

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 2009

PALMETTO

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Prepared for The City of Palmetto
By Urban Collage, Inc.
in association with
Noell Consulting Group and Keck & Wood



CITY OF PALMETTO

John O. Miller, *Mayor*
Lorraine Allen, *Mayor Pro Tem*
Natalie McFadden, *Council Member*
Laura Mullis, *Council Member*
Gregory Rusch, *Council Member*
Leon Sumlin, *Council Member*
Mike Basaric, *Council Member*
Terry Todd, *City Administrator*
Cindy Hanson, *City Clerk*
Butch Gaddy, *Public Works Director*
Henry Argo, *Fire Chief*
Luther Graham, *Police Chief*

PLANNING TEAM

URBAN COLLAGE, INC.
Bob Begle, *Principal*
John Skach, *Senior Associate*
Matt Cherry, *Associate*
Niti Gajjar, *Planner*

NOELL CONSULTING GROUP
Todd Noell, *Principal*

KECK & WOOD, INC.
Karl Brantner, *Associate Vice President*

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1.1 : CONTEXT

Palmetto has seen a good deal of change over the last decade. Like other smaller Metro Atlanta cities, the Historic Downtown area has continued to struggle with disinvestment while recent strip commercial developments have sprung up along the city's major corridors. New "starter home" neighborhoods have quickly taken shape throughout the area. Several large pieces of land were also recently cleared in anticipation of new development that never happened, leaving sizeable gaps in the densely-vegetated countryside. These challenges aside, the city has many positive things going for it. Recent developments such as Serenbe (just outside of the city limits) have begun to bring this area of Metro Atlanta into the forefront of desirable places to live. Recreational bicyclists are drawn to the area's pastoral landscapes and country roads. The Downtown includes a significant amount of historic housing stock. The city was recently awarded a Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grant for its Historic Train Depot, which is now subsequently undergoing a renovation. A recent influx of younger residents and a significant change in city leadership have recently given the city a means to institute new policies that are conducive to smart growth. The City also just recently completed and adopted a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Plan for the downtown area that recommends major public space investments and transportation enhancements while conceptualizing future housing and mixed-use development in and around Downtown.



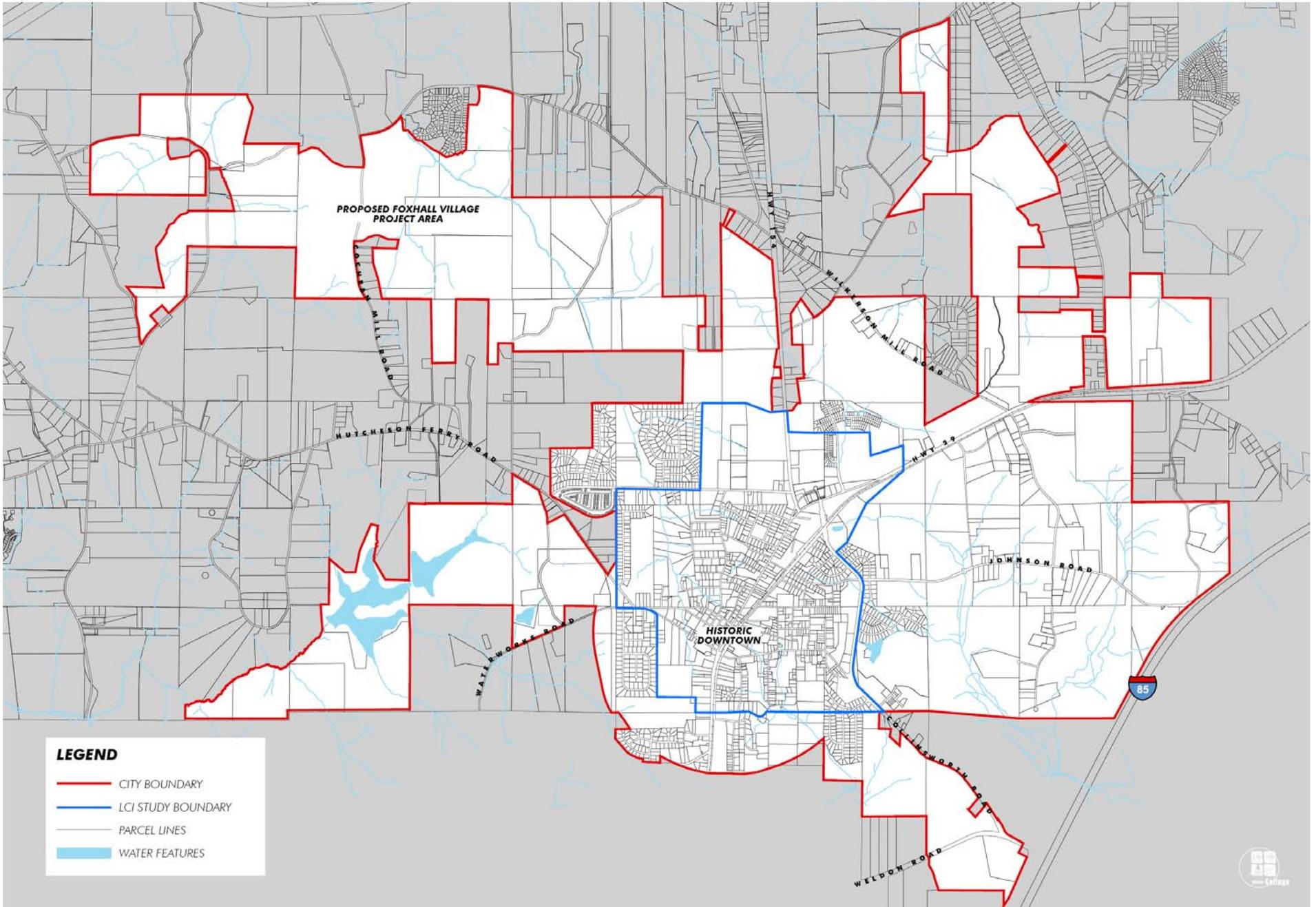
2009 is an opportunistic time for the City of Palmetto, even in the context of a national economic crisis. In some respects, the stagnant market presents an opportunity for local leaders to focus on a long-term economic plan without the often burdensome influence of short-term development pressures. Although a handful of new developments over the last several years have had the potential to deteriorate the city's overall quality of life, there are a wealth of opportunities to be found across the significantly undeveloped land area within the city limits of Palmetto. Using the aforementioned LCI Study as a jumping-off point, this Comprehensive Plan update provides an opportunity to create a blueprint for an economically and environmentally sustainable future for the entire City of Palmetto.

1.2 : 2005 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In October of 2005, The City of Palmetto adopted their most recently-completed comprehensive plan. The vision statement of the effort was "to embrace future development and growth through strategic planning initiatives and smart decision-making processes, while maintaining its small-town friendliness and Southern hospitable character." The overall focuses of the plan were to emphasize redevelopment of the historic downtown as a center of neighborhood commerce, endeavor to functionally and aesthetically improve the city's main thoroughfares,



Figure 1A : Existing Context Map



provide better/more local community facilities and incorporate more “life cycle” housing that would accommodate a range of family types and ages. Some of the specific short-term recommendations of the plan were:

- *Development of economic recruitment strategies for manufacturing and distribution-related jobs;*
- *Preparation of an annexation study;*
- *Coordination of economic development activities with development authorities, chambers, state agencies, utility companies and private entities;*
- *Pursue/participate in affordable housing initiatives;*
- *Enhance zoning controls/code enforcement;*
- *Develop/enhance stormwater management regulations;*
- *Conduct a survey of historic/cultural resources and prepare associated preservation plan;*
- *Encourage provisions for/acquisition of green space;*
- *Construct a new “3-bay” fire station and a multi-use gymnasium;*
- *Work with Fulton County to locate a new library and upgrade/expand the Elementary School;*
- *Improve existing recreational facilities and plan for new ones;*
- *Revise ordinances and regulations to include Mixed-Use development;*
- *Develop a “central core” (downtown) district that is different from other commercial development;*
- *Develop and implement an annual citywide Capital Improvements Program;*
- *Complete a sidewalk inventory to determine conditions and prioritize improvements;*
- *Submit TE and LCI applications for downtown area;*
- *Request GDOT evaluation of bypass route around Palmetto*
- *Work to repair railroad underpasses;*
- *Upgrade citywide street design standards.*

It should be noted that the process undertaken as part of the 2005 plan was organized according to the older Comprehensive Plan requirements per the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Given that these requirements were changed in May of 2005, this Comprehensive Plan Update is organized per these new standards.



1.3 : 2008 DOWNTOWN LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE (LCI) STUDY

Working with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), The City of Palmetto, the citizens of Palmetto and the consultant Planning Team of Urban Collage, Grice & Associates and Market+Main, an LCI study for the City's Downtown area was conducted throughout 2008 and adopted by City Council in February 2009. The plan outlines strategies for adding new historically-compatible mixed-use development alongside the downtown's old retail storefronts and conceptualizes a long-term strategy for incorporation of a significant amount of residential uses to sustain such future commercial establishments. The plan identifies areas for new open space throughout the study area, including a new park directly across from the historic retail storefronts on Main Street.

Transportation and circulation patterns were also extensively analyzed and addressed as part of the LCI Study. A recommended framework of bike lanes, trails and pedestrian amenities are included, connecting future development to parks and civic uses. The significant amount of local recreational bicycle activity would be capitalized upon by folding local routes into regional multi-use path plans. The plan addresses connectivity issues by including street-specific recommendations for potential streetscape improvements, concepts for reconfiguring existing streets, the addition of new streets, and strategies for improving connections between either side of the city's historic railroad corridor.

In accordance with ARC guidelines, the plan outlines specific transportation, circulation and development-related projects to be pursued in both short-term and long-term time frames. Implementation recommendations are market-based, outlined in terms of priority and recommended to be phased over time. Some of the specific short-term projects include:

- *A phase one streetscape on Main Street within the immediate Historic Downtown;*
- *A phase two streetscape on Main Street connecting Downtown to new commercial entities to the north;*
- *A bicycle facility on Cobb Street, including connections to nearby routes and upgrades to (3) RR underpasses;*
- *A supplemental study to improve east-west automobile, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity via Church and Toombs Streets;*
- *A supplemental study that investigates the feasibility of an alternate truck bypass route to Highway 29/Main Street.*



2.1 : SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1a : Population

The population of the City of Palmetto is best defined as a diverse, working class community that experienced moderate growth over the past 20 years, with more significant growth since 2000, rising in tandem with South Fulton County. Prior to the last five to seven years, South Fulton County represented an area that was very central to the Atlanta area, yet was continuously overlooked by most. The area’s proximity to Atlanta’s major job cores, including Downtown, Midtown, the Airport and Fulton Industrial, combined with its relatively low cost of land and abundant supply of developable property, made it a natural growth destination as commute times and housing costs rose in other areas of metro Atlanta.

This growth is highly evident in the chart to the right, with Palmetto’s estimated rate of growth increasing to more than 4.3% annually thus far this decade, greater than that of Southwest Metro Atlanta (parts of South Fulton, all of Coweta and Fayette Counties) and the metro area overall, yet still lagging South Fulton overall, which has seen more significant growth in areas to the north of Palmetto. Long-term, Palmetto’s relative close-in location, proximity to major job centers, and location in the growing I-85 South corridor will result in ongoing population growth - exceeding that of metro Atlanta - expected to average approximately 3.4% annually over the coming two decades.

2.1b : Households

Palmetto averages roughly 2.74 persons per household today, slightly higher than the greater Atlanta CBSA overall. This number is expected to decrease slowly in the coming years as a result of aging in the nation and decreasing number of children estimated per household. Given this data, it comes as no surprise that families with children comprise the greatest share of households. Nearly 40% of the households in Palmetto have children present under the age of 18; a figure in line or slightly higher than those of the larger comparison areas.

In 2009, an estimated 18.4% of Palmetto households were single-parent families with children - a rate much higher than that of surrounding South Fulton County and nearly double that of SW Metro Atlanta and the Atlanta CBSA overall. Furthermore, roughly 40% of Palmetto households are married couples, well below that of South Fulton, SW Metro Atlanta and the CBSA. Over time, the City should pursue opportunities to assist these single-parent households via after-school programs, sporting leagues, day cares, YMCAs and/or other public/non-profit activity centers.

