

**Habersham County 2029 Comprehensive Plan:
Community Assessment**

**Including the Municipalities of Alto, Clarkesville, Cornelia,
Demorest, and Mt. Airy**

March 1, 2007

Revised April 30, 2007



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Note: The city limit boundaries shown in the report figures were provided by the Habersham County Planning Department in October 2006, and do not reflect annexations that have taken place since that time. These city limit boundaries will be updated later for the preparation of the Community Agenda.

Technical Addendum (Found on the compact disc included at the end of this document)

Section I: Supporting Analysis of Data and Information

1. Introduction
2. Population
3. Economic Development
4. Housing
5. Natural and Cultural Resources
6. Community Facilities and Services
7. Intergovernmental Coordination
8. Transportation System

Section II: Atlas of Supportive Maps

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Community Assessment is to lay the foundation for the update of the Habersham County/Municipalities Joint Comprehensive Plan. This is a plan for the majority of Habersham County (County), including both the unincorporated areas of the County and the incorporated municipalities of Alto, Clarkesville (County Seat), Cornelia, Demorest and Mt. Airy. The two remaining municipalities in Habersham County, Baldwin and Tallulah Falls have elected to complete their plans with Banks and Rabun County respectively. The goal of this comprehensive plan will be to formulate an inclusive vision for the county and its municipalities and to develop an implementation strategy to make it a reality. In particular, this Community Assessment provides a comprehensive review of the issues and opportunities that will affect the future growth of the community. This Community Assessment is based on an analysis and inventory of existing conditions, land use patterns, public policies, and planned improvements. Since completing the last round of Comprehensive Planning in the early 1990's Habersham County and its municipalities have grown significantly (30 percent county-wide). With this growth has come the concern that Habersham may become yet another "bedroom community" with sprawling residential development and few employment opportunities. Community leaders recognize that this planning effort can play a critical role in directing the growth that is coming north to Habersham in a manner that results in enhancing the area's economic outlook while preserving its rural heritage and providing for managed growth that maintains the high quality of life which has attracted residents and businesses to north Georgia for decades.

Another purpose of this report is to meet the intent of the "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning" as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on May 1, 2005. Preparation of a Comprehensive Plan in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining the County's status as a Qualified Local Government.

1.2 Scope

The County and the participating municipalities have requested a comprehensive planning document and a planning process that is coordinated, yet recognizes each distinct community and their respective priorities and issues. This document has been laid out in a joint County/Municipal format; however, within each section of the document, one can find separate discussions related to the county and participating municipalities, as well as discussions that address areas of joint concern or opportunity for each jurisdiction.

As required in the DCA Standards, this Assessment includes four basic components:

1. A preliminary list of issues and opportunities that the community will further consider and refine through the planning process.
2. Analysis of existing development patterns.
3. Evaluation of current community policies, actions, and development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives.
4. Analysis of supportive data and information.

The Community Assessment is written in an executive summary-like fashion so that citizens and decision makers can quickly review the essential elements and major findings of this planning effort. Most of the detailed findings of this assessment are included in a “Technical Addendum.” A digital copy of this “Technical Addendum” is provided on compact disc in the back of this report. This Addendum serves as the basis for the report.

1.3 Methodology and Schedule

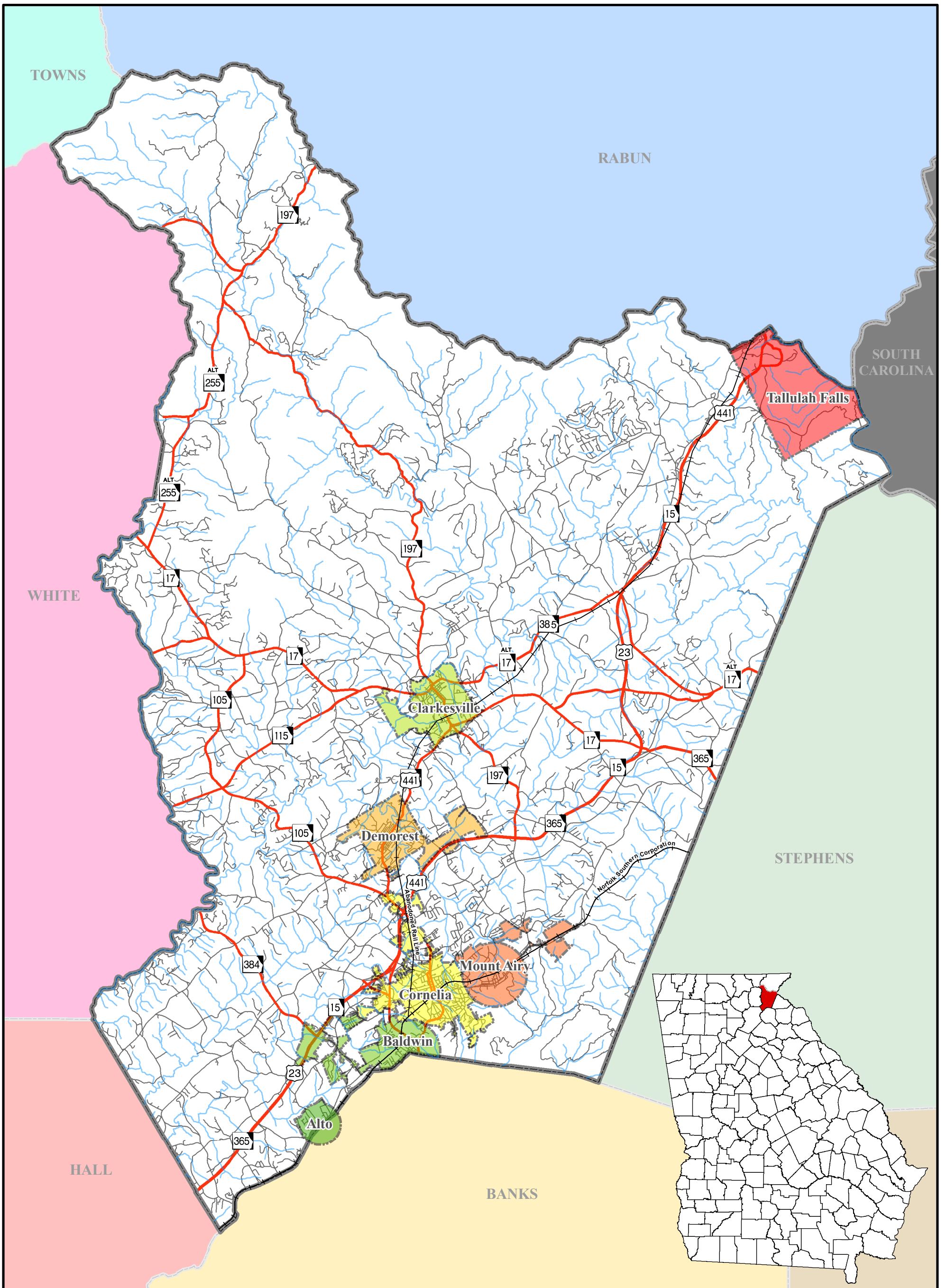
The DCA requires each local government to adopt and maintain a Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Chapter 110-12-1, Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, “Local Planning Requirements” effective May 1, 2005. This Comprehensive Plan is being prepared jointly by Habersham County and the municipalities of Alto, Clarkesville, Cornelia, Demorest and Mt. Airy. It will be reviewed, and approved by DCA and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center (GM-RDC) no later than October 31, 2009. Once adopted by the six jurisdictions, the Comprehensive Plan will serve as the official long-range policy for guiding future decisions concerning land use, zoning, and public facilities for Habersham County and the five participating municipalities for the 20-year planning period (2009-2029).

As required by the DCA Standards, this Community Assessment is the product of a review of policies, plans, regulations, and development patterns. The study area is the entire County, an area of approximately 178,662 acres. Approximately 5 percent of the County is incorporated, covering approximately 8,950 acres. Map 1 is a location map of the County and the location of the County’s seven municipalities: Alto, Baldwin (not participating in this plan), Clarkesville, Cornelia, Demorest, Mt. Airy and Tallulah Falls (not participating in this plan).

This Community Assessment document is the first major step in preparation of County’s Comprehensive Plan. This document and the Community Participation Program will be submitted to the GM-RDC and DCA for a 30-day comment and review period and approval.

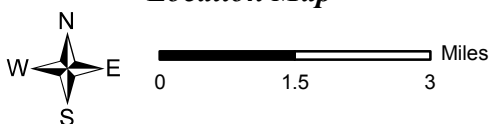
Upon approval of both documents, work on the Community Agenda will commence. The Community Agenda is the most important part of the plan; it includes the community’s vision for the future, key issues and opportunities it chooses to address during the planning period, and its implementation program for achieving this vision and addressing the identified issues and opportunities. The Community Agenda will be prepared in a more compartmentalized fashion than this Community Assessment, in order to allow for discussion of each jurisdiction’s goals, policies, and implementation programs.

Following the public involvement effort outlined in the Community Participation Program, the consultants will work closely with a Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee and County and City staff to develop the Community Agenda. This process includes a series of Community Visioning Workshops to be conducted in mid-2007. The results of this effort will be presented at an Open House in the fall of 2007. These community involvement events will provide the public support and input critical to a successful Comprehensive Plan. The Habersham County Board of Commissioners and participating City Councils are scheduled to transmit a final draft of the Community Agenda to the GM-RDC and DCA in the fall of 2007. After this, a 3-month review



**Habersham County 2028
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 1:
Location Map*



- | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| | County Lines | | State & Federal Highways |
| | City Limits | | Local Roads |
| | Streams and Rivers | | Railroads |



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February, 2007

and adoption process begins. This is scheduled to take place between the end of 2007 and early 2008.

2 Issues and Opportunities

In order to be effective, the Comprehensive Plan must identify and provide workable strategies for addressing the issues and opportunities facing the community. The Technical Addendum of this document is the first step taken towards identifying the issues and opportunities facing Habersham County and the participating municipalities. The data and current conditions detailed in the addendum are summarized in this section into a series of succinct issue and opportunity statements. The list provided here is only a potential list of the issues that may warrant further study during the planning process. It is anticipated that the list will be modified and revised through the public participation sessions, which will occur during subsequent planning phases. A final, locally agreed upon list of issues and opportunities the County and participating municipalities intend to address during the planning period, will be included in the Community Agenda(s) produced at the conclusion of the planning process.

The following issues and opportunities list is organized according to the areas or “elements” of the comprehensive plan: population, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, transportation, land use, and intergovernmental coordination. The statements are further categorized by the participating jurisdiction(s) to which they are applicable.

The statements included here will be discussed at length with the Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee (MJAC) formed to guide the development of the Community Agenda. These statements will also be provided for public feedback during the community participation phase of the planning process. Through these discussions and public response, a series of strategies and implementation programs will be developed to address the final list of issues and opportunities included in the Community Agenda. These strategies and implementation programs will also inform the Short Term Work Program components of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.1 Population¹

Habersham County

Issues:

1. **Major Population Growth.** Between the years of 2005 and 2029, the population of Habersham County is projected to double, reaching nearly 89,000 in 2029. The greatest growth will occur in unincorporated areas of the County. Such growth suggests there

¹ For more information on Population refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

may be need to improve infrastructure in some unincorporated areas to facilitate quality growth.

2. **Aging of Population.** As the County grows, the average age of the population is increasing. In 2029, persons aged 35 to 44 years old will make up the largest share of the population at 17.8 percent followed by those 65 and over at 15.9 percent. At the same time, the 14 to 34 year-old age group is projected to make up an increasingly smaller share of total population.

Opportunities:

1. **Major Population Growth.** Population growth is a major opportunity to attract new industries and jobs. With proper planning, growth can occur while maintaining the County's rural character.
2. **Aging of Population.** The higher presence of seniors and middle-aged individuals will likely drive a demand for different services, possibly including improved medical services, greater walk-ability, and access to religious institutions. Housing preferences are more likely to include smaller lots with less landscaping.

Town of Alto

Issues:

1. **Slower Growth Compared to Area.** The population of Alto is projected to reach 1,205 people in 2030, growing at a slower pace than the County and participating jurisdictions.
2. **High Hispanic Population.** Approximately 20 percent of the town's population was of Hispanic origin in 2000, a dramatic increase from 1990 (1.4 percent). Special translators may be needed for court and other community services. "English as a Second Language" (ESL) offerings may be necessary in local schools to assist children of Hispanic origin.

Opportunities:

1. **High Hispanic Population.** An increased Hispanic population also increases diversity, which can add to the Town's cultural assets. This diversity can spur the local economy by encouraging the growth of more diverse restaurants and stores.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **High Concentration of Poverty within Elderly Population.** The provision of adequate services and support for poverty-stricken persons is particularly important in Clarkesville. In 1999, 29.5 percent of persons (60) below the poverty level were 65 years of age or older. Services needed for this population may include a greater quantity of public housing and/or assisted living facilities.
2. **Major Population Growth.** Between 2000 and 2005, the City's population grew by 4.1 percent, which was the second highest growth rate of all participating municipalities.

Between the years of 2005 and 2029, the population of Clarkesville is projected to increase significantly reaching 3,639 in 2029.

Opportunities:

- 1. Major Population Growth.** New housing development as well as infrastructure can help facilitate managed growth. Potential land use changes can encourage an influx of new services and retail to serve new residents.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

- 1. High Concentration of Poverty within Elderly Population.** The provision of adequate services and support for poverty-stricken persons is particularly important in Cornelia. In 1999, 28.8 percent of persons below the poverty level were 65 years of age or older. Services needed for this population may include a greater quantity of public housing and/or assisted living facilities.
- 2. High Hispanic Population.** Approximately 19 percent of the City's population was of Hispanic origin in 2000, a dramatic increase from 1990 (1.3 percent). The needs of a high Hispanic population can create both issues and opportunities. Special translations may be needed for court and other community services. "English as a Second Language" (ESL) offerings may be necessary in local schools to assist children of Hispanic origin.
- 3. Major Population Growth.** Whereas Cornelia is not projected to grow at as quick of a pace as other areas in the County, its population is projected to more than double between 2010 and 2030. This growth will maintain the city's position as the most highly populated of participating municipalities and will cause major changes in the city.

Opportunities:

- 1. High Hispanic Population.** An increased Hispanic population also increases diversity, which can add to the town's cultural assets. This diversity can spur the local economy by encouraging the growth of more diverse restaurants and stores.
- 2. Major Population Growth.** New housing development as well as infrastructure can help facilitate managed growth. Beyond this, potential land use changes can encourage an influx of new commercial services and retail to serve new residents.

City of Demorest

Issues:

- 1. Major Population Growth.** Historically, Demorest saw larger growth than both the County and the State. Between 1990 and 2000 the growth rate was 3.5 percent, increasing to a 4.3 percent growth rate in between 2000 and 2005. Between the years of 2005 and 2029, the population of Demorest is projected to increase the greatest of all participating municipalities with the population reaching 4,271 in 2029.

Opportunities:

1. **Major Population Growth.** New housing development as well as infrastructure can help facilitate managed growth. Potential land use changes can encourage an influx of new services and retail to serve new residents.

Town of Mt. Airy**Issues**

1. **Major Population Growth.** Although the population of Mount Airy is projected to remain below 2,000 people by the year 2030, its population is projected to double between 2010 and 2030.
2. **Higher Median Income.** Between 1989 and 1999 Mount Airy retained its position as the jurisdiction with highest median income compared to all participating municipalities and the County. Between 1989 and 1999 the median household income increased by 17.4 percent, compared to a statewide increase of only 8.8 percent. This increase suggests that single family housing may be preferred in comparison to multi-family housing and more upscale retail establishment and office type employment options may be needed.

Opportunities:

1. **Major Population Growth.** New housing development as well as infrastructure can help facilitate managed growth. Beyond this, potential land use changes can encourage an influx of new commercial services and retail to serve new residents.

2.2 Economic Development²

Habersham County**Issues:**

1. **Infrastructure Challenges and Needs.** The County lacks major water and sewer facilities that are necessary for increased industrial growth. This lack of infrastructure may be the result of both limited planning due to unforeseen growth and limitations tied to water acquisition rights. Without improving the water infrastructure, growth of both industry and jobs will be difficult.
2. **Tourism.** Habersham County can serve as an increasingly important tourist destination due to its geographic location, rural character, and small town charm. Located in close proximity to the Atlanta metropolitan area, visiting Habersham County is an easy alternative to the nearby urban environments. To support this industry, the county is

² For more information on Economic Development refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

actively preserving its natural landscape and facilitating the continuation and growth of local festivals and fairs.

- 3. Broader Development of Economic Base.** The economic base of the county remains heavily weighted in the manufacturing sector; however, the manufacturing industry is slowly declining, resulting in the loss of a significant number of jobs due to manufacturing's high share of total employment. Whereas manufacturing jobs will continue to play a vital role in the local economy, diversification of the economic base is essential for ensuring a healthy mix of jobs over time. Some focus should be given to other industries with potential for sustained growth over the next 20 years. For example, education and health services grew by 55.2 percent between 1995 and 2005. According to projections, services will account for 28 percent of the total jobs in the county in 2030.

Opportunities:

- 1. Ecotourism.** Further development of the County's ecotourism is especially appealing due to the Chattahoochee Natural Forest, which encompasses 22 percent of the county's land.
- 2. New Growth in Education and Health Services.** Encouraging growth in both education and health services is appealing as they both benefit the local population and projected population trends. As the population ages, the demand for health services will increase. Growth of education services will help develop the human resources of the persons in the county.
- 3. Planned Industrial Park Growth.** The Habersham County Industrial Authority is working to improve the industrial park facilities available to incoming industries. Most notable are new sites being added to the southern end of the county. These new facilities have already caused the movement of two major plants, one from Florida and one from a neighboring county.
- 4. Greater Development Coordination in Region.** Commuting patterns indicate that there is strong economic integration between Habersham and surrounding counties. To help mitigate the effects of employer losses and increase potential for state and federal grants, the Banks-Habersham-Rabun County Joint Development Authority was formed. By encouraging these types of partnerships, Habersham County's workforce and residents will have an opportunity to achieve the optimal economic situation for both themselves and the county.

Town of Alto

Issues:

- 1. Increased Training Opportunities for Workforce.** In 2000, 41.6 percent of Alto's employed residents worked in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. This data suggests that there may be a lack of diversification in the skill-

sets of residents of Alto. Additional job training via the North Georgia Technical College will be needed to successfully diversify the workforce.

- 2. Infrastructure Challenges and Needs.** The County lacks major water and sewer facilities that are necessary for increased industrial growth. This lack of infrastructure may be the result of both limited planning due to unforeseen growth and limitations tied to water acquisition rights. Without improving the water infrastructure, growth of both industry and jobs will be difficult.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

- 1. Infrastructure Challenges and Needs.** The city lacks major water and sewer facilities that are necessary for increased industrial growth. This lack of infrastructure may be the result of both limited planning due to unforeseen growth and limitations tied to water acquisition rights. Without improving the water infrastructure, growth of both industry and jobs will be difficult.

Opportunities:

- 1. Tourism.** The City of Clarkesville can serve as an increasingly important tourist destination due to its geographic location, rural character, and small town charm. Located in close proximity to the Atlanta metropolitan area, visiting Habersham County is an easy alternative to the nearby urban environments. To support this industry, the County is actively preserving its natural landscape and facilitating the continuation and growth of local festivals and fairs.
- 2. Revitalization of Downtown.** By successfully receiving a grant for the revitalization of downtown, the community will continue to attract outside tourism dollars. The reinvestment also gives local residents the option of staying close to home rather than traveling to another jurisdiction for specific shopping needs.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

- 1. Infrastructure Challenges and Needs.** The County lacks major water and sewer facilities that are necessary for increased industrial growth. This lack of infrastructure may be the result of both limited planning due to unforeseen growth and limitations tied to water acquisition rights. Without improving the water infrastructure, growth of both industry and jobs will be difficult.

Opportunities:

1. **Tourism.** Habersham County can serve as an increasingly important tourist destination due to its geographic location, rural character, and small town charm. Located in close proximity to the Atlanta metropolitan area, visiting Habersham County is an easy alternative to the nearby urban environments. To support this industry, the County is actively preserving its natural landscape and facilitating the continuation and growth of local festivals and fairs.
2. **Attractive Environment for Restaurants.** Cornelia recently altered its ordinances to allow the pouring of liquor within its city limits. As the only community in the County to provide this opportunity for restaurants, Cornelia has developed an inviting economic environment. The city may develop a strategy to attract restaurants. An increased restaurant presence will not only help the tax base but also improve the quality of life for residents and County workers who enjoy such amenities.

City of Demorest**Issues:**

1. **Infrastructure Challenges and Needs.** The County lacks major water and sewer facilities that are necessary for increased industrial growth. This lack of infrastructure may be the result of both limited planning due to unforeseen growth and limitations tied to water acquisition rights. Without improving the water infrastructure, growth of both industry and jobs will be difficult.

Opportunities:

1. **Proximity of 4-Year College.** As the area's economy works towards diversification, the existence of Piedmont College in Demorest is of high importance. The college gives County residents an opportunity to further develop their education without leaving the County. This may also serve as an attractive feature for potential retirees relocating to the area who appreciate its cultural advantages, such as speakers and performances.

Town of Mt. Airy**Issues:**

1. **Infrastructure Challenges and Needs.** The County lacks major water and sewer facilities that are necessary for increased industrial growth. This lack of infrastructure may be the result of both limited planning due to unforeseen growth and limitations tied to water acquisition rights. Without improving the water infrastructure, growth of both industry and jobs will be difficult.

Opportunities:

1. **Revitalization of Downtown.** By successfully receiving a grant for the revitalization of downtown, the community will continue to attract outside tourism dollars. The reinvestment also gives local residents the option of staying close to home rather than traveling to another jurisdiction for specific shopping needs.

2.3 Housing³

Habersham County

Issues:

1. **Jobs-Housing Balance.** Communities should seek a balance between jobs and housing, at about 1.5 jobs per household, to improve quality of life. A higher ratio reflects an employment center and a lower ratio reflects a bedroom community. Habersham County's jobs-housing ratio declined from 1.19 to 1.06 between 1990 and 2000. Although this partly suggests that Habersham is attracting more retirees, it also suggests there are not enough jobs for its residents. Future development decisions need to encourage greater economic development to avoid prolonged commute time and other negative effects of commuting outside of a person's area of residence.
2. **Workforce Housing.** Nationwide, paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs is considered cost burdened, and paying more than 50 percent of household income on housing costs is considered extremely cost burdened. For both renter and owner households, a notable percentage of Habersham households are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. In 2000, 19 percent of households in owner-occupied units had housing costs above 30 percent of their household income. At the same time, 27 percent of all renter households were paying more than 30 percent of household income on rent.
3. **Special Housing Needs.** Discussions with local stakeholders identified the need for more shelter space for those experiencing temporary job loss and other hardships. Currently the County has 4 shelter units for the homeless and a waitlist of average waitlist of about six households.

Opportunities:

1. **Workforce Housing.** Workforce housing allows workers who are essential to the community's day-to-day operations (police, teachers, etc.) to live in the community where they work. Creative incentives for developers and specific allocation of units can make sure this type of housing is available.

³ For more information on Housing refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

2. Projected Demographic Changes Will Affect Housing Demand.

- The 35 to 44 age group is projected to make up the largest share of population (17.7 percent) in 2029. This group is more likely to have a larger share of family households and require single family housing.
- The 65 and older age group makes up the second largest share of the population (15.9 percent) in 2029. This group will likely prefer smaller lots with pedestrian friendly areas. One story structures and multi-family structures may be preferred in some cases where mobility is limited. Assisted living centers may also have increased demand. Due to limited income, this group may also require greater affordable housing choices including a need for additional public housing.

Town of Alto

Issues:

1. **Affordable Rental Housing.** Of participating municipalities, Alto had the highest percentage of cost-burdened renter households: 32 percent of all renter households paid more than 30 percent of income on rent. This data suggests that Alto needs more affordable housing options.
2. **Greater Housing Diversity.** Over one third (35 percent in 2000) of Alto's housing units are mobile homes/trailers, which is the highest percentage for the study area.
3. **Population Projections – Population Change Affecting Housing Rehabilitation.** Alto's population is projected to increase at a slower pace than the County over the next 20 years, increasing to about 1,185 in 2029. This suggests a need for neighborhood preservation and rehabilitation.

Opportunities:

1. **Affordable Rental Housing.** Because Alto is located close to the Lee Arrendale State Prison it likely is home to a significant share of its workers. The town may want to consider ways to increase housing opportunities for prison workers and other workers that are essential to County services. Workforce housing allows workers who are essential to the community's day-to-day operation to live in the same community they work in. Creative incentives for developers and specific allocation of units can make sure this type of housing is available.
2. **Greater Housing Diversity.** Greater housing diversity may help improve the quality of housing for those current and potential residents with low to moderate incomes. In particular, as discussed in the next paragraph, the emergence of bigger minority groups in the community may necessitate other housing types that fit their lifestyles.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **Workforce Housing.** Nationwide, paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs is considered cost burdened, and paying more than 50 percent of household income on housing costs is considered extremely cost burdened. In 2000, 23 percent of all Clarkesville renter households were paying more than 30 percent of household income on rent. More affordable rental housing may be needed to help alleviate potential shortages in the workforce to allow by creating a better match between income and housing costs, therefore encouraging people to choose Clarkesville for both employment and living.
2. **High Renter Population.** Approximately 42 percent of Clarkesville's occupied housing units were rented in 2000. Generally a significantly higher percentage of owner occupied units is ideal. Owners usually have a longer term investment in the area and are likely to have a long-term commitment to the local economy and community development. Clarkesville may try to encourage greater home ownership by offering mortgage counseling or other related services. Such services may be coordinated with other area communities facing a similar situation.
3. **Projected Demographic Changes Will Affect Housing Demand.**
 - The 35 to 44 age group is projected to make up the largest share of population (17.7 percent) in 2029. This group is more likely to have a larger share of family households and require single family housing.
 - The 65 and older age group makes up the second largest share of the population (15.9 percent) in 2029. This group will likely prefer smaller lots with pedestrian friendly areas. One story structures and multi-family structures may be preferred in some cases where mobility is limited. Assisted living centers may also have increased demand. Due to limited income, this group may also require greater affordable housing choices including a need for additional public housing.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

1. **Workforce Housing.** Nationwide, paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs is considered cost burdened, and paying more than 50 percent of household income on housing costs is considered extremely cost burdened. Affordability is principally an issue for renters in the City of Cornelia. In 2000, 30 percent of all renter households were paying more than 30 percent of household income on rent. Workforce housing allows workers who are essential to the community's day-to-day operation to live in the community.

2. Projected Demographic Changes Will Affect Housing Demand.

- The 35 to 44 age group is projected to make up the largest share of population (17.7 percent) in 2029. This group is more likely to have a larger share of family households and require single family housing.
- The 65 and older age group makes up the second largest share of the population (15.9 percent) in 2029. This group will likely prefer smaller lots with pedestrian friendly areas. One story structures and multi-family structures may be preferred in some cases where mobility is limited. Assisted living centers may also have increased demand. Due to limited income, this group may also require greater affordable housing choices including a need for additional public housing.

