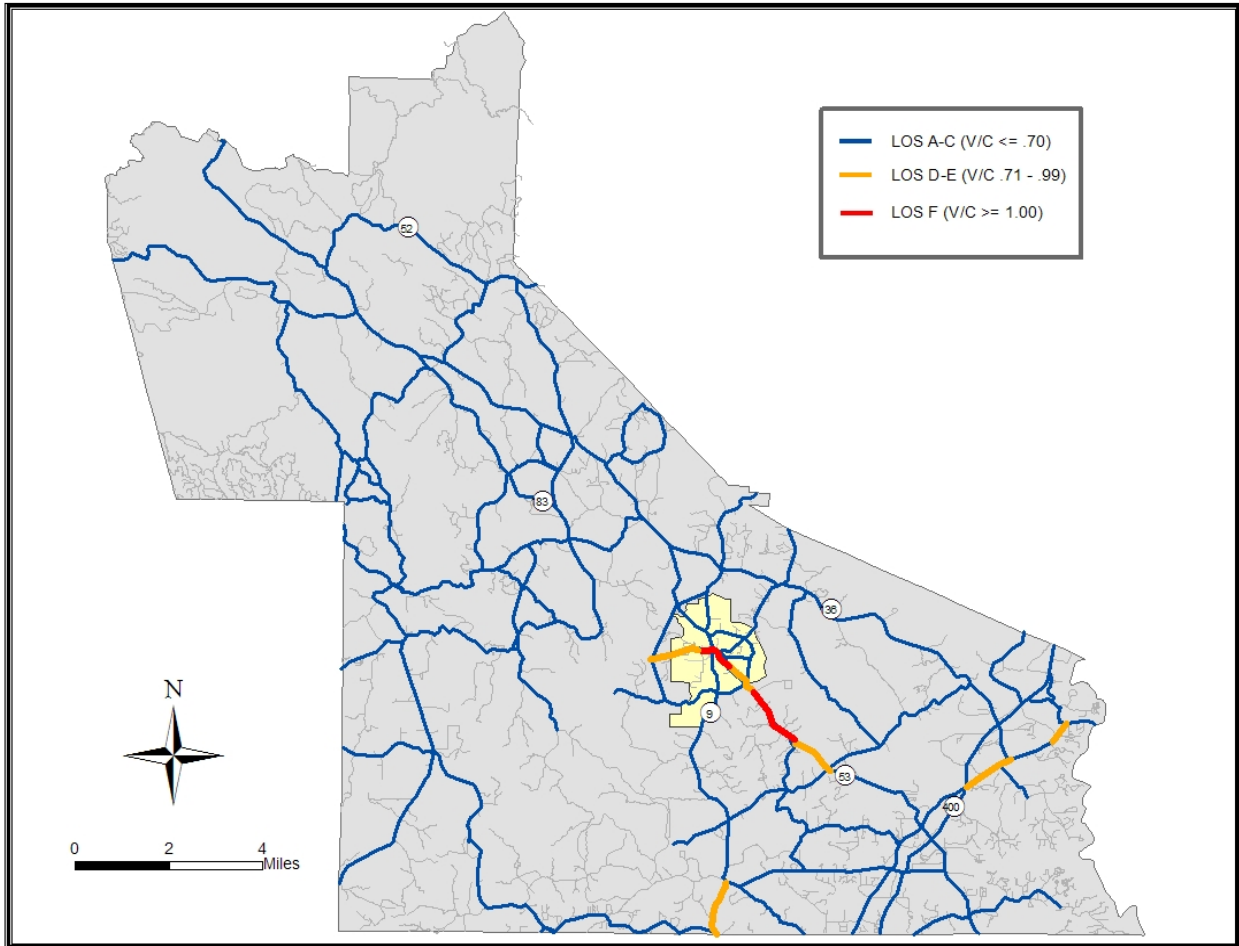


Figure 7. Dawson County 2030 V/C Ratios (Build)



### 5. Improvement Program

The following improvement options reference the constraints and issues mentioned in above. Action items are identified, along with responsible parties and a projected timeframe for implementation. This timeframe is expressed either as ongoing, short-range (1 to 5 years), or long-range (5+ years).