Figure 2A : Population Growth Rates

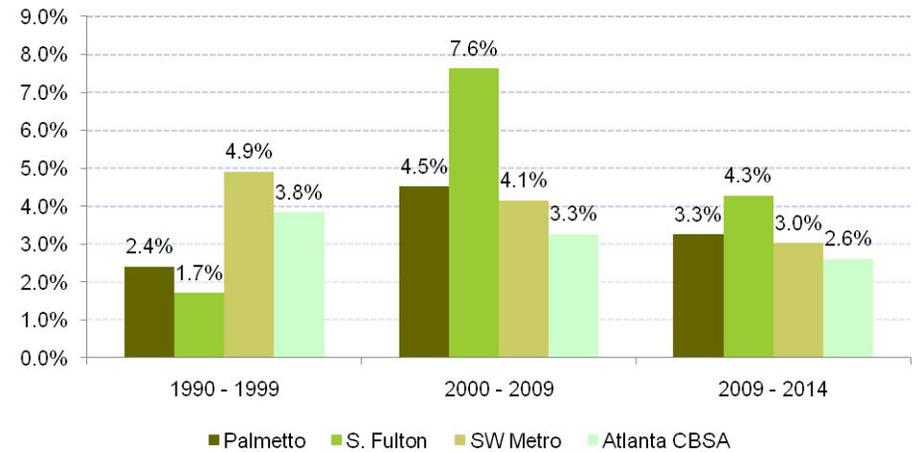


Figure 2B : Historic and Projected Population Growth

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
City of Palmetto	2,086	2,741	3,400	4,997	5,977	7,138	8,535	9,693
South Fulton	N/A	30,203	35,378	64,224	80,562	98,419	119,922	136,453
SW Metro Area	N/A	142,191	212,080	293,613	334,520	373,828	421,158	457,548
Atlanta CBSA	2,326,551	3,069,411	4,247,981	5,665,689	6,445,692	7,169,127	8,042,670	8,777,344

Figure 2C : Historic and Projected Household Growth

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
City of Palmetto	702	987	1,223	1,827	2,198	2,639	3,170	3,615
South Fulton	N/A	11,166	13,165	23,787	29,838	36,724	44,915	51,106
SW Metro Area	N/A	49,673	74,852	104,681	121,644	135,937	153,148	167,600
Atlanta CBSA	N/A	1,140,838	1,554,154	2,082,974	2,387,293	2,675,047	3,000,996	3,262,953

It is also worth noting that the majority of households in Palmetto are those without children. Childless singles, couples, and other childless households (multi-generational, roommates, etc) comprise nearly 60% of all Palmetto households. This is significant as these households tend to be much more accepting of higher-intensity products such as condominiums, apartments, townhouses, and small-lot single-family homes. Such housing products may represent opportunities in the intown areas of Palmetto; those within walking distance of downtown, and can help drive support for retail and office uses in the downtown area.

Among the most notable findings when examining population by age is the lack of senior households in Palmetto, with only about 8.6% of households being above 65 and 18% being above 55; a figure much lower than both South Fulton and SW Metro Atlanta. Housing affordability may be related to this as the low home prices found in the area are more attractive to younger households with modest income; households that haven't had the opportunity to accumulate wealth via home equity over time.

2.1c : Race and Ethnicity

The City of Palmetto is quite diverse relative to the larger comparison areas of South Fulton County, SW Metro Atlanta, and the Atlanta CBSA. Whites and African-Americans comprise nearly equal segments of the population, while American Indians and Asians constitute very small to no portions of the Palmetto population. Those identifying themselves as either multiple races or "other" races comprise 12% of Palmetto's population in 2009, double the rate seen at the larger Atlanta CBSA.

Population estimates by Claritas indicate that growth between Whites and African-Americans has increased at generally an equal pace since 2000. Given trends from the previous decade, it is likely that much of the White growth is related to the huge population growth of Hispanics in Palmetto, as Hispanic is not a race but an ethnicity. Statistics show that Palmetto had 49 Hispanic residents in 1990, growing to an estimated 977 Hispanics residents by 2010 and accounting for more than one-third of the household growth from 2000 to 2010. Job access and affordable housing are likely the key motivators for these Hispanic residents choosing Palmetto.

Hispanic growth will continue to be strong in the City of Palmetto with the estimated Hispanic population increasing by more than 2,200 people by 2030, or 23% of the city's population. Identifying ways to integrate these residents into Palmetto's civic, retail, and for-sale housing markets will be important over time.

Figure 2D : Households by Household Type

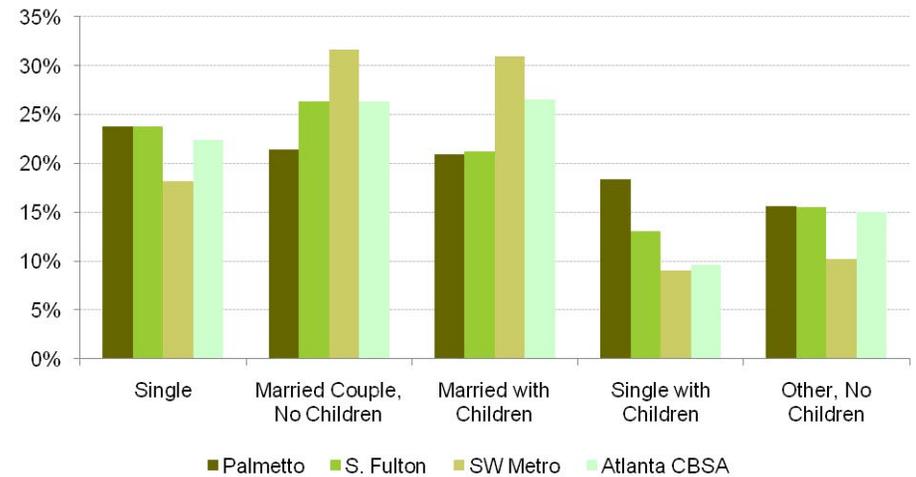
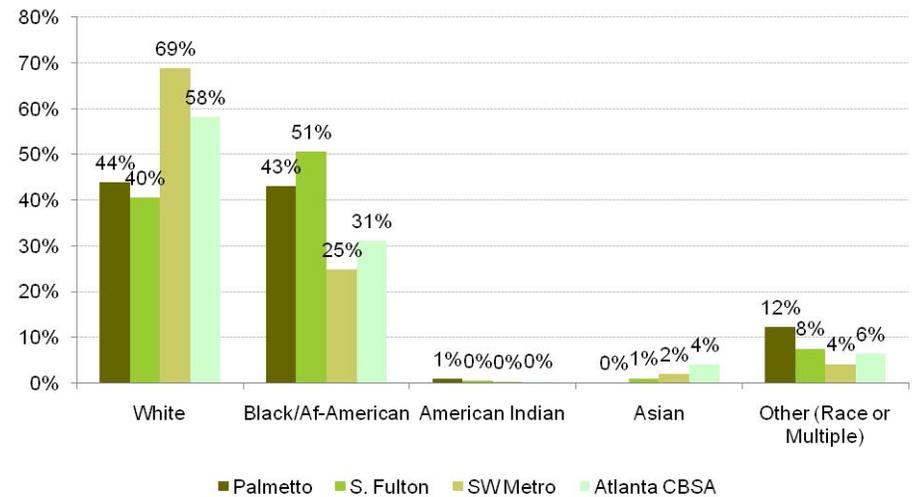


Figure 2E : Comparisons of Population by Race



2.1d : Education and Income

Analysis shows that one-third of the Palmetto’s residents do not have high school diplomas and an additional 54% have a high school or GED degree, but no higher education degree. Only 10% of the city’s residents have some kind of higher education degree compared to more than a third of all Atlanta metro residents and 22% of South Fulton residents.

Given these statistics, it is not surprising that their incomes lag those of South Fulton, SW Metro Atlanta, and the Atlanta MSA overall. Based on estimates from Claritas, the current median household income in Palmetto is just above \$38,500, fully a third below the median income for the entire metro Atlanta area and 20% lower than the \$47,800 median income for South Fulton County. While Palmetto continues to lag these comparison areas, it is worth noting that it has kept pace with South Fulton during the 1990s and, based on most recent estimates, it appears to have stronger overall income growth than the comparison areas in thus far in the current decade. In all areas, income growth is expected to be slow in the coming five year period as the economy slowly rebounds from the current recession.

Today (2009) nearly one-third of households in Palmetto have incomes below \$25,000 a year and nearly half of Palmetto households have incomes below \$35,000. The high share of households in this lowest income band (under \$25,000) is important to note as even the majority of residential resales in the area are out of the reach of these households; meaning most will be renters of existing homes or apartments. Having a strategy for providing below-market housing needs to be a consideration.

Of considerable note is the lack of households earning greater than \$100,000, with only 6% of all Palmetto households estimated to have these high incomes. That level pales in comparison to the SW Metro Area and Atlanta CBSA, which have nearly four times the proportion of households in this income band, and still less than half that of South Fulton overall. The lack of these higher-income households—executive households—is indicative of the lack of office demand in the area as these higher-end households drive office location decisions.

These moderate incomes are directly related to the price of housing in Palmetto, as the area has emerged as a value proposition relative to Coweta, Fayette, and other parts of South Fulton. Looking ahead, value creation will need to be a priority to attract households with more significant incomes and to create home equity among owners already in the area. Value creation should occur in a number of ways including new and improved schools, parks, placemaking downtown, and enhancing links/access to trail/path systems.

More detailed figures and supplemental information can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 2F : Educational Attainment

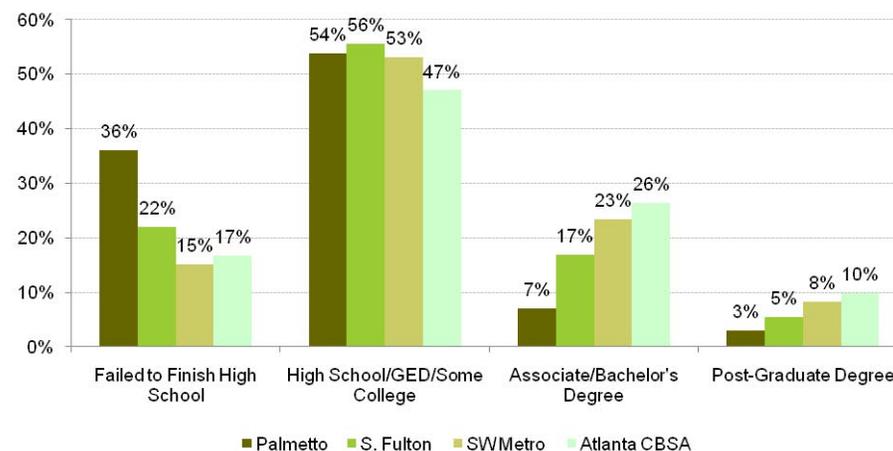


Figure 2G : Estimated Median Household Income

	City of Palmetto	South Fulton	SW Metro Atlanta	Atlanta CBSA
1990	\$26,786	\$34,582	\$39,984	\$36,051
2000	\$32,995	\$42,475	\$58,016	\$52,195
2009	\$38,559	\$47,852	\$63,754	\$58,964
Av. Annual Change, 1990-2000	2.3%	2.3%	4.5%	4.5%
Av. Annual Change, 2000-2009	1.7%	1.3%	1.0%	1.3%

2.1e : Commuters

As shown on the map to the right, the large majority of Palmetto residents work in the I-85 south corridor, emanating from Downtown Atlanta to the airport and southward to Coweta and Fayette Counties. As traffic conditions in metro Atlanta continue to deteriorate, and lifestyle has a greater impact on residential decision-making processes, growing numbers of Atlanta-area residents will opt to reside in areas that are convenient to their workplaces. For those working in these areas—Downtown, the airport, the I-85 south corridor, Fulton Industrial, and even Cumberland-Galleria—Palmetto could represent an option in which they can live. Commute times and distances for Palmetto residents is generally both a function of wage and job type.

When geographically examining where Palmetto residents work, it’s not surprising that their commutes are generally shorter than those of many in metro Atlanta. In 2000, slightly more than 50% of Palmetto residents had commute times under 30 minutes, down from 60% in 1990; a trend closely mirroring the Atlanta metro area figures. This rate of change is a concern, particularly given growing transportation costs in the United States, often a hidden cost not factored into the residential purchase/rent decision-making process.

While many Palmetto residents work in the I-85 corridor and in SW Metro Atlanta, as of 2000 only about 10% actually work in Palmetto; down from 15% in 1990. The remaining 90% work in Atlanta, College Park, and largely in other places in the south side of the metro area.

Given the more moderate incomes in the area and Palmetto’s location within Fulton County, mass transit is relatively accessible and is utilized by Palmetto residents at a higher rate than the Atlanta metro area overall. Perhaps more significant is the high rate of carpooling that occurs on the part of city residents (8-9% higher than metro area) Factors contributing to this may include the more moderating paying nature of the jobs these residents hold (including construction) as well as the relatively tight geography in which these residents work.

Palmetto residents are somewhat less likely to work from home relative to the greater Atlanta metro area. This is not surprising given the more moderate incomes in the area and the types of jobs they work in, which are dominated by construction, transportation, warehousing and services.

