

# **City of Homer Comprehensive Plan 2008-2030**

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## **Community Agenda**

**August, 2008**

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## **Purpose**

The Community Assessment and the Community Participation Program are the first two of three documents comprising the local comprehensive plan in Georgia. Enclosed herein are the Community Assessment, the Community Participation Program and all necessary supporting material for the City of Homer, for the planning period between 2008 and 2030. This material will support the development of the third, and most important, element of the comprehensive plan: The Community Agenda.

The purpose of planning and community development is to provide guidance for everyday decision-making by local government officials and other community leaders. To this end, the requirements for local comprehensive planning in Georgia emphasize involvement of stakeholders and the general public in preparation of plans that include an exciting, well-conceived, and achievable vision for the future of the community. When implemented, the resulting plan will help the community address critical issues and opportunities while moving toward realization of its unique vision for the community's future.

The Community Assessment presents a factual and conceptual foundation upon which the rest of the comprehensive plan is built. Preparation of the Community Assessment is largely a staff or professional function of collecting and analyzing data and information about the community and presenting the results in a concise, easily understood format, such as an executive summary, for consideration by the public and decision-makers involved in subsequent development of the Community Agenda.

The purpose of the Community Participation Program is to ensure that the local comprehensive plan reflects the full range of community values and desires, by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in development of the Community Agenda. This broad-based participation in developing the Community Agenda will also help ensure that it will be implemented, because many in the community are involved in its development and thereby become committed to seeing it through.

## **Profile of Homer**

Homer is the county seat for Banks County, Georgia. The city lies near the center of the county and serves as one of many modest, historic commercial and civic centers amidst a large agricultural region of Georgia. With approximately just 1,000 residents, Homer remains an agrarian community despite the early stages of metropolitan Atlanta's northward expansion. Homer has retained some minor commercial activities, largely of neighborhood scale and type to support existing residents, and can be seen as a residential hub. Homer's evolution will depend heavily on coordination with Banks County and the management of several economic factors that could attract industries other than the agricultural base. Should the region become awash in modern development with significant increases in density, the city will developed into a stronger civic and social center.

Location Map

*Copy of Signed Transmittal Resolution*

## COMMUNITY VISION

The Minimum Standards and Requirements for Local Comprehensive Planning defines a community vision as something "... *intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.*" It is required as an element of the comprehensive plan so that communities can truly establish a pure and simple ideal for themselves in a format that is easily expressed and understood.

Visioning provides communities with an opportunity to pause and consider the "big picture" as well as to attempt to clearly define their ideal future. Developing a vision means that community has at least tried to identify current values, describe how they're to be realized in the future and use that image as a foundation for short and long-term planning. As a process this also requires the community to develop a consensus on what conditions to change or to preserve.

### General Vision Statement

As the County seat the expectations for the community represented something more vibrant and self-sustaining, but it was acknowledged several factors have contributed to a stifling of Homer's growth and such vibrancy wasn't the reality. Thus, discussions with stakeholders over the key values for Homer and a potential vision for the community established several common themes, all focused on the need for the community's identity to evolve.

Residents expressed an appreciation for their community as a place to live but lamented the need to travel outside the city for employment, commerce and entertainment. The prevailing desire was to respect Homer's role as a largely residential community within a rural area, but that improvements should be made to strengthen the City's economic and social independence. There was a desire to increase the potential for industry and tourism, but that those elements would be fostered naturally after the community first established itself as a "more complete hometown." Ultimately the notions of being a place that caters to family values while aspiring for business and cultural prosperity gained consensus and formed the framework of a functional community vision.

***"The City of Homer is a community of family values, a place where families can live, work and play, and an attractive, rural destination for business and culture."***

Broken down, the General Vision for Homer expresses the following values:

<i>“The City of Homer is a community of family values;</i>	The reference to family values is intended to show the community as united (family members care for one another) and being considerate over the needs of the community.
<i>...a place where families can live, work and play;</i>	This language refers to Homer’s goal to become a “self-sustaining” community wherein residents have their basic needs within the community.
<i>...and an attractive, rural destination for business and culture;</i>	While acknowledging their city’s role as the civic seat for Banks County, the residents of Homer would like to see the city assume more of the cultural and commercial roles, as well. This expresses the desire of the City to support industry and cultural activities, while also acknowledging the rural, small-town atmosphere they wish to retain.

### Goals and Objectives

In addition to the values identified within the Vision Statement, other goals for Homer were raised for consideration. In most cases, these goals are ideal principles and objectives that simply could not be efficiently incorporated into the Vision Statement but generally compliment the values expressed therein.

- *Increase the volume and diversity of business and industry in and around the city* – In order for Homer to become more self-sustaining economically and to increase it’s status among other communities in the region, Homer must seek to attract and support economic development beyond the neighborhood scale options along Main Street.
- *Provide more complete utilities throughout the city* – For Homer to attract and sustain growth will require additional utilities, especially sewer service.
- *Develop infill around historic downtown and along Main Street* – Homer has several properties within downtown that are viable for redevelopment. The ideal is for Main Street to achieve economic stability and a vitality that lasts through/beyond common business hours.
- *Strengthen connection with US 441* – The City would like to see Business 441 redirected through downtown. Regardless of this potential, the need remains to improve the physical and conceptual linkage with this arterial that will be economic engine of central Banks County.