Opportunities:

1. **Workforce Housing.** Creative incentives for developers and specific allocation of units can make sure opportunities housing is available for Cornelia's growing workforce.

City of Demorest

Issues:

1. **Workforce Housing.** Nationwide, paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs is considered cost burdened, and paying more than 50 percent of household income on housing costs is considered extremely cost burdened. Renters face the greatest affordability problem in the city. In 2000, 21 percent of all renter households were paying more than 30 percent of household income on rent. By creating affordable rental units, people who work in many jobs that are essential to the local economy (teachers, cashiers, tellers, etc.) are able to live in the area. Without creating this environment, the city could face a shortage of employees.
2. **High Vacancy Rates.** The vacancy rate of all housing units in Demorest increased from 10 percent in 1990 to 12.5 percent in 2000. This rate is high compared to the rest of the county. High vacancy rates can have mixed and often negative effects on a community such as decreasing a sense of safety. Demorest has some of the oldest housing stock in the county, which likely contributes to the vacancy rates.

Opportunities:

1. **High Vacancy Rates.** Demorest can work to lower its vacancy rate over the next 20 years by encouraging habitation of vacant units while planning the construction of new units to meet market demand. Greater code enforcement and rehabilitation resistance could help facilitate the repair or removal of such stock from the city.
2. **High Renter Population.** Approximately 40 percent of Demorest's occupied housing units were rented in 2000. A significantly higher percentage of owner occupied units is preferred. Owners usually have a longer term investment in the area and are likely to have a long-term commitment to the local economy and community development.

Demorest may try to encourage greater home ownership by offering mortgage counseling or other related services.

3. Population Projections – Demographic Change Affecting Housing Demand.

- The 35 to 44 age group is projected to make up the largest share of population (17.7 percent) in 2029. This group is more likely to have a larger share of family households and require single family housing.
- The 65 and older age group makes up the second largest share of the population (15.9 percent) in 2029. This group will likely prefer smaller lots with pedestrian friendly areas. One story structures and multi-family structures may be preferred in some cases where mobility is limited. Assisted living centers may also have increased demand. Due to limited income, this group may also require greater affordable housing choices including a need for additional public housing.

Town of Mt. Airy

Issues:

- 1. Workforce Housing.** Nationwide, paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs is considered cost burdened, and paying more than 50 percent of household income on housing costs is considered rent burdened. For both renter and owner households, a notable percentage of Mt. Airy households are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. In 2000, 20 percent of households of all owner-occupied units had housing costs above 30 percent of their household income. At the same time, 27 percent of all renter households were paying more than 30 percent of household income on rent.
- 2. Greater Housing Diversity.** Housing diversity in the Town of Mt. Airy is limited. In 2000, about 25 percent of housing units were mobile homes/trailers and another 71 percent of units were detached single family residences. The quality of these two types of housing often varies greatly, suggesting that Mt. Airy has a disparity of housing for those people in the middle.

Opportunities:

- 1. Workforce Housing.** Workforce housing allows workers who are essential to the community's day-to-day operation to live in the community. Creative tax incentives for developers and specific allocation of units can make sure this type of housing is available.
- 2. Greater Housing Diversity.** Greater housing diversity may help improve the quality of housing for those current and potential residents with low to moderate incomes.
- 3. Projected Demographic Change Will Affect Housing Demand.**
 - The 35 to 44 age group is projected to make up the largest share of population (17.7 percent) in 2029. This group is more likely to have a larger share of family households and require single family housing.

- The 65 and older age group makes up the second largest share of the population (15.9 percent) in 2029. This group will likely prefer smaller lots with pedestrian friendly areas. One story structures and multi-family structures may be preferred in some cases where mobility is limited. Assisted living centers may also have increased demand. Due to limited income, this group may also require greater affordable housing choices including a need for additional public housing.

2.4 Natural and Cultural Resources⁴

Habersham County

Issues:

1. **Threatened or Endangered Plant and Animals.** The county and municipalities are home to many rare, threatened, or endangered species in need of preservation. The Persistent Trillium (*Trillium persistens*) is known to be found in the county and is an endangered species on the verge of extinction. The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is listed as threatened within the United States. Several fish species found in Habersham are listed as threatened in Georgia. Future development in the county should be directed in areas that do not contain these rare species. Critical animal and plant habitats should be preserved wherever possible.
2. **Loss of Historic Sites** – Historic sites throughout the County are lost every year to several factors including alterations, additions, and/or neglect.
3. **Lack of Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – The National Register of Historic Places listing is a federal recognition of its significance, but it does not offer protection for a site or district.
4. **Lack of Protection of Archaeological Sites** - There are currently no known provisions that exist in the current Habersham County code to protect archaeological sites through the development review process.

Opportunities:

1. **Chattahoochee National Forest.** Approximately 22 percent of the county (39,199 acres) falls within the Chattahoochee National Forest. The National Forest is a major asset for the county and municipalities. It attracts many visitors to the County each year, who enjoy the park's trout fishing, whitewater streams, abundant wildlife, hiking trails, and camping opportunities. Environmental tourism to the park contributes to the economic vitality of the community and should be actively promoted.

⁴ For more information on Natural and Cultural Resources refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

- 2. Tallulah Gorge State Park.** The Tallulah Gorge has been considered to be one of the seven natural wonders of Georgia. It consists of a series of breath-taking waterfalls and was at one point nicknamed the “Niagara Falls of the South.” In its heyday the Gorge attracted many visitors and supported large hotels in the City of Tallulah Falls. While technically not under the purview of this plan, as Tallulah Falls plans with Rabun County, its proximity to the planning area provides opportunities for unincorporated Habersham and its other municipalities. Ecological tourism to this site provides spillover effects in the form of increased tax revenue for the county. An opportunity exists to market the county for tourism to this and other scenic areas.
- 3. Scenic Beauty.** Habersham County is known for its natural beauty. The Blue Ridge Mountains, Chattahoochee National Forest, and Tallulah Gorge all contribute to this. The county contains numerous scenic vistas of mountain sides and unspoiled wilderness. Scenic beauty is the reason many have been attracted to the area and this will likely continue to draw residents to the county. It is projected that the county’s population will approximately double over the next 20 years. Steps should be taken to establish a greenway and open space program for Habersham County that can incorporate the scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of Habersham County and its municipalities before growth closes in around them, and they are lost. Inventorying these areas and guiding growth around them would accomplish one of the state’s Quality Growth Objectives. A GIS mapping system would enable the county and its municipalities to inventory and protect these areas from inappropriate development, thus ensuring that future development maintains the scenic quality of the county and does not detract from the reason so many have chosen to call the area home.
- 4. Conservation Subdivisions.** Conservation Subdivision Ordinances provide a practical and inexpensive way that Habersham County and its municipalities could create greenways, protect scenic beauty and permanently protect open space in the subdivision process. For example, conservation subdivision ordinance can provide an incentive for development of conservation subdivisions that would set aside appropriate amounts of open space in accessible areas adjacent to residential development as greenways. This could happen through the subdivision process as the county develops. If these greenway and open space areas were concentrated where there are already scenic vistas, streams, lakes, steep slopes or other environmentally sensitive areas, a conservation subdivision ordinance would do ‘double duty’ as it would allow development and extension of the tax base, while at the same time permanently protecting environmentally sensitive areas and increasing public access to open space and recreational areas.
- 5. Identification of Historic Resources -** Habersham County has a well documented collection of historic resources from an early 1990s countywide historic resources survey. This data along with other compiled data from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources has been inputted into an interactive web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural, archaeological and historic resources (NAHRGIS) of Georgia (<https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/>). Because the countywide survey was completed

approximately 15 years ago, a review and update of the survey is recommended to identify Habersham County's architectural history.

6. **Documentation of Historic Resources** – On the NAHRGIS database, approximately 261 sites countywide (including all municipalities) were identified as “appearing to meet National Register criteria”. Of these identified resources, a brief review of those resources should be conducted to identify exceptionally significant structures and the process to add them to the National Register of Historic Places should be undertaken.
7. **Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – To protect historic sites and districts, Habersham County could create historic overlay zoning districts to protect them from future changes. The districts should include structure standards and guidelines to maintain the character and integrity of the district or historic area.
8. **Promotion of Existing Historic Districts and Sites** – The National Trust for Historic Preservation states that studies have consistently shown that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travelers. Promoting the historic sites of Habersham could help create more tourism for the area.
9. **Design Guidelines** – The creation of design guidelines for historic resources located in Habersham County would act as a guide for both appropriate maintenance and for new construction of structures within historic districts. The Design Guidelines also would act as a guide for maintenance for existing resources.
10. **Protection of Archaeological Sites** - Steps should be taken to document, research, and protect sites that are discovered within the County.
11. **Habersham Historical Society & Museum** – Habersham County has one central location for its genealogical and historical collections at the Habersham Historical Society. The County and its municipalities should increase the use, support, promotion and assist in building the society and museum's collections.

Town of Alto

Issues:

1. **Threatened or Endangered Plant and Animals.** The county and municipalities are home to many rare, threatened, or endangered species in need of preservation. The Persistent Trillium (*Trillium persistens*) is known to be found in the county and is an endangered species on the verge of extinction. The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is listed as threatened within the United States. Several fish species found in Habersham are listed as threatened in Georgia. Future development in the town should be directed in areas that do not contain these rare species. Critical animal and plant habitats should be preserved wherever possible.
2. **Loss of Historic Sites** – Historic sites are lost every year to several factors including alterations, additions, and/or neglect.

3. **Lack of Protection of Archaeological Sites** - There are currently no known provisions that exist in the current code to protect archaeological sites through the development review process.

Opportunities:

1. **Scenic Beauty.** Habersham County and its municipalities are known for their natural beauty. They contain numerous scenic vistas of mountain sides and unspoiled wilderness. Scenic beauty is the reason many have been attracted to the area and this will likely continue to draw residents to the county. It is projected that the county's population will approximately double over the next 20 years. Steps should be taken to establish a greenway and open space program for Habersham County that can incorporate the scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of Habersham County and its municipalities before growth closes in around them, and they are lost. Inventorying these areas and guiding growth around them would accomplish one of the state's Quality Growth Objectives. A GIS mapping system would enable the county and its municipalities to inventory and protect these areas from inappropriate development, thus ensuring that future development maintains the scenic quality of the county and does not detract from the reason so many have chosen to call the area home.
2. **Conservation Subdivisions.** Conservation Subdivision Ordinances provide a practical and inexpensive way that Habersham County and its municipalities could create greenways, protect scenic beauty and permanently protect open space in the subdivision process. For example, conservation subdivision ordinance can provide an incentive for development of conservation subdivisions that would set aside appropriate amounts of open space in accessible areas adjacent to residential development as greenways. This could happen through the subdivision process as the county develops. If these greenway and open space areas were concentrated where there are already scenic vistas, streams, lakes, steep slopes or other environmentally sensitive areas, a conservation subdivision ordinance would do 'double duty' as it would allow development and extension of the tax base, while at the same time permanently protecting environmentally sensitive areas and increasing public access to open space and recreational areas.
3. **Identification of Historic Resources** – The Town of Alto has several identified historic resources within its town limits. The identified resources were part of a documented collection of historic resources from an early 1990s countywide historic resources survey. This data along with other compiled data from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources has been inputted into an interactive web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural, archaeological and historic resources (NAHRGIS) of Georgia (<https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/>). Because the countywide survey was completed approximately 15 years ago, a review and update of the survey is recommended to identify Alto's architectural history.
4. **Documentation of Historic Resources** – On the NAHRGIS database, approximately 10 sites were identified as “appearing to meet National Register criteria” within the town

limits of Alto. Of these identified resources, a brief review of those resources should be conducted to identify exceptionally significant structures and the process to add them to the National Register of Historic Places should be undertaken.

5. **Protection of Archaeological Sites** - Steps should be taken to document, research, and protect sites that are discovered within the town of Alto.

12. **Habersham Historical Society & Museum** – Habersham County has one central location for its genealogical and historical collections at the Habersham Historical Society. The County and its municipalities should increase the use, support, promotion and assist in building the society and museum’s collections.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **Lack of Protection for Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** Abundant natural resources and scenic views are among Habersham County and its municipalities’ greatest assets. However, the rapid pace of growth and development threatens these resources in a number of ways:
 - ◆ Loss of functional open space
 - ◆ Loss of tree cover
 - ◆ Declining water quality
 - ◆ Loss of prime agricultural land
 - ◆ Erosion of steep areas
 - ◆ Loss of scenic views

The proper protection of Habersham County and its municipalities’ natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas are necessary to maintaining environmental quality and preventing future degradation. Habersham County currently has sufficient ordinances or regulations in place to protect water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains. These meet state stipulations for the protection of these areas established by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Presently many of the other jurisdictions within the county do not have any regulations in place to protect these critical areas. Clarkesville contains wetlands, land in water supply watersheds, and a very small portion of the city (extreme southeast) is located in a groundwater recharge area. The city currently has not adopted wetlands, groundwater recharge, or water supply watershed protection regulations in accordance with state minimum standards.

The adoption of environmental regulations in congruence with those mandated by Article V of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 is needed for the proper preservation of these areas within the City. Environmentally sensitive lands exist within the unincorporated county as well as within the other municipalities. Steps should be taken to preserve them in every area of the county.

2. **Threatened or Endangered Plant and Animals.** The county and municipalities are home to many rare, threatened, or endangered species in need of preservation. The Persistent Trillium (*Trillium persistens*) is known to be found in the county and is an endangered species on the verge of extinction. The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is listed as threatened within the United States. Several fish species found in Habersham are listed as threatened in Georgia. Future development in the city should be directed in areas that do not contain these rare species. Critical animal and plant habitats should be preserved wherever possible.
3. **Loss of Historic Sites** – Historic sites are lost every year to several factors including alterations, additions, and/or neglect.
4. **Lack of Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – The National Register of Historic Places listing is a federal recognition of its significance, but it does not offer protection for a site or district.
5. **Lack of Protection of Archaeological Sites** - There are currently no known provisions that exist in the current code to protect archaeological sites through the development review process.

Opportunities:

1. **Ecotourism.** Portions of the Chattahoochee National Forest are in close proximity to the City of Clarkesville. The Tallulah Gorge State Park is also within a short driving distance to the city. These parks attract many visitors to the county and its municipalities each year, who enjoy the trout fishing, whitewater streams, abundant wildlife, hiking trails, and camping opportunities they offer. Many visitors to the parks patronize Clarkesville's restaurants, shops and hotels. Environmental tourism contributes to the economic vitality of the city and should be actively promoted.
2. **Scenic Beauty.** Habersham County and its municipalities are known for their natural beauty. The City of Clarkesville contains numerous scenic vistas of mountain sides, unspoiled wilderness and the picturesque Soque River. Scenic beauty is the reason many have been attracted to the city and this will likely continue to draw residents. It is projected that the city's population will increase by 41% between 2005 and 2029. Steps should be taken to protect scenic areas from inappropriate development, thus ensuring that future growth maintains the scenic quality of the city and does not detract from the reason so many have chosen to call the area home.
3. **Conservation Subdivisions.** Conservation Subdivision Ordinances provide a practical and inexpensive way for the City of Clarkesville to create greenways, protect scenic beauty and permanently conserve open space in the subdivision process. The city currently does not have such an ordinance. They can provide density incentives for developers, who set aside permanently conserved open space within a new subdivision. If open space areas are concentrated where there are already scenic vistas, streams, lakes, steep slopes or other environmentally sensitive areas, a conservation subdivision

ordinance would do ‘double duty’ as it would allow development and extension of the tax base, while at the same time permanently protecting environmentally sensitive areas and increasing public access to open space and recreational areas.

- 4. Identification of Historic Resources** – The City of Clarkesville has many identified historic resources within its city limits. The resources were part of a documented collection of historic resources from an early 1990s countywide historic resources survey. This data along with other compiled data from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources has been inputted into an interactive web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural, archaeological and historic resources (NAHRGIS) of Georgia (<https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/>). Because the countywide survey was completed approximately 15 years ago, a review and update of the survey is recommended to identify Clarkesville’s architectural history.
- 5. Documentation of Historic Resources** – On the NAHRGIS database, approximately 40 sites were identified as “appearing to meet National Register criteria” in the city limits of Clarkesville. Of these identified resources, a brief review of those resources should be conducted to identify exceptionally significant structures and the process to add them to the National Register of Historic Places should be undertaken.
- 6. Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – There are two historic districts in Clarkesville, the South Washington Street Historic District and the Washington-Jefferson Street Historic District. The city has adopted a “Preservation Overlay Corridor Zone” to protect these historic districts. The overlay district establishes architectural guidelines for new development in an effort to maintain the character and integrity of these historic areas.
- 7. Promotion of Existing Historic Districts and Sites** – The National Trust for Historic Preservation states that studies have consistently shown that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travelers. Promoting the historic sites of Clarkesville could help create more tourism for the area.
- 8. Protection of Archaeological Sites** - Steps should be taken to document, research, and protect sites that are discovered within the City of Clarkesville.
- 9. Habersham Historical Society & Museum** – Habersham County has one central location for its genealogical and historical collections at the Habersham Historical Society. The County and its municipalities should increase the use, support, promotion and assist in building the society and museum’s collections.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

1. **Loss of Historic Sites** – Historic sites are lost every year to several factors including alterations, additions, and/or neglect.
2. **Lack of Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – The National Register of Historic Places listing is a federal recognition of its significance, but it does not offer protection for a site or district.
3. **Lack of Protection of Archaeological Sites** - There are currently no known provisions that exist in the current code to protect archaeological sites through the development review process.
4. **Threatened or Endangered Plant and Animals.** The county and municipalities are home to many rare, threatened, or endangered species in need of preservation. The Persistent Trillium (*Trillium persistens*) is known to be found in the county and is an endangered species on the verge of extinction. The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is listed as threatened within the United States. Several fish species found in Habersham are listed as threatened in Georgia. Future development in the city should be directed in areas that do not contain these rare species. Critical animal and plant habitats should be preserved wherever possible.

Opportunities:

1. **Chattahoochee National Forest.** A portion of the city falls within the Chattahoochee National Forest. The National Forest is a major asset for the county and municipalities. It attracts many visitors to the county each year, who enjoy the park's trout fishing, whitewater streams, abundant wildlife, hiking trails, and camping opportunities. Environmental tourism to the park contributes to the economic vitality of the community and should be actively promoted.
2. **Scenic Beauty.** Habersham County and its municipalities are known for their natural beauty. The Blue Ridge Mountains, Chattahoochee National Forest, and Tallulah Gorge all contribute to this. The county contains numerous scenic vistas of mountain sides and unspoiled wilderness. Scenic beauty is the reason many have been attracted to the area and this will likely continue to draw residents to the county. It is projected that the county's population will approximately double over the next 20 years. Steps should be taken to establish a greenway and open space program for Habersham County that can incorporate the scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of Habersham County and its municipalities before growth closes in around them, and they are lost. Inventorying these areas and guiding growth around them would accomplish one of the state's Quality Growth Objectives. A GIS mapping system would enable the county and its municipalities to inventory and protect these areas from inappropriate development, thus ensuring that future development maintains the scenic quality of the county and does not detract from the reason so many have chosen to call the area home.
3. **Identification of Historic Resources** – The City of Cornelia has many identified historic resources within its city limits. The resources were part of a documented collection of historic resources from an early 1990s countywide historic resources survey. This data along with other compiled data from the Historic Preservation Division of the

Department of Natural Resources has been inputted into an interactive web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural, archaeological and historic resources (NAHRGIS) of Georgia (<https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/>). Because the countywide survey was completed approximately 15 years ago, a review and update of the survey is recommended to identify Cornelia's architectural history.

- 4. Documentation of Historic Resources** – On the NAHRGIS database, approximately 33 sites were identified as “appearing to meet National Register criteria” within in the city limits of Cornelia. A local historic district designation report for the Cornelia Downtown Historic District has identified key structures and has proposed a boundary for the district. Using this information as a basis, a National Register Nomination form should be completed to formally list the Cornelia Downtown Historic District on the National Register. In addition, a review of the remaining structures, not within the boundary of the proposed historic district, should be conducted to identify exceptionally significant structures and the process to add them to the National Register of Historic Places should be undertaken.
- 5. Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – A Local Historic District Designation Report for the Cornelia Downtown Historic District has already been completed and in order to protect historic sites and the district, Cornelia could implement a local preservation ordinance or create historic overlay zoning districts to protect them from future changes. The district should include structure standards and guidelines to maintain the character and integrity of the district or historic area.
- 6. Promotion of Existing Historic Districts and Sites** – The National Trust for Historic Preservation states that studies have consistently shown that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travelers. Promoting the historic sites of Cornelia could help create more tourism for the area.
- 7. Design Guidelines** – The creation of design guidelines for historic resources located in Cornelia would act as a guide for both appropriate maintenance and for new construction of structures within historic districts. The Design Guidelines also would act as a guide for maintenance for existing resources.
- 8. Protection of Archaeological Sites** - Steps should be taken to document, research, and protect sites that are discovered within the City of Cornelia.
- 9. Habersham Historical Society & Museum** – Habersham County has one central location for its genealogical and historical collections at the Habersham Historical Society. The County and its municipalities should increase the use, support, promotion and assist in building the society and museum's collections.

City of Demorest

Issues:

1. **Demorest Lake.** The 26-acre Demorest Lake provides a scenic backdrop for the Piedmont College campus. Preliminary reports have shown that the lake is in need of maintenance and dam safety improvements. The college has been in discussions with the City of Demorest to maintain ownership of the lake. The city has expressed interest in doing so and possibly draining the lake, replacing it with wetlands. In whatever outcome, steps should be taken to ensure adequate consideration is given to environmental quality, safety issues, and aesthetic concerns.
2. **Threatened or Endangered Plant and Animals.** The county and municipalities are home to many rare, threatened, or endangered species in need of preservation. The Persistent Trillium (*Trillium persistens*) is known to be found in the county and is an endangered species on the verge of extinction. The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is listed as threatened within the United States. Several fish species found in Habersham are listed as threatened in Georgia. Future development in the city should be directed in areas that do not contain these rare species. Critical animal and plant habitats should be preserved wherever possible.
3. **Lack of Protection for Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** Abundant natural resources and scenic views are among Habersham County and its municipality's greatest assets. However, the rapid pace of growth and development threatens these resources in a number of ways:
 - ◆ Loss of functional open space
 - ◆ Loss of tree cover
 - ◆ Declining water quality
 - ◆ Loss of prime agricultural land
 - ◆ Erosion of steep areas
 - ◆ Loss of scenic views

The proper protection of Habersham County and its municipality's natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas are necessary to maintaining environmental quality and preventing future degradation. Habersham County currently has sufficient ordinances or regulations in place to protect water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains. These meet state stipulations for the protection of these areas established by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Presently many of the other jurisdictions within the county do not have any regulations in place to protect these critical areas. Demorest contains wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and land in water supply watersheds. The city currently has not adopted wetlands, groundwater recharge, or watershed protection regulations in accordance with state minimum standards.

The adoption of environmental regulations in congruence with those mandated by Article V of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 is needed for the proper preservation of these areas within city. Environmentally sensitive lands exist within the unincorporated county as well as within the other municipalities. Steps should be taken to preserve them in every area of the county.

4. **Loss of Historic Sites** – Historic sites are lost every year to several factors including alterations, additions, and/or neglect.
5. **Lack of Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – The National Register of Historic Places listing is a federal recognition of its significance, but it does not offer protection for a site or district.
6. **Lack of Protection of Archaeological Sites** - There are currently no known provisions that exist in the current code to protect archaeological sites through the development review process.

Opportunities:

1. **Scenic Beauty.** Habersham County and its municipalities are known for their natural beauty. The Blue Ridge Mountains, Chattahoochee National Forest, and Tallulah Gorge all contribute to this. The county contains numerous scenic vistas of mountain sides and unspoiled wilderness. Scenic beauty is the reason many have been attracted to the area and this will likely continue to draw residents to the county. It is projected that the county's population will approximately double over the next 20 years. Steps should be taken to establish a greenway and open space program for Habersham County that can incorporate the scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of Habersham County and its municipalities before growth closes in around them, and they are lost. Inventorying these areas and guiding growth around them would accomplish one of the state's Quality Growth Objectives. A GIS mapping system would enable the county and its municipalities to inventory and protect these areas from inappropriate development, thus ensuring that future development maintains the scenic quality of the county and does not detract from the reason so many have chosen to call the area home.
2. **Conservation Subdivisions.** Conservation Subdivision Ordinances provide a practical and inexpensive way that Habersham County and its municipalities could create greenways, protect scenic beauty and permanently protect open space in the subdivision process. For example, a conservation subdivision ordinance can provide an incentive for development of conservation subdivisions that would set aside appropriate amounts of open space in accessible areas adjacent to residential development as greenways. This could happen through the subdivision process as the county develops. If these greenway and open space areas were concentrated where there are already scenic vistas, streams, lakes, steep slopes or other environmentally sensitive areas, a conservation subdivision ordinance would do 'double duty' as it would allow development and extension of the tax base, while at the same time permanently protecting environmentally sensitive areas and increasing public access to open space and recreational areas.
3. **Identification of Historic Resources** – The City of Demorest has many identified historic resources within its city limits. The resources were part of a documented collection of historic resources from an early 1990s countywide historic resources survey. This data along with other compiled data from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources has been inputted into an interactive web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural,

archaeological and historic resources (NAHRGIS) of Georgia (<https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/>). Because the countywide survey was completed approximately 15 years ago, a review and update of the survey is recommended to identify Demorest's architectural history.

4. **Documentation of Historic Resources** – On the NAHRGIS database, approximately 50 sites were identified as “appearing to meet National Register criteria” within in the city limits of Demorest. Of these identified resources, a brief review of those resources should be conducted to identify exceptionally significant structures and the process to add them to the National Register of Historic Places should be undertaken.
5. **Protection of National Register Historic Districts** – There is one historic district in Demorest, the Demorest Commercial Historic District. To protect historic sites and the district, Demorest could implement a local preservation ordinance or create historic overlay zoning districts to protect them from future changes. The district should include structure standards and guidelines to maintain the character and integrity of the district or historic area. The districts should include structure standards and guidelines to maintain the character and integrity of the district or historic area.
6. **Promotion of Existing Historic Districts and Sites** – The National Trust for Historic Preservation states that studies have consistently shown that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travelers. Promoting the historic sites of Demorest could help create more tourism for the area.
7. **Design Guidelines** – The creation of design guidelines for historic resources located in Demorest would act as a guide for both appropriate maintenance and for new construction of structures within historic districts. The Design Guidelines also would act as a guide for maintenance for existing resources.
8. **Protection of Archaeological Sites** - Steps should be taken to document, research, and protect sites that are discovered within the City of Demorest.
9. **Habersham Historical Society & Museum** – Habersham County has one central location for its genealogical and historical collections at the Habersham Historical Society. The County and its municipalities should increase the use, support, promotion and assist in building the society and museum's collections.