Figure 2H : Map of Where Palmetto Residents Work

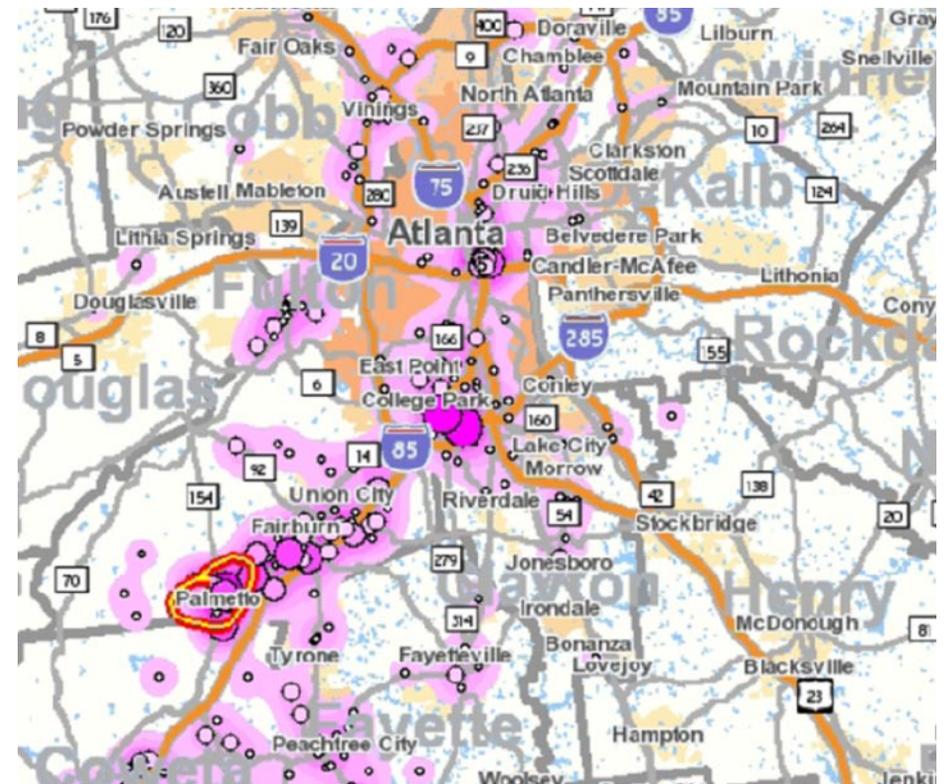


Figure 2I : Resident Commute Times

	CITY OF PALMETTO		ATLANTA CBSA	
	1990	2000	2009	2009
Under 30 minutes	60.8%	51.7%	55.9%	50.7%
30 to 45 minutes	24.0%	27.4%	25.6%	25.1%
45 to 60 minutes	8.9%	10.8%	10.7%	12.4%
More than 60 minutes	5.2%	10.1%	6.1%	11.8%

2.1f: Employment

Residents in the city of Palmetto are largely employed in moderate-paying occupations, with more than 80% being employed Sales/Office Support, Service (largely personal), Construction, and Transportation/Production (with a growing emphasis on transportation/warehousing) occupations. This latter occupation sector accounts for one in four jobs in Palmetto and represents a fast growing sector in the I-85 South corridor overall. Conversely, only 18% of residents are employed in higher-level Management, Business, Financial and Professional Services occupations. By comparison, more than 37% of the jobs in metro Atlanta are in these higher-paying sectors.

While unemployment has been historically low in Palmetto, the recent recession appears to be having a significant impact on the city’s residents. Two of the harder hit occupation sectors in this current recession are Construction and Production/Transportation. Nationally, nearly 20% of those working in construction and 14% of those employed in Production/Transportation are unemployed as of April 2009. Furthermore, it appears the local Palmetto unemployment rate has now exceeded 11%; above the metro Atlanta unemployment rate of 9.1%. This higher rate of unemployment will likely further stress the city’s housing market, which is already experiencing relatively high vacancy rates and abundant homes currently for-sale in the market.

From 1990 until around 2005, employment growth in the Palmetto market had been largely flat, with roughly 1,350 total jobs being found in the city. Data also indicates a significant uptick in job growth just prior to the recent recession, followed by job losses in 2008 (and likely continuing through 2009), but with anticipated stronger positive job growth beginning again from 2010 to 2015.

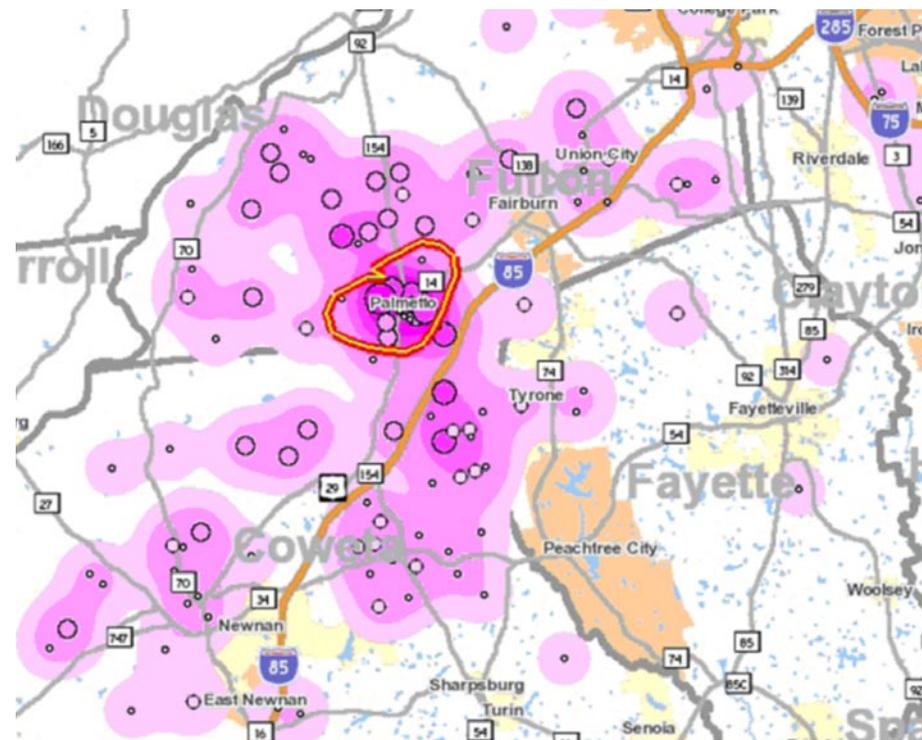
Over the next two decades, the greatest opportunities for growth in Palmetto will be for moderately-paying jobs in the Transportation/Warehousing, Accommodations, Education/Health Care, and Retail Trade categories. A significant share of this growth can be expected to occur around the Palmetto interchange on I-85, particularly the Transportation/Warehousing, Accommodations, and Retail, all of which depend on high visibility and access.

Similar to the map showing where those living in Palmetto work, we can also see where those working in Palmetto live (map to right). As the dark pink areas indicate, the majority of Palmetto workers live fairly close by in South Fulton, Coweta, or northern Fayette County. The local nature of these employees is likely due to the moderate distance Palmetto’s jobs are from the interstate. Over time, as the city reaches out to the interstate and development there grows, a greater share of workers are likely to come from farther afield.

Figure 2J: Occupational Mix of Palmetto Residents

CITY OF PALMETTO				ATLANTA CBSA
	1990	2000	2009	2009
Management, Business and Financial Occupations	6.0%	5.8%	6.3%	17.1%
Professional Occupations	2.6%	11.3%	11.8%	19.9%
Service Occupations	20.3%	16.8%	18.3%	11.9%
Sales/Office Occupations	28.8%	25.0%	25.3%	28.6%
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	1.0%	0%	0%	0.2%
Construction/Extraction	16.0%	15.7%	14.7%	10.3%
Production/Transportation	25.3%	25.4%	23.6%	12.0%

Figure 2K: Map of Where Palmetto Workers Live



2.1g: Housing

After a long period of stagnation, Palmetto's housing market demonstrated significant upward momentum in the early 2000s. While building permits peaked in the rest of the Atlanta market in 2005, permits in Palmetto actually peaked earlier, in 2003 (152 single-family permits) and 2004 (92 SFD, 126 attached), and have slowly moderated over time. However, permits in 2009 have declined to nearly zero, a trend likely to continue throughout 2009 and slowly improve in 2010, returning to a more stable situation by 2012.

Multifamily permits have been limited in Palmetto, with only 128 permits being issued in the last decade - a trend also common to Fairburn and Union City. Two key issues impact the limited construction of multifamily in South Fulton:

1. Weak apartment fundamentals nationally, regionally, and in the area due to the low costs of owning (falsely so) borne from exotic mortgage instruments
2. Moderate home prices overall in the Palmetto area, which temper the interest in attached for-sale products like townhouses and condominiums.

Given the aforementioned trends, single-family detached product still accounts for the overwhelming housing type in Palmetto (74% of all housing in the city). New home sales in the Palmetto zip code peaked in 2006, (consistent with the Atlanta market) and have decreased in volume in the past several years; dropping from 123 sales in 2006 to just 32 sales in 2008. Foreclosures have increased significantly in the past couple of years, with rates similar to Fulton County, Georgia and the US overall. However, these foreclosure rates pale in comparison to the hardest hit areas of Atlanta and, while a short-term issue, are unlikely to poise a long-term threat to Palmetto. Home price appreciation will likely be flat in the coming years; a factor which will impact budgeting processes in the City in years to come. Palmetto will therefore be more reliant on new residents to support increasing home prices in the coming decade and beyond than it has historically.

Other remnants of the ongoing housing downturn are the partially-completed subdivisions which surround Palmetto, including Princeton Village, Huntington Forest, and Carlton Estates. These and other subdivisions, which are either bank-owned, in foreclosure, or struggling to remain viable, represent a challenge in that they typically offer few (if any) amenities and generally lack any notion of sustainability. These subdivisions have potential to decline in quality in the coming years; an issue which will impact Palmetto's ability to further attract households to the area and its ability to successfully attract interest in higher-density residential products. Given this, Palmetto needs to be proactive in working with area builders and banks to keep these subdivisions well-maintained and identify opportunities to create value or upside within them.

Figure 2L : Single-Family Permitting Trends from 2000-2009 (YTD)

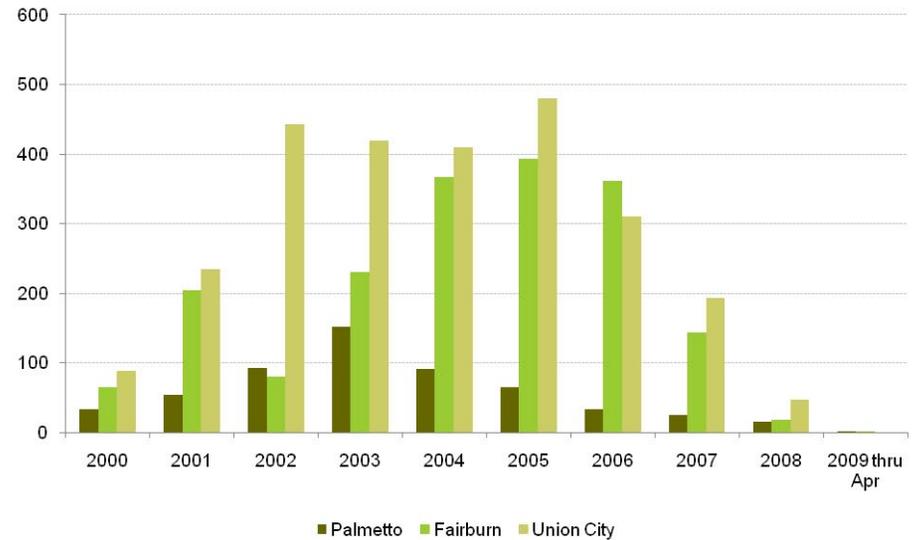
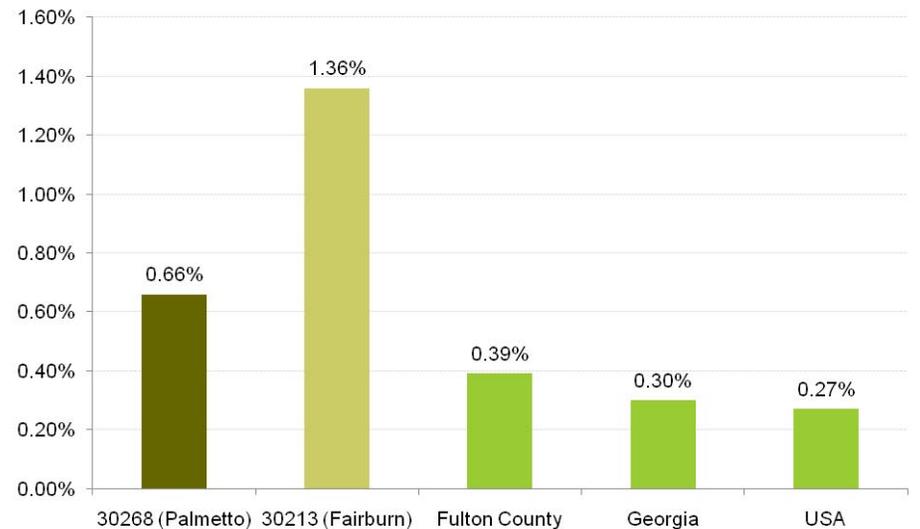


Figure 2M : Foreclosure Rates in Area



Palmetto's rental market has remained largely the same as little new rental product has been developed. Only one significant rental apartment community exists in Palmetto (Genesis Gardens), which features moderate rents and accepts market-rate and below-market vouchers. Judging by other apartment/rental areas along the I-85 south corridor, the prevalence of incentives (1 or 2 months free rent) is indicative of a weak rental apartment market that won't likely recover until 2011 or 2012. Also, the abundance of renters and vacant homes (estimated to be about 8.4% of all Palmetto homes) creates the potential to destabilize these neighborhoods and should be monitored by Palmetto in the coming months and years.

The previously mentioned demographic shifts will also fuel demand for attached products—both rental and for-sale—as well as for higher-density single-family detached products in the coming years. Lifestyle continues to play a critical role in people's lives today, including living in homes that offer lower maintenance as well as locating in interactive, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities (including Traditional Neighborhood Developments {TNDs} like Serenbe and the proposed Foxhall community) and in older established historic downtowns such as Palmetto.

