



Northeast Georgia Plan 2035

Regional Assessment

June 2011

1. Introduction	1
2. Potential Issues & Opportunities	2
Population	3
Economic Development	4
Housing	5
Community Facilities & Transportation	6
Intergovernmental Coordination	7
3. Regional Development Patterns	8
Projected Development Patterns	9
Areas Requiring Special Attention	10
Analysis	11
4. Supporting Data	12
Population	13-14
Economic Development	15-19
Housing	20-21
Community Facilities	22
Transportation System	23
Intergovernmental Coordination	24
Appendix	
Analysis of Quality Community Objectives	

<i>Maps</i>	
Northeast Georgia Region	1
Projected Development Patterns	9
Areas Requiring Special Attention	10
Commuting Patterns	17
Community Facilities	22
Transportation System	23

Regional Plan Overview

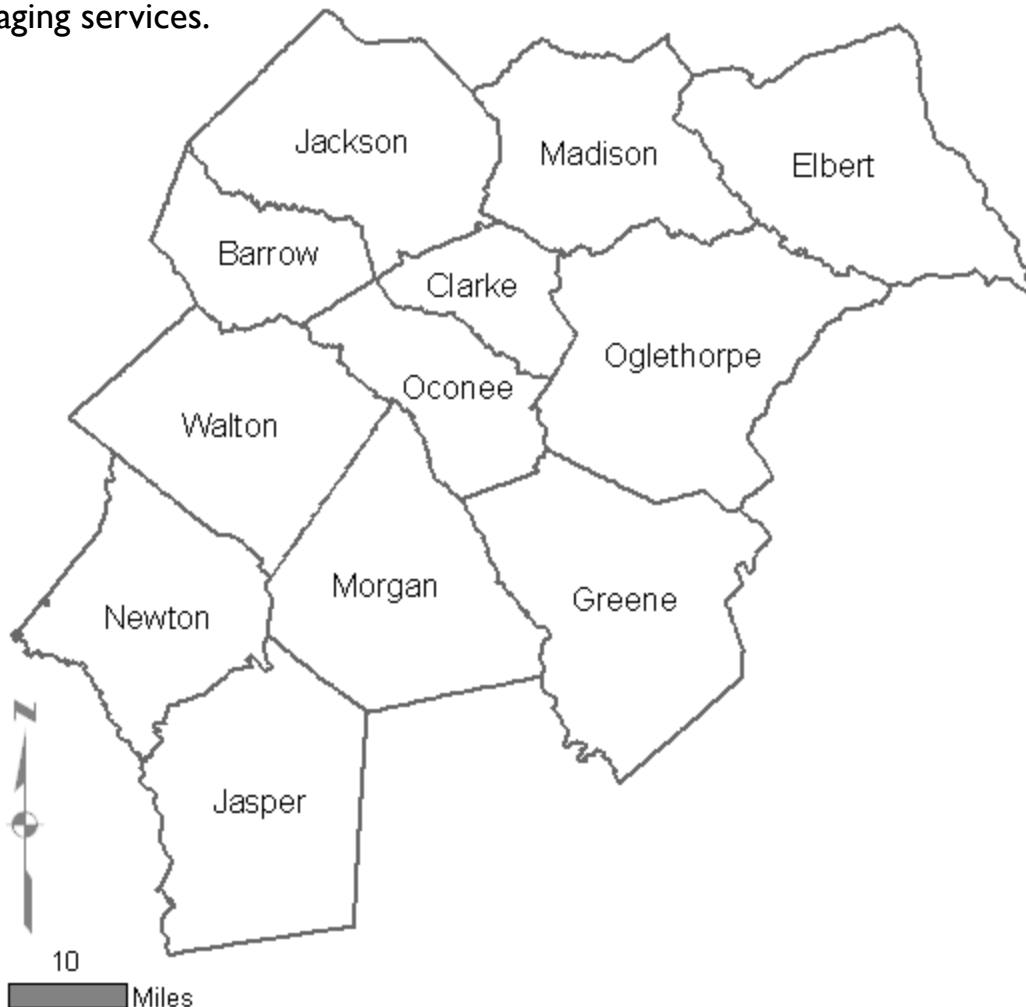
The Northeast Georgia region comprises twelve counties, covering approximately 3,260 square miles. Largely rural in nature, the region experiences development pressures from the Atlanta metropolitan region to the immediate west.

Northeast Georgia Regional Plan 2035 is the long-range plan for managing the region's projected growth. The process is divided into three distinct parts, per the *Regional Planning Requirements* established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

- **Regional Assessment**
Identification and analysis of existing conditions using available data
- **Stakeholder Involvement Program**
Strategy for public participation in the development of the Regional Agenda
- **Regional Agenda**
Regional vision and implementation program

About the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) serves the twelve counties and 54 municipalities in Northeast Georgia. Created in 1963, the agency is a resource for planning, economic development, grantwriting, workforce training, and aging services.



What are Potential Issues and Opportunities?