## **Identification of Issues and Opportunities**

### Land Use

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*Issues and Opportunities*

*Balancing/attracting growth* – The City lacks many resources to guide the locations or character of that growth if so desired. There are some aspirations for infill and select forms of commercial and industrial development, but the utilities and resources to attract such are currently lacking. The City also must be sure not to attract too much growth to adversely impact community character.

*Accommodating more/new commercial and industrial use* – For economic purposes the City needs to identify land and resources for sustaining commercial and industrial land use. To do this will require either an expansion of city limits or developing a strategy for utility and infrastructure improvements.

*Downtown properties available for infill/redevelopment* – Homer does have land available within the town to attract new business.

*City's current scale and form is conducive to pedestrian accessibility* – The location of schools, civic centers and the arrangements of streets and residences means a highly pedestrian friendly form is possible.

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*Implementation Strategies*

Consideration/ Implementation of updated land use management policies

Develop Industrial Capacity Report to determine the potential for industrial use within and around Homer.

In partnership with Banks County, develop formal Water and Sewer Plan for Homer and just outside city limits

Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities.

Develop Property Redevelopment Guide, a policy for Town directed efforts to encourage and support infill.

Update development regulations to allow/encourage traditional neighborhood design surrounding key public destinations.

Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan



Population

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*Issues and Opportunities*

*Managing population growth* – Homer and the surrounding region will experience dynamic growth levels that will change the character of the area. The City must consider how to incorporate this growth into the fabric of the community in order to sustain service levels and maintain the character desired.

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*Implementation Strategies*

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services  
Consideration/ Implementation of updated land use management policies

Economic Development

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*Issues and Opportunities*

*Need for economic development within the city* – Homer has land available for business development and a sizeable population base with growing needs. Failure to develop businesses to fill these needs within the city limits potential tax revenue and possibly impacts the city’s character.

*Dealing with transition of economic base* – As Banks County becomes more suburban the nature of industrial development and employment opportunities will change. Shifts from primarily goods production to service industries require new strategies for education, business development.

*Increase in Service sector/ hourly-rate employees* – Current growth in the Service industry is typically a weaker sector in terms of wages and benefits to local employees. Economic trends should be monitored to ensure a diverse range of employment opportunities available for residents.

*Need for a coordinated economic development strategy* –Homer has historically had fewer resources or economic development, limited targeted business recruitment and no unified strategy for business development. Failure to become proactive in this sense might lead to the dilution of the city’s character and a general weakening of the economy.

*Proximity to regional resources* – Metropolitan expansion to this part of Georgia comes in part because of the amenities already available, such as the mountains, lakes and parks.

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*Implementation Strategies*

Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities.  
Develop Property Redevelopment Guide, a policy for City directed efforts to encourage and support infill.  
Work with Chamber and Development Authorities to develop targeted marketing campaign.  
Work with Chamber and Development Authorities to develop targeted marketing campaign.  
Continue to support and participate in Chamber and Development Authorities.  
  
Work with Chamber and Development Authorities to develop targeted marketing campaign.  
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Work with Chamber and Development Authorities to develop targeted marketing campaign.  
Continue to support and participate in Chamber and Development Authorities.  
  
Support marketing of regional tourism and amenities within Homer.

Housing

*Issues and Opportunities*

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*Lack of housing variety* – While the overall demand for multi-family and other forms of housing is currently low, the eventual growth of the county will spur interest in housing types other than single family and manufactured units. Homer needs to consider, if, how and where such housing should be accommodated if this is to be incorporated into the city.

*Maintaining affordability* – Homer has have seen significant real increases in housing costs both for ownership and renting. The City remains affordable by comparison but is growing nearer to State averages.

*New housing development through continued regional growth* – As Homer experiences more and more encroachment from suburban expansion, there will be the opportunity to introduce more new, modern housing units to the local supply.

*Implementation Strategies*

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Consideration/ Implementation of updated land use management policies.

In partnership with Banks County, develop formal Water and Sewer Plan for Homer and just outside city limits.

Market Study to assess breakdown of housing cost factors, gauging the influence of development policies.

Market study to assess breakdown of housing cost factors, gauging the influence of development policies.

Public Facilities and Services

*Issues and Opportunities*

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*Viability of water and sewer service* – The distribution and collection system in Homer may require upgrades within the planning period depending on growth conditions.

*Space available for new facilities* – Through either infill or new development, Homer has the space available for locating new civic sites within close proximity to the heart of the city. Done properly, new facilities could assist efforts to strengthen the community’s character.

*Potential utility improvements* – In coordination with Banks County, Homer may be able to tap into expanded water and sewer service if so desired.

*Implementation Strategies*

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In partnership with Banks County, develop formal Water and Sewer Plan for Homer and just outside city limits.

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services.

Develop Parks and Recreation Master Plan w/ Banks County.

Report on updated long-term facility demands for the City.

In partnership with Banks County, develop formal Water and Sewer Plan for Homer and just outside city limits.

Transportation

*Issues and Opportunities*

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*Balancing local traffic and commercial traffic/ Maintaining the access corridors – –*  
As Banks County grows more suburban the major corridors will become viable for multiple uses that, at times, can lead to competing priorities, particularly in balancing through and tourist traffic with that of local residents.

*Improving access to public transit –* Few opportunities currently exist for public transit, either as a local service or as a link to service in Gainesville or into metropolitan Atlanta. The rate and styles of growth projected for the future suggest a strong need for such transit programs in order to mitigate transportation concerns.