**How does the county alleviate the complete dependence on the private automobile for transportation?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Increase alternatives to automobile travel.	County, GDOT, GMRDC	GDOT, GMRDC	Ongoing, short-range
Adopt standards for street cross-sections that include sidewalks.	County	GDOT, GMRDC	Ongoing, short-range
Add bike lanes, bicycle-friendly shoulders, and multi-use paths/trails where appropriate for future construction.	County, GDOT, GMRDC	GDOT, GMRDC	Short-range, long-range
Coordinate with GDOT or GRTA for possible extension of regional express bus in the county.	County, GDOT, GMRDC	GDOT, GRTA, GMRDC	Short-range, long-range
Require sidewalks in all new developments.	County, GDOT	GDOT, GMRDC	Short-range, long-range
Pursue Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) planning, implementation funds, and Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) grants.	County, City	GDOT, GMRDC, ARC	Short-range, long-range

**How does the county stay abreast of the GA 400/SR 53 project?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Continue coordination with GDOT.	County	GDOT	Ongoing
Improve communication with GDOT board representative.	County	GDOT	Ongoing



**How does the county increase the amount of sidewalks and walking trails?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Adopt a plan to identify where new sidewalks, trails, and greenways will be located.	County, GDOT, GMRDC	GDOT, GMRDC	Short -range

**How does the county improve street connectivity within the county, particularly around the GA 400 area?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Incorporate a grid network or a street plan where appropriate for future connectivity in the county.	County, GDOT	GDOT	Long-range
Develop a system of alternate routes to alleviate dependency on GA 400.	County, GDOT	GDOT	Long-range

**What can the county do about GA 400 dividing the area physically and not providing for safe pedestrian crossing?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Improve pedestrian access at the major intersections along GA 400 with signals, cross-sections, etc.	County, GDOT, GMRDC	GDOT, GMRDC	Ongoing, short-range
Coordinate with GDOT to incorporate some context-sensitive improvements for GA 400.	County, GDOT	GDOT, GMRDC	Ongoing, short-range

**How can the county ensure a collector street plan to connect new developments to other neighborhoods and nearby services in the County?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Require developers to submit a plan for a grid or street network that increases connectivity.	County	GMRDC	Short-range, long-range



**How can the county increase the amount of alternative forms of transportation within the county?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Educate the citizens on alternatives to automobile travel.	County	GMRDC	Ongoing
Add bike lanes, bicycle-friendly shoulders, and multi-use paths/trails where appropriate for future construction.	County, GDOT	GDOT, GMRDC	Ongoing
Coordinate with GDOT or GRTA for possible extension of regional express bus in the county.	County, GDOT	GDOT, GRTA	Short-range, long-range
Require sidewalks in all new developments.	County, GDOT, GMRDC	GDOT	Ongoing
Pursue LCI planning, implementation funds, and TEA grants.	County	GDOT	Short-range

**How can the county obtain better overall traffic safety statistics?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Coordinate with local traffic enforcement authorities for safety/accident data.	County	County Public Safety	Ongoing
Coordinate with GDOT’s office of Highway Safety for statistics.	County	GDOT	Ongoing

**How can the county become familiar with the technological impacts of traffic (Advanced Traffic Management Systems, Intelligent Transportation Systems, Traffic Cameras, etc.)?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Coordinate and become familiar with GDOT’s Navigator System.	County	GDOT	Short-range
Research the ATMS/ITS programs and features of surrounding counties.	County	GDOT	Short-range





**How can the county foster more GDOT coordination?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Attend the Quarterly State Transportation Board meetings and become familiar with area board representative.	County	GDOT	Ongoing
Have the county staff become more active in professional organizations/associations.	County	GDOT	Ongoing
Educate local community on the relationship of GDOT to the county.	County	GDOT	Ongoing

**How can the county be more familiar with Context Sensitive Design solutions?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Increase coordination with GDOT’s policies on context-sensitive design.	County	GDOT	Ongoing
County staff becomes more active in professional organizations/associations.	County	GDOT	Ongoing

**How can the county improve/increase the funding of the County Road Program?**

Solution	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeframe
Work with local elected officials on innovative financing methods.	County	City	Ongoing
Coordinate with local municipalities in the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program.	County	City	Ongoing
Educate the local business community on the benefits of creating a Community Improvement District (CID) to assist in raising funds for infrastructure improvements.	County	City	Ongoing

**5.1. Potential Funding Sources**

Regarding potential funding sources for projects, cost estimates, and funding/local match requirements can constrain the level of improvements implemented during a specific planning period. In some areas, a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) has provided millions of dollars in local funds for a variety of transportation improvements, including roadway and non-roadway transportation projects. Dawson County enacted a Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) in 1989. The current SPLOST program is valued at \$24.5 million and was approved by voters in 2004. Of that amount, only \$6 million is earmarked for





transportation projects. However, this is dependent upon sales tax revenues maintaining their current rate. This fourth edition of the Dawson County SPLOST program is scheduled to run from January 2005 to December 2009.