Moving forward, several housing-related growth trends and opportunities to be considered include:

- Neighborhood stabilization, including both Downtown area historic neighborhoods and newer suburban neighborhoods.
- Considering that the majority of product developed in Palmetto will likely remain moderately-priced single-family homes, creating standards in newly developing neighborhoods to secure long-term value and sustainability will be important.
- Value creation will also be important to attract a broader spectrum of home prices in Palmetto; particularly for new homes priced above \$200,000. Creation of more walkable communities, providing parks and greenway systems, and enhancing school quality are all ways in which greater value can be created in the city and a greater balance of home prices achieved.
- Higher home prices will be needed to support more dense products closer to the downtown area of Palmetto. Many buyers opt for attached townhouses or condominiums for two reasons: as a lifestyle choice (low-maintenance lifestyle) and as a price-alternative to single-family homes. The abundance of lower-priced housing in the area (with stagnating prices) effectively eliminates price as a reason for purchasing attached products and significantly reduces the marketability of attached for-sale product near the downtown area.



2.2 : NATURAL, CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

2.2a : Natural Features

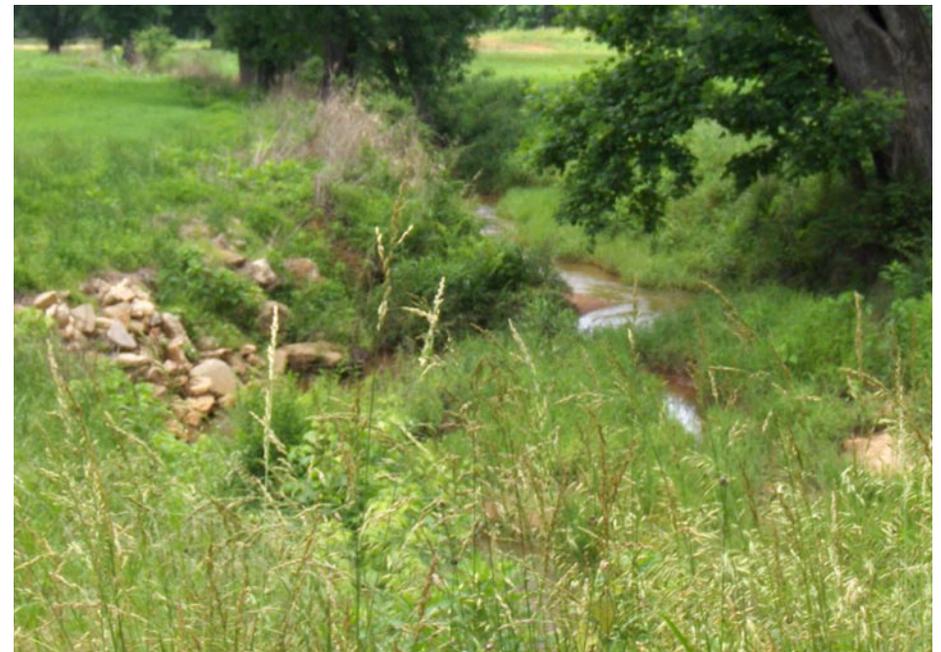
The City of Palmetto exhibits a rich diversity of natural areas and features. As is obvious from the Natural Features map (found in the Appendix), the bulk of the land within the city limits is undeveloped (areas shown in light green). The developed land (areas shown in red) is most prominent within the Downtown area, with some scattered recent neighborhoods along the western end of Carlton Road, a handful of commercial sites to the southeast along Collinsworth Road and a few larger institutional, commercial and industrial parcels to the northeast fronting Highway 29. Particularly large tracts of natural/undisturbed land exist in the recently-annexed northwestern part of the city, along Highway 154 north of Highway 29, on the east side of town between Phipps Road and Interstate 85, and to the southwest around the Palmetto Reservoir and Cedar Creek. Of the 7,600 total acres within the study area, approximately 38% (2,914 acres) of properties have been developed and 62% (4,686 acres) of properties remain natural or undeveloped.

Many significant natural/scenic elements exist within the city limits as well. Several small lakes and ponds can be found throughout the area as well as the more sizeable Palmetto Reservoir to the southwest. Cedar Creek, Cedar Branch, Bear Creek, and Little Bear Creek function as the main waterways. Additionally, Cochran Mill Road, Hutcheson Ferry Road and Wilkerson Mill Road remain significant natural country roads and scenic byways worth preserving. Several notable scenic areas can also be found where Waterworks Road meets Cedar Creek (to the southwest) and where Phillips Road meets Little Bear Creek to the north.

Overall, much of the land within Palmetto is an extension of the natural settings found throughout South Fulton County. While the city exhibits many important undisturbed lands, forests, streams, and bodies of water, many of these features remain hidden from view of inaccessible as public amenities. As the city continues to proactively plan for future growth, the preservation of open space, natural features and agricultural lands should be made a priority.

2.2b : Environmental Planning Criteria

The state's planning requirements provide localities with specific criteria that they must meet for protecting environmental resources, including water supply watersheds, wetlands, groundwater exchange areas, protected rivers and protected mountains. Although the city limits of Palmetto does not include any protected rivers or mountains, it has addressed all applicable environmental planning requirements through local ordinances, as noted in the following descriptions.



Water Supply Watersheds - Palmetto includes two water supply watersheds: the Upper Flint River Basin and the Middle Chattahoochee Basin, with the “fall line” between these at the high ground along Highway 29 and the CSX Railroad line. The City also has an adopted Water Supply Watershed District as an overlay to the city’s zoning ordinance that provides regulations for preserving such watersheds. This district includes regulations that relate to buffers, handling of hazardous materials, location of septic tanks, impervious surfaces, sanitary landfills and reservoir buffering.

Groundwater Recharge Areas- The Georgia DNR has mapped all of the recharge areas in the state which are likely to have the greatest vulnerability to pollution. Although there are (5) such areas in Fulton County, none are located within the City of Palmetto or in immediate proximity thereto.

Wetlands - Wetlands within the City of Palmetto occur generally in the areas surrounding the city’s major streams (Little Bear Creek and Cedar Creek). To date, these wetlands have not been encroached upon and continue to be preserved. The City and will continue to closely monitor and preserve these areas.

2.2c : Cultural and Historic Resources

The largest culmination of cultural and historical resources lies within its Downtown area. Although some of the Downtown’s original storefront buildings were demolished several decades ago for speculative uses, a significant portion of these buildings remain in good condition. A significant amount of historic homes ranging from the 1890s to the 1940s can also be found in neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown along streets such as Main, Church, Toombs and Cobb.

Given Palmetto’s origins as a center along the Atlanta-LaGrange Railroad in the late 1800s, perhaps one of the city’s most important resources is its historic Train Depot (located just south of Downtown storefronts on the east side of Main Street). The Depot’s ongoing renovation plans (made possible through a recent Transportation Enhancement Grant) and recently-created advisory panel envision the renovated building as a venue/meeting space with room for an interpretive/museum space.

Overall, while the city takes pride in its historic resources, there has been a lack of measures to protect this history. Many of the historic buildings are vacant and/or deteriorating. The city can harness these resources to revitalize the Downtown area and make it a destination for visitors by potentially incentivising the renovation of its historic buildings. Similar to the recently-created Depot advisory panel, the city should create a citywide preservation committee to oversee renovation efforts in order to ensure that new construction complements the area’s existing historic fabric.



2.3 : COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

2.3a : Community Facilities

The adequacy and capacity of community services and facilities are critical to maintaining a high quality of life in any community. The following sections provide a concise overview of existing community facilities, summaries of planned facilities and an evaluation of any deficiencies or considerations to be addressed as Palmetto continues to grow over the next 25 years or so. Maps of Palmetto’s Community Facilities can be found in the Appendix.

Parks

There are two small park facilities within the City of Palmetto - Wayside Park and Veterans Park. Wayside Park, a passive open space, lies along the east side of Main Street a few blocks north of the historic Downtown area and immediately south of Palmetto Community Center. Veterans Park, which includes a walking trail, gazebo and tennis courts, is located just north of the Senior Center one block west of Main Street. In addition, the thirty (30) acre Wilkerson Mill - Farris Park lies northeast of the city along Wilkerson Mill Road. Owned and operated by Fulton County, this park includes several ball fields, a track, an auxiliary building and restroom facilities.

The recent Downtown LCI Study also included recommendations for future parks and open spaces in Palmetto. First among them is a proposed linear park/gathering space along the thin strip of land between Main Street and the CSX railroad line across from the historic storefront retail spaces in Downtown. This new park would serve to add an important amenity to Downtown, serving as an attraction to help catalyze Downtown new downtown commercial tenants, bookended by the historic Train Depot to the south and the Palmetto Community Center/Future Civic Uses to the north. The LCI Plan also proposed creation of a future park/recreational space on the former Palmetto Elementary School site to the east of Downtown, just south of Fayetteville Road.

Community Centers

There two community centers within the city limits of Palmetto. The first is the Palmetto Community Center, built in the late 1940s, located just north of Wayside Park along the east side of Main Street. The iconic structure serves as a venue for various city events, public meetings and cultural performances. Built within the last few years, Fulton County also owns and operates a Senior Center, located just north of the Downtown area on Turner Avenue. The center offers a variety of activities, from crafts and quilting to exercise classes and health fairs.



Schools

The only school facility within the City of Palmetto is Palmetto Elementary School, located at 505 Carlton Road. Operated by the Fulton County School System, the facility includes Pre-K through fifth grade. The school’s maximum capacity is 625 students and 2009 enrollment was 547 students. Although their facilities are located outside the city limits, Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School are the primary higher-grade-level institutions for Palmetto students.



Police Department

The Palmetto Police Department is located at 401 Carlton Road in a multi-story structure that was renovated for use in 2002. The facility meets the needs for all normal police operations and still includes a fair amount of vacant building space for future growth. Although the city utilizes the South Fulton Regional Jail in Union City for long-term detention, the city’s police facility includes a temporary holding cell for arrestees.

The 24 total department personnel include 20 sworn officers and 4 administrative personnel. The department owns and operates 19 total vehicles. The department performs basic police functions including patrol, criminal investigation, command, administration and municipal court. Backup and emergency support are provided by local municipalities, county and state agencies.

Fire Protection and EMS

The City of Palmetto Fire Department provides fire protection and Emergency Medical First Response Services to the citizens of Palmetto. Licensed by the Ga. Department of Human Resources as an Advanced Life Support First Responder, the department is staffed with 15 firefighter/EMTs and firefighter paramedics. The department operates two pumpers from the three-bay fire station located at 501 Menefee Street. The department has automatic aid agreements with both the City of Fairburn and the City of Chattahoochee Hills for both fire and emergency medical response.

The Fire Department has an administrative staff consisting of a full-time Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and a part-time Fire Inspector/Investigator. During 2008, responsibility for Code Enforcement activities was transferred to the department. A full time Code Enforcement officer is assigned those duties. The administrative functions are housed in the Fire Department Headquarters portion of the Community Center located at 595 Main Street. To fulfill administrative and emergency response functions, 4 vehicles are assigned to this location.



Ambulance transport service is provided by the designated ambulance zone provider - Rural Metro Corporation. Under current state law, the City has no authority to designate the provider of this service. The City is also contracted with Fulton County for the provision of 911 and dispatch functions for all emergency services. Radio link to these services are via the Fulton County 800 mhz trunked radio system.

The current fire station, while centrally located, is insufficient to support further growth. Over the past thirty years, the building has undergone several renovations to support the conversion from a volunteer department to that of a career department. This facility lacks the ability to house additional personnel and apparatus of the type that will be needed to meet the fire protection needs of the City in the future. Given this situation, the City continues to plan for the construction of a replacement facility as well as the potential for additional facilities in recently annexed areas.

2.3b : Public Utilities

Water Supply and Treatment

The City of Palmetto operates its own surface water treatment plant that has a permitted capacity of 576,000 gallons per day. The facility, which was built in 1936, is located in the southwestern sector of the city along Waterworks Road. The plant was upgraded in 1958, in 1978 and again in 2008. The recent upgrades will extend the facility’s operating capability for at least another 10 years. Service currently extends within Palmetto’s city limits and within the city limits of Chattahoochee Hills.

In anticipation of projected future population increases in the area, Palmetto and neighboring South Fulton cities comprise the South Fulton Municipal Regional Water and Sewer Authority, which works to define alternative water sources, improve water infrastructure and strengthen existing intergovernmental relations. The City of Palmetto also uses water supplied by the Coweta County Water and Sewerage Authority.

Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment

The City built a new wastewater Pump Station in 2006, located off of Carlton Road near Little Bear Creek. The facility pumps wastewater to the Fulton County-owned Camp Creek Water Reclamation Facility. Given the station’s extended pumping capacity of 4 million gallons per day (GPD) and the average existing use of around 400,000 GPD, the station has plenty of built-in capacity to accommodate future growth.

Stormwater Management



The Stormwater Management Program of the City of Palmetto complies with the requirements of the State-issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. To ensure this compliance, the city annually inspects the requisite number of stormwater structures, outfalls, industrial facilities and highly visible pollutant sources. As the issuing authority for all Land Disturbance Permits within the City, each active construction site is inspected on a weekly basis to assure compliance with permit requirements. All private and public detention ponds are inspected as well.

Solid Waste

The City of Palmetto currently contracts with Waste Management of Atlanta - South (a private entity) to provide both residential solid waste and recycling services. Both residential trash and recyclables collection are provided to customers once a week. The city also continues to follow the recommendations outlined in its solid waste management plan, which was completed in 2005.

Electrical Service

The City owns and operates its own electric distribution system. Power is purchased from MEAG Power (the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia) to sell to Palmetto customers. MEAG Power owns the local power substation, located along Cobb Street just east of the Historic Downtown area.

Maps displaying locations of Community Facilities, Water Service Infrastructure, Sanitary Sewer lines and local Electric Service lines can be found in the Appendix.