*Improving road network interconnectivity –* Development patterns beyond downtown were not based on an interconnected road system, hampering emergency response times, and leads to an overburden of the existing collector and arterial roads. Completion of a perimeter road, and establishing new roads would improve efficiency and safety within the system, and preserve the existing road system by reducing overuse of certain sections.

*Improving safety and preservation of the road network --* An updated system of road name signage and local speed limits would improve safety and efficiency of the road network.

*Long-Range Road Improvement Plan -* Some of the county's roads, and State Routes 51, 98, and 164, which also serve as major corridors, serves the city. There is a need to develop a focused road improvement program to guide public investment in the future, and to connect future land use planning with transportation planning.

*Implementation Strategies*

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Update report concerning GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.

Update Transportation element of Comprehensive Plan.

Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441.

Review Rural Transit Plan; Consider options for van service.

Update report concerning GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.

Update Transportation element of Comprehensive Plan.

Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441.

Consideration/ Implementation of updated land use management policies.

Review and amend local standards for road construction and signage.

Update report on GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.

Update Transportation element of Comprehensive Plan.

Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441.

Natural Resources

*Issues and Opportunities*

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*Maintain environmental protection efforts* – Homer should continue enforcement of land use regulations that minimize threats to existing environmental resources. These efforts should be reviewed upon the completion of new flood plain mapping and aerial imagery for identifying wetlands.

*Consideration/ Land available for greenspace* – Homer should explore options for preserved greenspace as a measure for increasing environmental protection, enhancing the City’s rural character and providing space for passive recreation.

*Ability to provide utility services* – In partnering with the County, the City of Homer is poised to retain public utilities within City limits. Plans are in progress that may introduce public sewer to the County and the city of Homer.

*Implementation Strategies*

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Acquire updated floodplain and soil information from respective authorities.

Update Environmental element of Comprehensive Plan. Ensure updated information is accessible to Planning Commission and City Council

Consider conservation design regulations for larger development.

Explore options for financing of greenspace acquisition.

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services

Confirm future partnership terms and conditions with all utility providers.

Implement water and sewer system improvement plan.

Historic Resources

*Issues and Opportunities*

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*Need for appropriate growth strategies* - designed to bolster cohesiveness within the community.

*Need to extend existing historic district boundary* to include additional resources.

*Lack of Protective Ordinances* - Protection and maintenance of extensive historic architectural resources and archaeological sites

*Protection of open lands and historic view sheds* – These areas further define the character of the community

*Lack of Design Guidelines* - The need for appropriate growth strategies designed to bolster cohesiveness within the community

*Lack of an active Historic Preservation Commission*

*Implementation Strategies*

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Consideration/ Implementation of updated land use management policies.

Consider expansion of Historic District

Develop/ Adopt design regulations for historic district.

Consider conservation design regulations for larger development.

Explore options for financing of greenspace acquisition.

Consider design standards for whole town or, at a minimum, development surrounding historic districts.

Consider creation of HPC.

Intergovernmental Coordination

*Issues and Opportunities*

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*Maintain levels of public services* – Citizens desire all public services to either improve or, at a minimum, remain at existing levels despite increased growth.

*Annexation and growth management* – The City is likely to feel pressure to expand boundaries, requiring not only coordination as part of the Service Delivery Agreement but also effective planning to ensure the proper quality of development.

*Existing intergovernmental cooperation* – Measures such as the Service Delivery Agreements and the Special Purpose Local Option Tax (SPLOST) provide existing mechanisms for cooperation and communication between governments.

*Availability of services and resources* – Through partnerships with the County and neighboring communities Homer does have access to a high level of utilities and services.

*Implementation Strategies*

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Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services

Confirm future partnership terms and conditions with all utility providers.

Update Service Delivery Agreements.

Update Service Delivery Agreements.

Update Service Delivery Agreements.

Planning session to prepare for new SPLOST.

Maintain communications with GMRDC and State community development offices.

For each partner organization, designate a Council member to serve as liaison.

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

### **General Land Use Plan**

As surmised by the City's history the form of the community stems from the established civic center of the courthouse and the adjoining main road, now called Main St. and Historic Homer Highway. This road runs roughly north and south, not quite bisecting the City and consisting of three distinct segments: The southernmost third with the modern commercial and residential development, the middle third that comprises the big bend and where most of the historic structures are situated, and the northern third that marks the transition into rural territory. Almost all of the community's commercial, civic and industrial sites are off this main road or located very close by along intersecting roads, with the exceptions of the high school and middle school property that straddles the City boundaries to the south and southeast. Several concentrations of residential development are found along this corridor or also nearby along adjoining roads, including a few subdivisions found on the city's northeast side. The remaining land within the city is comprised of rural estates, some farming and undeveloped lots.

Homer's development strategy doesn't feature a dramatic change in the existing pattern save for an interest in fostering higher densities on the city's eastern side, between Main Street and US 441. That arterial is expected to be the economic engine of central Banks County, and will likely be the main service corridor for future utility improvements. Given this, and knowing that Homer wishes to pursue some level of increased residential and commercial densities, the direction for steering most growth will be between the freeway and downtown.

Ideally this becomes a concentration of traditional neighborhood, urban scale residential use with commercial and other public uses dispersed throughout. Roadways will be encouraged to maintain interconnectivity, with additional aspirations for pedestrian accessibility, as well.