Town of Mt. Airy

Issues:

1. **Threatened or Endangered Plant and Animals.** The county and municipalities are home to many rare, threatened, or endangered species in need of preservation. The Persistent Trillium (*Trillium persistens*) is known to be found in the county and is an endangered species on the verge of extinction. The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is listed as threatened within the United States. Several fish species found

in Habersham are listed as threatened in Georgia. Future development in the town should be directed in areas that do not contain these rare species. Critical animal and plant habitats should be preserved wherever possible.

2. **Loss of Historic Sites** – Historic sites are lost every year to several factors including alterations, additions, and/or neglect.
3. **Lack of Protection of Archaeological Sites** - There are currently no known provisions that exist in the current code to protect archaeological sites through the development review process.
4. **Lack of Protection for Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** Abundant natural resources and scenic views are among Habersham County and its municipalities' greatest assets. However, the rapid pace of growth and development threatens these resources in a number of ways:
 - ◆ Loss of functional open space
 - ◆ Loss of tree cover
 - ◆ Declining water quality
 - ◆ Loss of prime agricultural land
 - ◆ Erosion of steep areas
 - ◆ Loss of scenic views

The proper protection of Habersham County and its municipalities' natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas are necessary to maintaining environmental quality and preventing future degradation. Habersham County currently has sufficient ordinances or regulations in place to protect water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains. These meet state stipulations for the protection of these areas established by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Presently many of the other jurisdictions within the county do not have any regulations in place to protect these critical areas. Mt. Airy contains wetlands and land in a water supply watershed. The town currently does not have wetlands or watershed protection regulations in place that meet minimum state planning standards.

The adoption of environmental regulations in congruence with those mandated by Article V of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 is needed for the proper preservation of these areas within the town. Environmentally sensitive lands exist within the unincorporated county as well as within the other municipalities. Steps should be taken to preserve them in every area of the county.

Opportunities:

1. **Chattahoochee National Forest.** A portion of the town falls within the Chattahoochee National Forest. The National Forest is a major asset for the county and municipalities. It attracts many visitors to the county each year, who enjoy the park's trout fishing, whitewater streams, abundant wildlife, hiking trails, and camping opportunities. Environmental tourism to the park contributes to the economic vitality of the community and should be actively promoted.

- 2. Scenic Beauty.** Habersham County and its municipalities known for their natural beauty. They contain numerous scenic vistas of mountain sides and unspoiled wilderness. Scenic beauty is the reason many have been attracted to the area and this will likely continue to draw residents to the county. It is projected that the county's population will approximately double over the next 20 years. Steps should be taken to establish a greenway and open space program for Habersham County that can incorporate the scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of Habersham County and its municipalities before growth closes in around them, and they are lost. Inventorying these areas and guiding growth around them would accomplish one of the state's Quality Growth Objectives. A GIS mapping system would enable the county and its municipalities to inventory and protect these areas from inappropriate development, thus ensuring that future development maintains the scenic quality of the county and does not detract from the reason so many have chosen to call the area home.
- 3. Conservation Subdivisions.** Conservation Subdivision Ordinances provide a practical and inexpensive way that Habersham County and its municipalities could create greenways, protect scenic beauty and permanently protect open space in the subdivision process. For example, a conservation subdivision ordinance can provide an incentive for development of conservation subdivisions that would set aside appropriate amounts of open space in accessible areas adjacent to residential development as greenways. This could happen through the subdivision process as the county develops. If these greenway and open space areas were concentrated where there are already scenic vistas, streams, lakes, steep slopes or other environmentally sensitive areas, a conservation subdivision ordinance would do 'double duty' as it would allow development and extension of the tax base, while at the same time permanently protecting environmentally sensitive areas and increasing public access to open space and recreational areas.
- 4. Identification of Historic Resources –** The Town of Mt. Airy has several identified historic resources within its town limits. The identified resources were part of a documented collection of historic resources from an early 1990s countywide historic resources survey. This data along with other compiled data from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources has been inputted into an interactive web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural, archaeological and historic resources (NAHRGIS) of Georgia (<https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/>). Because the countywide survey was completed approximately 15 years ago, a review and update of the survey is recommended to identify Mt. Airy's architectural history.
- 5. Documentation of Historic Resources –** On the NAHRGIS database, approximately 10 sites were identified as "appearing to meet National Register criteria" within the town limits of Mt. Airy. Of these identified resources, a brief review of those resources should be conducted to identify exceptionally significant structures and the process to add them to the National Register of Historic Places should be undertaken.

6. **Protection of Archaeological Sites** - Steps should be taken to document, research, and protect sites that are discovered within the Town of Mt. Airy.
7. **Habersham Historical Society & Museum** – Habersham County has one central location for its genealogical and historical collections at the Habersham Historical Society. The County and its municipalities should increase the use, support, promotion and assist in building the society and museum’s collections.

2.5 Community Facilities and Services⁵

Habersham County

Issues:

1. **Water Supply.** Insufficient water supply to keep pace with projected growth is a major issue within the county. The county and its municipalities have recently completed a 50-year Comprehensive Water Development Plan to study and address this issue. The findings of this plan estimate that the unincorporated county will need to add an additional 3.2 MGD of capacity to serve demand in 2030. Steps are being made to go forward with recommendations of the plan, including the purchase of water from Toccoa and the construction of a pipeline to Stephens County.
2. **Fire Service.** Improvements are needed to enhance fire service within the County. The Habersham County Fire Department’s ISO ratings range from 6 to 10. 10 indicate little or no fire protection. The average response time for fire calls within the department is 8.5 minutes. This does not meet standards set by the National Fire Protection Service which advocate response times of 4 minutes or less. In anticipation of future growth, the department foresees the opportunity to construct additional stations to raise ISO ratings in class 10 areas.
3. **Police Service.** Habersham County currently has a low level of service for police protection in terms of officers per residents. The County currently has 0.8 officers per 1,000 residents, which is well below the national average of 2.3 officers per 1,000 residents⁶. To improve this ratio to national standards the Sherriff’s office will have to add a significant numbers of officers to its ranks.
4. **School Overcrowding.** The Habersham County School System is currently experiencing rapid increases in student enrollment. In years past, the system would typically see increases of 30-50 students per year. In recent years increases of over 200 additional students is not uncommon. These additional students have caused strain on the system and school overcrowding is common. Expansions to school capacity are planned over the 20-year planning period to help alleviate this problem.

⁵ For more information on Community Facilities refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

⁶ U.S., Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Town of Alto

Issues:

1. **Water Supply.** Insufficient water supply to keep pace with projected growth is an issue within the Town. The county and its municipalities have recently completed a 50-year Comprehensive Water Development Plan to study and address this issue. The findings of this plan estimate that the town will need to add an additional 1.0 MGD of capacity to serve demand in 2030. Alto currently relies on a system of wells for their water supply. Groundwater supplies are insufficient to meet future demand. At this time Alto maintains a connection to Demorest's water system. This could serve as a potential source for additional water capacity.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **Water Supply.** Insufficient water supply to keep pace with projected growth is an issue within Clarkesville. The county and its municipalities have recently completed a 50-year Comprehensive Water Development Plan to study and address this issue. The findings of this plan estimate that the city will need to add an additional 1.7 MGD of capacity to serve demand in 2030.

Opportunity:

1. **Water Supply Negotiations.** The city is currently in negotiations to attain additional water supply from the county, in the event the county is serviced by a waterline from Toccoa. This additional water source could be used to help meet projected future demand.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

1. **Water Supply.** Insufficient water supply to keep pace with projected growth is an issue in Cornelia. The county and its municipalities have recently completed a 50-year Comprehensive Water Development Plan to study and address this issue. The findings of this plan estimate that the Town will need to add an additional 1.0 MGD of capacity to serve demand in 2030.

City of Demorest

Issues:

1. **Water Supply.** Insufficient water supply to keep pace with projected growth may be an issue within the city of Demorest. The county and its municipalities have recently

completed a 50-year Comprehensive Water Development Plan to study and address this issue. The findings of this plan estimate that the Town will need to add an additional 6.9 MGD of capacity to serve demand in 2030. The city may be able to meet this demand through additional capacity gained through its recently submitted permit to withdraw water from Lake Yonah.

Opportunities:

- 1. Piedmont College.** Piedmont College is a major asset to the city of Demorest. It not only provides educational, employment, and cultural opportunities for city residents, it can also be used as a marketing device. It is anticipated that large numbers of affluent baby-boomers will be relocating to the county. Marketing to retirees, the cultural opportunities offered by a college, can attract new residents and promote economic development within the city.

Town of Mt. Airy**Issues:**

- 1. Water Supply.** Insufficient water supply to keep pace with projected growth is an issue within the Mt. Airy. The county and its municipalities have recently completed a 50-year Comprehensive Water Development Plan to study and address this issue. The findings of this plan estimate that the Town will need to add an additional 3.3 MGD of capacity to serve demand in 2030. Mt. Airy currently relies on a system of wells for their water supply. Groundwater supplies are insufficient to fully meet future demand.
- 2. Sewer Service.** The Town of Mt. Airy currently does not have a centralized sewer system. The town's population is projected to increase by approximately 1,000 residents or 150 percent by 2029. This will undoubtedly cause significant development pressures. To develop at densities greater than 1-acre lots the town will be required to construct a sewer system or purchase capacity from neighboring jurisdictions.

2.6 Intergovernmental Coordination⁷

Habersham County

Issues:

- 1. Intergovernmental agreements.** Many of the county's municipalities rely on the county for community services. As the county and its municipalities continue to grow and state and federal regulations change, the county needs to ensure that proper agreements are in place with other local jurisdictions, regional authorities and the state government to ensure adequate delivery of public services to its citizens.
- 2. Land use conflicts and service delivery issues that result from annexation.** The county needs to continue to work closely with the various city and town councils to avoid potential land use conflicts and service delivery confusion when annexations occur. It may be beneficial to establish "Spheres of Influence" for each municipality in Habersham County in which the county and affected municipality would be required to jointly review proposed infrastructure improvements, new developments and zoning or land intensity district changes.
- 3. Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy:** As Habersham County and its municipalities work through the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans, needed changes in service delivery may be identified. Open communication and dialogue with the municipalities will have to be maintained throughout this planning process. Additionally, the county's Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated following the Comprehensive Plan process to accurately reflect necessary changes in service delivery agreements.
- 4. Coordinate development and education.** Review of development proposals should include the Habersham County School Board, as new housing usually produces new students. The School Board should also have a role in which to comment on impacts of rezoning applications. The School Board should also coordinate school planning with the county's land use planning efforts, seeking ways to reduce bussing costs by building new housing close to educational facilities. Just as the School Board should have a say in where new development is approved, Habersham County should have a voice in where new schools are located. New schools require service by infrastructure and often drive residential development in the vicinity. School placement can have major impacts on local governments and because of this they should be an active partner in these decisions.
- 5. Varying Development Regulations.** The county and its municipalities should work together to adopt similar development ordinances. Currently some ordinances are more restrictive in the county than they are in a number of the municipalities. This has resulted

⁷ For more information on Intergovernmental Coordination refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

in annexations to avoid the county's tougher standards. If the county and its municipalities adopted identical regulations annexations would be reduced and consistent degrees of protection for environmental and cultural resources could be obtained.

Opportunities:

- 1. Regional transportation planning.** To ensure the proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, County officials need to continue to be actively involved in transportation planning activities at the Georgia Mountain Regional Development Center and Georgia Department of Transportation.
- 2. Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Renewal:** County officials need to work closely with the municipalities to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is renewed and effectively and equitably.
- 3. Actively participate in local regional planning efforts.** The Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center is continually undertaking new planning efforts that can and will have an impact on the future of Habersham County. The county needs to stay in touch with these efforts and actively participate in them.
- 4. Actively participate in Appalachian region planning efforts.** The county has been successful in receiving grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a federal-state partnership that works with the people of Appalachia to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life. The county should continue to work with the ARC and look for opportunities to utilize assistance from the organization to increase job opportunities in the county and improve infrastructure.

Town of Alto

Issues:

- 1. Intergovernmental agreements.** The town relies upon the county for many of its services. As it continues to grow and state and federal regulations change, the Town needs to ensure that proper agreements are in place with other local jurisdictions and the regional and state governments to ensure adequate delivery of public services to its citizens.
- 2. Land use conflicts and service delivery issues that result from annexation.** The Town needs to continue to work closely with the county Board of Commissioners and Habersham County Building and Planning Department to avoid potential land use conflicts and service delivery issues in the areas surrounding its limits.
- 3. Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy:** As Habersham County and its municipalities work through the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans, needed changes in service delivery may be identified. Open communication and dialogue with the municipalities will have to be maintained throughout this planning process. Additionally, the County's Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated following

the Comprehensive Plan process to accurately reflect necessary changes in service delivery agreements.

4. **Coordinate development and education.** Review of development proposals should include the Habersham County School Board, as new housing usually produces new students. The School Board should also have a role in which to comment on impacts of rezoning applications. The School Board should also coordinate school planning with the county's land use planning efforts, seeking ways to reduce bussing costs by building new housing close to educational facilities. Just as the School Board should have a say in where new development is approved, the Town of Alto should have a voice in where new schools are located. New schools require service by infrastructure and often drive residential development in the vicinity. School placement can have major impacts on local governments and because of this they should be an active partner in these decisions.
5. **Varying Development Regulations.** The county and its municipalities should work together to adopt similar development ordinances. Currently some ordinances are more restrictive in the county than they are in a number of the municipalities. This has resulted in annexations to avoid the county's tougher standards. If the county and its municipalities adopted identical regulations annexations would be reduced and consistent degrees of protection for environmental and cultural resources could be obtained.

Opportunities:

1. **Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Renewal:** Town officials need to work closely with the County to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is used effectively.
2. **Regional transportation planning.** To ensure the proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, Town officials need to continue to be actively involved in transportation planning activities at the County, Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center, and Georgia Department of Transportation.
3. **Create an Annexation Policy:** It would benefit Alto to develop an annexation policy to define when annexation is or is not in its best interest. The town should work closely with Habersham and Banks counties and state and regional planning agencies to ensure that new community facilities and services built in close proximity to Alto support the needs of local residents and businesses and are compatible with the provisions of the Comprehensive Plan.
4. **Actively participate in local regional planning efforts.** Habersham County, Banks County and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center continue to undertake planning and development efforts that can and will have an impact on the future of the town. The town needs to stay in touch with these efforts and actively participate in them.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **Intergovernmental agreements.** The city relies upon the county for many of its services. As the city continues to grow and state and federal regulations change, the city needs to ensure that proper agreements are in place with other local jurisdictions and the regional and state governments to ensure adequate delivery of public services to its citizens.
2. **Land use conflicts and service delivery issues that result from annexation.** The city needs to continue to work closely with the County Board of Commissioners and the County Building and Planning Department to avoid potential land use conflicts and service delivery issues in the areas surrounding its limits.
3. **Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy:** As Clarkesville, Habersham County and the other cities in Habersham work through the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans, needed changes in service delivery will certainly be identified. Open communication and dialogue with the county will have to be maintained throughout this planning process. Additionally, the cities' Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated following the Comprehensive Plan process to accurately reflect necessary changes in service delivery agreements. Some areas that have been identified for further study include police protection, transportation and parks and recreation.
4. **Coordinate development and education.** Review of development proposals should include the Habersham County School Board, as new housing usually produces new students. The School Board should also have a role in which to comment on impacts of rezoning applications. The School Board should also coordinate school planning with the county's land use planning efforts, seeking ways to reduce bussing costs by building new housing close to educational facilities. Just as the School Board should have a say in where new development is approved, the City of Clarkesville should have a voice in where new schools are located. New schools require service by infrastructure and often drive residential development in the vicinity. School placement can have major impacts on local governments and because of this they should be an active partner in these decisions.
5. **Varying Development Regulations.** The county and its municipalities should work together to adopt similar development ordinances. Currently some ordinances are more restrictive in the county than they are in a number of the municipalities. This has resulted in annexations to avoid the county's tougher standards. If the county and its municipalities adopted identical regulations annexations would be reduced and consistent degrees of protection for environmental and cultural resources could be obtained.

Opportunities:

1. **Regional transportation planning.** To ensure the proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, city officials need to continue to be actively involved in transportation planning activities at the County, Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center, and Georgia Department of Transportation.

2. **Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Renewal:** City officials need to work closely with the county to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is used effectively.
3. **Update Annexation Policy:** Clarkesville has an annexation policy which was developed contemporaneously with its previous Comprehensive Plan. Such a policy is useful in defining for city leaders and community members the city's annexation plans. It is recommended that during this planning process Clarkesville's leaders take the opportunity to assess the city's current policies and update them as necessary and as required to meet the stipulations of current Georgia annexation laws. During this process the city may also consider updating its mapping of areas of possible annexation.
4. **Actively participate in local regional planning efforts.** Habersham County and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center continue to undertake planning and development efforts that can and will have an impact on the future of the city. The city needs to stay in touch with these efforts and actively participate in them.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

1. **Intergovernmental agreements.** The city relies upon the county for many of its services. As the city continues to grow and state and federal regulations change, the city needs to ensure that proper agreements are in place with other local jurisdictions and the regional and state governments to ensure adequate delivery of public services to its citizens.
2. **Land use conflicts and service delivery issues that result from annexation.** The city needs to continue to work closely with the Habersham County Board of Commissioners and the Habersham County Building and Planning Department to avoid potential land use conflicts and service delivery issues in the areas surrounding its limits.
3. **Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy:** As Cornelia, Habersham County and the other municipalities in Habersham work through the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans, needed changes in service delivery will certainly be identified. Open communication and dialogue with the county will have to be maintained throughout this planning process. Additionally, the cities' Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated following the Comprehensive Plan process to accurately reflect necessary changes in service delivery agreements.
4. **Coordinate development and education.** Review of development proposals should include the Habersham County School Board, as new housing usually produces new students. The School Board should also have a role in which to comment on impacts of rezoning applications. The School Board should also coordinate school planning with the county's land use planning efforts, seeking ways to reduce bussing costs by building new housing close to educational facilities. Just as the School Board should have a say in

where new development is approved, the City of Cornelia should have a voice in where new schools are located. New schools require service by infrastructure and often drive residential development in the vicinity. School placement can have major impacts on local governments and because of this they should be an active partner in these decisions.

- 5. Varying Development Regulations.** The county and its municipalities should work together to adopt similar development ordinances. Currently some ordinances are more restrictive in the county than they are in a number of the municipalities. This has resulted in annexations to avoid the county's tougher standards. If the county and its municipalities adopted identical regulations annexations would be reduced and consistent degrees of protection for environmental and cultural resources could be obtained.

Opportunities:

- 1. Regional transportation planning.** To ensure the proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, city officials need to continue to be actively involved in transportation planning activities at the County, Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center, and Georgia Department of Transportation.
- 2. Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Renewal:** City officials need to work closely with the county to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is used effectively. There is an identified need for Clarkesville to have greater access to SPLOST funds for needed infrastructure improvements.
- 3. Create an Annexation Policy:** Cornelia needs a clear annexation policy to define when annexation is or is not in its best interest and to define its expectations for prospective developers. The city should work closely with surrounding jurisdictions and state and regional planning agencies to ensure that new community facilities and services built within this sphere of influence support the needs of local residents and businesses and are compatible with the provisions of this plan.
- 4. Actively participate in local regional planning efforts.** Habersham County and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center continue to undertake planning and development efforts that can and will have an impact on the future of the city. The city needs to stay in touch with these efforts and actively participate in them.

City of Demorest

Issues:

- 1. Intergovernmental agreements.** The city relies upon the county for many of its services. As the City continues to grow and state and federal regulations change, the City needs to ensure that proper agreements are in place with other local jurisdictions and the regional and state governments to ensure adequate delivery of public services to its citizens.
- 2. Land use conflicts and service delivery issues that result from annexation.** The City needs to continue to work closely with the County Board of Commissioners and the County Building and Planning Department to avoid potential land use conflicts and service delivery issues in the areas surrounding its limits.
- 3. Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy:** As Demorest, Habersham County and the other municipalities in Habersham work through the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans, needed changes in service delivery will certainly be identified. Open communication and dialogue with the County will have to be maintained throughout this planning process. Additionally, the cities' Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated following the Comprehensive Plan process to accurately reflect necessary changes in service delivery agreements.
- 4. Coordinate development and education.** Review of development proposals should include the Habersham County School Board, as new housing usually produces new students. The School Board should also have a role in which to comment on impacts of rezoning applications. The School Board should also coordinate school planning with the county's land use planning efforts, seeking ways to reduce bussing costs by building new housing close to educational facilities. Just as the School Board should have a say in where new development is approved, the City of Demorest should have a voice in where new schools are located. New schools require service by infrastructure and often drive residential development in the vicinity. School placement can have major impacts on local governments and because of this they should be an active partner in these decisions.
- 5. Varying Development Regulations.** The county and its municipalities should work together to adopt similar development ordinances. Currently some ordinances are more restrictive in the county than they are in a number of the municipalities. This has resulted in annexations to avoid the county's tougher standards. If the county and its municipalities adopted identical regulations annexations would be reduced and consistent degrees of protection for environmental and cultural resources could be obtained.

Opportunities:

- 1. Regional transportation planning.** To ensure the proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, City officials need to continue to be actively

involved in transportation planning activities at the County, Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center, and Georgia Department of Transportation.

2. **Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Renewal:** City officials need to work closely with the County to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is used effectively.
3. **Create an Annexation Policy:** Demorest needs a clear annexation policy to define when annexation is or is not in its best interest and to define its expectations for prospective developers. The city should work closely with surrounding jurisdictions and state and regional planning agencies to ensure that new community facilities and services built within this sphere of influence support the needs of local residents and businesses and are compatible with the provisions of this plan.
4. **Actively participate in local regional planning efforts.** Habersham County and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center continue to undertake planning and development efforts that can and will have an impact on the future of the city. The city needs to stay in touch with these efforts and actively participate in them.

Town of Mt. Airy

Issues:

1. **Intergovernmental agreements.** The Town relies upon the County for many of its services. As the city continues to grow and state and federal regulations change, the city needs to ensure that proper agreements are in place with other local jurisdictions and the regional and state governments to ensure adequate delivery of public services to its citizens.
2. **Land use conflicts and service delivery issues that result from annexation.** The Town needs to continue to work closely with the County Board of Commissioners and the County Building and Planning Department to avoid potential land use conflicts and service delivery issues in the areas surrounding its limits.
3. **Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy:** As Mt. Airy, Habersham County and the other municipalities in Habersham work through the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans, needed changes in service delivery will certainly be identified. Open communication and dialogue with the County will have to be maintained throughout this planning process. Additionally, the town's Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated following the Comprehensive Plan process to accurately reflect necessary changes in service delivery agreements.
4. **Coordinate development and education.** Review of development proposals should include the Habersham County School Board, as new housing usually produces new students. The School Board should also have a role in which to comment on impacts of rezoning applications. The School Board should also coordinate school planning with the

county’s land use planning efforts, seeking ways to reduce bussing costs by building new housing close to educational facilities. Just as the School Board should have a say in where new development is approved, the Town of Mt. Airy should have a voice in where new schools are located. New schools require service by infrastructure and often drive residential development in the vicinity. School placement can have major impacts on local governments and because of this they should be an active partner in these decisions.

- 5. **Varying Development Regulations.** The county and its municipalities should work together to adopt similar development ordinances. Currently some ordinances are more restrictive in the county than they are in a number of the municipalities. This has resulted in annexations to avoid the county’s tougher standards. If the county and its municipalities adopted identical regulations annexations would be reduced and consistent degrees of protection for environmental and cultural resources could be obtained.

Opportunities:

- 1. **Regional transportation planning.** To ensure the proper coordination and execution of much needed transportation improvements, Town officials need to continue to be actively involved in transportation planning activities at the County, Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center, and Georgia Department of Transportation.
- 2. **Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Renewal:** Town officials need to work closely with the County to help ensure that this important source of capital improvements funding is used effectively.
- 3. **Create an Annexation Policy:** Mt. Airy needs a clear annexation policy to define when annexation is or is not in its best interest and to define its expectations for prospective developers. The Town should work closely with surrounding jurisdictions and state and regional planning agencies to ensure that new community facilities and services built within this sphere of influence support the needs of local residents and businesses and are compatible with the provisions of this plan.
- 4. **Actively participate in local regional planning efforts.** Habersham County and the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center continue to undertake planning and development efforts that can and will have an impact on the future of Mt. Airy. The Town needs to stay in touch with these efforts and actively participate in them.

2.7 Transportation⁸

Habersham County

Issues:

⁸ For more information on Transportation refer to the Technical Addendum to this Community Assessment.

1. **Lack of Pedestrian Network.** Poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The county lacks a sidewalk installation and repair program and future funding sources.
2. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety.** Many pedestrian crossing locations lack safety improvements such as crosswalk striping, refuges, and signals.
3. **Traffic Congestion in Tourist Season.** Peak tourism season (November) traffic volumes can be almost 200 percent higher than typical volumes during the off season.
4. **Radial Road Network.** Clarkesville's linear road network, coupled with county traffic pass-through, create burdensome and excessive traffic congestion in the downtown thoroughfares.
5. **Strip Development Patterns.** As a consequence of strip development patterns, congestion occurs on the major routes such as US 23/441, SR 17, SR 105, and SR 197 which are the main tourist and commercial routes across the county and to the municipalities.
6. **High Accident Rates.** There are many accidents on SR 15, SR 17, SR 105, SR 365, and SR 385.
7. **Bridge Upgrading.** Several bridges in the county are in need of upgrades to heavier loads on concrete trucks (see bridge section).
8. **Roads in Need of Resurfacing.** There is a need to resurface SR 348 to SR 365.

Opportunities:

1. **Re-striping to Improve Safety.** The Georgia Department of Transportation is currently re-striping five of the high accident locations to remove geometric and sight distance problems.
2. **Traffic Mitigation.** Mitigating increasing traffic congestion. Traffic congestion is going to worsen as the county grows. Steps need to be emplaced to mitigate congestion including requiring street connectivity, traffic studies, and consideration of impact fees.
3. **Street Connectivity.** Improving street connectivity within and between developments.
4. **Preserving Bicycle Safety.** Habersham County needs to expand on the existing bicycle routes system and connect to other facilities such as the proposed rails-to-trails conversion of the Tallulah Falls railed.
5. **Multi-Use Trails.** The abandoned rail line to Tallulah Falls could be used as right-of-way to build a multi-use trail on the site and augment tourism opportunities. The

prospective Tallulah Falls Railroad Multi-use trail and its connections to other bike/pedestrian facilities would be a boon to the whole county's economy. The county should press GDOT and its elected officials to expedite the process.

6. **Preserve Forestlands.** Over 20 percent of the county is designated National Forest and tourism is a major economic engine for the county. All transportation improvements should consider careful management of these assets in order to preserve them and offer better access to all public parklands.