2.4 : LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

2.4a : Existing Land Use

As displayed on the map on the following page, the majority of developed land within the City of Palmetto is clustered around the historic downtown area and following the Highway 29 corridor, roughly along the historic railroad line. This “transportation corridor”, (described south to north) consists of a few commercial warehousing sites to the south, the Historic Downtown area, aging strip commercial developments built in the 1950s-70s, several industrial/warehousing sites, a few single-family homes, clusters of recent strip commercial development (around intersection of Highways 29 and 154) and the larger industrial sites (airport, landfill) in the northeast corner of the city.

Although there are smaller pockets of developed lands along Johnson Road, Wilkerson Mill Road, and Collinsworth Road, the majority of the land on the periphery of the city is undeveloped or vacant. These lands make up the majority of the land use type within the study area, estimated to about 62% percent of the city.

The other dominant land use within the city is single-family consisting of about 20% of the total land area. Both sides of the previously-mentioned Highway 29/Railroad Line transportation corridor are flanked by sizeable single-family neighborhoods. A significant portion of the homes within 4-5 blocks of the downtown area are historically significant (many built between 1900-1940), especially along Toombs, Church, Menefee and Cobb Streets. Many others were built in the 1940s and 50s, such as along Locke Street and Collinsworth Road. A few newer neighborhoods built within the last 20 years are found along Phipps Road and Carlton Road.

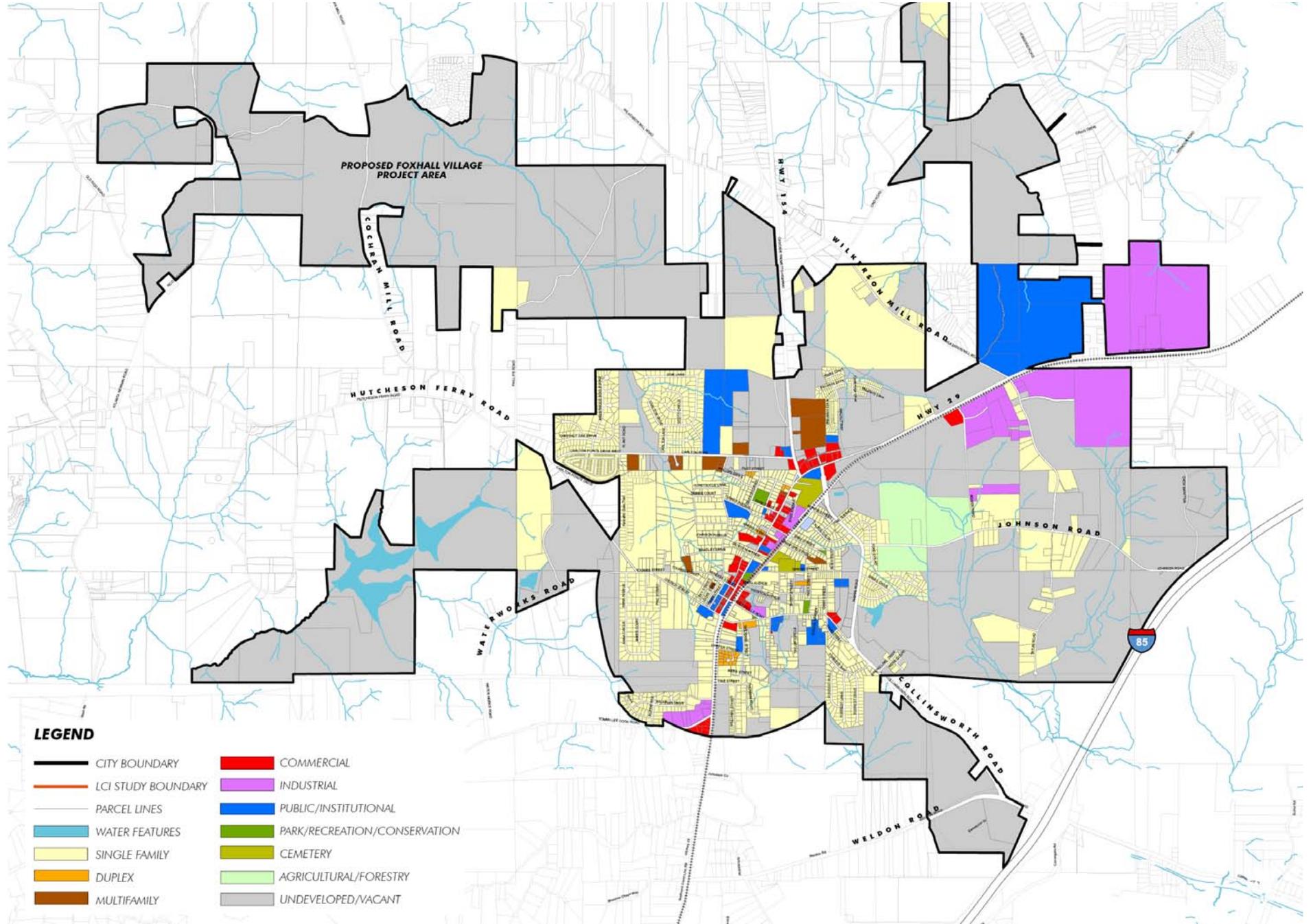
NOTE: The existing land uses within the study area were validated by the planning team through a “windshield” survey in May of 2009. Acreages and percentages included in the matrix to the right are approximate, based on limited GIS data available.



Figure 2S : Existing Land Uses in Palmetto

EXISTING LAND USE	AREA (Acres)	Percentage of Total Land
Vacant/Undeveloped	4686	62%
Single-Family Residential	1518	20%
Transportation (streets, etc)	355	5%
Light Industrial	411	5%
Institutional	281	4%
Agricultural	113	1%
Planned Unit Development	87	1%
Commercial	59	1%
Multifamily Residential	51	1%
Cemetery	20	0%
Duplex	11	0%
Open Space (parks)	6	0%
Utilities	2	0%
TOTALS	7600	100%

Figure 2T : Existing Land Use Map



2.2b : Existing Zoning

Palmetto’s existing zoning districts are somewhat conventional, dealing primarily with density, height, yards, lot dimensions and uses. The historic downtown area is zoned almost exclusively C-2 commercial, while other commercial properties further north on Main Street are a mix of C-1, C-2 and C-3 commercial. Strip commercial parcels near the Hwy 29/Hwy 154 intersection are zoned C-3. Much of the vacant/undeveloped land on the periphery of the city is zoned A (Agricultural). Larger commercial/industrial sites on the north end of Highway 29 and abutting I-85 are zoned M-1 (Light Industrial) and M-2 (Manufacturing and Heavy Industrial).

The intents of each commercial zoning category vary. The C-1 zoning district, for instance, is intended to serve mainly nearby residential neighborhoods, whereas the C-2 zoning district is intended to serve the larger community with a broad variety of sales and services. The C-3 zoning district is primarily for those commercial uses which are less attractive or less compatible with residential neighborhoods. On the residential end, most single-family properties to the west of downtown are zoned R-2, while the single-family properties east of downtown are a mix of R-2 and R-3. Generally, those homes to the west are larger lots while homes to the east are smaller lots.

Overall, the existing zoning districts in Palmetto are limited in potentially accommodating the recent LCI Plan and likely Comprehensive Plan strategies. They do not include the urban design regulations necessary to control sprawl and ensure quality growth throughout the city. Current zoning does not call for lot sizes, building dimensions, or open space requirements in line with more sustainable, denser development. Residential uses are not currently accommodated for within the immediate downtown area (only C-2), nor is Mixed-Use currently allowed at all. On the other hand, some aspects of the ordinances are too generous, allowing many uses that perhaps should not be allowed within the city (golf courses and package stores, for instance). It is recommended that many current districts be re-written as part of a subsequent zoning study.

A map of existing zoning districts can be found in the Appendix.



2.4c : Circulation

Palmetto includes a variety of transportation and mobility patterns, as shown by the Circulation Map found in the Appendix. Primary access to Interstate 85 is at Weldon/Collinsworth Roads. A series of rural highways connect the City to other major destinations and activity centers, including Highway 154 (Cascade-Palmetto Highway) to South Fulton Parkway to the north, Highway 29 (Main Street) to Coweta County to the south and Fairburn to the northeast, Hutcheson Ferry Road and Cochran Mill Road to points west and Johnson Road and Collinsworth Roads to points east of I-85. A series of local streets and minor collectors make up the Downtown Core area. The city also has a fair amount of informal/unpaved roads that provide limited access to agricultural areas, while contributing to the area’s natural, pastoral character.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations

The pedestrian and bicycle environment within the study area is challenging. The majority of vehicular routes do not have sidewalks, and when they do, they are typically not continuous. Many streets within the historic downtown core have sidewalks on at least one side, such as Main, Toombs and Church Streets. The sidewalk on Main Street continues along the West side only northward to the Cascade-Palmetto/Main intersection. There is a sidewalk for a portion of Carlton Road, although its discontinuity near the Elementary School is a particular safety concern.

In recent years, Palmetto has been a popular stop for recreational bicyclists, whose routes typically follow the low-traffic rural highways found in surrounding areas. While there are currently no designated bicycle lanes or other facilities currently within the study area, several projects were identified as part of the recent LCI study and are currently being pursued through various funding opportunities. Dedicated bicycle facilities were identified for Cobb Street, Highway 154 and Hutcheson Ferry Road, all of which would serve to connect to planned regional trail networks.

Transit

Palmetto is served by one MARTA Bus Route (Route 180). The route’s two endpoints are the intersection of Church/Main in Downtown Palmetto on the south end and the College Park MARTA Rail Station on the north end. It runs mainly along Roosevelt Highway (29), providing connections to Fairburn and Union City. In addition to MARTA service, GRTA Express Bus Route 455 serves the Union City park-and-ride lot, which is a 10-minute drive from Downtown Palmetto. GRTA Express Bus service provides service to Five Points and Civic Center MARTA Rail Stations in Downtown Atlanta. Recent LCI plans call for a short- to mid-term city collaboration with MARTA to evaluate potential modifications to Bus Route 180 as well as identification of areas for potential bus stop amenity upgrades.



Commercial Vehicles

Since Main Street is both a Federal and State Route today, it serves as a truck route by default. The prevalence of commercial trucks on Downtown Palmetto continues to be a major concern of area stakeholders and the recent LCI study recommended a long-term bypass feasibility study. The city also anticipates working with the Atlanta Regional Commission through a recently-begun regional freight study to further investigate potential commercial vehicle management options.

Railroad Crossings

The CSX line running through the study area has reports of about 31 trains per day. There are 8 total railroad crossings within the city limits, which includes at-grade crossings, underpasses and an overpass. There are three (3) railroad underpasses - at Thornton Street, at Church Street and at Fayetteville Road. These underpasses are in dire need of surface upgrades, painting and, in some cases, minor structural repair. The steep grade at some of these intersection approaches also poses visibility problems to many vehicles. The low clearances (ranging from 9'-9" to 10'-10") may also be problematic for routing larger commercial vehicles.

2.4d : Planned Transportation Projects

The ARC Envision6 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement program (TIP) and Fulton County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) include a few projects that impact the City of Palmetto. The ARC TIP includes Cascade-Palmetto Highway, Phipps Road, and Collinsworth Road as part of the Metro Arterial Corridor Study. Per recent discussions with GDOT, however, this project has not progressed and remains in question given recent GDOT funding issues. ARC is also currently undergoing a Regional Freight Mobility Plan, which will address many of the negative impacts truck traffic have on local congestion, safety, and quality of life.

The projects included in the Fulton County CTP that impact the study area and surroundings include a bridge upgrade at Fayetteville Rd./CSX Railroad; intersection improvements at Wilkerson Mill Rd. and Cascade-Palmetto Hwy.; interchange reconstruction at I-85 and S.R. 74 (Senoia Road) at Exit 61; Widening of S.R. 74 from I-85 to Fulton County line (through Tyrone). The Fulton County CTP also lists long-range planned transit projects, including a new commuter rail station in Palmetto and express bus service from Shannon Mall to the College Park MARTA station.



3.1 : THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The issues facing Palmetto - and the opportunities it could realize - portray a city that is on the verge of major changes; but one that must act aggressively to shape them for long-term advantages instead of potentially fleeting short-term gains. Despite Palmetto's location in the highly-charged real estate market in South Fulton County, it has remained at its heart a small rural town, largely unchanged from its early growth period through the 1950s. Its existing land use pattern reveals a quintessential commercial core formed by a railroad; surrounded on most sides by dense, traditional neighborhoods; and only expanding into more conventional suburban development in a few areas. In fact, Palmetto's boundary discloses the forces that have pressed on its rural heritage in recent times, with annexations that have broken out of the city's chartered one-mile radius to reach toward the interstate, the airport and surrounding industries. While the slow economy and foreclosure crisis have stalled several ongoing and planned developments in Palmetto, the pause is a welcome chance to take stock of the future, recommit to what is important to preserve, and plan accordingly.