Main Street will continue to serve as a commercial and civic corridor, with hopes that the route can garner the Bus. 441 designation to support economic development. Downtown and the historic district will be reserved for truly small-town scale development, while more distant stretches of the roadway will be permitted to accommodate conventional development forms.

The western half of the city will be earmarked for rural and agricultural activity, though this designation is tied also to the availability of utilities. If and when full utility service can be introduced to this area Homer would benefit by increasing the allowed densities, thus increasing the volume of households within close proximity of the emerging business development in downtown.

## Quality Community Objectives

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted 17 Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve her unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to her fullest potential. In developing the Community Assessment portion of the Comprehensive Plan, the community is encouraged to review the QCOs for their applicability to local conditions and goals. Their general application to Dawsonville is described here, while the description of each character area will also identify specific QCOs addressed for that area.

*(Note: Not every QCO was recognized as applying to Dawsonville in regards to this discussion.)*

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

Homer does have some remnants of traditional neighborhoods surrounding the downtown and within the historic district. Where Homer a larger community these areas would lack the scale or cohesion to present great influence over the prevailing housing trends, but as Homer remains small and focused around a historic Main Street, there is some precedence for this form to continue. The vision for a pedestrian friendly downtown also supports the call for more traditional neighborhood residential developments.

*Infill Development - Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.*

Homer has the land and vacant buildings available to warrant infill policies, but only a few sites are large enough or located in significant sites to make redevelopment readily feasible. There is enough space within the massing of existing structures within downtown to encourage development within the city before pursuing it further outside.

*Sense of Place - Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment*

The Community Vision recognizes Homer's rural roots and the notion that Homer is a mostly residential, small home town. With the recent redevelopment within downtown the core of Homer is a unique place capable of evoking history and providing ample resources for modern prosperity. Strengthening the neighborhood forms around this area will support the character and charms of Homer.

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

Homer and Banks County are too rural to sustain a sizable rural transit program. However, the GMRDC has performed a basic Rural Transit Study of the county and is working with GDOT to plan for improved service in the near future.

*Regional Identity - Each region should promote and preserve a regional "identity," or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.*

Homer's scale and form illustrate the city's relationship to the regional agrarian culture. It is a relatively isolated community, and its economy is truly intertwined with the regional patterns. Residents would like to see improved access/signage off the US 441 freeway so as to increase the City's status among tourists and through-travelers.

*Heritage Preservation - The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining local character.*

Homer does have a historic district and is reviewing possible changes to the district and their protection measures. Most importantly, the City does have several key, quality structures within downtown from which a fuller portrait of Homer's architectural history can be gleaned. The residents and officials all support the notion of preserving and revitalizing these resources as best as possible.

*Open Space Preservation - New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.*

Homer does not currently have or need a formal greenspace plan but should consider conservation design policies that encourage open space protection. As a long-term goal residents are supportive of maintaining some greenspace within the city and will work with Banks County towards the implementation of larger greenspace plans.

*Environmental Protection - Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.*

Homer does have the minimum environmental protection criteria in place, however the City and Banks County are awaiting updated information with regards to floodplains and



soil conditions. As this information becomes available, the City will amend the Comprehensive Plan as necessary.

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

Homer's residents understand that certain businesses and industries are better suited for the area's conditions and resources, and will work with the local Chamber of Commerce and Development Authorities to improve targeted recruiting measures.

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

Homer recognizes the changes in the regional economies and the need to be part of a diverse and dynamic economy. The City will partner with area educational institutions, economic development agencies and other stakeholders to help bring additional jobs to the area and to support the economic vitality of the downtown area.

*Housing Choices - A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (reducing commuting), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choices to meet market needs.*

Residents and stakeholders in Homer agree there are limited options for housing types in the city, but this is largely a byproduct of the limited utilities and employment options. Little progress is expected here until public sewer service is available.

*Educational Opportunities - Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.*

Homer acknowledges the importance of education as a resource for economic prosperity and improved well being for community residents, and is committed to working with all partners in supporting all levels of education opportunities for residents.

*Regional Cooperation - Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.*

Residents of Homer recognize the inter-dependence among the area's communities and the region as a whole, due largely to the economic co-dependence of commuting or direct partnerships for providing programs and services. The City must work with other entities as a willing and capable partner in order to achieve the best results for Homer.

**Recommended Character Areas**

To further assist in identifying development needs and target areas it is crucial to understand not only the land use patterns but also the prevailing character and context of a community. It is possible to identify these sub-areas within the community defined by architectural scale and style, functions and roles, traffic flow, and other factors that differentiate one area from the next. These can include the areas requiring special attention identified above and/or existing community sub-areas for which plans have already been prepared.

*Historic District/ Downtown*

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This is the historic district and the portion of Historic Homer Highway that is also known as Main Street. This district features the Banks County courthouse, City Hall and the historic portions of downtown Homer. This area does not harbor as much of the current commercial operations of the city but does serve as its civic center, often for the county as well. In addition to the government facilities the square in front of the historic courthouse across from City Hall hosts many public functions, making this single most iconic place in Homer. This area is also recognized for the adjacent residential and rural properties that embody the city's small town character. Taken all together this area is the most attractive and available for bringing quality development that will support, and be supported by, local residents yet it is also the most sensitive to development conditions as they can adversely impact the general feel and scale of Homer if not managed properly.