Additional funding is an issue that warrants more attention for the county. In addition to SPLOST funding, there are other potential funding sources that should be considered, including:

- GDOT (TEA Funds, State/County contracts, STIP Funds);
- 1 percent sales tax programs: Municipal Option Sales Tax (MOST), Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST);
- General operating funds;
- Public/private partnerships, such as Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) and developer contributions; and
- Development impact fees.



## 6. Prepare Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates

There were specific improvements and projects identified for the County in the 2004 LRTP. These projects, strategies, and improvements provide multimodal, technological, and demand management solutions to meet Dawson County's future transportation needs. The proposed projects are multi-modal in nature and are intended to satisfy the county's growth-related transportation needs.

The 2004 LRTP listed projects by their location, identified deficiencies, source of identification, and proposed solution. Each project was also assigned an implementation period. Proposed projects not meeting the above criteria were not included. The county has the discretion to modify the program periodically to be consistent with any changing conditions. Projects are annually reviewed and are added or removed from the program due to funding constraints, environmental issues, or changes in priority.

The following table has the draft list of improvement options, projects, and other transportation features for implementation in Dawson County's Program of Projects from the 2004 LRTP.



**Table 7. Transportation Implementation Program**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Deficiency</i>	<i>Method of Identification</i>	<i>Implementation Period</i>	<i>Proposed Solution</i>	<i>Cost (\$millions)</i>
Cowart Road from SR 53 to the Cherokee County line	Congestion	2030 LRTP	2021-2030	Widening	\$20.862
Gold Mine Road at Sweetwater Juno Road	Congestion	2030 LRTP	2011-2020	Intersection and operational improvements	\$1.200
SR 53 from the Forsyth County line to East Bypass/Perimeter Road	Intermittent Congestion	2030 LRTP	2011-2020	Widening and completion of Perimeter Road/Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9 (State Aid Project)	\$24.539
SR 53 from West Bypass/Perimeter Road to Cowart Road	Intermittent Congestion	2030 LRTP	2021-2030	Widening and Completion of Perimeter Rd./Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9 (State Aid Project)	\$21.475
GA 400 from the Forsyth County line to Lumpkin Camp Ground Road	Congestion	2030 LRTP	2011-2020	Widening	\$15.675
Interchange at GA 400 and SR 53	Congestion	GDOT CWP/Public Comment	2006-2010	Interchange	\$20.121
Dawson Forest Road from Lumpkin Camp Ground Road to GA 400	Congestion	Public Comment	2011-2020	Widening	\$12.270
SR 52: two westbound passing lanes between Gilmer and Lumpkin Counties	Congestion	GDOT CWP	2011-2020	Reconstruction, passing lanes	\$1.960
SR 9 passing lanes from Thompson Road to Jenkins Road	Congestion	GDOT CWP	2011-2020	Reconstruction, passing lanes	\$1.680
Lumpkin Campground Road from Forsyth County line to Kilough Church Road	Congestion	Stakeholder Meeting May 2004	2021-2030	Widening	\$12.583
Kilough Church Road from Lumpkin Campground Road to SR 53 (new location between Kilough Church Road and SR 53)	Congestion	Stakeholder Meeting May 2004	2021-2030	Widening, New location Roadway	\$32.077



<i>Location</i>	<i>Deficiency</i>	<i>Method of Identification</i>	<i>Implementation Period</i>	<i>Proposed Solution</i>	<i>Cost (\$millions)</i>
Dawsonville Bypass from White Lane to SR 9	Congestion	GDOT CWP	2011-2020	New Construction Roadway Project	\$23.413
Bridge at Shoal Creek Road	Sufficiency of 48.43821	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$30.659
Bridge at Hubbardsville Road	Sufficiency of 34.29137	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$5.227
Bridge at SR 9	Sufficiency of 42.4533	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$3.100
Bridge at SR 136	Sufficiency of 47.736	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$1.370
Bridge at SR 136	Sufficiency of 10.71283	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$1.820
Bridge at Cleve Wright Road	Sufficiency of 29.18122	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$3.398
Bridge of SR 183	Sufficiency of 50.55103	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$22.406
Bridge at Holcomb Road	Sufficiency of 26.34645	GDOT	2011-2020	Reconstruct/Replace	\$3.696



## 7. Alternatives Evaluation

According to **Section 4.2, Existing and Future Deficiencies**, and **Figures 5-7**, the v/c ratios for Dawson County are currently at acceptable levels (LOS A-C). The transportation model showed that by 2030 the majority of the county will continue to perform at acceptable levels, with the exception of SR 53 and a significant portion of GA 400. These facilities are forecasted to have a lower LOS due to several reasons.