3.2 : AREAS OF SPECIAL ATTENTION

Comprehensive planning's geographic basis is a distinguishing feature of The Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) contemporary methodology, and enables a more design-driven and tangible analysis of portions of the city that have commonalities that make them distinct places. As a first step, DCA recognizes the need to identify focus areas, or Areas Requiring Special Attention (ASRA), as both a mirror of the more global issues discussed under the planning topics, and a window to developing draft character areas to advance into the Community Agenda phase. The basic parameters for identifying these areas include:

- *Areas of significant and sensitive natural or cultural resources;*
- *Areas where rapid physical change is likely to occur;*
- *Areas where the provision of community facilities/services may lag development;*
- *Areas with the potential for environmental distress;*
- *Areas with major infill opportunities; and*
- *Blighted areas or other areas in need of improvement or redevelopment*

The planning focus areas identified on the following pages (and shown on the map in the Appendix) emerged during the LCI process and from field observation and discussion with the steering committee. They include clusters of related land uses or greenfield sites; corridors that are in transition or vulnerable to change; and specific sites that relate to the criteria listed above.



3.2a : Historic Downtown

Palmetto's downtown is one of its most valuable assets and has been discussed and planned in the recent (2008-2009) LCI study. It has many opportunities for infill development both in its traditional neighborhoods and its Main Street commercial areas, and is a logical candidate for a priority character area. However, given the broad scope of the comprehensive plan, the currency of the LCI study, and the central position of the downtown, issues that were paramount during the LCI should be reviewed in this process – not to repeal or rework LCI recommendations, but to inform strategies to strengthen the relationship between downtown and the balance of the city.

Trends / Issues:

- *Many historic storefront spaces are vacant, underutilized and under-maintained*
- *Significant amount of aging commercial parcels are adjacent to downtown*
- *The railroad serves as a barrier, and underpasses are in need of repair*
- *Truck traffic continues to be a detriment to quality of life*
- *Lack of pedestrian and bicycle connections in and outside downtown*

Opportunities / Constraints:

- *Renovation of the historic train depot could serve to catalyze more activity in downtown and provide a measure of identity for the city as a whole*
- *LCI study grants may provide significant new investment in downtown pedestrian amenities and connections to other Palmetto destinations*
- *Redeveloping the Palmetto Cotton Mill / Spurlin Industries complex as a cultural arts center could trigger improvements in adjacent neighborhoods*

3.2b : Foxhall Village

Foxhall Village is a planned traditional neighborhood development on 1,322 acres in the northwest corner of Palmetto. The development plan is comprised of three development zones – village core, village general, and village edge – and at full buildout is proposed to have approximately 4,500 residential units; 600,000 square feet of commercial and office space; and almost 400 acres of community green space and parks. Despite the project's loss of momentum due to a depressed residential market, it remains a major benefit and addition to the city in the long term but will require sustained attention if it is to realize its full potential without overwhelming both its rural context and Palmetto's historic core.



Trends / Issues:

- Major residential and commercial addition to the city, but could compete with downtown revitalization
- Site plan designed as traditional village
- Existing subdivision to north is aging poorly
- Appropriate transition to property boundaries an issue

Opportunities / Constraints:

- Influx of housing could benefit downtown businesses
- Generous open space provides needed city parks, but location is remote
- Opportunity to improve pedestrian / bike connections to downtown with greenway
- Existing farm / meadow landscapes contribute to Palmetto's sense of place
- Sluggish market could affect product delivery, phasing
- More suburban areas could pressure adjacent rural single-family to transition
- Threat of sprawl development in area between Village and city's downtown edge
- Improvements to Cochran Mill Road needed



3.2c : Areas of Rapid Commercial Growth

Palmetto is unlike most Atlanta exurban towns in that it has very little retail development outside of the storefronts and small stand-alone businesses along Main Street. In fact, the city has only one concentration of strip commercial land uses which cluster at the intersections of Carlton Road, Highway 154, and Roosevelt Highway (U.S. 29). Because of the limited retail options in town and the mainstream quality here, the retail presence is growing and likely to accelerate over time. In addition, there is a significant retail-based development under construction at the I-85 interchange which will affect the future of adjacent undeveloped land.

Carlton Road / Highway 154 / Highway 29 Junction

The area around the offset intersections of Carlton Road, Highway 154, and Roosevelt Highway was identified in the LCI process as an emerging commercial node, and was recommended for further study because of its problematic intersection geometries, its increasing auto-oriented retail bias, Highway 154's future widening, and its position as a gateway to Main Street. It is also the location of the only CSX railroad roadway overpass, adding to its traffic volume. The confluence of transportation facilities guarantee that commercial development pressure will only grow, and that careful planning and land use control will be key to diversification and greater accessibility.



Trends / Issues:

- *Recent investment in municipal facilities including public safety building and Fulton branch library*
- *Growth in retail businesses because of good highway exposure and access*
- *Existing apartment complex sets a multifamily precedent, but perception of poor design / construction quality*
- *Complex intersection needs rationalization for safety, future capacity expansion*

Opportunities / Constraints:

- *Could expand municipal presence over time to anchor area*
- *Proximity to elementary school is an asset*
- *Strip retail provides needed goods / services, but is not amenable to pedestrians*
- *Could continue denser housing development, especially if quality is improved*
- *Intersection redesign could provide gateway but would require right-of-way*
- *Significant development potential in vacant land to north, but still room to plan*
- *Opportunity to include new east-west access to Foxhall Village.*
- *Need zoning change to allow residential, mixed-use*
- *Old horse farm is a major development opportunity*
- *Existing Creek bed is a greenway opportunity*
- *Wilkerson Mill Farris Park is an asset but is underutilized*



I-85 Interchange Area

The interchange of Collinsworth Road and Interstate 85 is relatively undeveloped beyond a few filling stations and fast-food restaurants, but is on the verge of major change with the construction of Weldon Park which will add thirty acres of development to the commercial inventory, as well as fifty-five acres of planned industrial. This will undoubtedly create additional growth pressure on the remaining greenfield sites around the interchange, since the nearest major interstate commercial nodes are either fifteen miles north in Union City or eighteen miles south in Newnan. Development of Weldon Park has proceeded slowly, allowing time for considering the shape of future growth and how it should relate to both this principal entry to Palmetto, and any future annexation the city may wish to consider.

Trends / Issues:

- *Traffic congestion at I-85 exit*

- *Difficult for visitors coming from I-85 to navigate to downtown*
- *Development of the Weldon Park commercial / industrial center is pending site plan review*
- *Current development is conventional, not very inviting*

Opportunities / Constraints:

- *Significant portion of land around interchange not in city limits*
- *Significant portion of land currently undeveloped*

3.2d : Industrial Border

Palmetto has made an investment in industrial development sites at and around the intersection of Roosevelt Highway and Hobgood Road. Existing industrial and warehousing facilities include a large distribution building (1.3 million square feet) formerly occupied by the General Services Administration but currently vacant; several smaller warehouses with various tenants; Walker Concrete, a batch plant; and the Willow Oaks landfill with plans for a recycling facility awaiting environmental clearance. The city also shares a border with Fairburn paralleling Williams Road and is included in the western reaches of the South Fulton CID; several other industrial uses lie over the border in Fairburn or in unincorporated Fulton County but contribute to the area’s synergy. Finally, the South Fulton Skyport is a unique and underutilized asset. Stretching between Hobgood and Wilkerson Mill Road, it is privately-owned and limited in size due to physical constraints and F.A.A. restrictions.

Trends/Issues:

- *Light industrial uses have been slowly growing at the corridor’s north end*
- *The CSX Fairburn Intermodal Facility has contributed to the industrial presence*
- *The landfill north of Highway 29 may be a long-term environmental / noise issue*
- *The private airstrip is underutilized and in disrepair*
- *The corridor is shared with the City of Fairburn and unincorporated Fulton County, and is included in the South Fulton CID*
- *Palmetto’s portion of the CID is largely undeveloped*
- *Access is relatively limited at the corridor’s south end*

Opportunities / Constraints:

- *The presence of the South Fulton CID is an asset, but collective effort is needed to tap the corridor’s potential*



- Large amounts of undeveloped land for future light industrial growth
- The intermodal yard could be an industrial catalyst
- New public infrastructure (road, water, sanitary) is needed to support future development
- The landfill may be a long-term site for green industry
- The private airstrip could be an economic development opportunity but is hampered by FAA restrictions / proximity to Hartsfield
- Gullatt Road is a more realistic location for a new I-85 interchange than Johnson Road

3.2e : Cultural Resource Areas

Aside from Palmetto’s historic downtown and neighborhoods, important cultural resources are either associated with major economic or institutional factors in the city’s development such as the railroad or the Baptist Children’s Home; or the agricultural landscapes inside or adjacent to the city limits. The two significant railroad-related resources - the depot complex and the Palmetto Cotton Mill and village – are both addressed in the LCI study and part of a potential Downtown Character Area. Similarly, the Baptist Children’s Home is not likely to face radical change and is being managed carefully and sensitively. The agricultural landscapes, however, do face growth pressures from surrounding development and general urbanization of South Fulton County. In particular, the Johnson / Tatum crossroads and the corridors of Wilkerson Mill, Cochran Mill, Hutcheson Ferry and Philips Road deserve special attention to their futures.

Johnson / Tatum Crossroads

The crossroads cultural resource area occupies a knoll between the floodplains of Shoal Creek and Peeks Creek centered on the small farms and fields clustered around the Johnson Road / Tatum Road intersection. There are very few historic farm structures remaining in the area; but the broad fields and pastures lining Johnson Road, the rolling topography, and the large lots and country homes contribute to a strong rural sense of place despite its location just over two miles east of Main Street.

Trends / Issues:

- Large-lot single-family uses dominate, contributing to the area’s rural character
- The area is bounded on almost all sides by streams / wetlands
- A large power easement and floodplain isolate the south edge



Opportunities / Constraints:

- *Tatum Road north is effectively an extension of the scenic and rural Wilkerson Mill Road*
- *Johnson Road has a strong rural character and is lined by mature trees and fields*
- *Johnson Road leads directly to the potential Palmetto Mill District to the west*
- *The wetland areas constrain development but are a natural asset*
- *Extending Tatum Road to the south is complicated by the wetlands, limiting its function to residential access only*

Scenic Road Corridors

The farm landscapes described previously are especially prevalent on the north and east side of town where old county roads still maintain their scenic qualities and rural environments and structures; several are considered state scenic byways. Wilkerson Mill Road, the longest of these corridors, features not only forests and fields but historic farm buildings, a former horse track, and the picturesque Wilkerson Mill hydrangea gardens. Hutcheson Ferry and Cochran Mill exhibit the same qualities, particularly at their junction and at the entrance to the Baptist Children’s Home. Phillips Road is a minor (unpaved) corridor, but leads past farmsteads and pecan orchards deep into the forest along Little Bear Creek, where the bottomland is tilled as it has been for decades.

Trends / Issues:

- *As growth happens north of Palmetto (such as South Fulton Parkway area), these scenic areas may be threatened with sprawl*
- *Significant portions of these corridors are outside city limits*
- *Future development/growth may bring pressure for larger transportation infrastructure (wider roads)*

Opportunities / Constraints:

- *These corridors add much to the area’s rural legacy and quality of life and would be an attraction to new residents*
- *Many of these routes are traveled by recreational bicyclists who would advocate for their scenic preservation*
- *Annexation of scenic corridors into the city would put developmental controls in the city’s hands*



3.1f: Natural Resource Areas

Palmetto is laced with streams and dotted with forests and veteran trees so common that their reach extends to within blocks of the downtown core. The most notable creek, Little Bear, springs from land south of Church Street and gradually widens to a broad floodplain at Phillips Road, eventually joining Bear Creek on its route to the Chattahoochee River. Likewise, Shoal Creek and Peeks Creek are equally important natural resources east of the railroad. On Palmetto's west side, Cedar Creek and the city reservoir are central features in a recent annexation. The potential changes associated with this annexation, and the pristine natural environment of Cedar Creek between the reservoir and its source, are reason for a more focused look.

Cedar Creek Valley

Cedar Creek is a slow, meandering stream bisected by Waterworks Road where a small check dam backs up the water into a broad marshy area surrounded by fields. Further downstream a second dam holds back the city reservoirs, which are soon to be made redundant by the construction of a larger basin on Bear Creek to serve multiple South Fulton communities. Cedar Creek is an important natural asset, and its proximity to downtown along with its undeveloped condition and natural beauty make it a candidate for careful resource management practices and possible environmentally-based land use and development controls, especially around the reservoirs. Future uses of the existing municipal water treatment facility should also be considered.

Trends / Issues:

- *Waterworks road in poor condition*
- *Natural features such as reservoir and Cedar Creek are largely hidden*
- *Majority of land is undeveloped or part of Baptist Children's Home*

Opportunities / Constraints:

- *Majority of land in natural state*
- *Picturesque water / natural features are a major asset*
- *Relatively little immediate development pressure, allowing time to consider preservation strategies / policies*



3.3 : PRIORITY CHARACTER AREAS

The Areas Requiring Special Attention discussed previously point the way to recommended Character Areas for the city, and particularly for priority areas that are facing more immediate change or are more specialized in their physical attributes than those described in DCA’s state planning recommendations. The five areas identified on the following pages are where the bulk of Palmetto’s growth is likely to occur or where city policy and stakeholder input has indicated it should occur. In some of these areas, recent and proposed development has been discussed in a variety of forums, and the main ideas are included in the narratives and summary points. In addition, several other character areas are identified and depicted in the map on the following page along with the priority list. These additional character areas closely resemble DCA classifications and round out the comprehensive picture of Palmetto’s physical situation as it exists today.