Town of Alto

Issues:

1. **Lack of Pedestrian Network.** Poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The town lacks a sidewalk installation and repair program and future funding sources.
2. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety.** Many pedestrian crossing locations lack safety improvements such as crosswalk striping, refuges, and signals.
3. **Railroad Crossing Safety.** Some railroad crossings lack any safety improvements.
4. **Traffic Congestion in Tourist Season.** Peak tourism season (November) traffic volumes can be almost 200 percent higher than typical volumes during the off season.
5. **Radial Road Network.** Due to the radial configuration of the road network, cross county traffic passes through the cities; most traffic congestion within Alto is located in residential and commercial corridors.

Opportunities:

1. **Traffic Mitigation.** Mitigating increasing traffic congestion. The town has the opportunity to prevent congestion by requiring street connectivity, traffic studies, and considering the use of impact fees.
2. **On-Street Parking.** On-street parking opportunities, shared parking opportunities, and continued landscaped screening of off street parking need to be identified in the main street commercial area of town.
3. **Preserving Bicycle Safety.** Alto has the opportunity to expand the existing bicycle routes system and connect to other facilities such as the proposed rails-to-trails conversion of the Tallulah Falls railed.
4. **Multi-Use Trails.** The abandoned rail line to Tallulah Falls could be used as right-of-way to build a multi-use trail on the site and augment tourism opportunities. The prospective Tallulah Falls Railroad Multi-use trail and its connections to other bike/pedestrian facilities would be a boon to the whole county's economy. The town should press GDOT and its elected officials to expedite the process.

5. **Preserve Forestlands.** Over 20 percent of the county is designated National Forest and tourism is a major economic engine for the county. All transportation improvements should consider careful management of these assets in order to preserve them and offer better access to all public parklands.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **Lack of Pedestrian Network.** Poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The city lacks a sidewalk installation and repair program and future funding sources.
2. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety.** Many pedestrian crossing locations lack safety improvements such as crosswalk striping, refuges, and signals.
3. **Railroad Crossing Safety.** Some railroad crossings lack any safety improvements.
4. **Traffic Congestion in Tourist Season.** Peak tourism season (November) traffic volumes can be almost 200 percent higher than typical volumes during the off season.
5. **Radial Road Network.** Due to the radial configuration of the road network, cross county traffic passes through the cities; most traffic congestion within Alto is located in residential and commercial centers.
6. **Truck Traffic.** Truck traffic should be discouraged on the Washington Street corridor.

Opportunities:

1. **Traffic Mitigation.** The City has the opportunity to prevent congestion by requiring street connectivity, traffic studies, and considering the use of impact fees.
2. **On-Street Parking.** On-street parking opportunities, shared parking opportunities, and continued landscaped screening of off street parking need to be identified in the commercial areas of town.
3. **Preserving Bicycle Safety.** Clarkesville has the opportunity to expand the existing bicycle routes system and connect to other facilities such as the proposed rails-to-trails conversion of the Tallulah Falls railed.
4. **Multi-Use Trails.** The abandoned rail line to Tallulah Falls could be used as right-of-way to build a multi-use trail on the site and augment tourism opportunities. The prospective Tallulah Falls Railroad Multi-use trail and its connections to other bike/pedestrian facilities would be a boon to the whole county's economy. The city should press GDOT and its elected officials to expedite the process.

5. **Preserve Forestlands.** Over 20 percent of the county is designated National Forest and tourism is a major economic engine for the county. All transportation improvements should consider careful management of these assets in order to preserve them and offer better access to all public parklands.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

1. **Lack of Pedestrian Network.** Poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The city lacks a sidewalk installation and repair program and future funding sources.
2. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety.** Many pedestrian crossing locations lack safety improvements such as crosswalk striping, refuges, and signals.
3. **Railroad Crossing Safety.** Cornelia needs to review the railroad crossings in the City periodically to see if any safety improvements are needed.
4. **Traffic Congestion in Tourist Season.** Peak tourism season (November) traffic volumes can be almost 200 percent higher than typical volumes during the off season.
5. **Radial Road Network.** Due to the radial configuration of the road network, cross county traffic passes through the cities; most traffic congestion within Cornelia is located in residential and commercial centers.

Opportunities:

1. **Expansion of Pedestrian Facilities.** The city seeks to complete a pedestrian multi-use trail along Level Grove Rd. Phase I is already underway and Phase II is in design. The city needs to leverage this project to begin a plan to connect the city's entire pedestrian network.
2. **Parking Solutions.** On street parking opportunities, shared parking opportunities, and continued landscaped screening of off street parking need to be identified in the commercial areas of the city.
3. **Mitigate Traffic Congestion.** Traffic congestion is going to worsen as the City grows. Possible steps to mitigate congestion include requiring street connectivity, traffic studies, and consideration of impact fees.
4. **Street Connectivity.** Improving street connectivity within and between developments.
5. **Preserving Bicycle Safety.** Cornelia and Habersham County need to expand on the existing bicycle routes system and connect to other facilities such as the proposed rails-to-trails conversion of the Tallulah Falls railed.

6. **Multi-Use Trails.** The prospective Tallulah Falls Railroad Multi-use trail and its connections to other bike/pedestrian facilities would be a boon to the whole county's economy. The city should press GDOT and its elected officials to expedite the process.
7. **Preserve Forestlands.** Over 20 percent of the county is designated National Forest and tourism is a major economic engine for the county. All transportation improvements should consider careful management of these assets in order to preserve them and offer better access to all public parklands.

City of Demorest

Issues:

1. **Lack of Pedestrian Network.** Poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The city lacks a sidewalk installation and repair program and future funding sources.
2. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety.** Many pedestrian crossing locations lack safety improvements such as crosswalk striping, refuges, and signals.
3. **Railroad Crossing Safety.** Cornelia needs to review the railroad crossings in the city periodically to see if any safety improvements are needed.
4. **Traffic Congestion in Tourist Season.** Peak tourism season (November) traffic volumes can be almost 200 percent higher than typical volumes during the off season.
5. **Radial Road Network.** Due to the radial configuration of the road network, cross county traffic passes through the cities; most traffic congestion within Cornelia is located in residential and commercial centers.

Opportunities:

1. **Expansion of Pedestrian Facilities.** The city currently has a poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The city needs sidewalk installation and repair program and funding sources.
2. **Parking Solutions.** On street parking opportunities, shared parking opportunities, and continued landscaped screening of off street parking need to be identified in the commercial areas of the city.
3. **Mitigate Traffic Congestion.** Traffic congestion is going to worsen as the City grows. The City seeks to widen US 441 and create a bypass from SR 365 in order to handle traffic in the long term. Additional steps need to be emplaced to mitigate congestion including requiring street connectivity, traffic studies, and consideration of impact fees.

4. **Street Connectivity.** Improving street connectivity within and between developments.
5. **Preserving Bicycle Safety.** Demorest and Habersham County need to expand on the existing bicycle routes system and connect to other facilities such as the proposed rails-to-trails conversion of the Tallulah Falls railed.
6. **Multi-Use Trails.** The prospective Tallulah Falls Railroad Multi-use trail and its connections to other bike/pedestrian facilities would be a boon to the whole county's economy. The city should press GDOT and its elected officials to expedite the process.
7. **Preserve Forestlands.** Over 20 percent of the county is designated National Forest and tourism is a major economic engine for the county. All transportation improvements should consider careful management of these assets in order to preserve them and offer better access to all public parklands.

Town of Mt. Airy

Issues:

1. **Lack of Pedestrian Network.** Poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The city lacks a sidewalk installation and repair program and future funding sources.
2. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety.** Many pedestrian crossing locations lack safety improvements such as crosswalk striping, refuges, and signals.
3. **Railroad Crossing Safety.** Mt. Airy needs to review the railroad crossings in the city periodically to see if any safety improvements are needed.
4. **Traffic Congestion in Tourist Season.** Peak tourism season (November) traffic volumes can be almost 200 percent higher than typical volumes during the off season.
5. **Radial Road Network.** Due to the radial configuration of the road network, cross county traffic passes through the cities; most traffic congestion within Mt. Airy is located in residential and commercial centers.

Opportunities:

1. **Expansion of Pedestrian Facilities.** The town currently has a poorly connected or incomplete pedestrian network. The town needs a sidewalk installation and repair program and funding sources.
2. **Parking Solutions.** On street parking opportunities, shared parking opportunities, and continued landscaped screening of off street parking need to be identified in the commercial areas of the city.

3. **Mitigate Traffic Congestion.** Traffic congestion is going to worsen as the City grows. Possible steps to mitigate congestion include requiring street connectivity, traffic studies, and consideration of impact fees.
4. **Street Connectivity.** Improving street connectivity within and between developments.
5. **Preserving Bicycle Safety.** Mt. Airy and Habersham County need to expand on the existing bicycle routes system and connect to other facilities such as the proposed rails-to-trails conversion of the Tallulah Falls railed.
6. **Multi-Use Trails.** Multi-use trails can be found within the Lake Russell Recreation Area. At this time these trails are not sufficiently maintained. Mt. Airy has the opportunity to work with park officials to improve the conditions of the trails and expand recreational opportunities for residents.
7. **Preserve Forestlands.** Over 20 percent of the county is designated National Forest and tourism is a major economic engine for the county. All transportation improvements should consider careful management of these assets in order to preserve them and offer better access to all public parklands.

2.8 Land Use

Habersham County

Issues:

1. **Beginnings of Sprawl Development Pattern.** Recent development has occurred in a sporadic fashion. There are instances where isolated single-family residential subdivisions that have been allowed to develop in the middle of the countryside miles from any supportive services or employment centers.
2. **Need for Better Land Use/Transportation Coordination.** Many of the County's transportation problems are a result development and the lack of a long-range perspective in making land use decisions. This is evident in the lack of transportation connectivity between developments, and the high number of curb cuts present on major corridors that reduce the ability of these routes to optimally move traffic.
3. **Outdated Development Regulations.** The County needs to update its land development regulations. In particular, while the codes do not prohibit mixed-use, they could be revised to specifically encourage this type of development and additional connectivity between uses in appropriate areas. Additionally, there is a lack of design standards and tree preservation standards.

4. **Consistent and Effective Code Enforcement is Needed.** There are many instances of code violations within the county. Violations bring down the property values of adjacent properties and contribute to neighborhood decline.
5. **Need for Additional County Staff to Address Development.** There is a need for County planners, GIS analysts, building inspectors, engineers and code enforcement officers. These additional personnel can devote time to the proper planning, design and upkeep of the built environment within the county.

Opportunities:

1. **Use the Comprehensive Plan as the Guide to Making Land Use Decisions.** The county and municipalities can develop in a cohesive fashion if they follow the same blueprint for growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides this common blueprint and its recommendations should be followed by all jurisdictions to limit conflict and grow in a uniform fashion.
2. **Preserve Rural Character and Ability to Farm.** Increasing the minimum lot size (currently 5 acres) in the active agricultural areas of the county can help preserve the community's agrarian industry. The county's rural character is the reason many have moved to the area and this should be maintained.
3. **Reserve Land for Industrial Growth.** Within the Future Land Use Plan, the County has the opportunity to designate areas for industrial growth. Industry should be limited to areas that can be conveniently served by infrastructure and buffered properly from residential uses.
4. **Protect Natural Resources within Developments.** Promote the use of the conservation subdivision ordinance that establishes incentives to create greenway connections. This development technique can lead to increased density which benefits developers and increased greenspace that benefits residents.
5. **Citizen Involvement.** The County should develop mechanisms to keep citizens informed about planning and development issues. Simple methods that could be employed include an email newsletter and greater coverage of issues in the local newspapers.

Town of Alto

Issues:

1. **Lack of Tree Ordinance.** A tree ordinance is needed to prevent the clear-cutting of lots for development. The town currently has no mechanism to preserve existing trees on developing parcels. Without tree ordinances new subdivisions are often devoid of mature trees and decades are required for the establishment of tree canopy.

2. **Inter-parcel Connectivity.** Adjacent developments should be required to share entrances/exits to reduce the number of curb cuts on major transportation routes in the town and alleviate traffic congestion and improve roadway safety.
3. **Community Green Spaces are Needed.** Aside from a small playground co-located with Town Hall, there are no community greenspaces. Areas for community parks and greenspaces should be delineated and designated in the Future Land Use Plan.
4. **Protection of Natural Resources.** Because the town does not have zoning or subdivision regulations development is not directed away from environmentally sensitive areas. The adoption of environmental standards for development should be considered.

Opportunities:

1. **Use the Comprehensive Plan as the Guide to Making Land Use Decisions.** The county and municipalities can develop in a cohesive fashion if they follow the same blueprint for growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides this common blueprint and its recommendations should be followed by all jurisdictions to limit conflict and grow in a uniform fashion.
2. **Infill Housing.** There is a need to promote infill housing either within or adjacent to the Town's existing neighborhoods. Infill housing should complement and emulate the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
3. **Attract Additional Retail and Professional Uses to the Town.** The town currently lacks a significant number of retail or professional businesses. An inventory of vacant retail sites should be conducted, so these sites can be marketed to potential businesses. Alto should actively recruit businesses to the area to provide employment opportunities for its residents and enhance the town's tax base.

City of Clarkesville

Issues:

1. **Lack of Tree Ordinance.** A tree ordinance is needed to prevent the clear-cutting of lots for development. The City currently has no mechanism to preserve existing trees on developing parcels. Without tree ordinances new subdivisions are often devoid of mature trees and require decades for the establishment of tree canopy.
2. **Inter-parcel Connectivity.** Adjacent developments should be required to share entrances/exits to reduce the number of curb cuts on major transportation routes in the City and alleviate traffic congestion and improve roadway safety.

3. **Coordinate Development and Infrastructure Growth.** The City needs to develop a capital improvement program that is coordinated with the future land use plan to insure that new development is provided with adequate services and does not put a burden on existing residents and facilities.

Opportunities:

1. **Use the Comprehensive Plan as the Guide to Making Land Use Decisions.** The County and municipalities can develop in a cohesive fashion if they follow the same blueprint for growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides this common blueprint and its recommendations should be followed by all jurisdictions to limit conflict and grow in a uniform fashion.
2. **Infill Housing.** There is a need within the city to promote infill housing either within or adjacent to downtown districts and activity centers. Infill housing should complement and emulate the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
3. **Reserve Land for Industrial and Office/professional Growth.** Within the Future Land Use Plan, include adequate space for the growth of non-retail employment-related uses.
4. **Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development.** Traditional neighborhoods developments may not be viable in every context, but they should be required when developing adjacent to or within the Town Center area.

City of Cornelia

Issues:

1. **Consistent and Effective Code Enforcement is Needed.** There are many instances of code violations within the city. These bring down the property values of adjacent properties and contribute to neighborhood decline.
2. **Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** The City's code of ordinances should be updated to include the protection of all natural resources, including wetlands and groundwater recharge areas.

Opportunities:

1. **Use the Comprehensive Plan as the Guide to Making Land Use Decisions.** The county and municipalities can develop in a cohesive fashion if they follow the same blueprint for growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides this common blueprint and its recommendations should be followed by all jurisdictions to limit conflict and grow in a uniform fashion.

2. **Infill Housing.** There are opportunities to promote infill housing either within or adjacent to downtown districts and activity centers. Infill housing should complement and emulate the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
3. **Reserve Land for Industrial and Office/professional Growth.** Within the Future Land Use Plan, include adequate space for the growth of non-retail employment-related uses.

City of Demorest

Issues:

1. **Consistent and Effective Code Enforcement is Needed.** There are many instances of code violations within the city. Violations bring down the property values of adjacent properties and contribute to neighborhood decline.
2. **Outdated Development Regulations.** The City needs to update its land development regulations. In particular, while the codes do not prohibit mixed-use, they could be revised to specifically encourage this type of development and additional connectivity between uses in appropriate areas.
3. **Appropriate Infill Development.** There are currently no regulations to insure new development compliments and is cohesive with the City's historic areas. Design standards for infill development and/or the establishment of local historic districts and a design review board should be considered.
4. **Community Green Spaces are Needed.** Aside from a small park adjacent to Piedmont College, there are no community green spaces. Areas for community parks and green spaces should be delineated and designated in the future land use plan.
5. **Conservation Subdivisions.** The city does not have a conservation subdivision ordinance. Conservation subdivisions are a development technique in which developers build at greater densities if they agree to leave a portion of the property as conserved greenspace. These developments provide opportunities to create greenway connections.
4. **Lack of Tree Ordinance.** A tree ordinance is needed to prevent the clear-cutting of lots for development. The town currently has no mechanism to preserve existing trees on developing parcels. Without tree ordinances new subdivisions are often devoid of mature trees and require decades for the establishment of tree canopy.

Opportunities:

1. **Use the Comprehensive Plan as the Guide to Making Land Use Decisions.** The county and municipalities can develop in a cohesive fashion if they follow the same blueprint for growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides this common blueprint and

its recommendations should be followed by all jurisdictions to limit conflict and grow in a uniform fashion.

2. **Infill Housing.** There is a need within the local Cities to promote infill housing either within or adjacent to downtown districts and activity centers. Infill housing should complement and emulate the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
3. **Reserve Land for Industrial and Office/professional Growth.** Within the Future Land Use Plan, include adequate space for the growth of non-retail employment-related uses.
4. **Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development.** Traditional neighborhoods developments may not be viable in every context, but they should be required when developing adjacent to or within the Town Center area.

Town of Mt. Airy

Issues:

1. **Consistent and Effective Code Enforcement is Needed.** There are many instances of code violations within the town. Violations bring down the property values of adjacent properties and contribute to neighborhood decline.
2. **Coordinate Development and Infrastructure growth.** The Town needs to develop a capital improvement program that is coordinated with the future land use plan to insure that new development is provided with adequate services and does not put a burden on existing residents and facilities.
3. **Lack of Tree Ordinance.** A tree ordinance is needed to prevent the clear-cutting of lots for development. The town currently has no mechanism to preserve existing trees on developing parcels. Without tree ordinances new subdivisions are often devoid of mature trees and require decades for the establishment of tree canopy.

Opportunities:

1. **Use the Comprehensive Plan as the Guide to Making Land Use Decisions.** The county and municipalities can develop in a cohesive fashion if they follow the same blueprint for growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides this common blueprint and its recommendations should be followed by all jurisdictions to limit conflict and grow in a uniform fashion.
2. **Infill Housing** There is a need within the local Cities to promote infill housing either within or adjacent to downtown districts and activity centers. Infill housing should complement and emulate the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

3. **Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development.** Traditional neighborhood developments may not be viable in every context, but they should be required when developing adjacent to or within the Town Center area.
4. **Reserve Land for Industrial and Office/professional Growth.** Within the Future Land Use Plan, include adequate space for the growth of non-retail employment-related uses.

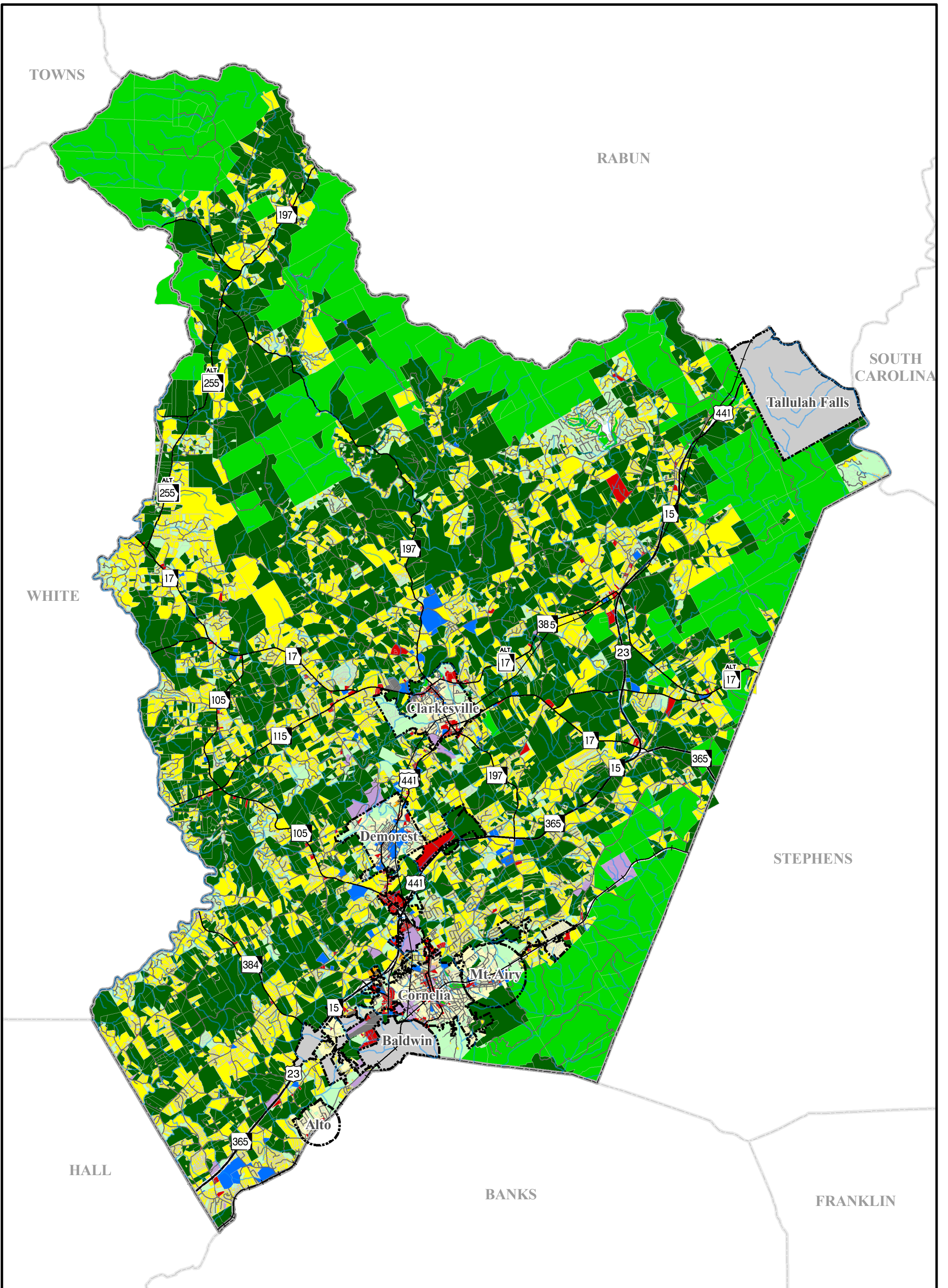
3 Analysis of Existing Development Patterns

The purpose of this analysis of Existing Development Patterns is to gain a clear understanding of the setting within which Habersham County and the participating municipalities are growing and to explore further those issues and opportunities that relate directly to the physical environment. The following analysis looks at three aspects of the existing development patterns: Existing Land Use, Areas Requiring Special Attention, and Character Areas.

3.1 Existing Land Use

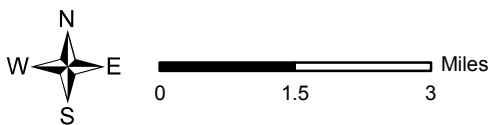
An existing land use map is a representation of the land uses existing in a community at a given time. For purposes of this analysis, the Habersham County Existing Land Use Map depicts the County's land use pattern as of October 2006. The map is based on an analysis of aerial photography (March 2005) and tax assessor data (October 2006). The map illustrates uses found throughout the County, including the participating municipalities. These uses were categorized using a variation of the standard category system prescribed by the DCA. Figure 1 lists the definitions of each land use category.

Figure 2 shows the amount of land (in acres) categorized under each use by jurisdiction, and Figure 3 shows the percentage of total acres of land categorized under each use by jurisdiction. Map 2 is the Existing Land Use map.



**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 2:
Existing Land Use Map*



- County Line
- City Limits
- State/Federal Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroads
- Streams

Existing Land Use

- County Residential
- Residential Single Family
- Residential Multi-Family
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial
- Industrial

- Public/Institutional
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- AF - Agriculture/Forestry
- UND - Undeveloped



**JORDAN
JONES &
GOULDING**

February, 2006

Figure 1: Existing Land Use Category Definitions

Existing Land Use Category	Definition
Agricultural/Forestry	Land used for agricultural purposes, such as cropland or livestock production, and all land used or potentially used for commercial timber production. This category also includes large tracts of land that are in a natural forested state with no indication of development.
Residential	Includes land used for all residential uses in the unincorporated county; the category includes single mobile homes on individual lots.
Residential - Single-family	A subcategory of residential used within the participating municipalities to denote single-family residences.
Residential - Multi-family	A subcategory of residential that includes residential structures containing attached units, such as townhouses and apartments. This category is used within the participating municipalities
Mobile Home Park	A subcategory of residential that includes land used for mobile home communities. This category is used within the participating municipalities.
Commercial	Land used by commercial uses including retail and offices.
Industrial	Land used by industrial uses both built and under construction.
Parks/Recreation/Conservation (PRC)	Active and passive recreation areas, parks, and protected lands. Includes land owned by a land trust or public agency, preserved from future development, and maintained as open space.
Public/Institutional (PI)	Community facilities (except utilities), general government, and institutional uses. Examples include schools, public safety stations, city halls, courthouses, jails, health facilities, churches, and libraries.
Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU)	Land used by transportation, communication, or utility facilities; such as airports, cell towers, power stations, sewer plants, water towers, and water treatment facilities.
Road Right-of-Way	Land dedicated to road right-of-way.
Undeveloped	No active use on the property. This category includes property that has been subdivided and/or improved (cleared and graded but no structure) for real estate sale.

Figure 2: Total Acres by Existing Land Use Category, Habersham County and Local Municipalities, October 2006

	Unincorporated	Alto	Clarksville	Cornelia	Demorest	Mt. Airy	County Total
Agricultural/Forestry/	70,381	10	81	80	344	141	71,037
Residential	39,667	262	698	1,348	841	868	43,684
Residential (County)	39,667	0	0	0	0	0	39,667
Single-Family Residential (Municipalities)	0	262	627	1,180	791	868	3,727
Multi-Family Residential (Municipalities)	0	0	60	60	18	0	139
Mobile Home Park (Municipalities)	0*	0	11	108	32	0	151
Public/Institutional	1,123	5	42	79	166	23	1,439
Parks/Recreation/Conservation (PRC)	40,278	0	14	33	3	18	40,347
Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU)	6,513	45	142	366	137	427	7,630
Commercial	1,045	9	171	433	250	27	1,935
Industrial	830	0	45	239	0	0	1,114
Undeveloped/Vacant	9,874	39	567	300	342	356	11,478
Total	169,712	370	1,759	2,878	2,083	1,861	178,662

* Some organized mobile home parks exist in the county. At this time their locations and acreages are unknown. This information will be updated upon further windshield surveys of the county.