The vision for Main Street portion of this district is to build on its existing role and character as the civic seat of the city while encouraging more commercial development that is compatible with the design, form and scale appropriate for the historic district. Additional uses would be considered based on their design and the ability to contribute to the district as a social center.

Where the historic district incorporates residential uses, those areas should seek to remain residential.

Land Uses

Civic/Institutional  
Commercial  
Office  
Churches

Quality Community Objectives

*Traditional Neighborhoods*  
*Infill Development*  
*Sense of Place*  
*Heritage Preservation*  
*Appropriate Businesses*  
*Housing Choices*

Implementation Strategies

Develop/ maintain inventory of infill properties.

Consider development regulations for this district compatible with historic district design guidelines.

Propose Bus 441 be aligned along Main Street.

*Arterial Corridors*

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This designation is for the arterial roadways that run through the center and east side of the City, including Main Street and the main roads connecting Main Street with US 441. This array of arterials includes most of the non-residential activities within the city, and stands in stark contrast to unincorporated Banks County. These corridors would make then most logical launching point for commercial growth up to automotive-scale developments. However, they must maintain also maintain their role for local accessibility.

The vision for these corridors is an array of predominantly commercial and office uses, along with select civic and residential uses. Within and adjacent to the historic district uses and development forms should compliment the design guidelines for the historic district. More intense, auto-oriented uses would be permitted further away from downtown, closer to US 441.

The other caveat to these conditions is the presence of the schools dispersed throughout the city along these freeways. Adjacent to the schools development should be more subdued and of compatible use.

Land Uses

Commercial  
Office  
Churches  
Civic/Institutional  
Light Industrial (Conditional)

Quality Community Objectives

*Infill Development*  
*Employment Options*  
*Appropriate Businesses*  
*Regional Cooperation*

Implementation Strategies

Report on GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.

Update Transportation element of Comprehensive Plan.

Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441.

*Conventional Subdivisions*

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Several small subdivisions exist within Homer that feature different character compared to the traditional neighborhoods. These are newer developments with minimalist streetscapes and designs, most of which are comparably modest-sized subdivisions with chose cul-de-sacs rather than blending with the established neighborhoods. Compared with the older traditional homes with formal front porches and historic detailing, these units include houses built on slab, manufactured housing units, and/or units with uncovered parking pads. These represent a form of affordable housing commonly developed in the 1980's and 1990's, wherein the bulk of the investment was directed to the interior amenities of the house in order to reduce costs and allow the owner to develop the property as desired.

Land Uses

Residential

Quality Community Objectives

*Housing Choices*

Implementation Strategies

Maintain development policies

*Traditional Neighborhood*

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This district is the mostly residential component to the gradual urbanization of Homer. The City's smaller-lot residential uses are within this district, cultivated along the roads intersecting Main Street, missing only the density allowed by public sewer to create a small pocket of true urbanity. This district defines the depth of Homer as an individual community as opposed to a being just a commercial destination along the roadway. Expansion of this as a neighborhood is key to sustaining the scale and character of the city versus the completely rural nature of the unincorporated county. The potential exists to continue the small connecting streets around downtown and foster a sense of pedestrian scale for the majority of City residents if this district is strengthened with a neighborhood scale and sense of purpose.

The ideal is to expand the existing patterns and foster a sustainable density of housing around the downtown area. Permissible (on condition) non-residential uses would include neighborhood scale shops, churches and civic/institutional activities.

Recommendations for this area includes protective development policies that encourage infill of compatible designs and foster long-term capital improvement plans that increase the viability of the residential uses. Sidewalks and improved street signage are encouraged, especially to assist in the pedestrian accessibility of traveling from these houses to the schools, shops and library located within or immediately adjacent to the district.

Land Uses

Residential  
Neighborhood Parks  
Churches  
Neighborhood Commercial\*  
Civic/Institutional\*

\*=Conditional

Quality Community Objectives

*Traditional Neighborhoods*  
*Infill Development*  
*Sense of Place*  
*Transportation Alternatives*  
*Heritage Preservation*  
*Appropriate Businesses*  
*Housing Choices*

Implementation Strategies

Amend development policies to allow/encourage traditional neighborhood design

Develop/ maintain inventory of infill properties

Consider design guidelines for outside historic districts

Consider neighborhood assistance programs for concentrations of dilapidated properties

***Rural/ Agricultural Areas***

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This district refers to the land largely west of downtown Homer with the lowest densities and most active agricultural use in the City, including some undeveloped land, active farms and some remaining large-lot residences. This is where the transition occurs between rural Banks County and iconic, historic Homer, and, because of the undeveloped land, it is also where the bulk of future development is likely to occur. Management of this development will impact the community's character and overall health as a residential and commercial destination. This area also represents the best options for new greenspace or the introduction of any new large-scale industrial activity, should the City pursue that development.

The vision for this district is to retain the existing rural character until the viability for utilities alters the development potential. Subdivisions would be permitted under the notion of having larger lot sizes than would be allowed in the Traditional Neighborhood district. Conservation design would be preferred so as to screen the subdivision from neighboring properties.

Non residential or agricultural uses would be permitted under certain conditions, largely based on utilities and infrastructure demands.