3.3a : Historic Downtown

The LCI study (completed in January of 2009) envisioned Palmetto’s downtown as a place where the railroad corridor, Main Street, and the marginal properties in between would be renewed as a dynamic and impressive series of public spaces bookended by the historic train depot and the community center, and graced with a new city hall and formal plaza. With preserved storefront buildings and new mixed-use development lining Main Street in either direction, future townhouses would both provide additional downtown residents and physically transition to the beautiful old neighborhood beyond West Street. Compatible single-family infill development and historic preservation would provide new housing opportunities without sacrificing the small-town character that is dear to the residents. The same holds true east of the railroad, where Cobb Street is envisioned as the historic residential equivalent of Main. While smaller than the LCI area, Historic Downtown still includes three of its subareas – the mixed-use districts flanking Main Street; the preservation-based traditional neighborhood; and the selective residential infill areas.

Guiding Principles:

- *Ensure historically-compatible future development*
- *Encourage a range of housing types, sizes and price points*
- *Encourage more local goods and services*
- *Concentrate on capital improvements*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Create design guidelines for future development*

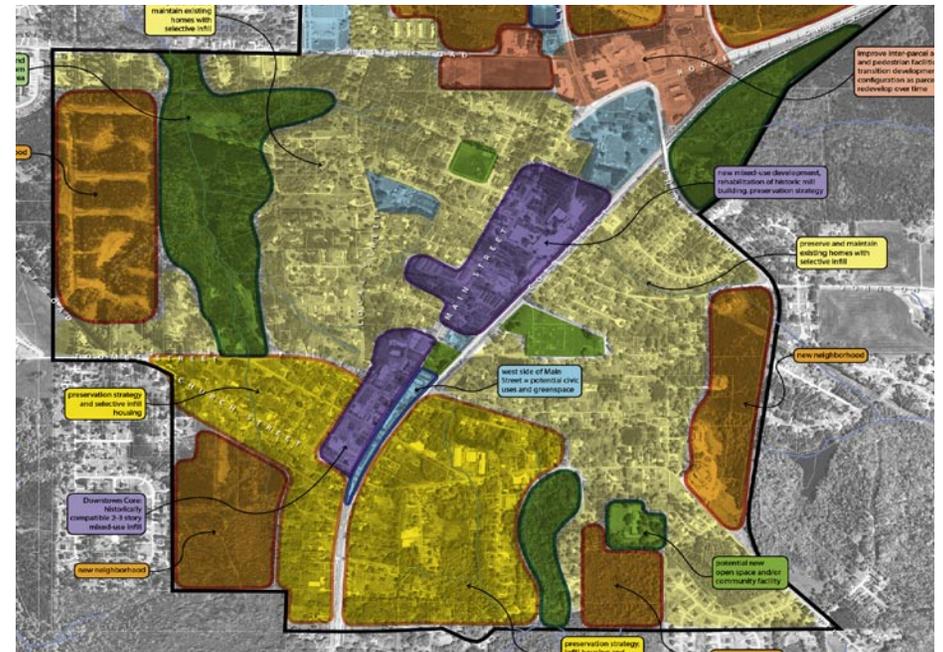
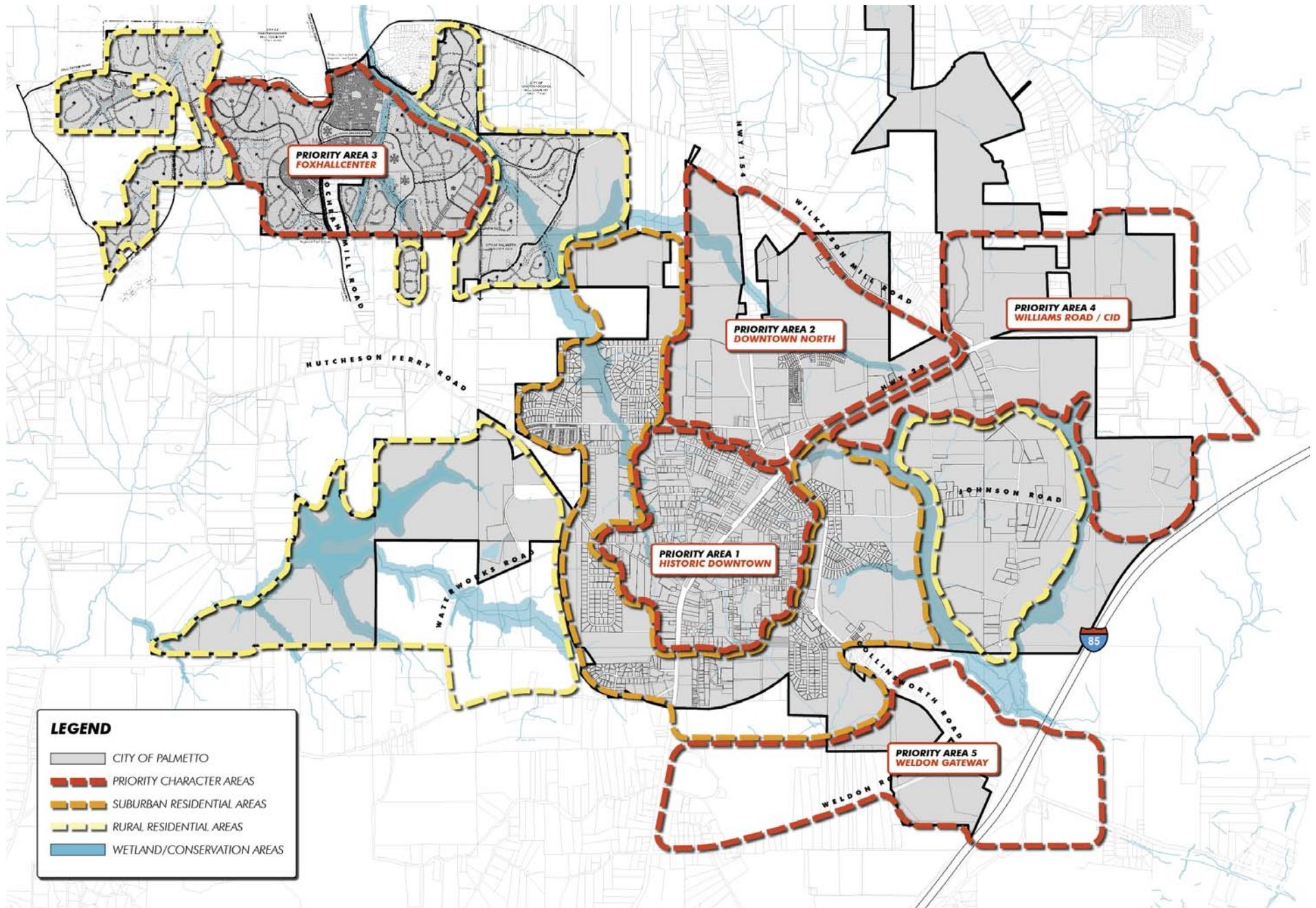


Figure 3A : Character Areas



- *Incentivize housing development any way possible*
- *Create a business recruitment strategy/organization*
- *Create a capital improvements program*

3.3b : Downtown North

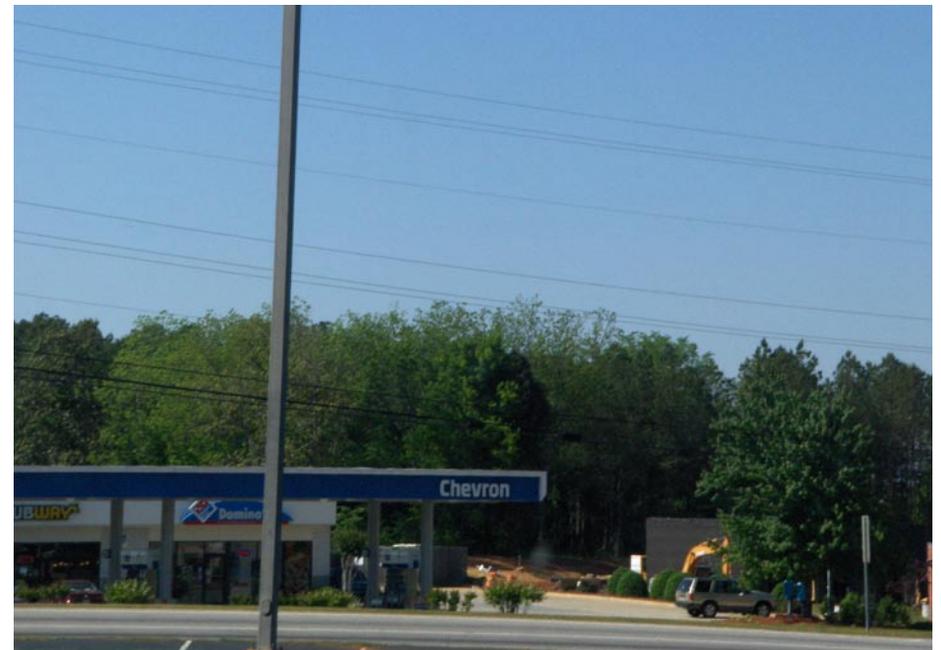
The emerging commercial area around Carlton Road, Highway 154 and Roosevelt Highway is an indication of market favorability in a city where few new retail businesses have taken hold. It is also the location of a planned Fulton County branch library and a new municipal public safety facility. Much of it was included in the LCI study, which recommended a dedicated subarea planning process to fully address its complexities. The LCI Study noted that the confluence of important transportation facilities coupled with economic activity and land use trends made it a northern equivalent of downtown; but significant greenfield sites and the presence of multifamily housing pointed to a development future different from the small-scale preservation-based envelope of downtown. Ideally, Downtown North would evolve as a complement to downtown, where uses that are essential to the city but difficult to insert into downtown’s mature framework could find a place and still be accessible and sustainable. Downtown North should be given special attention to ensure that it develops as a center in its own right, but also as a gateway to Palmetto’s historic core.



Guiding Principles:

- *Re-design the Carlton Road / Highway 154 / Roosevelt Highway intersection area as both an efficient traffic facility and a gateway to downtown*
- *Use the investment in municipal facilities at the Carlton/Hwy 154 node as a foundation for a more visible and organized public realm*
- *Promote a street network and development guidelines that ensure walkability, development quality and efficient growth*
- *Diversify the retail and make it more pedestrian-friendly over time*
- *Expand both the quantity and quality of multifamily housing south of the east fork of Little Bear Creek*
- *Better link the area to portions of the city to the west*
- *Preserve the scenic and rural qualities of Wilkerson Mill Road with appropriate land uses / regulations*
- *Capitalize on the presence of the creek and Farris Park*

Recommended Development Strategies:



- Undertake a traffic planning / engineering study for the Carlton Road / Highway 154 / Roosevelt Highway intersection area
- Conduct a needs assessment for future growth in municipal services to determine additions / expansions (particularly fire) at and around the public safety facility
- Adjust zoning as needed to allow more and better multifamily residential, pedestrian-oriented retail / mixed-use
- Expand the street / sidewalk network to support a walkable environment in the southern portion of the Character Area
- Plan for a road connection between Highway 154 and the eastern entry to Foxhall Village
- Link the proposed greenway along Little Bear Creek to Farris Park with a greenway spur
- Study expanding Farris Park to better serve the north side of town
- Redevelop the former horse farm property as medium-density single-family with a scenic buffer along Wilkerson Mill Road
- Extend the scenic byway designation down the length of Wilkerson Mill Road



3.3c : Foxhall Village Center

Foxhall Village is a significant addition to city's land area and, if built as envisioned, would be a major resource in supporting downtown businesses and cultural amenities, providing the infrastructure linkages are in place to enable the support. Foxhall represents a land use change based on sustainable development and strikes a common note with Palmetto's desire to retain aspects of its rural past. The Foxhall proposal was subject to a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review, which was approved in January of 2009 with a number of conditions that affect its planning (as noted below). The fact that Foxhall Village requires a zoning change qualifies it as a priority character area. Its size, however, suggests division into at least two subareas, with the Village Core and Village General districts combined into a Village Center that has design and development attributes different from the Village Edge. Given the recent DRI process and associated conditions, the Foxhall Village plan does not warrant extensive re-examination. The development in its entirety, though, should be reviewed and considered in relationship to the balance of the city – particularly in the way it engages it and responds to the concern for maintaining its small-town existence. The guiding principles and development strategies should reflect both the planning that has already been done, and the refinements needed to guarantee that it is both a fully-integrated part of the city and a separate village in its own right.