Figure 3: Percentage of Land Occupied by each Existing Land Use Category in each Jurisdiction, Habersham County and Local Municipalities, October 2006

	Unincorporated	Alto	Clarksville	Cornelia	Demorest	Mt. Airy	County Total
Agricultural/Forestry	41%	3%	5%	3%	17%	8%	40%
Residential	23%	71%	39%	47%	40%	47%	24%
Residential	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%
Single-Family Residential	0%	71%	36%	41%	38%	47%	2%
Multi-Family Residential	0%	0%	3%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Mobile Home Park	0%*	0%	1%	4%	2%	0%	0%
Public/Institutional	1%	1%	2%	3%	8%	1%	1%
Parks/Recreation/Conservation (PRC)	24%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	23%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU)	4%	12%	8%	13%	7%	23%	4%
Commercial	1%	2%	10%	15%	12%	1%	1%
Industrial	0%	0%	3%	8%	0%	0%	1%
Undeveloped/Vacant	6%	11%	32%	10%	16%	19%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Some organized mobile home parks exist in the county. At this time their locations and acreages are unknown. This information will be updated upon further windshield surveys of the county.

Habersham County

Habersham County is a land grant county which was formed from land ceded by the Cherokee Indians in 1817 and 1819. The county was originally 713 square miles, but as parts of it were split off during the formations of Rabun, Lumpkin, Banks, White and Stephens counties the size was reduced to the 280 square miles that comprise the county today.⁹

The first of the counties cities to be founded was Clarkesville, which was chartered in 1823. Habersham County developed in a number of waves. In the late 1820's settlers were attracted by the discovery of gold in the region, then in the 1830's the clear mountain air provided a refuge for people in coastal areas seeking a location to beat the unyielding southern summer heat. The county continually attracted residents with its quality farmland; records from the 1840's show that at that time many of the county's residents made a living growing and selling wheat, corn, cotton, and apples.

The coming of the railways helped the County recover from the ravages of the Civil War. The Southern Railway opened in Habersham on July 17, 1873, Mt. Airy has the distinction of being the highest point on that railway and Cornelia, founded in 1881 was located at the junction of two major railroad lines.

New immigrants also contributed to Habersham's recovery. Around 1880, German and Swiss immigrants began to move into the area to grow grapes and make wine. Before a profit could be made on this industry, however, the county became dry, and many of the German-Swiss moved away, although some remained to farm and to become citizens. Around 1920 apple growers from England, Canada, and the North helped to make the apple industry an important source of revenue for the county.

Since its formation Habersham County has remained predominantly rural and agrarian. The preeminence of the area as a summer retreat dwindled after the Depression, but beginning in the 1960's and carrying through today the County has experienced steady growth.

Today, unincorporated Habersham County remains mostly rural with 40 percent of the County classified as agriculture or forestry. In contrast, less than 2 percent of unincorporated County land is used for commercial, institutional or industrial use combined. Adding to the rural character of the unincorporated county is the 39,199-acre Chattahoochee National Forest, located mostly in the northwestern regions of Habersham. The National Forest accounts for the nearly 22 percent of the County that is classified as park/recreation/conservation.

While agriculture and forestry is the largest single land use in unincorporated Habersham County, 23 percent of the land is categorized as residential. Undeveloped uses, which are mainly lots that have been subdivided for development but not yet built upon, comprise another 6 percent of the land in unincorporated Habersham. Residential land uses are most evident in areas

⁹ Information related to the historic development of Habersham County is based on the following: Georgia Mountain Regional Development Center. "City of Demorest, Georgia Comprehensive Plan 1993 – 2015." and various sources cited on the Habersham County webpage: <http://www.co.habersham.ga.us/general/history/habersham.php>

near the incorporated municipalities, along the county's major roadways and near the County's significant natural resources such as the Chattahoochee and Soque rivers.

Town of Alto

Alto is the smallest (at 370 acres or 0.6 sq. miles) and least rural of the Habersham County municipalities participating in this Comprehensive Plan. Existing land use analysis shows that only 10 acres in the Town is currently used for agriculture and forestry uses. Instead, Alto's largest land use is residential development which comprises over two-thirds of the Town. The residential uses in the Town represent a diversity of styles and ages, with some newer residences along Cook Street with older homes along Grant Street. There is a smattering of public-institutional uses and commercial uses in the Town (1 and 2 percent respectively) these uses are concentrated in the vicinity of Gainesville Highway and the railroad tracks.

City of Clarkesville

Habersham's County seat, Clarkesville, is a quaint City that is for the most part retaining its traditional small town form. The City's major thoroughfares create an "I" pattern where Washington Street is the major component; changing from a commercial corridor when it enters the city at the southeast into a residential boulevard lined with some of Clarkesville's most historic and stately homes and then gradually giving way to a traditional small town Main Street lined with small commercial structures and the occasional church or civic building as it leaves the city to the northwest. East and West Louise Streets are the commercial corridors which form the base of the "I" on the southern edge of the City. A large new commercial strip center is located at the intersection of Louise Streets and Washington Street. Highway 115/Monroe Street and Hollywood Highway form the cap of the "I".

Commercial land uses account for 10 percent of land in Clarkesville. There are two distinct commercial districts, a new "suburban style" strip located to the south as discussed above and a traditional central business district on a small grid network of streets either side of Washington Street in the north section of the city. This business district is bounded approximately by Reeves and Jefferson Streets. There is also a large industrial site (Soque River Mills) located in the northeastern corner of the City, which has been converted into a successful antiques mall. Industrial uses account for 3 percent of the City and are concentrated in the extreme southwestern portion of the municipality.

All of the park/recreation/conservation land uses (14 acres) are located in the northern portion of the City. The city's largest park is located near the Soque River off of Washington Street and Bridge Streets. There is another city park located east of Mary Street.

Residential land use is the primary land use in Clarkesville. The central business district is framed by narrow lanes with a mixture of historic and compatible non-historic single-family homes. A gated, suburban style, large lot subdivision is developing along the Soque River in the extreme western area of the City. Only (3 percent) of the land in the City is used for multi-family residential. Two larger areas of this land use are located along Memorial Drive and W. Water Street.

There is one remaining pocket of agriculture/forestry land use in Clarkesville (5 percent), this area is located along the northern edge in the vicinity of Beaver Dam Road. This area is currently in mitigation status and development is not permitted at this time.

Clarkesville has the largest proportion of its total land classified as undeveloped (32 percent) among all the jurisdictions party to this plan. The largest pockets of undeveloped land are located on the western side of the city, north of Park Place Drive, and in the vicinity of Gabrels Drive and Stewart Lane on the east side.

City of Cornelia

Cornelia, incorporated in 1887, was a City born of the railroad, and the railroad still influences its development pattern heavily today. At its incorporation the city's boundaries were set at ½ mile from the historic depot; the loop road formed by Wayside Street and Highland Avenue approximates the original boundary of the city. Due to the location of the railroad, as the city developed retail businesses and warehouses naturally developed in proximity to the rail line. Many of these historic buildings remain and make up the core of Cornelia's downtown area which is one area where the city's commercial land use is concentrated today. The other area of commercial concentration is a number of suburban strip style centers located along Hwy 441 near the interchange with SR 365. Commercial land uses account for 15 percent of the total land are in Cornelia.

Residential neighborhood development occurred throughout the City over time, and is the dominant land use today (47 percent). The City's older neighborhoods filled with single-family homes in a variety of architectural styles and sizes are located to the northeast and southeast of the central business district. Despite being bounded on two sides by other municipalities and on a third by the National Forest, Cornelia has grown over time. This growth has mostly taken the form of annexations of newer residential subdivision on the north and southeastern ends of the city. Cornelia also has a high percent (6 percent) of multi-family and manufactured housing, in comparison to other participating jurisdictions. This housing is scattered throughout the city, with notable pockets along Lee and Farlinger Streets and north of Wayside Drive.

Cornelia has a higher percentage of industrial land uses (8 percent) than the other jurisdictions. Contributing heavily to this is the location of Fieldale Farms Corporation plant in the southwestern portion of the city (along Irvin Street) and Ethicon located in the northern portion of the city (along Hwy 441). Over time, residential uses have surrounded the plant presenting a situation of conflicting land uses as there is little to no buffer between the large industrial use and some adjacent single-family residences.

Three percent of Cornelia's land is classified as public or institutional uses. These uses are scattered throughout the city and include a number of churches, schools, and civic buildings like the Cornelia-Habersham Public Library. In addition to schools and civic building, the City also maintains 5 City parks resulting with 1 percent of the City's land being classified as parks/recreation/conservation. The largest of these parks, City Park, is located on Wyle Street east of Main Street.

While there is little agriculture and forestry land (3 percent) within the City of Cornelia, there is a significant amount of land classified as vacant or undeveloped (10 percent). As most of this undeveloped land is in small parcels scattered throughout the city, a discussion of appropriate standards to insure compatible infill development may be appropriate as the City moves forward with future land use planning.

City of Demorest

The development of Demorest has been influenced by four main factors. The topography of the Georgia Mountains region resulted in development being fit into the available narrow valleys. The 1918-1919 survey of Habersham County resulted in the platting of regular rectangular lots. Perhaps the most influential factor in Demorest's development is the town plan developed by J.A. Reynolds for the Demorest Home, Mining and Improvement Company, which chartered the town to be a morality based community. This plan was "an odd combination of geometric and naturalistic styles" with lakes and drives following the contours of the land and a network of streets that was neither a true grid or a conventional radial network. The final influence on the early development of Demorest was the location of the school that would become Piedmont College, and institution that has and continues to serve as a physical and cultural hub of the City.¹⁰

Residential areas are the largest and most significant land use within Demorest, comprising 40 percent of the City's land area. Single-family residential is the predominant use within the City and occupies 94 percent of the total residential land area or 38 percent of the City's total land area. Approximately 1 percent of the City is occupied by land that includes multi-family residences (apartments, town houses) scattered throughout the City. Four percent of the City's residential land use is comprised of a mobile home park located along Gunn Drive in the northeast of the City. There is much evidence of new residential development in Demorest; specifically there is a large single-family home neighborhood that has been constructed near the Piedmont College campus. The small lots and single floor design of these homes may be very attractive to the city's growing senior population.

There is a moderate amount of commercial land use in Demorest – about 12 percent of the City's land area - and the amount that is present is dotted throughout the jurisdiction. The city's central business district is very small and limited to the area immediately surrounding the City Hall along Georgia Street, Holley Street, and Central Avenue. The lack of commercial activity in "downtown" Demorest is surprising due to the close proximity of Piedmont College, which would certainly provide an immediate market.

Public and Institutional land uses include local schools, several churches, cemeteries and municipal properties. Piedmont College, a small liberal arts college is located in the heart of Demorest and is the most important institution in the city. The Piedmont College campus is also expanding; in October 2006, the College began construction of a Center for Performing Arts and Mass Communication. The building will be located on the back side of the campus across Demorest Lake from the Arrendale Library. In addition to a new roadway it will be accessible

¹⁰ Georgia Mountain Regional Development Center. "City of Demorest, Georgia Comprehensive Plan 1993 – 2015."

by a footbridge across the lake. This new facility provides a unique opportunity for Demorest to be home what can potentially become a regional entertainment and cultural resource

Very little of the City's land area (2.8 acres) is classified as park/recreation/conservation use (Piedmont College has a number of open space areas on its campus but those are classified under the public/institutional land use). Demorest Springs Park is located in adjacent to the Piedmont College Campus at the corner of Georgia Street and Central Avenue.

All of the industrial uses within Demorest are light industry and are limited in the City, due in part to the lack of railroad and airport access. An industrial park is located, along with other similar uses, in the southern portion of the City. Other industrial sites are near the City's eastern edge. Together these sites make up 70 acres, approximately one percent of the City's land area.

Vacant and undeveloped land is located in all areas of the city and comprises 16 percent of the total land area of the City. There are several large parcels located north of Central Avenue, which may be appropriate for future residential development. An array of smaller parcels available along the city's major roads would be suited for additional commercial/retail or office/professional development.

At this time, there is no land classified as industrial in Demorest. Additionally, there is only a very small amount of land categorized as agricultural/forestry land use in the City, these parcels are located on the City's southwestern limits.

Town of Mt. Airy

The Town of Mt. Airy, incorporated on March 3, 1874, was founded and developed by a railroad promoter. As typical for towns centered on the railroad, commercial and industrial land uses were developed in close proximity to the train tracks for ease of access. Residential land uses then grew out from the core business areas. Today, Dick's Hill Parkway serves as the jurisdiction's key transportation route and supports many of the Town's commercial land uses. About 27 acres of commercial land use, comprising 1 percent of the Town's land area, are located along this roadway.

The most prevalent land use in Mt. Airy is residential (47 percent of the Town's land area), with this being exclusively single-family in form. There are some more traditional neighborhood areas of older homes near the rail lines while new development has located further out, in many cases, such as on the east side of the Town, this has resulted in the municipality annexing new residents into the Town resulting in the Town's irregular limits. There remains a good deal of undeveloped (19 percent) and agriculture/forestry (8 percent) land use within the Town's limits. Areas of both can be found on the northern and southern sides of the Southern Railroad.

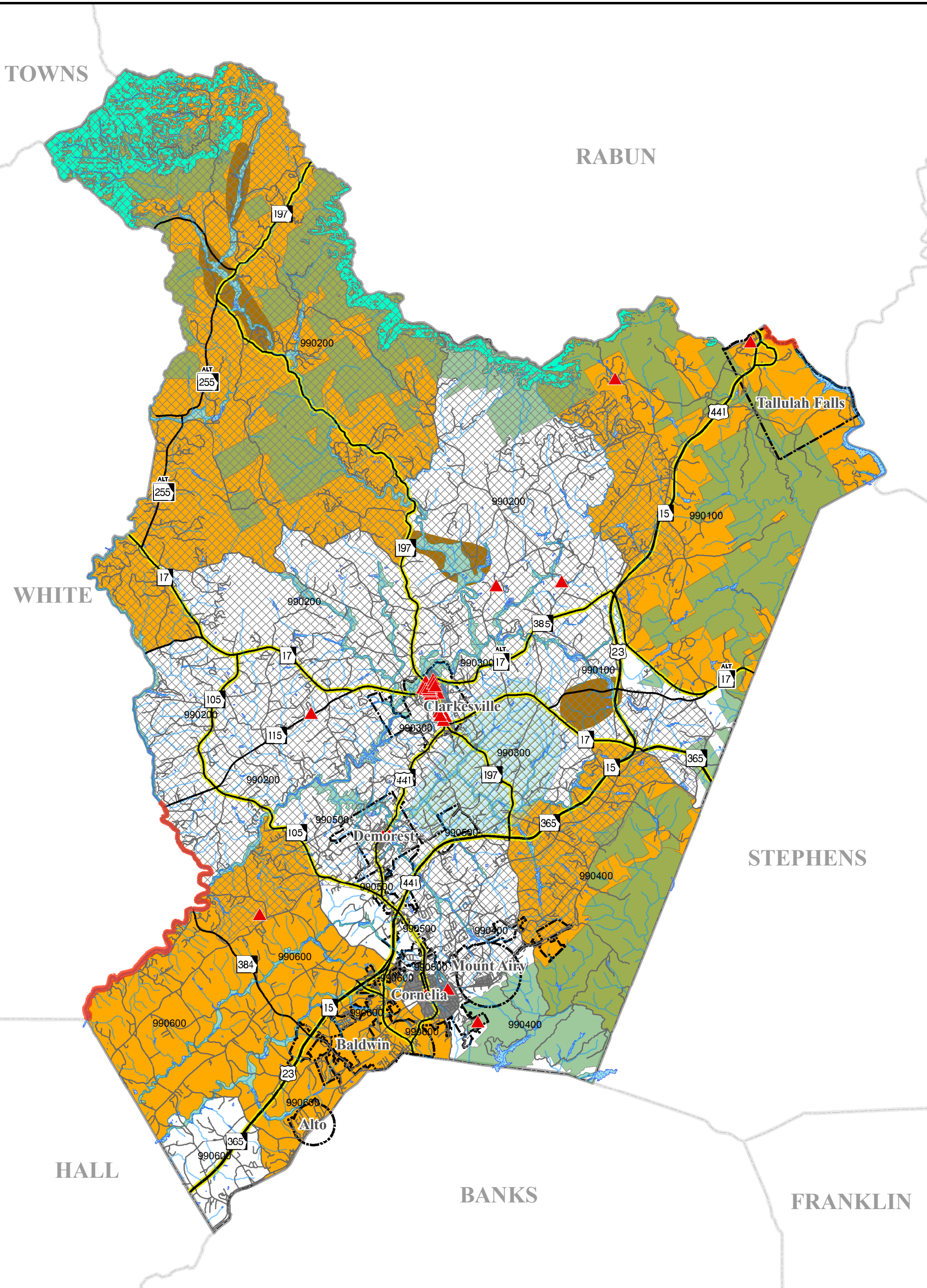
To some extent, Mt. Airy is hemmed in along its boundaries, and this is a factor that limits its expansion. Mt. Airy shares a border with the City of Cornelia to the southwest and the National Forest to the east. The Chattahoochee National Forest accounts for the areas in the Town categorized as parks/recreation/conservation land use.

3.2 Areas Requiring Special Attention

Continued development in Habersham County and the participating cities and towns will have significant impacts on the existing residents, natural and cultural resources, community services and facilities, and infrastructure. This section summarizes the locations of some of the likely impacts of growth, including areas where growth should be avoided. Also included are areas in need of additional investment because of aesthetics, pollution, or disinvestment. The following table, Figure 4, presents the definitions of each of the special attention areas. Map 3 maps the locations of these areas.

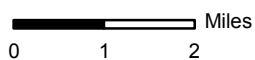
Figure 4: Areas Requiring Special Attention Definitions

Areas Requiring Special Attention	Definition
Corridors Requiring Special Attention	There are several corridors in the County and participating municipalities that may need to be considered for special land use controls. These corridors are congested and/or high accident locations.
Conservation Areas	Critical natural resources including the Protected River Corridors, Protected Mountains, the Chattahoochee National Forest, and areas of the county with concentrations of prime agricultural soils.
Historic Neighborhoods and Traditional Downtowns	The downtown central business districts and nearby historic neighborhoods in the participating municipalities will require special attention to ensure that new development and redevelopment of existing buildings happens in a manner that supports the jurisdiction's unique character rather than detracts from it.
Groundwater Recharge Areas	Pursuant to state regulations, the County has adopted Regulations Governing Land Development Within Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas. These regulations include restrictions on siting landfills, agricultural waste impoundment sites, and certain hazardous waste facilities.
Water Supply Watersheds	Habersham contains all or part of three watersheds that are currently being used for water supply. Habersham County and the City of Cornelia have adopted regulations to limit development in these areas to protect water quality, however, a number of municipalities that contain water supply watersheds do not have adopted regulations (Alto, Clarkesville*, Demorest, & Mt. Airy.) It may be appropriate to consider limiting development in these areas to protect water quality. Limitations to consider Development would limited by regulations protecting water quality including, impervious surface limitations, setbacks, buffers, and others. *Clarkesville is within the Chattahoochee River Watershed that feeds into the Demorest/Baldwin water intake.
Historic Sites	There are many historic sites in Habersham County and the participating municipalities. The jurisdictions need to create a policies and regulations for ensuring the long-term integrity of these resources.
Floodplains and Wetlands	Floodplains and wetlands are located throughout Habersham County and many of the participating jurisdictions. The treatment of these areas will have an impact on future development.
Areas where rapid development has occurred or has the potential to occur	Areas shown on the Special Attention Areas Map under this category are census tracts that have grown at rates more than double the County's annual average population growth of 2.1 percent during the 1990 – 2000 period. These are areas where change in land use is likely to occur, and where development may outpace the availability of community facilities and services. In particular, many of there areas are where suburban residential development is encroaching on the County's rural areas.



**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 3:
Areas Requiring Special Attention*



- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| County Lines | Groundwater Recharge Area |
| City Limits | 100-Year Flood Plain |
| State & Federal Highways | Wetlands |
| Local Roads | Protected Mountains |
| Corridors Requiring Special Attention | Prime AG Concentrations |
| Streams | Chattahoochee NF |
| Protected Rivers | Areas of Rapid Development |
| Buildings on National Register of Historic Sites | Watersheds |
| Historic Neighborhoods | |



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3.3 Recommended Character Areas

The patterns of development throughout a community create individual areas that have an identifiable character. These “Character Areas” are defined as specific geographical areas that (1) presently have unique characteristics; (2) have the potential to evolve into a unique area when provided specific and intentional guidance; or (3) require special attention because of unique developmental issues. The use of character areas in planning acknowledges the visual and functional differences that exist today among Habersham County and the participating municipalities of Alto, Clarkesville, Cornelia, Demorest and Mt. Airy and helps guide future development through policies and implementation strategies that are tailored to each situation. Figures 5 –10 offer descriptions of the characters that apply in each participating jurisdiction and possible development strategies to apply to them. Map 4 shows the proposed location for each of these character areas. Maps 5 through 9 are enlarged versions of this map for each of the participating municipalities.

The character areas developed so far represent a first-brush effort at identifying character areas within the county and its municipalities. These have been developed with a minimum of public input and will likely change significantly through the planning process, as the community’s desires are heard. They serve as a starting point to engage the public and stakeholders in meaningful discussions about the current state of the community, an appropriate vision for the community and effective strategies to achieve this vision. Final versions of these maps and development strategies will be found in the subsequent Community Agenda portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 5: Unincorporated Habersham Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Conservation Area	<p>These areas include undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including scenic views, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development.</p> <p>The primary Conservation Area in Habersham County is the Chattahoochee National Forest</p>	<p>Maintain natural, rural character by prohibiting new development and promoting use of conservation easements. Roadways in these areas should be widened only when absolutely necessary and then carefully designed so that the roadway alterations have minimal visual impact. These areas should be promoted as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.</p>

Figure 5: Unincorporated Habersham Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Agricultural Area	<p>These areas consist of lands that are in an open or cultivated state or are sparsely settled. These areas also included woodlands and those used for poultry or livestock production.</p>	<p>The ability to farm should be preserved in Habersham County. To protect farms and open spaces and woodlands large lot sizes (10 acres) should be maintained and conservation easements promoted. Residential subdivisions should be limited, with minor exceptions made for family subdivisions and rural cluster residences using conservation subdivision design.</p> <p>Due to the prevalence of cattle and poultry farming in the County and the potential negative impacts of these activities on adjacent residences the development of “right-to-farm” regulations may be appropriate.</p>
Rural Residential Area	<p>Unique rural neighborhoods and undeveloped land that help establish the rural character of the County. These areas have low pedestrian orientation and accessibility, large lots, open space, pastoral views, and a high degree of building separation.</p>	<p>The rural atmosphere of these areas should be maintained while accommodating new residential development as rural cluster or conservation subdivision design that incorporate significant amounts of open space. Maintain the regional rural character by encouraging compatible architectural styles. Foster establishment of a regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians and bicyclists for both tourism and recreational purposes.</p>
Developing Residential Area	<p>Area where pressures for the typical types of residential subdivision development are greatest (due to availability of water and sewer service). Without intervention, this area is likely to evolve with low pedestrian orientation, high open space, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.</p> <p>This character area is mainly situated on the fringes and immediately outside of the county’s municipalities.</p>	<p>Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions. New development should be a master-planned with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision. There should be strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development. There should be good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail/commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points. Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and do not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture. Wherever possible, connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes. Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking, and addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Through the adoption of a tree ordinance, preserve existing trees in new developments.</p>

Figure 5: Unincorporated Habersham Character Area Definitions

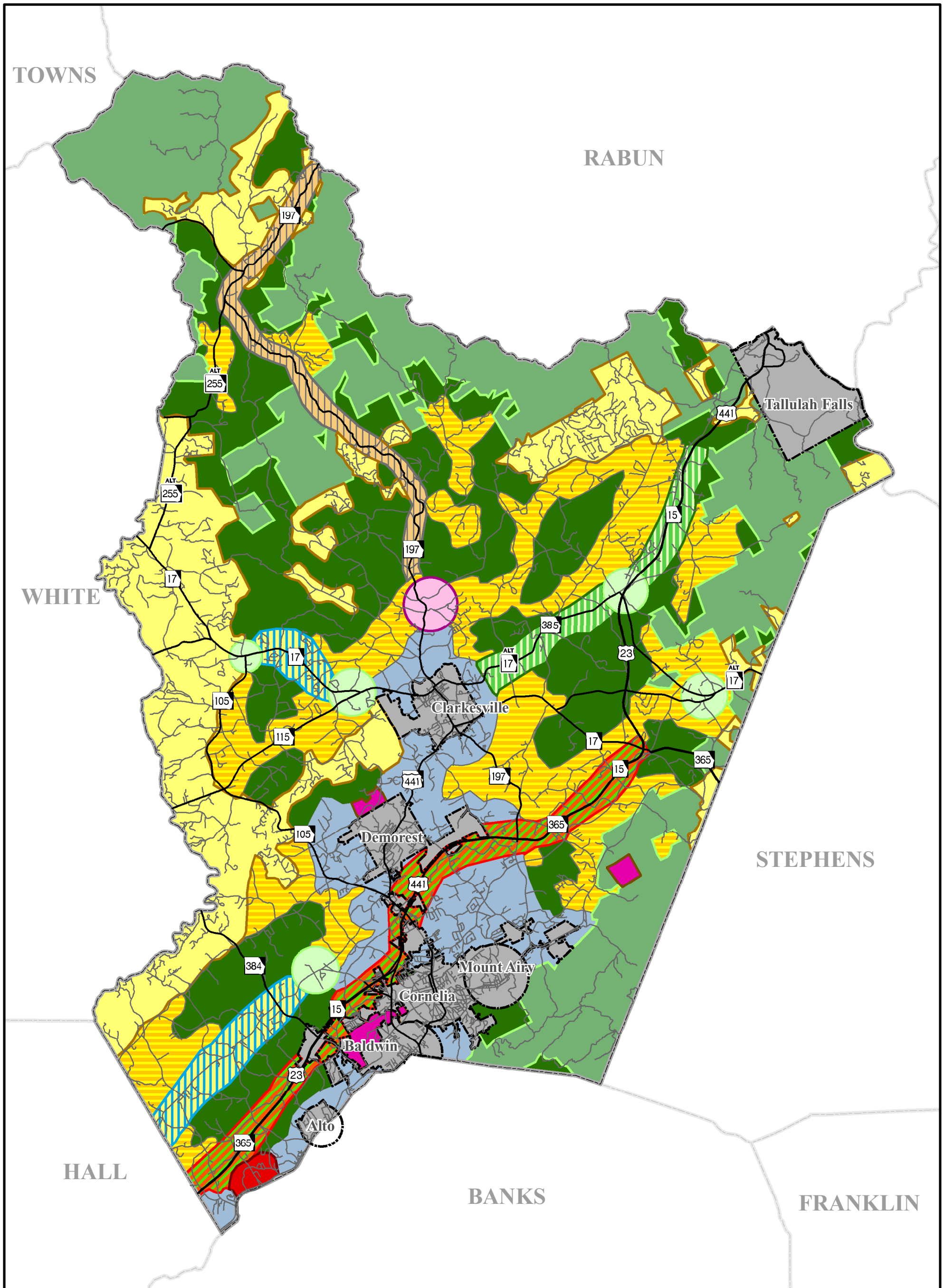
Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Scenic Residential Area	River and lake front developments. As well as, developments adjacent to the Chattahoochee National Forest and Blue Ridge Mountains.	<p>The rural atmosphere of these areas should be maintained and the unique environmental assets protected while accommodating new residential development. Residential development should either be in very large, estate like lots, or as rural cluster or conservation subdivision design that incorporate significant amounts of open space.</p> <p>Due to the unique environmental and scenic nature of these areas efforts should be made to maintain public access. Fostering the establishment of a passive recreation areas and trails in the vicinity of these developments can increase their attractiveness to potential residents while strengthening the county’s tourism potential.</p>
Rural Village	Commercial activity areas located at highway intersections that provide a mixture of uses to serve highway passers-by, and rural and agricultural areas.	<p>Maintain rural atmosphere while accommodating small retail and commercial nodes with attractive character. Rural Villages must have clear boundaries so that they don’t promote sprawl-type development in rural areas. Compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character and do not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture should be promoted. Wherever possible, these areas should connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, and bicyclists for both tourism and recreational purposes. Through the attractive clustering of buildings, Rural Villages can provide greater pedestrian access and help preserve open space.</p>
Highway 365 Corridor	Land adjacent to Highway 365 that is directly affected by development along the roadway, from the county line to Highway 17.	<p>This corridor has seen significant development in recent years and it will likely continue to be an area of major growth over the planning period. Proactive steps should be taken within the corridor to ensure new development does not impede traffic flow along this high-capacity roadway. Strict access management and interparcel access regulations should be developed and adopted by the unincorporated county and the municipalities that border the highway. Without these in place the corridor is in danger of becoming a congested strip of development with excessive stop lights, crossroads and curb cuts. Opportunities to extend I-985 or completely restrict new access points should be explored. The roadway should continue to provide high-speed travel for commuters traveling outside of the county for work, truckers transporting goods from local industries, and county visitors.</p>

Figure 5: Unincorporated Habersham Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Scenic Corridor	Scenic Corridors are located along thoroughfares in the rural portions of the County. These corridors are noteworthy for their natural, scenic, and pastoral views.	Maintain scenic and rural character while accommodating new development within the corridor. Residential development should be clustered and screened in such a way as to preserve rural views from the corridor. Scenic corridors should be designed to accommodate all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Billboards should be banned within these corridors.
Residential Corridor	A highway corridor designated for residential uses. Located throughout the County, Residential Corridors often connect non-residential areas together.	Encourage moderate-speed vehicular travel so that pedestrians, school children, and bicyclists can be accommodated. The predominant land use along Residential Corridors should be residential subdivisions. These should be designed so that homes front the corridor, with internal access leading to common subdivision entrances spaced every 1,000 feet to provide adequate connectivity. Opposing entrances should be aligned and served by a common traffic signal. Where appropriate, incidental or accessory commercial uses may be incorporated into a Residential Corridor. These should be designed as part of, and integrated into the design of a subdivision.
Rural Development Corridor	An uninterrupted channel of developed or developing land on both sides of designated high-volume transportation facilities.	Older commercial buildings should be retro-fitted to be more aesthetically appealing and, therefore, more marketable to prospective tenants. Complete and integrated pedestrian improvements and crosswalks throughout the corridor should be required to promote pedestrian comfort, safety and convenience. High standards of landscape should be promoted and sign controls put in place to improve corridor appearance. Access management and inter-parcel access should be designed to maintain traffic speeds and capacity. This use should be limited to existing development corridors in the county as nodal commercial/industrial development is now the preferred development pattern.