Land Uses

Residential  
Agricultural  
Conservation  
Churches  
Neighborhood Commercial  
Parks

Quality Community Objectives

*Sense of Place*  
*Regional Identity*  
*Heritage Preservation*  
*Open Space preservation*  
*Environmental Protection*  
*Appropriate Businesses*  
*Housing Choices*

Implementation Strategies

Restrict capital improvements in this area  
  
Amend development policies to allow/  
encourage conservation design

*Environmentally Sensitive Areas*

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These are the areas identified within the Community Assessment as environmentally sensitive, including wetlands, flood plains and water supply watersheds. These areas require special protection from development types that may adversely impact the resource and the overall ecology of the region.

Land Uses

NA - This is an overlay that provides indication of where special development criteria will apply.

Quality Community Objectives

*Open Space preservation  
Environmental Protection*

Implementation Strategies

Maintain Environmental Protection criteria

Acquire updated floodplain and soil information from respective authorities.

Update Environmental element of Comprehensive Plan. Ensure updated information is accessible to Planning Commission and City Council



Map: Future Development Scenario

## **IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

While the Future Development Map illustrates the physical conditions expressed within the Vision, the Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision and for addressing each of the Community Issues and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals.

### **Policies**

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may compliment single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

- ✓ Support marketing of regional tourism and amenities within Homer.
- ✓ Continue to support and participate in Chamber and Development Authorities.
- ✓ For each partner organization, designate a Council member to serve as liaison.
- ✓ Maintain communications with GMRDC and State community development offices.

### **Long-Term Activities and Ongoing Programs**

In addition to establishing policy, communities may also establish long-term or ongoing programs and activities that support identified objectives. These measures may compliment policies or may simply be action items that must be employed more than once. These are recognized here so as to distinguish their need and conditions apart from the single-action items and to identify any required special terms or context.

- ✓ Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services.
- ✓ Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities.
- ✓ Implement Water and Sewer System Improvement Plan (Once developed).

**Short-Term Work Program**

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the Short-Term Work Program (STWP). This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.

(See attached spreadsheet)

**Report of Accomplishments**

This is the review of the STWP from the previous five years. As a new STWP is produced every five years, the items within the previous STWP must be identified for their status as either complete, in progress, postponed or cancelled. Those items that have been postponed or are in progress must be shown in the next STWP where appropriate, while those items that have been postponed or cancelled must also include a reason for their status.

(See attached spreadsheet)

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF  
HOMER, GEORGIA  
ADOPTING THE CITY OF HOMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN,  
2008-2030**

**WHEREAS:** The State of Georgia requires its local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan for the purposes of coordinating future development policies and the investment of public services and facilities; and

**WHEREAS:** The City Council, as the governing authority of the City of Homer, Georgia, has participated in developing an update to the City of Homer Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS:** The City of Homer Comprehensive Plan, 2008 - 2030 was prepared in accordance with the Rules and Procedures of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

**WHEREAS:** The elements for the City of Homer Comprehensive Plan, 2008 - 2030 - The Community Assessment, the Community Participation program and the Community Agenda - have all been reviewed and approved by the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs;

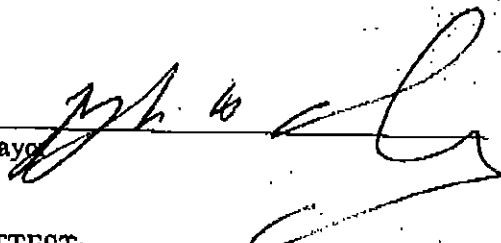
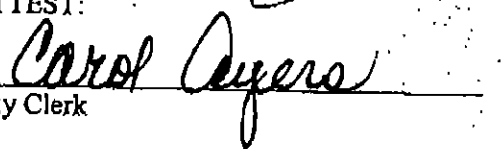
Now, therefore, **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the City Council that the City of Homer Comprehensive Plan, 2008 - 2030 is adopted and it becomes the official plan for the City of Homer.

Adopted by the City Council this 18 day of Nov, 2008.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk

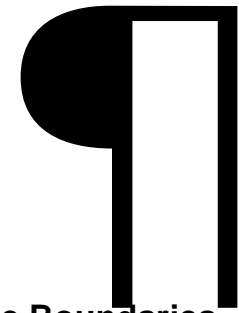
  


<b>Year</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
2009	Consider creation of HPC	\$3,000	DNR, City	City
2009	Report confirming utility partnerships	NA	NA	City
2009	Develop/ Adopt design regulations for historic district	\$5,000	DNR, City	City, GMRDC
2009	Consideration of new land use management policies	\$5,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2009	Develop inventory of viable infill opportunities	\$2,000	City	City, GMRDC
2009	Update Service Delivery Agreement	\$8,000	City	City
2009	Develop Water and Sewer Improvement Plan for Homer	\$15,000	City	City, GMRDC
2009	Connect to Banks County Water on Thompson Street	\$30,000	SPLOST	Water Dept.
2009	Apply for Better Hometown Program	\$6,000	General Fund	Administration; GMRDC
2010	Study re: adoption of traditional neighborhood design standards	\$5,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2010	Study re: conservation design regulations	\$3,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2010	Study re: design regulations for non-historic areas	\$5,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2010	Develop Property Redevelopment Guide	\$3,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2010	Planning session to prepare for new SPLOST	NA	NA	City, GMRDC
2010	Report concerning DOT plans for region	NA	NA	City, DOT
2010	Develop Homer Business and Marketing Strategy	\$5,000	DED, City	City/ Dev. Authority
2011	Conduct Housing Market study	\$5,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2011	Update floodplain and soil information	\$5,000	NRCS, DNR	City
2011	Develop Industrial Capacity Report for Homer	\$2,000	DED, City	City, GMRDC
2011	Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan	\$3,000	City	City
2011	Review/ Amend standards for road construction and signage	\$2,000	DOT, City	City
2012	Update Natural Resources, Transportation elements of Comp. Plan	\$1,000	DCA, City	City, GMRDC
2012	Explore options for financing of greenspace acquisition	NA	NA	City, GMRDC
2013	Report on updated long-term facility demands for the City	NA	NA	City
2013	Review Rural Transit Plan; Consider options for van service	NA	NA	City, GMRDC
2013	Develop Parks and Recreation Plan w/ Banks County	\$5,000	City	City, County