Guiding Principles:

- *Ensure that Foxhall Village is both integrated into the physical fabric and economy of Palmetto but retains its identity as a separate village*
- *Treat the Village Core and the Village General districts areas as one settlement, anchoring the more dispersed and rurally-inspired single-family on the edges*
- *Treat the Village General districts as individual neighborhoods with interconnected street networks and centered around small parks*
- *Provide natural buffers and transitions between the character area periphery and future preservation land*
- *Link the Village Core to downtown Palmetto with suitable infrastructure, including greenways, to ensure a wide range of accessibility*
- *Strive for at least a portion of the Village Core as the development's first phase*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Create a new zoning ordinance to address the desired development program, the valuable rural context, and the relationship to adjoining parts of the city*
- *Undertake a transportation implementation plan to address timing and coordination of roadway and intersection improvements (DRI)*
- *Undertake a greenspace plan for the entire site (DRI)*
- *Limit the number of single-family residential units west of Cochran Mill Road to no more than 600 (DRI)*
- *Reserve a minimum of 46% of the entire site area as open space, with 40% of the area west of Cochran Mill Road preserved as open space following conservation subdivision practices (DRI)*
- *Reserve enough land in the Village Center to erect one elementary school, one police station, and one fire station (DRI)*
- *Determine and implement appropriate natural / rural / scenic buffers around the development periphery (DRI)*
- *Refine existing plan to minimize culs-de-sac in the Village General areas*
- *Formalize open space in each Village General 'cluster' as a neighborhood park*
- *Preserve Cochran Mill Road as a scenic byway*
- *Improve portions of Cochran Mill as part of the first phase of development*



3.3d : Williams Road / Community Improvement District (CID)

Palmetto is fortunate to be included in the boundary of the South Fulton Community Improvement District and stands to benefit from CID initiatives like the long-term extension of Oakley Industrial Boulevard to Johnson Road, and advocacy for an I-85 interchange at Gullatt Road. However, only a small portion of the CID overlaps Palmetto and its boundary stops short of several existing industrial uses, the Willow Oaks landfill, and the South Fulton Skyport. With industrial uses growing in the eastern half of the CID, Palmetto could push for expansion of the CID boundary to include its own industrial park to solidify its existing and future industrial uses in an established organizational framework. Likewise, with Oakley Industrial Boulevard becoming the CID’s ‘Main Street’ over time, the City could lobby GDOT for improvements to Gullatt Road – including the interchange – as essential to the economic functioning of the west end of the CID and in particular supporting the substantial investment in the CSX Fairburn Intermodal Facility. Treating Gullatt Road as an extension of Oakley Industrial would not only stimulate industrial investment in Palmetto, but might broaden the role the recycling facility could play in CID waste stream management and provide a mechanism for improving the South Fulton Skyport as a CID asset.

Guiding Principles:

- *Embrace the South Fulton CID as the organization umbrella for the city’s industrial park area*
- *Maximize the economic / industrial development potential while maintaining or improving the quality of water resources like Shoal Creek and Peeks Creek*
- *Capitalize on the proximity to the CSX Fairburn intermodal yard*
- *Treat the Willow Oak landfill and the South Fulton Skyport as a long-term assets for the city and the CID*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Work to expand the South Fulton CID boundary to encompass Palmetto’s industrial park area*
- *Create an industrial master plan for the west end of the CID*
- *Lobby GDOT for improvements to Gullatt Road including an interchange at I-85*
- *Improve Williams Road to handle truck traffic*
- *Market the vacant industrial park sites to developers*
- *Conduct a market analysis / positioning study for the intensification of the Skyport*
- *Support the landfill recycling operation and work to expand it in a safe and sustainable way, ideally to help manage the CID’s waste stream*



3.3f: Weldon Road Gateway

The inevitable intensification of the I-85 interchange area over time, coupled with the planned uses at Weldon Park and the greenfield development opportunities along Weldon Road suggest that the entire corridor from the interstate to Highway 29 could develop as an employment center focused on office and supporting commercial, complementing the growing light industrial orientation of the northeast portion of the city. Since this would require extensive annexation north of Weldon Road, the character area could reflect two phases – an initial expansion around the I-85 interchange to control and take advantage of short-term growth, and a later phase at the corridor’s west end to support the employment investment but move it away from light industrial and into office. The northern boundary of this character area would follow the existing power easement, a natural buffer to the adjacent residential areas to the north.

Guiding Principles:

- *Rethink the Weldon Road corridor as an employment center and a main gateway to the city*
- *Clearly mark the routes to downtown throughout the area*
- *Ensure appropriate and sustainable development through adequate infrastructure provision and regulatory control*
- *Minimize traffic congestion along Weldon and Collinsworth as feasible through techniques such as access management*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Obtain support for annexations required to solidify the character area*
- *Create wayfinding / gateway signage program to link the character area to downtown*
- *Create design guidelines for future commercial development that include regulations for landscaping, building aesthetics, signage, and sustainability measures*
- *Encourage inter-parcel connectivity between future commercial sites to minimize traffic congestion on Weldon / Collinsworth*

3.4 : ADDITIONAL CHARACTER AREAS / OVERLAYS

Outside of the priority character areas, there are several other places where land use or development patterns exhibit similarities to such an extent that they could be considered minor character areas or character overlays. Some of these reflect sizeable



suburban housing developments or distinct growth periods in the city's history; others relate more to the natural and cultural landscape and continuing traditions of rural Georgia. These areas discussed below generally follow classifications outlined under DCA guidelines, and are indicated on the Character Areas Map (Figure 3A) as both existing and proposed districts in the city.

3.4a : Suburban Residential Areas

Palmetto contains a number of conventional suburban subdivisions built over the last forty years, though in general the city is still relatively compact and unlike other metro exurban towns not overwhelmed by sprawl. However, recent suburban-style developments have either been affected by the housing crisis and stalled as “pipe farms”; or criticized by city residents over their perceived poor quality. The suburban residential areas identified in Figure 3B are a combination of these existing and planned subdivisions and greenfield sites, and they occupy a place between DCA classification of developing and built-out suburbs. Entry-level single-family housing is important to Palmetto's future; and because there is room for growth in these areas it is important to maintain their suburban features to expand housing type and price diversity, but improve their quality, connectivity and walkability even to the point of retrofitting some of the older or in-progress developments.

Guiding Principles:

- *Ensure development quality through design standards*
- *Integrate traditional neighborhood development principles into conventional suburban practices*
- *Link new with existing developments to establish an interconnected street network*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Encourage medium density, traditional-style neighborhoods for new construction*
- *Retrofit existing suburban neighborhoods to promote walkability and allow accessory dwelling units, as feasible*
- *Create a street network that links to other parts of the city and minimizes barriers to access*
- *Suggest compatible architectural styles that maintain regional character and mandate high-quality construction*
- *Connect to local and regional trail and open space systems wherever possible*



3.4b : Rural Residential / Preservation Areas

One of the most striking aspects of Palmetto’s landscape is the proximity of meadows and farmland to downtown and its neighborhoods. It is possible to walk less than a half mile from most residential areas and be in what feels like the open country, with very little sense of the nearness of the city’s urban footprint. This is due in part to landowners who maintain pastures or small farms often called “farmettes” or “ranchettes”; wetland areas that discourage development; and large businesses and institutions such as the Baptist Children’s Home, that intentionally maintain the agricultural landscape. The lag in market attention to South Fulton County has also been a contributing factor. Palmetto’s slow growth has become one of its chief assets, and rural preservation is critical to maintain the qualities that make the city unique and desirable and strengthen its connection to the land and the past. New residential development in these areas should be sensitive to the agricultural context and encourage both farmettes and conservation subdivision practices as minimum standards.

Guiding Principles:

- *Ensure preservation of area’s rural, agricultural legacy*
- *Encourage conservation-oriented types of development*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Formalize a greenspace/preservation plan*
- *Increase amount of minimum open space requirements in ordinances*

3.4c : Wetland / Conservation Areas

Palmetto exists as an integral part of the surrounding rural landscape and includes a significant amount of creeks, streams and other water features. These assets are crucial to the city’s quality of life and role within the history of the rural Georgia landscape. The most notable areas include the floodplain around Little Bear Creek, Cedar Creek and adjoining reservoir, Shoal Creek and Peeks Creek. The close proximity of these features to downtown Palmetto make them candidates for careful resource management practices and environmentally-sensitive development controls.

Guiding Principles:

- *Amenitize and provide public access to key natural resources*
- *Preserve key natural/rural features*



- *Encourage conservation subdivision-type development*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Include creek/stream-side trails as part of greenspace/recreational plans*
- *Increase and enforce hefty buffers along waterways and floodplains*
- *Increase development restrictions to ensure preservation in key areas*

3.4d : Scenic Corridors

As mentioned in section 3.2e, old country roads found mostly throughout the northeastern sector of Palmetto add much to the area's scenic quality and rural legacy. Such corridors, including Cochran Mill Road, Hutcheson Ferry Road, Wilkerson Mill Road and Phillips Road, act as gateways into Palmetto, leading travelers past farmsteads, pecan orchards and thick pine forests.

Guiding Principles:

- *Preserve key scenic corridors as rural gateways into Downtown Palmetto*
- *Maintain "country road" character*
- *Establish substantial buffers/greenways along these corridors*

Recommended Development Strategies:

- *Identify key corridors to be designated as official scenic byways (many are already)*
- *Increase developmental buffer widths along key scenic corridors*
- *Update and enforce tree ordinance regulations for developments along these corridors*



4.0 : QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The tables on the following pages summarize existing conditions within the City of Palmetto as they relate to the Quality Community Objectives offered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Many of the suggested elements and principles have been embraced by the City of Palmetto over the last several years with updates to city ordinances and the recent completion of a Downtown Livable Centers Initiative Study. Other smart-growth elements have been identified as areas of emphasis for this Comprehensive Plan Update by elected officials, city staff and community members. Following this plan update, the city plans to revamp its current zoning ordinance to reflect smart growth concepts outlined in recent studies. The Quality Community Objectives provide a starting point for the Community Agenda to be developed throughout the Summer and Fall of 2009.



Development Patterns			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.		✓	No allowance for mixed-use zoning currently
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development “by right” so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process.		✓	
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.	✓		
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		✓	
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	✓		
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.		✓	Sidewalks are maintained, but provide limited walkability due to dispersed development pattern
7. In some areas, several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.		✓	
8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.		✓	While there seems to be a very limited amount of children that walk to Palmetto Elementary School, existing conditions around the school’s campus and location on Carlton Road make it a challenge.
9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.		✓	Although not currently pedestrian-friendly, the city recently applied for a Safe Routes to School Grant
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.		✓	While Palmetto Elementary School is located near limited amount of neighborhoods, it is generally isolated from the Downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods

Development Patterns			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	✓		Part of LCI and Comprehensive Plans
2. Our community is actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.		✓	
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.		✓	

4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road)	✓		Nodal development concepts were part of the recent Livable Centers Initiative Study for the Downtown Area and will be furthered by this Comprehensive Plan Update and subsequent zoning updates.
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses.		✓	

Development Patterns

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.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics.		✓	
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have taken steps to protect those areas.	✓		While no official historic survey has been conducted, historic resources were identified through the LCI study and are further outlined in this document. The city is also currently undergoing an extensive renovation to its Historic Train Depot.
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	✓		Limited
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	✓		Limited
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.		✓	While city does not currently have an illustrated development guidebook, the LCI Plan recommends the short-term persual of such a document.
6. If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.		✓	

Development Patterns

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 transporation should be encouraged.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have public transportation in our community.	✓		MARTA Bus Route 180
2. We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.		✓	
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.		✓	

4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.	✓		Limited
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.	✓		
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.	✓		Recent LCI Study outlines specific bicycle routes throughout the Downtown area, connecting with regional Chattahoochee Hill Country trail plans. The City is also pursuing grants for construction of a major multi-use path through the Downtown area.
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.		✓	

Development Patterns

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.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.		✓	While the immediate Downtown area is characteristic of the region, the majority of recent development throughout the city is more generic in character.
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.		✓	
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc.)		✓	
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s regional tourism partnership.		✓	
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on unique characteristics of our region.		✓	
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.		✓	Although Palmetto does not currently significantly contribute and draw from the region, recent planning studies such as the LCI and this comprehensive plan update outline steps for furthering such efforts.

Resource Conservation			
Heritage Preservation The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.		✓	
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.		✓	
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.		✓	Although ordinances are not currently in place, the city plans to update its ordinances following this Comprehensive Plan update to reflect the historically-compatible development vision outlined in LCI plan.

Resource Conservation			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.		✓	While a preliminary greenspace plan was included as part of the LCI Study, it is limited to the LCI area and not overly detailed
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.		✓	Although not currently actively purchasing land, the city is making strides to implement public improvements and move forward with open space initiatives outlined in recent LCI plan
3. We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.		✓	
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	✓		Although Conservation Subdivision ordinance is in place, it has not been widely-used to date

Resource Conservation			
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.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.	✓		Included as part of LCI and Comprehensive Plan Efforts
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.		✓	No major development proposals since inventory completed

3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.		✓	
4. Our community has passed the necessary “Part V” environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.	✓		
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.	✓		
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	✓		
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	✓		
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.)	✓		

Social and Economic Development

Growth Preparedness
 Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	✓		
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	✓		
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.	✓		
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.		✓	City plans to update ordinance soon
5. We have a Capital Improvements Programs that supports current and future growth.		✓	
6. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.	✓		Such areas were designated as part of the recent LCI study and those recommendations will be addressed for the city as a whole through this Comprehensive Plan Update
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.		✓	
8. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.		✓	
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed anout land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.	✓		Website, Town Hall Meetings

10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	✓		
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Social and Economic Development

Appropriate Businesses
 The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, 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.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our economic development organization has considered our community’s strengths, assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.		✓	
2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.		✓	
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	✓		
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.	✓		

Social and Economic Development

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

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.		✓	
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	✓		
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	✓		
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	✓		Limited

Social and Economic Development

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 (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	✓		Yes, but limited in size
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.	✓		

3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).		✓	Deficient in above-average income housing
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.		✓	Although there are residential infill provisions in current ordinances, they are not specific enough
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.		✓	
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	✓		
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	✓		
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.	✓		
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.		✓	
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.		✓	

Social and Economic Development

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.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.	✓		Workforce training is provided through Fulton County
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	✓		
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.		✓	
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.		✓	Some jobs for graduates, but limited opportunities for young professionals

Government Relations

Regional Solutions
 Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.	✓		
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	✓		

3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.	✓		
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.	✓		

Government Relations

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.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive planning purposes.	✓		
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.		✓	Strategy is currently undergoing 10-year county/ municipality review
3. We initiate contact with other local governments and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft regionwide strategies.	✓		
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	✓		