The Potential Issues and Opportunities section provides an objective, professional analysis (not based on public or stakeholder input) of the region. This section, presented in divisions relating to classical planning analysis areas such as housing and transportation, presents a preliminary catalog of potential focal points to be examined during the development of Plan 2035. As part of the Regional Assessment, the identified issues and opportunities are intended to be all-inclusive and will be revisited and revised in the Regional Agenda section of the plan.

Methods

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) publishes a list of typical issues and opportunities as part of the *State Planning Recommendations*. This list, in addition to an evaluation for the region's consistency with the DCA's *Quality Community Objectives*, was used as the starting point for developing the Potential Issues and Opportunities list. Further issues and opportunities were identified as part of a thorough analysis of regional datasets and regional development patterns (see chapters Three and Four of this document). The issues and opportunities compiled in this Regional Assessment are preliminary in nature; they will be reexamined and a final list will be assembled as part of the Regional Agenda planning process.

NOTE: Due to a conflict between state planning deadlines and data release schedules, U.S. Census data for 2010 were not available during the development of the Regional Assessment. Upon their release by the Census Bureau, 2010 data for Georgia will be reviewed; if revisions to the Issues and Opportunities section are necessary, they will be incorporated into the Regional Agenda.

POPULATION

The population growth illustrated in historical trends is expected to continue over the twenty-five-year horizon of this planning project. This can be both advantageous and potentially problematic, and the region's ability to capitalize on opportunities and respond to issues depends heavily on its level of growth preparedness. Irrespective of growth or decline, issues related to age, income, and special populations affect needs and service provision.

- By 2035, the twelve-county region is projected to account for 1.15 million people, an increase of approximately 250% over the observed 1990 population of 328,223. This increase will have implications on housing, jobs, transportation, leisure, natural resources, and infrastructure.
- As the Northeast Georgia region grows, it will also age rapidly: while the portion of residents under twenty years old is projected to decrease by 4.6% between 1990 and 2035, the share of residents 65 years or older is expected to increase by 6.4%. Needs associated with aging include transportation and medical services; if adequately anticipated and planned for, this could present a significant economic opportunity. At the same time, it would be worthwhile to evaluate potential ways to attract and retain young adults, who are more likely to invest in communities and contribute to the workforce. While some of their expectations might overlap with those of seniors (walkable communities, etc.), other needs (for example: employment opportunities for a skilled workforce and recreation improvements) could require more targeted planning approaches.
- In 2009, seven of the region's twelve counties exhibited poverty rates higher than the national average of 14%; the same seven counties also exceeded the U.S. rate (21%) for children living in poverty.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Northeast Georgia region's economy is diverse, and communities typically make concerted efforts to attract new business. However, coordinated economic development planning and promotion could be strengthened, both on a region-wide scale and between proximately-located communities.

- NEGRC serves as a Local Economic Development District (EDD) in coordination with the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and encourages cooperation between local government officials, community-based organizations, and the private sector. Per EDA requirements, NEGRC developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in 2007; the document soon will be updated, presenting a key opportunity to craft a regional development vision.
- Northeast Georgia lags behind the state in educational attainment, including high school graduation, college and/or university graduation, and post-graduate studies. This fits with the observed lack of employment opportunities in professional, scientific, and technical services sectors in the region. Workforce development professionals note, however, that training and employment in the trucking industry present opportunities for Northeast Georgia's labor pool.
- Economic developers and anti-poverty advocates cite lack of workforce training in appropriate fields as a major problem, especially in the small business sector.
- From 2008 to 2009, unemployment within the NEGRC area increased by 55.7 % to 9.5%, in line with the state-level situation (54.8% increase to 9.6%). This accompanies a 6.6% loss in jobs region-wide.
- The most recent available dataset (2000) shows that fewer than half of Northeast Georgia work trips were made within the region, meaning that workers are forced to find employment opportunities outside their county and/or the region.
- Although many tourism opportunities exist in Northeast Georgia, concerted promotion is lacking. The region's twelve counties are split among three of Georgia's nine designated travel regions. However, since no travel region-level or NEGRC-level tourism promotion plan exists, this sector could represent a significant untapped economic development opportunity.
- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has identified four Opportunity Zones in the Northeast Georgia region, all of which are located on the western edge of the NEGRC area, close to metro Atlanta. These zones exist in Covington, Monroe, Social Circle, and Walton County, and are meant to counter "pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, general distress, and blight." Employers within these designated areas are eligible for a Job Tax Credit of \$3,500 per eligible job they create, and communities must apply to DCA for designation. Businesses in other communities are eligible for somewhat reduced tax credit options.
- Construction and development have until very recently represented significant employment sectors in Northeast Georgia's economy. NEGRC staff compiled a status report on Developments of Regional Impact from 2005 to 2010 to determine what types of projects represent opportunities for the region. A significant majority of the projects *completed* during this timeframe were categorized as Wholesale & Distribution or Industrial, while the bulk of *abandoned* projects were described as Housing or Mixed Use.