**Acronyms**

- 
- DED = Georgia Department of Economic Development
  - DCA = Georgia Department of Community Affairs
  - GMRDC = Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center
  - DOT = Georgia Department of Transportation
  - DNR = Georgia Department of Natural Resources
  - NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Services

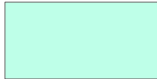
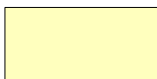

# Aquatic Resources Maysville/Homer, GA

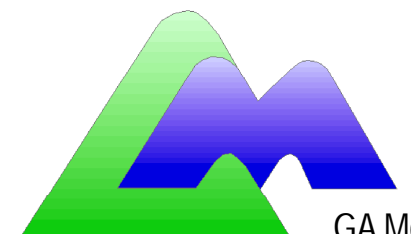
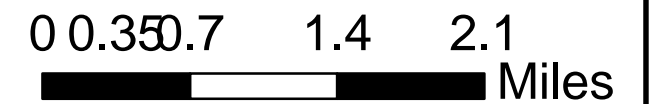


## Flood Zone Boundaries

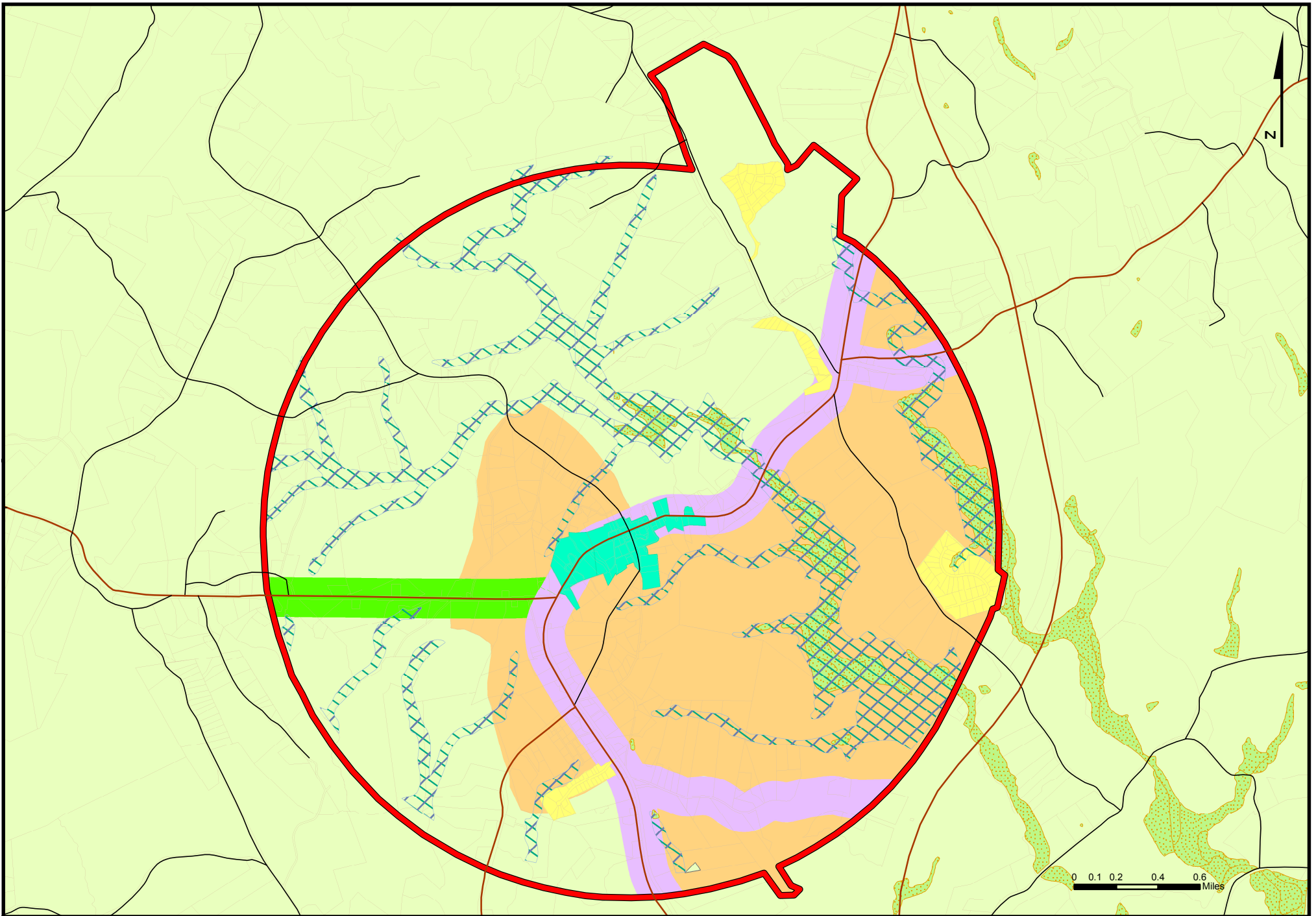
-  100 Year Flood Zone
-  500 Year Flood Zone
-  Groundwater Recharge Area
-  Wetlands
-  Streams