Figure 5: Unincorporated Habersham Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Industrial Area	<p>These areas consist of industries, warehouses, quarries and distribution facilities on level sites having close access to truck routes and state and federal highways, railroads, utilities, and space for expansion.</p> <p>The Habersham County Industrial Park is a significant and growing area of industrial land uses in the southern portion of the county. It is located adjacent to the Habersham County Airport. In this area steps should be taken to ensure that noise from air travel, truck traffic, and industry do not have negative impacts on the quality-of-life of neighboring residential areas.</p>	<p>Areas should provide adequate infrastructure capacity and maintain designated truck routes that are safe and maneuverable for heavy vehicles and minimize noise, vibration, and intrusion of trucks in residential areas. Design should provide adequate room for expansion and the development of ancillary business and employee services. Landscaped entrances and grounds should be encouraged, environmentally sensitive areas protected, and surrounding neighborhoods buffered. Truck docks and waste handling areas should be screened from public view. The intrusion of obnoxious uses into industrial parks should be discouraged. Strong design standards are necessary to help ensure that the aesthetic qualities of the built environment is reflective of the community's vision for the future and the image they want to portray to visitors, and still promote local businesses.</p>
Education Center	<p>This area is located around Habersham Central High School.</p>	<p>Enhance streetscape to soften impact of automobile traffic as relates to pedestrian right-of-way. Construct sidewalks and bicycle paths to connect campus areas to surrounding neighborhoods. Encourage limited infill retail and office development that will meet school needs. Coordinate development strategies with local school system. Coordinate school traffic with local traffic to mitigate traffic congestion. Develop in a dense compact form which centers around the school campus cluster.</p>
Institutional Area	<p>This area is centered on Arrendale State Prison.</p>	<p>Screen and buffer institutional uses from view through extensive landscaping to avoid negatively affecting property values. Coordinate institutional expansion with surrounding neighborhood organizations to minimize conflicts.</p>



**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 4:
Habersham County
Character Areas*



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|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| County Lines | Education Center | Rural Development Corridor |
| City Limits | Hwy 365 Corridor | Rural Residential Area |
| State & Federal Highways | Incorporated | Rural Village |
| Local Roads | Industrial Area | Scenic Corridor |
| Character Areas | Institutional Area | Scenic Residential Area |
| Agricultural Area | Newly Developed Residential Area | |
| Conservation Area | Residential Corridor | |



**JORDAN
JONES &
GOULDING**

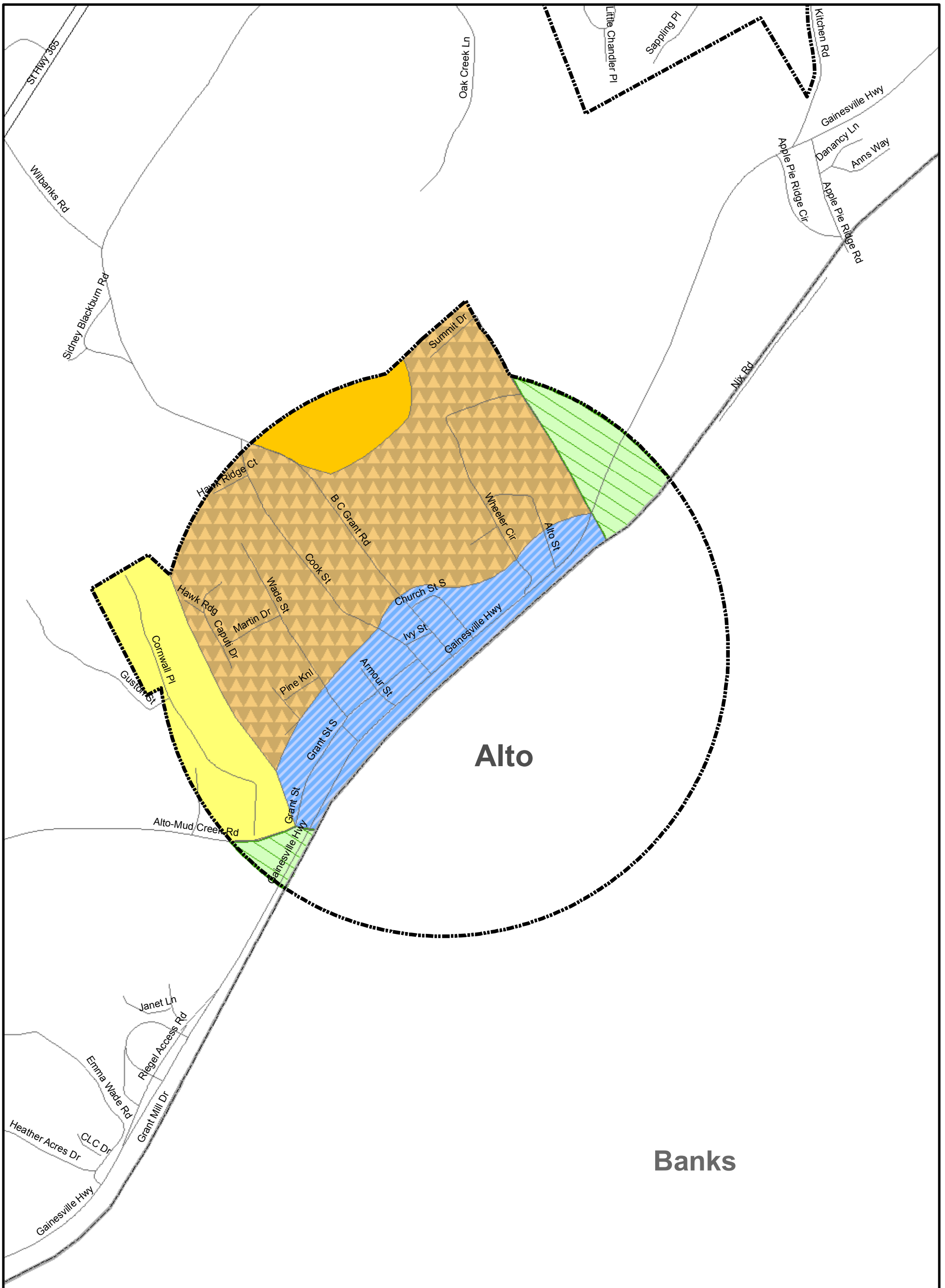
February, 2007

Figure 6: Town of Alto Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Green Gateway Corridor	<p>Undeveloped land paralleling the route of a major thoroughfare into the community.</p> <p>These areas are found adjacent to Gainesville Highway between the town boundary and Alto-Mud Creek Rd. and Wheeler Circle.</p>	<p>This green gateway into the town should be maintained. There should be a clear delineation between the town and the unincorporated county. Enact guidelines for new development that preserves the scenic value of the corridor. New development in these areas should be buffered from view from the highway by a thick buffer of natural vegetation.</p>
Main Street District	<p>This area comprises the historic heart of the community. It contains all of the public institutions including town hall, police station, post office as well as a collection of historically valuable homes. It also contains a small grocery store.</p> <p>This area is found adjacent to Gainesville Highway from Alto-Mud Creek to Wheeler Circle.</p>	<p>Residential development should reinforce the traditional main street environment through a combination of rehabilitation of historic buildings in this area and compatible new infill development targeted to a broad range of income levels. Multi-family housing is appropriate for this area. Design should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses. Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear. Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks. New residential and commercial development should be concentrated in and around the Main Street District and adjacent neighborhoods on infill sites. Attractive and consistent landscaping, lighting, and signage should be designed and implemented to create a town identity. Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation with appropriate incentives, including National Register of Historic places designation, which enables eligibility for tax incentive programs. Historic properties should be maintained or rehabilitated/restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's <u>Standards for Rehabilitation</u>.</p>
Mixed Residential Area	<p>Mixed income levels and types of housing units including both single family and multi-family.</p> <p>This area is found throughout the majority of Alto.</p>	<p>Infill development in the area should continue to encourage a variety of housing types including apartments, town homes, and single residences. Efforts should focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of existing stock. Pedestrian-friendly corridors should be encouraged and enhanced to mitigate congestion that develops from higher density of area. New regulations may encourage streetscaping and sidewalk lighting to encourage pedestrian atmosphere.</p>

Figure 6: Town of Alto Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Rural Fringe Residential	<p>Areas near city limits that extend into the unincorporated county and are not on a major commercial corridor. These areas often have scenic views with larger lots with limited pedestrian access.</p> <p>This area is found adjacent to BC Grant Rd. in the northern section of the Town.</p>	<p>The rural atmosphere of these areas should be maintained by limiting new residential areas by density regulations. Regulations protecting trees and water supply will assure that new development mitigates potential erosion and associated environmental concerns. Limit signage and preserve scenic views by implementing required set-backs or related regulations. Wherever possible, encourage the establishment of regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians and bicyclists for both tourism and recreational purposes.</p>
Stable Neighborhood	<p>A neighborhood having relatively well-maintained housing, possess a distinct identity through architectural style, lot and street design, and has higher rates of home-ownership.</p> <p>This area is predominantly found along Cornwall Place Road.</p>	<p>Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing. The neighborhood should, however, also include a well-designed new neighborhood activity center at appropriate location, which would provide a focal point for the neighborhood, while also providing a suitable location for a grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided to encourage these residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.</p>

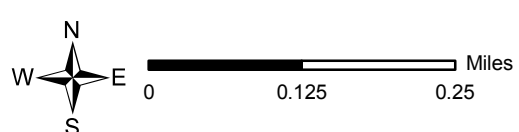


Alto

Banks

**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 5:
Alto Character Map*



- County Line
- City Limits
- State/Federal Highways
- Local Roads

- Character Areas**
- Green Gateway Corridor
 - Main Street District
 - Mixed Residential Area
 - Rural Fringe
 - Stable Neighborhood



February, 2007

Figure 7: City of Clarkesville Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Stable Neighborhood	Areas close to Downtown and Washington St. commercial corridor.	Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing. The neighborhood should, however, also include a well-designed new neighborhood activity center at appropriate location, which would provide a focal point for the neighborhood, while also providing a suitable location for a grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided to encourage these residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.
Downtown	<p>The traditional central business district and immediately surrounding commercial, industrial, or mixed-use areas.</p> <p>Area near city hall including the intersection of E. Green St., E. Water St., and E. Morgan St. with Washington St. and area directly surrounding.</p>	Downtown should include a relatively high mix of retail, office, services, and employment that serves not only the county but also a regional market. Housing in the area should preserve the historic nature of downtown while encouraging infill housing that facilitates the smooth connection of mixed income levels. The combination of single and multi-family units including lofts, apartments, town homes, and traditional single family will accommodate the widest variety of people. Design should be very pedestrian-oriented, with street furniture and landscaping to tie together mixed uses. The pedestrian-friendly environment can be enhanced with pedestrian friendly rail/bike routes linking to neighboring communities and major destination; such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, parks, schools, etc. New commercial and residential should occur in and around downtown on vacant sites.

Figure 7: City of Clarkesville Character Area Definitions

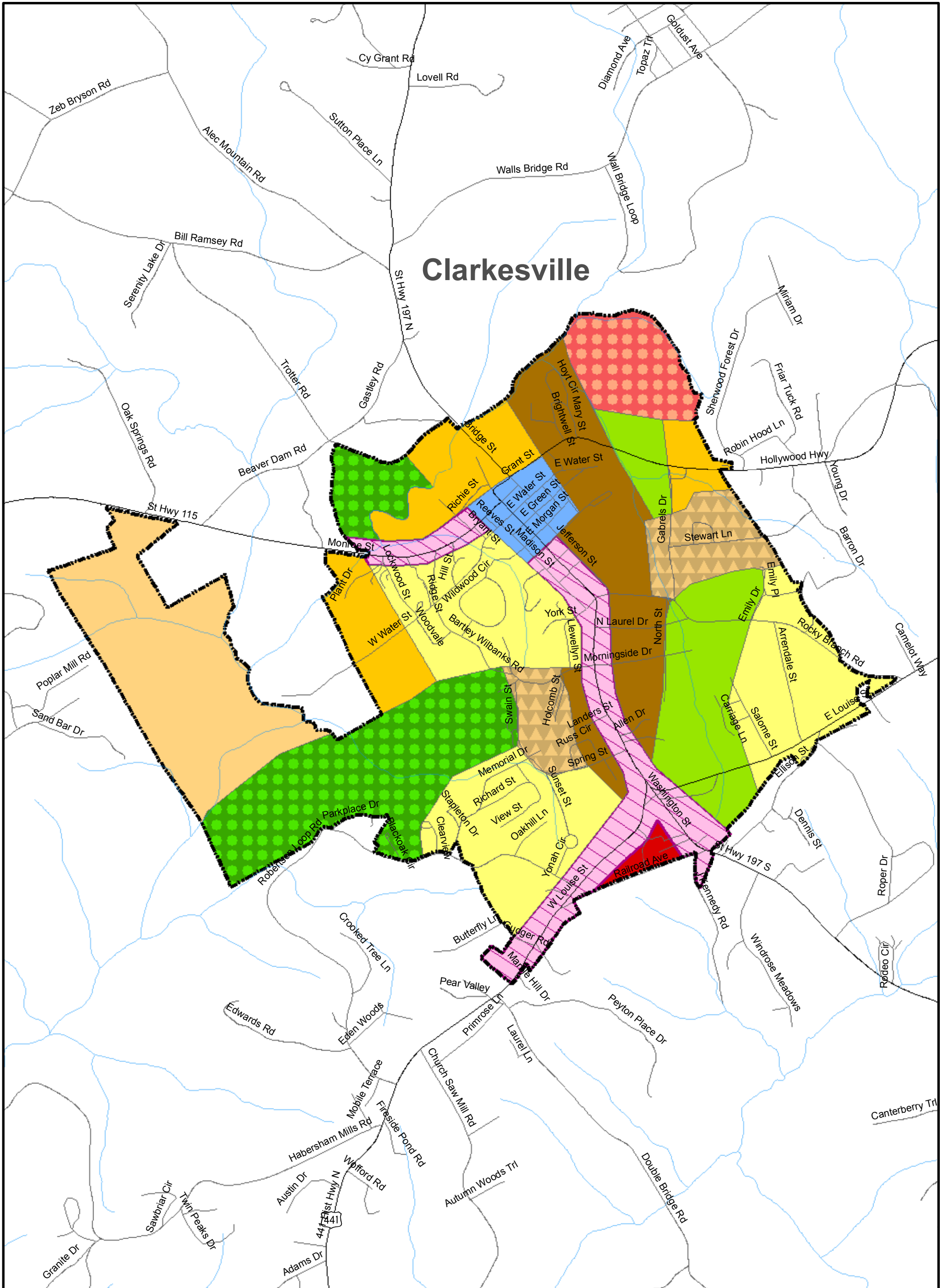
Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
In-Town Corridor	W. Louis St. north to Washington St. intersection. Area with varied commercial and retail development.	Gradually convert corridor to welcoming boulevard that creates harmony between areas leading to historic section and downtown. The appearance of the corridor can be enhanced quickly with streetscape improvements (including street lights, landscaping, etc.) Sidewalks appropriate to accommodate density of the area should be maintained to allow connectivity for workers and residents in the area. In the longer term, enact design guidelines so that corridors become more attractive for development. Encourage traffic calming devices to limit role of automobiles. Such measures may include buffered sidewalks, pedestrian islands, and tree lined medians to mitigate visual impact of higher-density corridor. Coordinate land use and bike/pedestrian facilities to further encourage use of alternate transportation modes.
Historic Neighborhood	<p>Washington-Jefferson Street Historic District – area includes Washington, Jefferson, and Wilson Sts. between Green St. and Laurel Dr.</p> <p>South Washington Street Historic District – area includes South Washington St. between Laurel Dr. and Spring St.</p>	Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation with appropriate incentive, including National Register of Historic places designation, which enable eligibility for tax incentive programs. Historic properties should be maintained and restored according to the Secretary of the Interior’s <u>Standards for Rehabilitation</u> . Community character should be preserved in the area by enforcing strict design guidelines that meet pre-existing design elements. Attributes that encourage pedestrian friendly environments should be emphasized to promote alternate transportation to neighborhood activity centers including retail and recreation areas.
Greenspace	<p>These areas include undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including scenic vies, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development.</p> <p>Area south of W. Water St. and north of southern county line</p>	Maintain natural, rural character by prohibiting new development and promoting use of conservation easements. Roadways in these areas should be widened only when absolutely necessary and then carefully designed so that the roadway alterations have minimal visual impact. These areas should be promoted as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.

Figure 7: City of Clarkesville Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Large Lot Planned Neighborhood	Western area of county. Characterized by large lots and well planned development	Well-planned residential areas that are largely self-regulated. Areas should be encouraged to develop where infrastructure needs are met. Architecture should reflect overall character of the community while allowing for new and varied design. Pedestrian-accessible streets should be encouraged to allow flow of people to neighborhood amenities such as parks. The development should be coordinated with the expansion of services including schools, parks, and community facilities.
Rural Fringe Residential	Areas near city limits that extend into unincorporated county and are not on major commercial corridor. These areas often have scenic views with larger lots with limited pedestrian access.	The rural atmosphere of these areas should be maintained by limiting new residential areas by density regulations. Regulations protecting trees and water supply will assure that new development mitigates potential erosion and coordinates environmental concerns. Limit signage and preserve scenic views by implementing required set-backs or related regulations. Wherever possible, encourage the establishment of regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians and bicyclists for both tourism and recreational purposes.
Neighborhood Redevelopment Area	Declining, vacant structures surround by housing that may be at risk. East of North St. to eastern city line and south.	Focus on preserving and rehabilitating housing that is at risk, while encouraging attractive redevelopment on vacant sites. New development should follow traditional neighborhood design patterns of existing stock. The neighborhood redevelopment should include a neighborhood center while identifying locations for key central uses such as a park, grocery store, and appropriate-scaled retail that serves neighborhood residents. Street should further encourage pedestrian and bicycle access, connecting residential sites to neighborhood activity center.
Mixed Residential	Gabrels Dr. and Richie St. areas. Mixed income levels and types of housing units including both single family and multi-family.	Infill development in the area should continue to encourage a variety of housing types including apartments, town homes, and single residences. Efforts should focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of existing stock. Pedestrian-friendly corridors should be encouraged and enhanced to mitigate congestion that develops from higher density of area. New regulations may encourage streetscaping and sidewalk lighting to encourage pedestrian atmosphere.

Figure 7: City of Clarkesville Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Suburban Residential	Area north of Clarkesville Mill to northern end of city line.	Promote moderate density and design that follows traditional development style of residential neighborhood development. New residential should be planned with new parks, schools, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips. There should be good connectivity between planned developments to encourage vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to nearby facilities such as Piedmont college and downtown. Efforts should be made to coordinate this development with a regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians and bicyclists for both tourism and recreational purposes.



**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 6:
Clarkesville Character Map*



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- County Line
- City Limits
- State/Federal Highways
- Local Roads

Character Areas

- Conservation Area
- Downtown
- Highway Commercial Area
- Historic Neighborhood
- In-Town Corridor

- Large Lot Planned Neighborhood
- Mixed Residential Area
- Neighborhood Redevelopment Area
- Newly Developed Residential Area
- Rural Fringe
- Stable Neighborhood



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Figure 8: City of Cornelia Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
At Risk Neighborhood	<p>A neighborhood that has most of its original housing stock in place, but housing conditions are worsening due to low rates of homeownership and neglect of property maintenance. There may be a lack of neighborhood identity and gradual invasion of different type and intensity of use that may not be compatible with the neighborhood residential use.</p> <p>These areas are located north of the Fieldale industrial area and adjacent to the industrial area north of Downtown.</p> <p>Steps should be taken to ensure the adequate buffering of incompatible uses. Both At Risk Neighborhoods within the city border industrial areas. The decline in these neighborhoods may result from noxious odors or noise and light pollution resulting from industry.</p>	<p>Focus on strategic public investments to improve conditions, appropriate infill development on scattered vacant sites, and encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Public assistance and investment should be focused where needed to ensure that the neighborhood becomes more stable, mixed-income community with a larger percentage of owner-occupied housing. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.</p>
Conservation Area	<p>These areas include undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including scenic vies, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development.</p> <p>This area is located within the Chattahoochee National Forest at the summit of Chenocetah Mountain. It contains spectacular views of the county from a lookout point.</p>	<p>Maintain natural, rural character by prohibiting new development and promoting use of conservation easements. Roadways in these areas should be widened only when absolutely necessary and then carefully designed so that the roadway alterations have minimal visual impact. These areas should be promoted as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.</p>

Figure 8: City of Cornelia Character Area Definitions

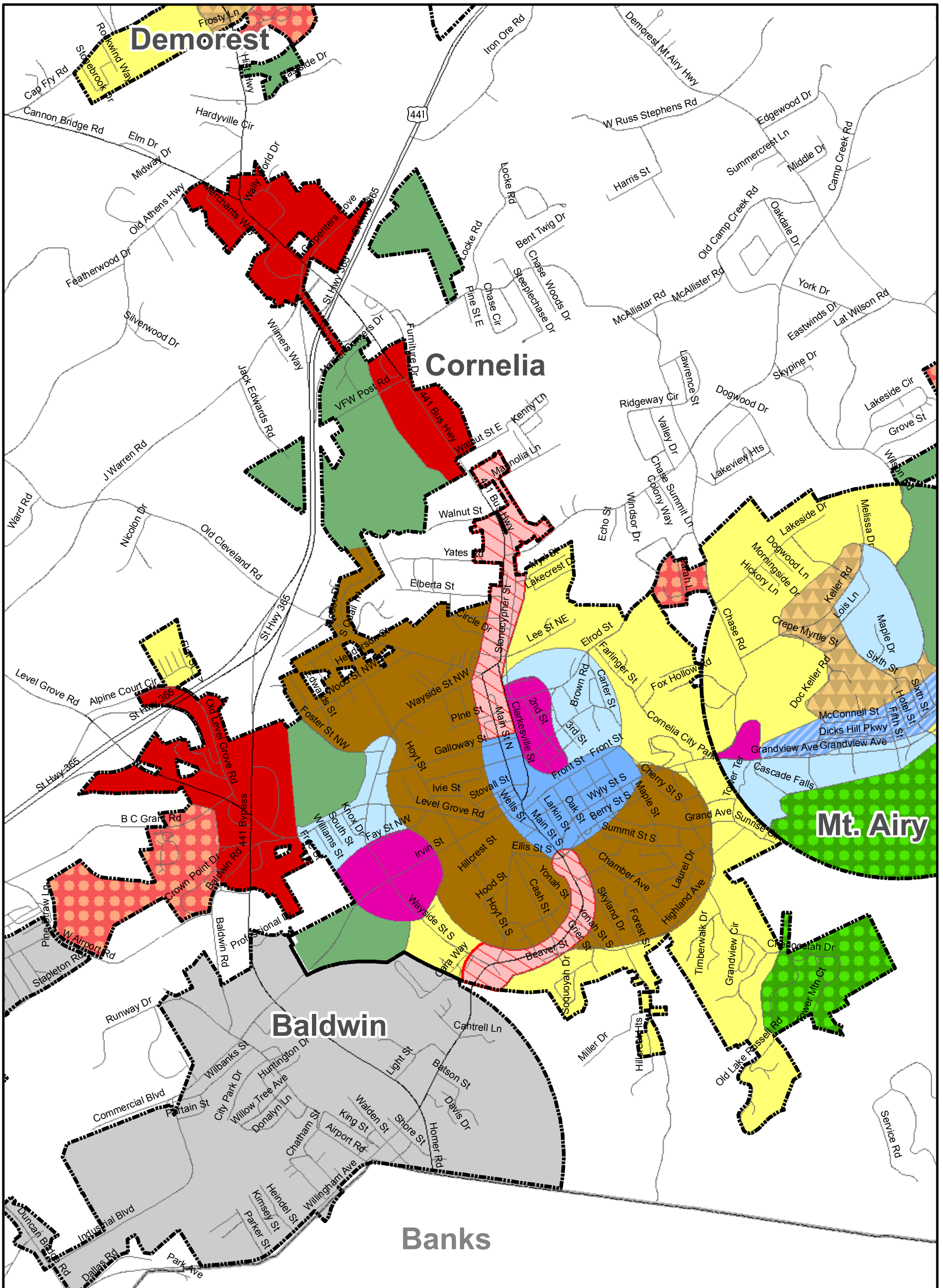
Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Developing Residential Area	<p>Area where pressures for the typical types of residential subdivision development are greatest (due to availability of water and sewer service). Without intervention, this area is likely to evolve with low pedestrian orientation, high open space, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.</p> <p>These areas are located on the outskirts of Cornelia adjacent the city boundary.</p>	<p>Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions. New development should be a master-planned with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision. There should be strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development. There should be good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail/commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points. Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and do not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture. Wherever possible, connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes. Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking, and addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Through the adoption of a tree ordinance, preserve existing trees in new developments.</p>
Downtown	<p>The traditional central business district and immediately surrounding commercial, industrial, or mixed-use areas.</p> <p>This area surrounds the historic center of the city at the intersection of Main Street and Front Street.</p>	<p>Downtown should include a relatively high mix of retail, office, services, and employment that serves not only the county but also a regional market. Housing in the area should preserve the historic nature of downtown while encouraging infill housing that facilitates the smooth connection of mixed income levels. The combination of single and multi-family units including lofts, apartments, town homes, and traditional single family will accommodate the widest variety of people. Design should be very pedestrian-oriented, with street furniture and landscaping to tie together mixed uses. The pedestrian-friendly environment can be enhanced with pedestrian friendly rail/bike routes linking to neighboring communities and major destination; such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, parks, schools, etc. New commercial and residential should occur in and around downtown on vacant sites.</p>