SR 53 is one of the few east-west corridors moving through the county and the central business district. With the projected growth in the county and the lack of any additional facilities in the current plans to alleviate the pressure off SR 53, the model projects unacceptable LOS for SR 53. This will require the county to come up with some strategies, projects, and programs to attain acceptable levels of service.

GA 400 is another facility projected to function at an unacceptable LOS in the future. This facility is currently used for both inter-county and intra-county travel as it functions as a major corridor for the entire region. Since the 2004 LRTP's forecasts, the county has been proactive in addressing the mobility needs that will benefit the north-south movement in the county. There are intersection improvements and plans for frontage roads that will help to alleviate the local pressure off GA 400.

Environmental considerations increasingly impact transportation planning in the Atlanta region. Numerous federal and state regulations impact planning; the key issues are air quality and watershed protection because of their potential to influence transportation programs and strategies as well as related residential and employment considerations. These major issues are highlighted in the following sections.

### 7.1. Air Quality

In nonattainment areas, such as the metropolitan Atlanta region, long-range transportation plans must conform to federal air quality standards. In the 2004 LRTP, Dawson County was not designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of the eight-hour Atlanta nonattainment area. However, due to the county's proximity to the Atlanta and the projected growth in Dawson County, a future nonattainment designation is possible.

### 7.2. Wetlands and Environmentally-Sensitive Watersheds

The identification of wetlands and environmentally sensitive watersheds in transportation planning is important for several reasons. In many cases, these areas both create natural barriers to connecting roadways and limit the ability to develop selected areas. Furthermore, federal Clean Water Act regulations and more stringent state watershed protection rules are limiting the amount of impervious surface in key watersheds. Land use and environmental considerations are significant factors to be incorporated into the transportation planning process.



The key item relating to transportation planning is that Dawson County desires to protect environmentally-sensitive areas from higher density land uses. These considerations should be taken into account in the development of any future transportation plan strategies and programs.

### *7.3. Acceptability to the Community (leaders, citizens, and merchants)*

As stated earlier, there was both a quantitative effort to examine transportation performance measures as well as a qualitative effort of public outreach and meetings with local stakeholders and the public. The process was deemed acceptable to the community due to the significant input from public officials, staff, and local leaders regarding current transportation issues and potential solutions.

### *7.4. Demand for Alternative Modes Beyond the Existing Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Facilities (Connectivity Plan)*

The 2004 LRTP, along with recent feedback from local stakeholders, shows the need for alternative modes to move around the county and a strategy to improve connectivity in the county. This strategy would help identify additional connection opportunities within the county to alleviate pressure on some of the existing facilities. There is evidence of a need for a north-south and some east-west routes to improve overall street connectivity. A connectivity plan identifying new connections as conceptual alignments would provide a template for the county to use with developers as they connect new subdivisions together to improve the street network and create route choices for new residents.

Dawson County's connectivity plan could conceptualize the connections that should be made by any developer by specifying the details for type of facility and relate it to a typical cross-section. The county could then ensure that any development is designed so any new connections would limit cut-through traffic. By setting up an overlay requirement for connectivity, the county can set standards for access points between subdivisions and communities and establish minimum block sizes. A connectivity plan would create more direct trips and increase the efficiency of public services like public safety vehicles. Also, a connectivity plan would help to disperse traffic on several routes instead of having traffic congest one or two facilities in the county. **Figure 8** shows potential locations for connectivity and alternative routes for mobility in the county.