## Water Supply Watersheds

-  City of Athens/Clarke County
-  City of Commerce
-  City Limit Boundary












GA Mountains RDC  
JGD, February 2008

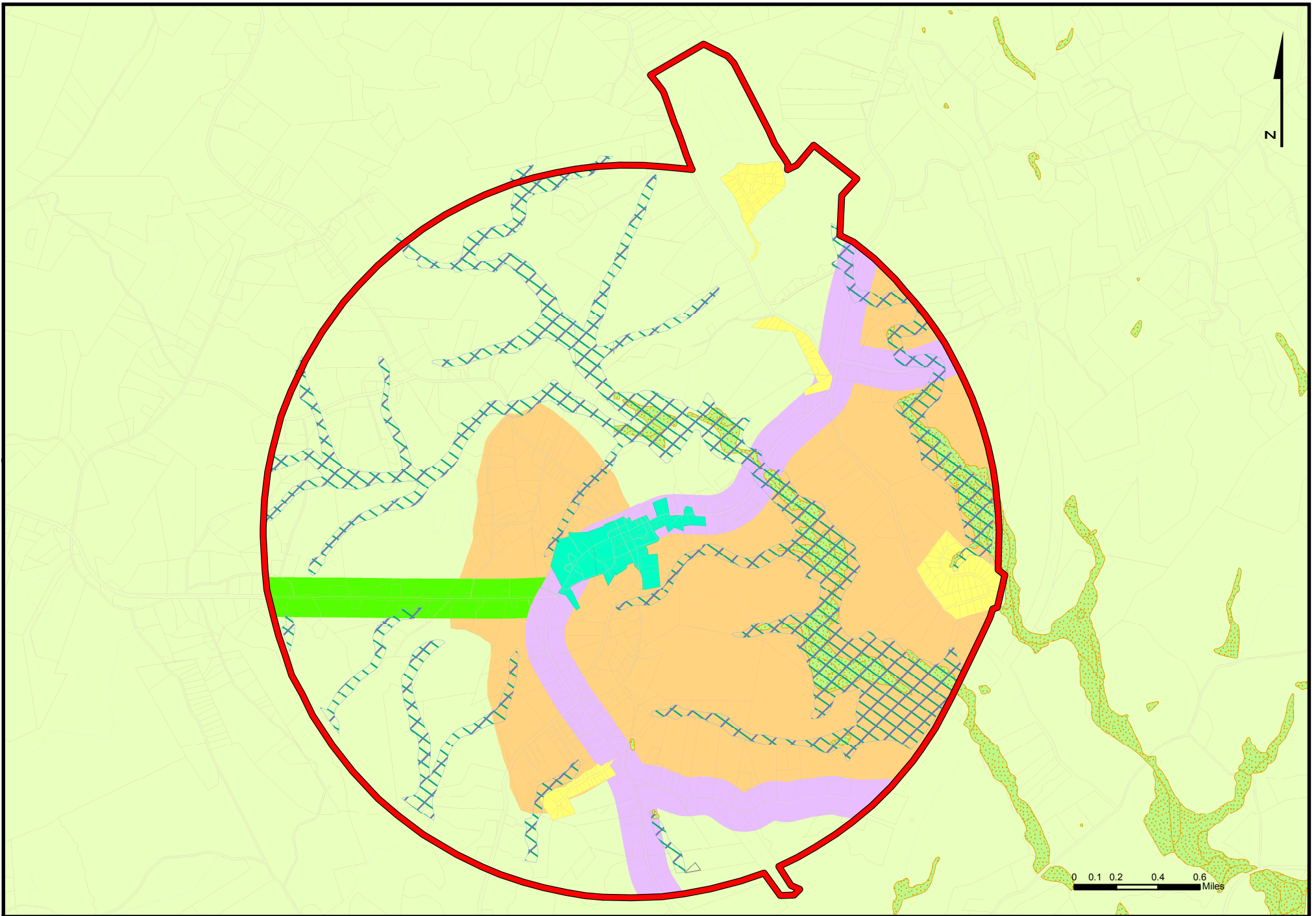


# Future Development Homer, GA



GA Mountains RDC  
JGD, Rev. Sept. 2008










- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  Arterial Corridors        |  Historic District/Downtown |  100 Year Flood Zone             |
|  State Route 51S Corridor  |  Rural/Agricultural         |  Environmentally Sensitive Areas |
|  Conventional Subdivisions |  Traditional Neighborhood   |  City Limit Boundary             |



# Character Areas Homer, GA



GA Mountains RDC  
JGD, Rev. August 2008

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  Historic District/Downtown |  Conventional Subdivisions |  100 Year Flood Zone             |
|  Arterial Corridors         |  Traditional Neighborhood  |  Environmentally Sensitive Areas |
|  Rural/Agricultural         |  State Route 51S Corridor  |  City Limit Boundary             |