Figure 8: City of Cornelia Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Gateway Corridor	<p>Developed land paralleling the route of a major thoroughfare that serves as an important entrance or means of access to the community.</p> <p>These areas are found along 441 and Main Street from the city boundaries to the Downtown Area.</p>	<p>Focus upon appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping and other beautification measures. Manage access to keep traffic flowing; using directory signage to clustered developments. Retrofit or mask existing strip development or other unsightly features as necessary. Establish gateway features to signify to visitors that they have entered the city. Provide directional signs to area attractions and facilities.</p>
Highway Commercial Area	<p>Developed land on both sides of designated high-volume transportation facility, such as arterial roads and highways.</p> <p>These areas are found along US 441, 441 Bypass, 441 Business Highway, State Highway 365, Level Grove Road. Predominantly at major crossroads.</p>	<p>Encourage landscaped, raised medians to provide vehicular safety, aesthetics, and also pedestrian crossing refuge. Provide pedestrian facilities behind drainage ditches or curb. Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes. Manage access to keep traffic flowing; using directory signage to developments.</p>
Historic Neighborhood	<p>Historic neighborhoods contain features, landmarks, civic or cultural uses of interest. Characteristics may vary based on size, location and history of the community.</p> <p>Historic neighborhoods may be found adjacent to Downtown in the south and west. They consist of homes on small lots with sewer service.</p>	<p>Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation with appropriate incentive, including National Register of Historic places designation, which enable eligibility for tax incentive programs. Historic properties should be maintained and restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's <u>Standards for Rehabilitation</u>. Community character should be preserved in the area by enforcing strict design guidelines that meet pre-existing design elements. Attributes that encourage pedestrian friendly environments should be emphasized to promote alternate transportation to neighborhood activity centers including retail and recreation areas.</p>

Figure 8: City of Cornelia Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Industrial Area	<p>Land used in higher intensity manufacturing, assembly, processing activities where noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics are not contained on-site.</p> <p>These areas are located surrounding the intersection of Irvin St. and Wayside St. and in areas adjacent to Downtown surrounding Clarkesville St. and 2nd St.</p>	<p>Areas should provide adequate infrastructure capacity and maintain designated truck routes that are safe and maneuverable for heavy vehicles and minimize noise, vibration, and intrusion of trucks in residential areas. Design should provide adequate room for expansion and the development of ancillary business and employee services. Landscaped entrances and grounds should be encouraged, environmentally sensitive areas protected, and surrounding neighborhoods buffered. Truck docks and waste handling areas should be screened from public view. The intrusion of obnoxious uses into industrial parks should be discouraged. Strong design standards are necessary to help ensure that the aesthetic qualities of the built environment is reflective of the community's vision for the future and the image they want to portray to visitors, and still promote local businesses.</p>
Newly Developed Residential Areas	<p>Area where typical types of suburban residential subdivision development have occurred. Characterized by low pedestrian orientation, high open space, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.</p> <p>This area is found on the outskirts of Cornelia adjacent to BC Grant Rd.</p>	<p>Foster retrofitting of this area to better conform with traditional neighborhood development (TND) principles. This includes creating neighborhood focal points by locating schools, community centers, or well-designed small commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Add traffic calming improvements, sidewalks, and increased street interconnections to improve walk-ability within existing neighborhoods. Permit accessory housing units, or new well-designed, small-scale infill multi-family residences to increase neighborhood density and income diversity.</p>
Stable Residential Area	<p>A neighborhood having relatively well-maintained housing, possess a distinct identity through architectural style, lot and street design, and has higher rates of homeownership. Location near declining areas of town may also cause this neighborhood to decline over time.</p> <p>These areas are predominantly found on the eastern outskirts of Cornelia.</p>	<p>Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing. The neighborhood should, however, also include a well-designed new neighborhood activity center at appropriate location, which would provide a focal point for the neighborhood, while also providing a suitable location for a grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided to encourage these residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.</p>



**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 7:
Cornelia Character Map*



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|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| County Line | Conservation Area | Historic Neighborhood |
| City Limits | Developing Residential Area | Industrial Area |
| State/Federal Highways | Downtown | Main Street District |
| Local Roads | Gateway Corridor | Mixed Residential Area |
| Character Areas | Green Gateway Corridor | Newly Developed Residential Area |
| At Risk Neighborhood | Highway Commercial Area | Stable Neighborhood |



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Figure 9: City of Demorest Character Area Definitions

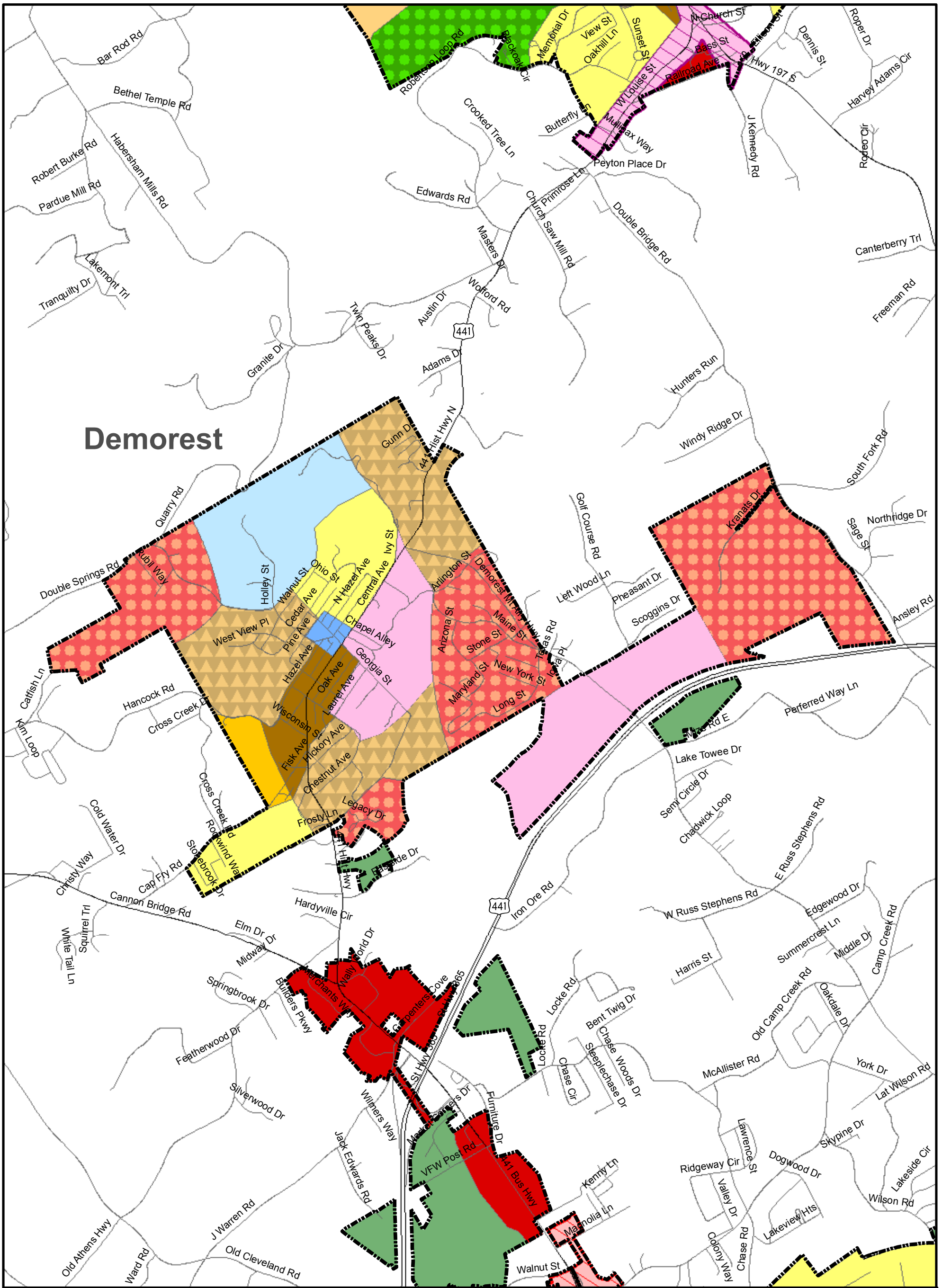
Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Mixed Residential	Are north of Hazel before Double Springs Rd.	Infill development in the area should continue to encourage a variety of housing types including apartments, town homes, and single residences. Efforts should focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of existing stock. Pedestrian-friendly corridors should be encouraged and enhanced to mitigate congestion that develops from higher density of area. New regulations may encourage streetscaping and sidewalk lighting to encourage pedestrian atmosphere.
Stable Neighborhood	<p>A neighborhood having relatively well-maintained housing, possess a distinct identity through architectural style, lot and street design, and has higher rates of home-ownership. Location near declining areas of town may also cause this neighborhood to decline over time.</p> <p>Area just east of Georgia St. and north of Central Ave.</p>	Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more ownership and upkeep of facilities. Limit infill development to that which closely matches existing area, complementing architecture of neighborhood. The neighborhoods should encourage the development of a focal area with recreation and light commercial/retail that can act as an activity center that serves neighborhood residents. Appropriate development may encourage a grocery store, salon, Laundromat, and similar establishments. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should provide alternative travel opportunities for neighborhood residents to work, shopping, and other destinations in the area.
Education Center	Piedmont College along Central Ave west of Georgia St. Area just north of 441, at city limits.	Encourage infill housing appropriate for college students and employees at college and schools, including apartments, town homes, traditional single family, etc. Enhance streetscape to soften impact of automobile traffic as relates to pedestrian right-of-way. Maintain sidewalks and bicycle paths to connect campus areas to rest of city. Encourage limited infill retail and office development that will meet college needs and school needs. Coordinate development strategies with college long-term plan and local school system.

Figure 9: City of Demorest Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Downtown	<p>The traditional central business district and immediately surrounding commercial, industrial, or mixed-use areas.</p> <p>Area at intersection of Central Ave. and Georgia St. including City Hall.</p>	<p>Downtown should include a relatively high mix of retail, office, services, and employment that serves not only the county but also a regional market. Housing in the area should preserve the historic nature of downtown while encouraging infill housing that facilitates the smooth connection of mixed income levels. The combination of single and multi-family units including lofts, apartments, town homes, and traditional single family will accommodate the widest variety of people. Design should be very pedestrian-oriented, with street furniture and landscaping to tie together mixed uses. The pedestrian-friendly environment can be enhanced with pedestrian friendly rail/bike routes linking to neighboring communities and major destination; such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, parks, schools, etc. New commercial and residential should occur in and around downtown on vacant sites. These efforts should be coordinated to reflect demand of area especially as it relates to the college.</p>
At Risk Neighborhood	<p>Holley St. area. An area that has most of its original housing stock in place, but housing conditions are worsening due to low rate of homeownership and neglect of property maintenance.</p>	<p>Focus on strategic public investments to improve conditions, appropriate infill development on scattered vacant sites, and encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Public assistance and investment should be focused where needed to ensure that the neighborhood becomes more stable, mixed-income community with a larger percentage of owner-occupied housing. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.</p>
Suburban Residential	<p>Area around Arizona St., Maryland St., and Long. Newer housing on smaller lots.</p>	<p>Promote moderate density and design that follows traditional development style of residential neighborhood development. New residential should be planned with new parks, schools, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips. There should be good connectivity between planned developments to encourage vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to nearby facilities such as Piedmont college and downtown. Efforts should be made to coordinate this development with a regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians and bicyclists for both tourism and recreational purposes.</p>

Figure 9: City of Demorest Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Historic Neighborhood	Area near Central Ave west of 441. Close to Downtown.	Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation with appropriate incentive, including National Register of Historic places designation, which enable eligibility for tax incentive programs. Historic properties should be maintained and restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's <u>Standards for Rehabilitation</u> . Community character should be preserved in the area by enforcing strict design guidelines that meet pre-existing design elements. Attributes that encourage pedestrian friendly environments should be emphasized to promote alternate transportation to neighborhood activity centers including retail and recreation areas.



**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 8:
Demorest Character Map*



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|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| County Line | Developing Residential Area | In-Town Corridor |
| State/Federal Highways | Downtown | Large Lot Planned Neighborhood |
| Local Roads | Education Center | Mixed Residential Area |
| City Limits | Gateway Corridor | Neighborhood Redevelopment Area |
| Character Areas | Green Gateway Corridor | Newly Developed Residential Area |
| At Risk Neighborhood | Highway Commercial Area | Rural Fringe |
| Conservation Area | Historic Neighborhood | Stable Neighborhood |



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Figure 10: Town of Mt. Airy Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
At Risk Neighborhood	<p>A neighborhood that has most of its original housing stock in place, but housing conditions are worsening due to low rates of homeownership and neglect of property maintenance.</p> <p>These areas are located south of Grandview Avenue and in the area bounded by Sixth and Seventh Avenues.</p>	<p>Focus on strategic public investments to improve conditions, appropriate infill development on scattered vacant sites, and encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Public assistance and investment should be focused where needed to ensure that the neighborhood becomes more stable, mixed-income community with a larger percentage of owner-occupied housing. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.</p>
Conservation Area	<p>These areas include undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including scenic views, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development.</p> <p>This area is comprised of the portion of the Lake Russell Recreation Area found within the town's boundaries.</p>	<p>Maintain natural, rural character by prohibiting new development and promoting use of conservation easements. Roadways in these areas should be widened only when absolutely necessary and then carefully designed so that the roadway alterations have minimal visual impact. These areas should be promoted as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.</p>

Figure 10: Town of Mt. Airy Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
<p>Developing Residential Area</p>	<p>Area where pressures for the typical types of residential subdivision development are greatest (due to availability of water and sewer service). Without intervention, this area is likely to evolve with low pedestrian orientation, high open space, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.</p> <p>These areas are located adjacent to Demorest Mt. Airy Highway and in the northeast quadrant of the town.</p>	<p>Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions. New development should be a master-planned with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision. There should be strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development. There should be good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail/commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points. Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and do not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture. Wherever possible, connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes. Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking, and addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Through the adoption of a tree ordinance, preserve existing trees in new developments.</p>

Figure 10: Town of Mt. Airy Character Area Definitions

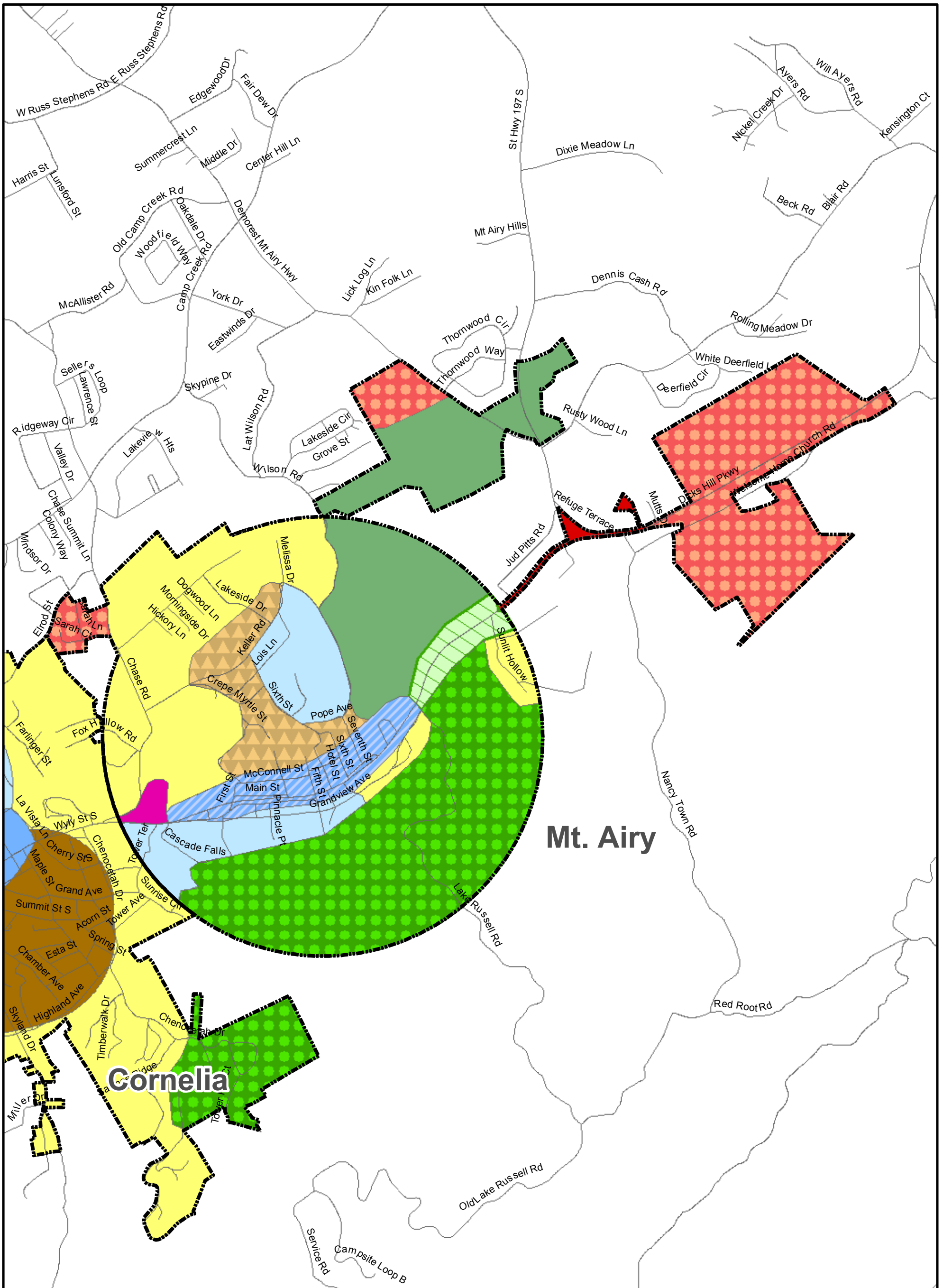
Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Main Street District	<p>This area comprises the historic heart of the community. It contains all of the public institutions including town hall, as well as a collection of historically valuable homes.</p> <p>This area is located from Lake Russell Road to Cascade Falls Road and is bounded roughly by Grandview Avenue and McConnell Street.</p>	<p>Residential development should reinforce the traditional main street environment through a combination of rehabilitation of historic buildings in this area and compatible new infill development targeted to a broad range of income levels. Multi-family housing is appropriate for this area. Design should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses. Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear. Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks. New residential and commercial development should be concentrated in and around the Main Street District and adjacent neighborhoods on infill sites. Attractive and consistent landscaping, lighting, and signage should be designed and implemented to create a town identity. Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation with appropriate incentives, including National Register of Historic places designation, which enables eligibility for tax incentive programs. Historic properties should be maintained or rehabilitated/restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's <u>Standards for Rehabilitation</u>.</p>
Green Gateway Corridor	<p>Undeveloped land paralleling the route of a major thoroughfare into the community.</p> <p>This area is found adjacent to US 123 from the town's boundary to Lake Russell Road.</p>	<p>This green gateway into the town should be maintained. There should be a clear delineation between the town and the unincorporated county. Enact guidelines for new development that preserves the scenic value of the corridor. New development in this area should be buffered from view from the highway by a thick buffer of natural vegetation.</p>
Highway Commercial Area	<p>Developed land on both sides of designated high-volume transportation facility, such as arterial roads and highways.</p> <p>These areas are found adjacent to US 123 and Nancy Town Road and State Highway 197.</p>	<p>Encourage landscaped, raised medians to provide vehicular safety, aesthetics, and also pedestrian crossing refuge. Provide pedestrian facilities behind drainage ditches or curb. Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes. Manage access to keep traffic flowing; using directory signage to developments.</p>

Figure 10: Town of Mt. Airy Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
Mixed Residential Area	<p>Mixed income levels and types of housing units including both single family and multi-family.</p> <p>This area is found in central My. Airy along Crepe Myrtle Street and Keller Road.</p>	<p>Infill development in the area should continue to encourage a variety of housing types including apartments, town homes, and single residences. Efforts should focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of existing stock. Pedestrian-friendly corridors should be encouraged and enhanced to mitigate congestion that develops from higher density of area. New regulations may encourage streetscaping and sidewalk lighting to encourage pedestrian atmosphere.</p>
Industrial Area	<p>Land used in higher intensity manufacturing, assembly, processing activities where noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics are not contained on-site.</p> <p>This area is located adjacent to Chase Road and US 123.</p>	<p>Areas should provide adequate infrastructure capacity and maintain designated truck routes that are safe and maneuverable for heavy vehicles and minimize noise, vibration, and intrusion of trucks in residential areas. Design should provide adequate room for expansion and the development of ancillary business and employee services. Landscaped entrances and grounds should be encouraged, environmentally sensitive areas protected, and surrounding neighborhoods buffered. Truck docks and waste handling areas should be screened from public view. The intrusion of obnoxious uses into industrial parks should be discouraged. Strong design standards are necessary to help ensure that the aesthetic qualities of the built environment is reflective of the community's vision for the future and the image they want to portray to visitors, and still promote local businesses.</p>
Newly Developed Residential Areas	<p>Area where typical types of suburban residential subdivision development have occurred. Characterized by low pedestrian orientation, high open space, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.</p> <p>This area is found in newly annexed portions of the town along US 123, Demorest Mt. Airy Highway, and Chase Road.</p>	<p>Foster retrofitting of this area to better conform with traditional neighborhood development (TND) principles. This includes creating neighborhood focal points by locating schools, community centers, or well-designed small commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Add traffic calming improvements, sidewalks, and increased street interconnections to improve walk-ability within existing neighborhoods. Permit accessory housing units, or new well-designed, small-scale infill multi-family residences to increase neighborhood density and income diversity.</p>

Figure 10: Town of Mt. Airy Character Area Definitions

Character Area	Description/Location	Development Strategy
<p>Stable Residential Area</p>	<p>A neighborhood having relatively well-maintained housing, possess a distinct identity through architectural style, lot and street design, and has higher rates of home-ownership. Location near declining areas of town may also cause this neighborhood to decline over time.</p> <p>These areas are predominantly found on the western outskirts of Mt. Airy as well as on Grandview Avenue and Sunlit Hollow Road.</p>	<p>Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties. Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing. The neighborhood should, however, also include well-designed new neighborhood activity center at appropriate location, which would provide a focal point for the neighborhood, while also providing a suitable location for a grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents. Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided to encourage these residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.</p>



Mt. Airy

Cornelia

**Habersham County 2029
Comprehensive Plan**

*Map 9:
Mt. Airy Character Map*



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|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| County Line | Conservation Area | Industrial Area |
| City Limits | Developing Residential Area | Main Street District |
| State/Federal Highways | Downtown | Mixed Residential Area |
| Local Roads | Green Gateway Corridor | Newly Developed Residential Area |
| Character Areas | Highway Commercial Area | Stable Neighborhood |
| At Risk Neighborhood | Historic Neighborhood | |



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February, 2007

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. Each of the 15 Quality Community Objectives is listed below with a brief summary of participating jurisdictions’ successes and challenges with respect to the objective.

4.1 Habersham County

Development Patterns

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

1. Success: Our Comprehensive Land Development Resolution allows a mixture of compatible uses in four intensity districts.
2. Success: Our community uses performance-based land use and development regulations that would allow neo-traditional development “by-right”, subject to minimum lot size restrictions (10,000 sq. ft.), minimum 600 ft. block lengths, and minimum 35 ft. setback requirements. Small lots of this size are only permitted in areas of the unincorporated county served by sewer.
3. Challenge: Our community does not have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing street trees appropriate to our climate.
4. Challenge: Our community has not organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that would make walking more comfortable in the summer.
5. Success: We do have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.
6. Challenge: Our community has few sidewalks to encourage walking as an option for those who would choose to walk.
7. Success: Our Comprehensive Land Development Resolution does not require segregation of land uses that would make errands on foot undesirable, dangerous, or impossible for our residents.
8. Success: Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.
9. Success: Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.

10. Success: Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.

Infill Development Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community has not prepared an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.
3. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.
4. Success: We have designated areas of our community that are planned for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, nodal development.
5. Challenge: Our community does not allow small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses. The minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet.

Sense of Place Objective: 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.

1. Success: 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.
2. Success: We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.
3. Challenge: We do not have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.
4. Success: We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.
5. Challenge: We have not prepared a development guidebook that illustrates the types of new development we want in our community.
6. Success: the Agriculture Protection District of our Comprehensive Land Development Resolution provides protection for bona fide farms.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have public transportation in our community. Due to the rural nature of the county public transit is currently unfeasible. In the future it may be appropriate for portions of the unincorporated county to be served by transit.
2. Challenge: We do not require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, rather than having a single entry/exit.
3. Challenge: We do not have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations. Due to the rural nature of the county this is not practical in most areas.
4. Challenge: We do not have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks. Sidewalks within new subdivisions should be required, but the provision of sidewalks for isolated developments is impractical.
5. Challenge: We do not require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.
6. Success: We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community. The Tallulah Falls Railroad will be converted to a multi-use trail all the way to Franklin, NC.
7. Challenge: We do not allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas.

Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

1. Success: Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.
2. Success: Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products. Fieldale Farms is the largest employer in the area.
3. Success: Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage.

4. Success: Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.
5. Success: Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region. Examples include promotion of local festivals and events that are related to Appalachian culture, Tallulah Falls, and related outdoor recreation.
6. Success: Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have designated historic districts in our community.
2. Challenge: We do not have an historic preservation ordinance or an active historic preservation commission.
3. Challenge: We want new development to complement our historic development, but we do not have ordinances and design standards in place to ensure this.

Open Space Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not have a greenspace plan.
2. Success: Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new developments.
3. Success: 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.
4. Challenge: We do not have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Environmental Protection Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have a natural resources inventory.
2. Success: We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Success: We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.
4. Success: Our community has passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we enforce them.
5. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.
6. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.
7. Success: We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.
8. Success: We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplains or marsh protection, etc.)

Social and Economic Development Goal

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

1. Success: We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.
2. Challenge: Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities do not use the same population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan, except with respect to the long-range water supply plan.
3. Success: Our elected officials understand the land development process in our community.
4. Success: We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.

5. Success: We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.
6. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth based on a natural resources inventory of our community.
7. Success: We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.
8. Success: We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.
9. Success: 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. Success: We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

1. Success: Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them. The Habersham Development Authority focuses on attracting manufacturing groups.
2. Success: Our Economic Development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible. The economic development agency is planning to set aside more land for industrial parks.
3. Success: We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products. Examples include Fieldcrest Farms and Ethicon.
4. Success: We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.

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

1. Challenge: Our economic development program does not have an entrepreneur support program.
2. Success: Our community has jobs for skilled labor.

3. Success: Our community has jobs for unskilled labor. Most of these are in the health care, social services and education industries.
4. Success: Our community has professional and managerial jobs.

Housing Choices Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.
2. Success: People who work in our community can afford to live here, too.
3. Success: Our community has ample housing for most families in each income level (low, moderate and above-average). However 19 percent of our homeowners and 27 percent of our renters pay more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing.
4. Challenge: We do not encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original towns, continuing the traditional street design and maintaining small setbacks.
5. Challenge: Our community is rural and we do not yet have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.
6. Success: We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing. The development of multi-family housing is limited within the unincorporated county to areas served by sewer.
7. Success: We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community.
8. Challenge: We do not have community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.
9. Challenge: We do not have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.
10. Challenge: We do not allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.

Educational Opportunities Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community provides workforce training options for our citizens. North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
2. Success: Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.
3. Success: Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does. North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
4. Success: Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.

Governmental Relations

Regional Solutions Objective: 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.

1. Success: We participate in regional economic development organizations.
2. Success: We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding quality and quantity issues.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.

Regional Cooperation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We plan jointly with our cities and counties for comprehensive planning purposes.
2. Challenge: We need to update Service Delivery Strategies to reflect recent changes in sewer service and funding mechanisms.
3. Success: 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.

4. Success: We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.

4.2 Town of Alto

Development Patterns

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

1. Success: Since we do not have a zoning code, there are no requirements separating commercial, residential and retail uses by district.
2. Success: Our community does not have regulations that would disallow neo-traditional development “by-right”, subject to consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and applicable state and federal regulations.
3. Challenge: Our community does not have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing street trees appropriate to our climate.
4. Challenge: Our community has not organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that would make walking more comfortable in the summer.
5. Success: We do have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.
6. Challenge: Our community has few sidewalks to encourage walking as an option for those who would choose to walk.
7. Success: Since we do not have a zoning ordinance, we do not require segregation of land uses that would make errands on foot undesirable, dangerous, or impossible for our residents.
8. Challenge: Our community does not have a school nearby so children cannot walk to school safely.
9. Challenge: Few of our children can bike to school safely.
10. Challenge: Schools are not located in or near neighborhoods in our community.

Infill Development Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community has not prepared an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.

2. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.
3. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.
4. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community or planned for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, nodal development.
5. Challenge: Our community has a development rule that would disallow small lot development (5,000 square feet or less). The minimum lot size in the Town is 1 acre.

Sense of Place Objective: 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.

1. Success: 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.
2. Challenge: We have not delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.
3. Challenge: We do not have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.
4. Success: We have a sign ordinance to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.
5. Challenge: We have not prepared a development guidebook that illustrates the types of new development we want in our community.
6. Challenge: Our community does not have a plan to protect designated farmland.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have public transportation in our community.
2. Challenge: We do not require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, rather than having a single entry/exit.

3. Challenge: We do not have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk so a variety of destinations.
4. Challenge: We do not have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.
5. Challenge: We do not require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.
6. Challenge: We do not have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.
7. Success: Since we do not have a parking ordinance, commercial and retail development can share parking areas.

Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

1. Success: Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.
2. Success: Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.
3. Success: Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage.
4. Success: Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s regional tourism partnership.
5. Success: Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region. For instance there are local festivals and events based on the Appalachian culture.
6. Success: Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective: 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.

4. Challenge: We do not have designated historic districts in our community.
5. Challenge: We do not have an historic preservation ordinance or an active historic preservation commission.
6. Challenge: We want new development to complement our historic development, but we do not have ordinances and design standards in place to ensure this.

Open Space Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not have a greenspace plan.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively preserving greenspace, neither through direct purchase nor by encouraging set-asides in new developments.
3. Challenge: We do not have a local land conservation program, nor do we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.
4. Challenge: We do not have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Environmental Protection Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have a natural resources inventory in our Comprehensive Plan.
2. Challenge: We do not have zoning or subdivision regulations so we do not steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Challenge: We have identified our defining natural resources but have not taken steps to protect them.
4. Challenge: Our community has not passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we enforce them.
5. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.

6. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.
7. Challenge: We are not using stormwater best management practices for all new development.
8. Challenge: We do not have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplains or marsh protection, etc.)

Social and Economic Development Goal

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

1. Success: We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.
2. Challenge: Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities do not use the same population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan, except with respect to the long-range water supply plan.
3. Success: Our elected officials understand the land development process in our community.
4. Challenge: We have do not have development regulations or a zoning code that would help us achieve our QCO goals.
5. Challenge: We do not have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.
6. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth based on a natural resources inventory of our community.
7. Challenge: We do not have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.
8. Challenge: We do not have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.
9. Challenge: We do not have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues and proposed new development.
10. Success: We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

1. Success: We have a local economic development organization that has considered our community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them. The Habersham Development Authority focuses on attracting more manufacturing concerns.
2. Success: We have an economic development organization that has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible. The economic development agency is planning to set aside more land for industrial parks.
3. Challenge: We do not recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.
4. Challenge: We do not have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving could impact our economy.

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

1. Challenge: We do not have an economic development program that has an entrepreneur support program.
2. Challenge: Our community does not have many jobs for skilled labor.
3. Success: Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.
4. Challenge: Our community does not have many professional and managerial jobs.

Housing Choices Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.
2. Success: People who work in our community can afford to live here, too.

3. Challenge: Our community does not have ample housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average). Over 30 percent of our renters and 23 percent of our homeowners pay more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing.
4. Challenge: We do not encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original towns, continuing the traditional street design and maintaining small setbacks.
5. Challenge: Our community is rural and we do not yet have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.
6. Success: We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing, subject to availability of appropriate wastewater treatment systems.
7. Success: We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community, subject to availability of appropriate wastewater treatment systems.
8. Challenge: We do not have community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.
9. Challenge: We do not have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.
10. Challenge: We do not allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) due to a lack of appropriate wastewater treatment systems.

Educational Opportunities Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community provides workforce training options for our citizens. The North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
2. Challenge: We do not have workforce training programs that provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.
3. Success: Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does. The North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
4. Challenge: Our community has few job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.

Governmental Relations

Regional Solutions Objective: 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.

1. Success: We participate in regional economic development organizations.
2. Success: We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding quality and quantity issues.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.

Regional Cooperation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We plan jointly with our cities and counties for comprehensive planning purposes.
2. Challenge: We need to update Service Delivery Strategies to reflect recent changes in sewer service and funding mechanisms.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.

4.3 City of Clarkesville

Development Patterns

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

1. Success: Our Zoning Ordinance has five (5) zoning districts in which a mixture of compatible uses is permitted.

2. Success: Our community's land use and development regulations allows a variety of housing styles, lot sizes and setbacks, and other development standards that would allow neo-traditional development to be developed "by-right".
3. Challenge: Our community does not have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing street trees appropriate to our climate.
4. Challenge: Our community has not organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that would make walking more comfortable in the summer.
5. Success: We do have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.
6. Success: Parts of our downtown has sidewalks to encourage walking as an option for those who would choose to walk.
7. Success: Our Zoning Ordinance includes several zoning districts downtown that do not require segregation of land uses that would make errands on foot undesirable, dangerous, or impossible for our residents.
8. Not Applicable: At this time there are no schools located in the City of Clarkesville. If schools are constructed in the future, steps should be taken to ensure that children can walk to school safely, through the provision of adequate sidewalks.
9. Not Applicable: If schools are built in the city they should be made accessible by bicycle. Opportunities should exist for children to safely bicycle to and from school.
10. Not Applicable: In the event schools are constructed in Clarkesville they should be sited in or near neighborhoods to provide students with the ability to walk or bike to school. This would reduce bussing costs and automobile travel.

Infill Development Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community has not prepared an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment. However we recently redeveloped the Old Clarkesville Mill.
3. Success: Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment. We recently received a federal grant to revitalize some of our downtown areas that could be considered greyfields.

4. Success: We have designated areas of our community that are planned for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, nodal development.
5. Success: Our community does allow small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses. The minimum lot size is 2,000 square feet.

Sense of Place Objective: 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.

1. Success: 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.
2. Success: We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.
3. Success: The Preservation Corridor Overlay District and the Clean Community Regulations includes standards for the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.
4. Success: We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.
5. Success: The Preservation Corridor Overlay District for includes development standards for 5 types of character areas and establishes guidelines for the types of new development we want in each character area of our community.
6. Challenge: The City of Clarkesville has little remaining farmland, and there are no regulations that protect prime farmland in our community.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have public transportation in our community.
2. Challenge: We do not require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, rather than having a single entry/exit.
3. Challenge: We do not have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk so a variety of destinations.

4. Challenge: We do not have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.
5. Challenge: We do not require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.
6. Success: We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community. The Tallulah Falls Railroad will be converted to a multi-use trail all the way to Franklin, NC.
7. Success: We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas subject to proper justification.

Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

1. Success: Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.
2. Success: Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products. Fieldale Farms is the largest employer in the area.
3. Success: Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage. The conversion of the Clarkesville Mill is one example.
4. Success: Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s regional tourism partnership.
5. Success: Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region. This includes promotion of local festivals and other events related to Appalachian culture as well as Tallulah Gorge and related outdoor attractions.
6. Success: Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have designated several historic districts in our community.

2. Challenge: We do not have an historic preservation ordinance or an active historic preservation commission.
3. Challenge: We want new development to complement our historic development, but we do not have ordinances and design standards in place to ensure this.

Open Space Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not have a greenspace plan.
2. Success: Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new developments.
3. Success: 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.
4. Challenge: We do not have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Environmental Protection Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have a natural resources inventory.
2. Success: We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Success: We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.
4. Challenge: Our community has not passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we do not enforce them.
5. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.
6. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.

7. Success: We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.
8. Success: We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplains or marsh protection, etc.)

Social and Economic Development Goal

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

1. Success: We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.
2. Challenge: Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities do not use the same population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan, except with respect to the long-range water supply plan.
3. Success: Our elected officials understand the land development process in our community.
4. Success: We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.
5. Challenge: We do not have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth. As these items are rarely needed in the past, any capital expenditure has been accounted for as specific project line items within a given budget.
6. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth based on a natural resources inventory of our community.
7. Success: We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.
8. Success: We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.
9. Success: 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. Success: We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

1. Success: Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them. The Habersham Development Authority focuses on attracting more manufacturing concerns.
2. Success: Our Economic Development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible. The economic development agency is planning to set aside more land for industrial parks.
3. Success: We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products. Ethicon creates medical supplies and Fieldale Farms contributes to the agricultural specialization in Georgia.
4. Success: We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.

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

1. Challenge: Our economic development program does not have an entrepreneur support program.
2. Success: Our community has jobs for skilled labor, especially in the health care, social services and educational service industries.
3. Success: Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.
4. Success: Our community has professional and managerial jobs.

Housing Choices Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.
2. Success: People who work in our community can afford to live here, too.

3. Challenge: Our community has ample housing for most people in various income levels (low, moderate and above-average). However, 23 percent of our renters pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing.
4. Challenge: We do not encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original towns, continuing the traditional street design and maintaining small setbacks.
5. Success: Our community has zoning regulations that would make available options for downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.
6. Success: We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing.
7. Success: We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community.
8. Challenge: We do not have community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.
9. Challenge: We do not have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.
10. Success: We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.

Educational Opportunities Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community provides workforce training options for our citizens through North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College.
2. Success: Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.
3. Success: Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does. These include North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College.
4. Success: Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.

Governmental Relations

Regional Solutions Objective: 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.

1. Success: We participate in regional economic development organizations.
2. Success: We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding quality and quantity issues.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.

Regional Cooperation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We plan jointly with our cities and counties for comprehensive planning purposes.
2. Challenge: We need to update Service Delivery Strategies to reflect recent changes in sewer service and funding mechanisms.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.

4.4 City of Cornelia

Development Patterns

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

1. Success: Our Zoning Ordinance has five zoning districts in which a mixture of compatible uses is permitted.
2. Success: Our community's Zoning Ordinance includes a Traditional Neighborhood Development District that allows a variety of housing styles, lot sizes and setbacks, and other development standards that would allow neo-traditional development to be developed "by-right".

3. Success: Our community has a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing street trees appropriate to our climate.
4. Challenge: Our community has not organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that would make walking more comfortable in the summer.
5. Success: We do have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.
6. Success: Parts of our downtown has sidewalks to encourage walking as an option for those who would choose to walk.
7. Success: Our Zoning Ordinance includes several zoning districts that do not require segregation of land uses that would make errands on foot undesirable, dangerous, or impossible for our residents.
8. Success: Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.
9. Success: Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.
10. Success: Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.

Infill Development Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community's Better Hometown program manager has prepared an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.
3. Success: Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment. We recently received a federal grant for revitalization of areas of downtown that could be considered greyfields.
4. Success: We have designated areas of our community that are planned for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, nodal development.
5. Success: Our community does allow small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses. The minimum lot size for single-family detached dwellings is 5,000 square feet and the minimum lot size for fee simple townhouses is 2,000 square feet.

Sense of Place Objective: 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.

1. Success: 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.
2. Success: We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.
3. Success: The Zoning Ordinance includes standards for the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.
4. Success: We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.
5. Challenge: We do not have a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.
6. Success: The City of Cornelia has an Agricultural zoning district that is intended to protect farmland and land that is not ready for urban or suburban development from encroachment by untimely or unplanned urban development.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have public transportation in our community.
2. Challenge: Except in the TND Zoning District, we do not require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, rather than having a single entry/exit.
3. Challenge: We do not have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk so a variety of destinations.
4. Success: We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.
5. Success: We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.

6. Success: We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community. The Tallulah Falls Railroad will be converted to a multi-use trail all the way to Franklin, NC.
7. Success: We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas subject to proper justification.

Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

1. Success: Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.
2. Success: Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products. Fieldale Farms is the largest employer in the area.
3. Success: Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage.
4. Success: Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s regional tourism partnership.
5. Success: Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region. Examples are promotion of local festivals and other events relate to Appalachian culture.
6. Success: Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have designated historic districts in our community.
2. Challenge: We do not have an historic preservation ordinance or an active historic preservation commission.
3. Success: We want new development to complement our historic development and have an infill development ordinance with design standards in place to ensure this.

Open Space Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not have a greenspace plan.
2. Success: Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new developments.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Environmental Protection Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have a natural resources inventory in our Comprehensive Plan.
2. Success: We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Success: We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.
4. Success: Our community believes that it has passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances and is enforcing them.
5. Success: Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.
6. Success: Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.
7. Success: We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.
8. Success: We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (floodplains and watershed protection.).

Social and Economic Development Goal

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

1. Success: We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.
2. Challenge: Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities do not use the same population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan, except with respect to the long-range water supply plan.
3. Success: Our elected officials understand the land development process in our community.
4. Success: We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.
5. Success: We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.
6. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth based on a natural resources inventory of our community.
7. Success: We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.
8. Success: We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.
9. Success: 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. Success: We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

1. Success: Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them. The Habersham Development Authority focuses on attracting manufacturing growth.

2. Success: Our Economic Development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible. The economic development agency is planning to set aside more land for industrial parks.
3. Success: We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products whenever we can identify them.
4. Success: We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.

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

1. Challenge: Our economic development program does not have an entrepreneur support program.
2. Success: Our community has jobs for skilled labor. Health care, social services and education are the areas strengths.
3. Success: Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.
4. Success: Our community has professional and managerial jobs.

Housing Choices Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.
2. Success: People who work in our community can afford to live here, too.
3. Success: Our community has ample housing for most families in each income level (low, moderate and above-average). However, 30 percent of our renters pay more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing.
4. Success: We have a TND zoning district that encourages new residential development to follow the pattern of our original towns, continuing the traditional street design and maintaining small setbacks.

5. Success: Our community has zoning regulations that would make available options for downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.
6. Success: We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing.
7. Success: We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community, subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit.
8. Challenge: We do not have community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.
9. Challenge: We do not have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.
10. Success: We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.

Educational Opportunities Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community provides workforce training options for our citizens. North Georgia College and Piedmont College are the sources.
2. Success: Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.
3. Success: Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does. North Georgia College and Piedmont College are the sources.
4. Success: Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.

Governmental Relations

Regional Solutions Objective: 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.

1. Success: We participate in regional economic development organizations.
2. Success: We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding quality and quantity issues.

3. Success: 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.
4. Success: Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.

Regional Cooperation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We plan jointly with our cities and counties for comprehensive planning purposes.
2. Challenge: We need to update Service Delivery Strategies to reflect recent changes in sewer service and funding mechanisms.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.

4.5 City of Demorest

Development Patterns

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

1. Success: Our Land Use Ordinance allows commercial, residential and retail uses to be mixed in three land use intensity districts for except the Sensitive Land district.
2. Success: Our community's Land Use Ordinance would allow neo-traditional development "by-right", so developers would not have to go through a variance process.
3. Challenge: Our community does not have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing street trees appropriate to our climate.
4. Challenge: Our community has not organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that would make walking more comfortable in the summer.

5. Success: We do have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.
6. Challenge: Our community has few sidewalks to encourage walking as an option for those who would choose to walk.
7. Success: Our Land Use Ordinance does not require segregation of land uses that would have made errands on foot undesirable, dangerous, or impossible for our residents.
8. Success: Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.
9. Success: Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.
10. Success: Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.

Infill Development Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community has not prepared an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.
3. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.
4. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community that are planned for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, nodal development.
5. Success: Our community does not regulate lot size except in the Sensitive Land Use district, so we would allow small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) in the High Intensity district, provided minimum setbacks (15 ft. front/ 6 ft. side) and lot coverage (50 percent) are met.

Sense of Place Objective: 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.

1. Success: 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.

2. Success: We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.
3. Challenge: We do not have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.
4. Challenge: We do not have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.
5. Challenge: We have not prepared a development guidebook that illustrates the types of new development we want in our community.
6. Challenge: We do not have a plan to protect designated farmland in our community.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have public transportation in our community.
2. Challenge: We do not require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, rather than having a single entry/exit.
3. Challenge: We do not have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk so a variety of destinations.
4. Challenge: We do not have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.
5. Challenge: We do not require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.
6. Success: We do not have a plan for bicycle routes through our community. The Tallulah Falls Railroad will be converted to a multi-use trail all the way to Franklin, NC.
7. Challenge: We do not allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas.

Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

1. Success: Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.

2. Success: Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.
3. Success: Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage.
4. Success: Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.
5. Success: Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.
6. Success: Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have designated an historic district in our community.
2. Success: We have an historic preservation ordinance and an Historic Preservation Advisory Committee.
3. Challenge: We want new development to complement our historic development, and while we have an ordinance and advisory commission to review plans, we do not have design standards in place to guide this process.

Open Space Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not have a greenspace plan.
2. Success: Our community is actively preserving greenspace through encouraging set-asides in new developments.
3. Challenge: We do not have a local land conservation program, nor do we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.

4. Challenge: We do not have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Environmental Protection Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have a natural resources inventory.
2. Success: We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Success: We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.
4. Challenge: Our community has not passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we enforce them.
5. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.
6. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.
7. Success: We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.
8. Success: We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slopes and floodplains).

Social and Economic Development Goal

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

1. Success: We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.
2. Challenge: Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities do not use the same population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan except with respect to the long-range water supply plan.

3. Success: Our elected officials understand the land development process in our community.
4. Success: We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.
5. Success: We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.
6. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth based on a natural resources inventory of our community.
7. Success: We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.
8. Success: We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.
9. Success: 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. Success: We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

1. Success: Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them. The Habersham Development Authority focuses on attracting more manufacturing concerns.
2. Success: Our Economic Development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible. The economic development agency is planning to set aside more land for industrial parks.
3. Challenge: We do not recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.
4. Success: We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.

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

1. Challenge: Our economic development program does not have an entrepreneur support program.
2. Success: Our community has jobs for skilled labor.
3. Success: Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.
4. Success: Our community has professional and managerial jobs.

Housing Choices Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not allow accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.
2. Success: People who work in our community can afford to live here, too.
3. Success: Our community has ample housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).
4. Success: We encourage new residential development in the High Intensity district to follow the pattern of our original towns, continuing the traditional street design and maintaining small setbacks.
5. Challenge: Our community is rural and we do not yet have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.
6. Success: We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing.
7. Success: We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community.
8. Challenge: We do not have community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.
9. Challenge: We do not have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.
10. Success: We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.

Educational Opportunities Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community provides workforce training options for our citizens. North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
2. Success: Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.
3. Success: Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does. North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
4. Success: Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.

Governmental Relations

Regional Solutions Objective: 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.

1. Success: We participate in regional economic development organizations.
2. Success: We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding quality and quantity issues.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.

Regional Cooperation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We plan jointly with our cities and counties for comprehensive planning purposes.
2. Challenge: We need to update Service Delivery Strategies to reflect recent changes in sewer service and funding mechanisms.

3. Success: 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.
4. Success: We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.

4.6 Town of Mt. Airy

Development Patterns

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

1. Challenge: Our Zoning Ordinance separates commercial, single-family residential, multi-family residential and industrial uses into four separate use districts.
2. Challenge: Our Zoning Ordinance would not allow neo-traditional development “by right” so developers would have to go through a variance process to gain permission to construct such a development.
3. Challenge: Our community does not have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing street trees appropriate to our climate.
4. Challenge: Our community has not organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that would make walking more comfortable in the summer.
5. Challenge: We do not have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.
6. Challenge: Our community has few sidewalks to encourage walking as an option for those who would choose to walk.
7. Challenge: Our Zoning Ordinance requires segregation of land uses that would make errands on foot difficult, dangerous, or impossible for residents in some parts of the City.
8. Success: Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.
9. Success: Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.
10. Success: Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.

Infill Development Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community has not prepared an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.
3. Challenge: Our community is not actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.
4. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community that are planned for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, nodal development.
5. Success: Our community allows townhouses to be constructed on small lots (minimum of 2,400 square feet).

Sense of Place Objective: 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.

1. Success: 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.
2. Success: We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.
3. Challenge: We do not have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.
4. Success: We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.
5. Challenge: We have not prepared a development guidebook that illustrates the types of new development we want in our community.
6. Challenge: Our community does not have a plan to protect designated farmland.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have public transportation in our community.

2. Challenge: We do not require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, rather than having a single entry/exit.
3. Challenge: We do not have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk so a variety of destinations.
4. Challenge: We do not have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.
5. Challenge: We do not require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.
6. Challenge: We do not have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.
7. Challenge: We do not allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas.

Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

1. Success: Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.
2. Success: Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products. Fieldale Farms is the largest employer in the area.
3. Success: Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage.
4. Success: Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s regional tourism partnership.
5. Success: Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region. We do this through local festivals and other events related to Appalachian culture.
6. Success: Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: We do not have designated historic districts in our community.
2. Challenge: We do not have an historic preservation ordinance or an active historic preservation commission.
3. Challenge: We want new development to complement our historic development, but we do not have ordinances and design standards in place to ensure this.

Open Space Preservation Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not have a greenspace plan.
2. Challenge: Our community is not actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new developments.
3. Challenge: We do not have a local land conservation program, nor are we working with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.
4. Challenge: We do not have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Environmental Protection Objective: 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.

1. Success: We have a natural resources inventory in our Comprehensive Plan.
2. Success: We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Success: We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.
4. Challenge: Our community has not passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we do not enforce them.

5. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.
6. Challenge: Our community does not have a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.
7. Challenge: We are not using stormwater best management practices for all new development.
8. Success: We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slopes and floodplains.)

Social and Economic Development Goal

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

1. Success: We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.
2. Challenge: Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities do not use the same population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan, except with respect to the long-range water supply plan.
3. Success: Our elected officials understand the land development process in our community.
4. Success: We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.
5. Challenge: We do not have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.
6. Challenge: We have not designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth based on a natural resources inventory of our community.
7. Success: We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.
8. Success: We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.
9. Success: 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. Success: We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

1. Success: Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them. The Habersham Development Authority focuses on attracting manufacturing groups.
2. Success: Our Economic Development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible. The economic development agency is planning to set aside more land for industrial parks.
3. Challenge: We do not currently recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.
4. Success: We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.

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

1. Challenge: Our economic development program does not have an entrepreneur support program.
2. Challenge: Our community has few jobs for skilled labor.
3. Success: Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.
4. Challenge: Our community has few professional and managerial jobs.

Housing Choices Objective: 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.

1. Challenge: Our community does not allow accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.
2. Success: People who work in our community can afford to live here, too.

3. Success: Our community has ample housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).
4. Challenge: We do not encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original towns, continuing the traditional street design and maintaining small setbacks.
5. Challenge: Our community is rural and we do not yet have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.
6. Success: We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing.
7. Success: We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community.
8. Challenge: We do not have community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.
9. Challenge: We do not have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.
10. Challenge: We do not allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas except for townhouses.

Educational Opportunities Objective: 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.

1. Success: Our community provides workforce training options for our citizens. North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
2. Success: Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.
3. Success: Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does. North Georgia Technical College and Piedmont College are the sources.
4. Challenge: Our community has few job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.

Governmental Relations

Regional Solutions Objective: 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.

1. Success: We participate in regional economic development organizations.
2. Success: We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding quality and quantity issues.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.

Regional Cooperation Objective: 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.

1. Success: We plan jointly with our cities and counties for comprehensive planning purposes.
2. Challenge: We need to update Service Delivery Strategies to reflect recent changes in sewer service and funding mechanisms.
3. Success: 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.
4. Success: We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.