### *7.5. Compatibility with Land Use and Other Local Policies*

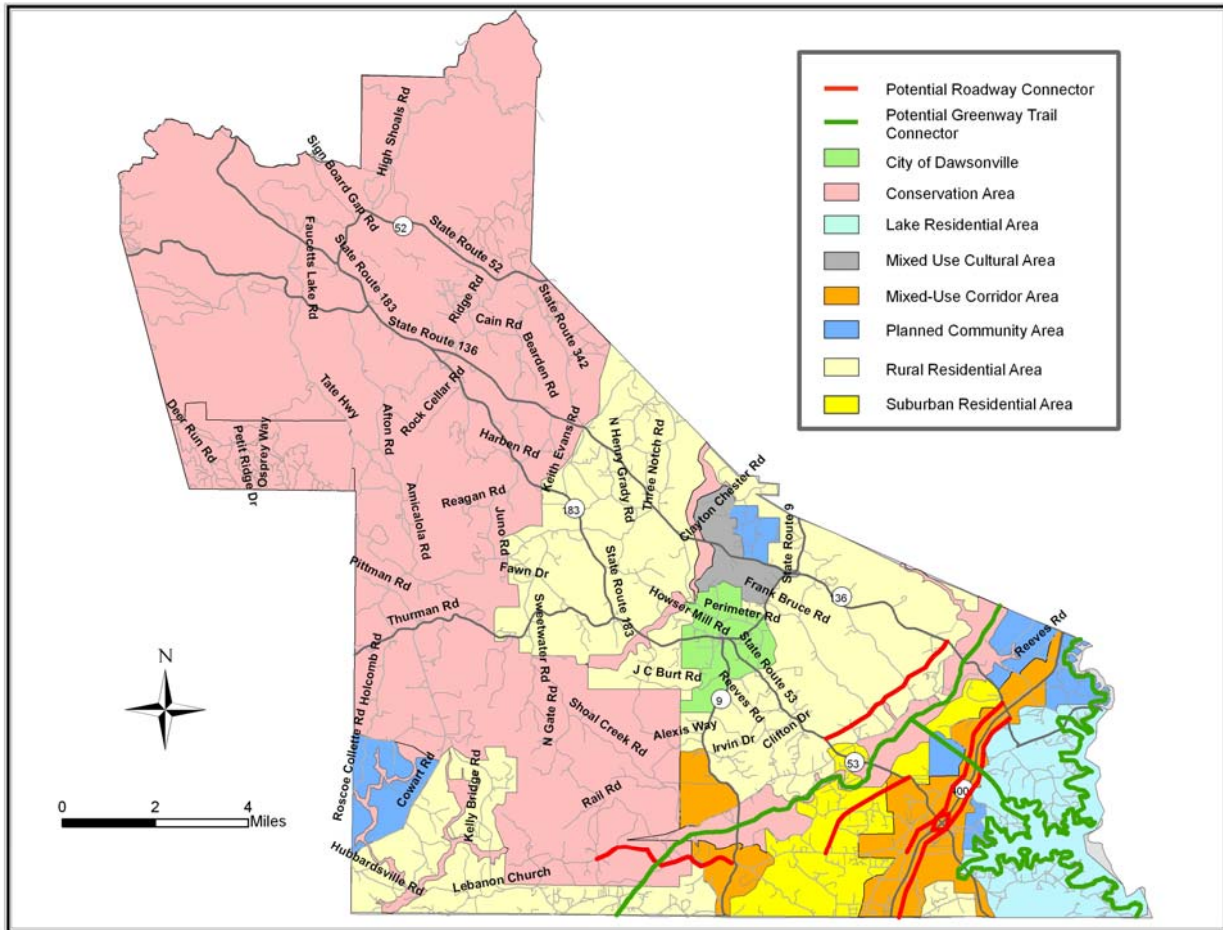
As described in **Section 3, Existing Conditions**, most of the congested roadways in Dawson County are located in the southeastern half of the county where significant land use changes have occurred over the past 10 years. Most of this growth has primarily been related to the development retail and single-family subdivisions, which have increased at a scale that has outpaced improvements in infrastructure and other transportation improvements. This is the type of inconsistency in transportation/land use coordination that will eventually lead to significant traffic congestion.



This recent explosion in commercial and residential development has increased the utilization of all existing transportation facilities but has shown evidence of the need for alternative measures such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and other amenities. In terms of the less developed areas of the county, such as in the western and extreme northwestern portions of the county, the travel volumes are typically well below the capacity levels. The development patterns in these areas are in stark contrast to the east and southeast portions of the county and as a result have a much lower demand for transportation and infrastructure improvements for congestion.



Figure 8. Dawson County Potential Connectivity Routes





## 8. Conclusion

Dawson County is a rapidly growing county in the Metro Atlanta region and as a result, will continue to face transportation planning challenges. The purpose of this document is to present an overall assessment of the current transportation conditions and discuss possible solutions, strategies, and programs. Additionally, this document can provide the county with the framework necessary to develop a transportation plan to address the challenges in a rapidly changing environment. Dawson County and the consultant team worked together through a transportation planning process to develop strategies that will meet the multi-modal needs of the local community and at the same time be consistent with future land use changes.

The consultant team along with the county determined that an additional level of effort should be taken in the future, i.e., potential detailed studies, travel demand modeling, etc. There was discussion with the Dawson County staff regarding the need for a follow-up study or in-depth transportation plan for the county and the county has agreed. This matter of a specialized transportation study and travel demand model will be handled in the future by the county.