HOUSING

Although the region's stock of housing is consistent with observed statewide conditions and averages, housing and related costs represent a major portion of Northeast Georgians' budgets.

- Little attention has been paid to housing issues on a regional scale, specifically related to the quality and availability of workforce housing, and few data exist to assess current and projected needs. A formal study inventorying Northeast Georgia's housing stock, analyzing projected trends, and recommending action items should be considered.
- Cost-burdened households are defined as those in which housing costs represent 30%-49% of income; severely cost-burdened households spend over 50%. The average rates for Northeast Georgia's counties in 2000 were 9.7% cost-burdened and 7.5% severely cost-burdened. The region's two most populous counties, Clarke and Newton, are also the two most cost-burdened: both exhibit figures that exceed state and national rates.
- Adding transportation costs to housing yields aggregate figures that may provide a more realistic impression of true household outlays and burdens. As housing costs decrease further from employment centers, the expense of getting to work is likely to rise, potentially offsetting presumed savings. Although data only exist for six Northeast Georgia counties (Barrow, Clarke, Madison, Oconee, Newton, and Walton), they show that, compared to income, housing and transportation represent a significant portion of residents' finances. Together, these counties represent 73.5% of the region's population, and the portion of households spending at least 45% of income on housing and transportation closely approaches or exceeds half in each of them.
- In a 2008-2009 reporting period, 21,095 homeless persons were reported to live in Northeast Georgia. This far exceeds the 10,139 total shelter beds available in the region, and while all twelve counties were shown to contain homeless individuals, six lack facilities for sheltering them.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION

The region's physical infrastructure is extensive and diverse, featuring state and federal highways (including two Interstate Highways), hospitals, facilities to manage solid waste and wastewater, and other resources. Water and sewerage service varies by locale, as does availability of transportation options aside from single-occupancy vehicle travel. Possibly due to fragmentation of decision-making duties, transportation, infrastructure, and land use planning are not always in accordance with one-another. This phenomenon could cause inefficient investment, direct growth toward areas of a community in which development was not intended, or expose sensitive areas to potential impacts from infrastructure.

- Three-quarters of the region's counties contain hospitals within their boundaries; the three counties without hospitals all immediately border Clarke County, which contains two major medical centers.
- Public water service availability closely relates to population. The region's less populous counties have far lower rates of service (as low as 17.2% of population served) than those with the most residents (as high as 99.8%). Recent major droughts have demonstrated the need for increased water availability and/or conservation measures.
- Northeast Georgia contains one urban transit system (Athens-Clarke County), four county-based rural systems (Elbert, Greene, Jackson, and Morgan), and one municipal rural system (Social Circle). Outside of these communities, public transportation does not exist, although special-needs transportation is available throughout the region.
- The Northeast Georgia Regional Transportation Roundtable, established under House Bill 277, is currently working with the Georgia Department of Transportation to develop a proposed transportation improvements package to present to voters for a 2012 referendum. This will allow regional leaders to prioritize transportation investments over a ten-year period of new revenue generation.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, which has existed under various names since 1963, offers member governments many avenues to coordinate on planning, economic development, workforce development, and aging services. Other instances of intergovernmental coordination take place between municipalities within a given county, between counties, from region to region, and with state and federal government agencies.

- The Upper Oconee Water Basin Authority was created in 1994 to develop a drinking-water reservoir serving Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, and Oconee counties. The project was completed in 2002, and serves as a prime example of regionalism as well as an opportunity for extension into other parts of Northeast Georgia and beyond.
- NEGRC serves as the Local Development District for the four counties included under the Appalachian Regional Commission: Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison. For 2011, ARC has designated Elbert County as “at-risk,” while Barrow, Jackson, and Madison are listed as “transitional” (other classifications include distressed, competitive, and attainment). ARC offers these counties funding opportunities in job creation, infrastructure investment, and workforce development.
- Air pollution in four of the region’s counties has exceeded federal limitations; this may require collaborative mitigation planning with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Environmental Protection Division.
- Northeast Georgia’s twelve counties are split among three of Georgia’s water planning councils, each of which is required to develop a regional water plan by June 2011.
- NEGRC hosts and coordinates activities of the Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force, which, with staff, was responsible for developing the *Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking* (adopted by the NEGRC Council in August 2010). The task force continues to meet quarterly to discuss infrastructure, planning, programming, and policy opportunities in support of plan implementation.
- NEGRC assists the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority, which represents ten of the region’s twelve counties, with coordination and planning activities. An updated Solid Waste Management Plan is due to be completed in 2014.
- NEGRC assists the Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (JDANEG), which represents five counties: Clarke, Elbert, Jackson, Madison, and Oglethorpe. The JDANEG is engaged in forging strategies and partnerships that result in economic development activities on a regional level. Other northeast Georgia counties can seek membership in the JDANEG.
- NEGRC reviews and comments on applications for federal and state grant, loan, and permit assistance submitted by local governments and other applicants within the region. This is known as the Georgia Intergovernmental Consultation Process (Executive Order 12372), and is intended to offer comment on a proposed project’s consistency with local and regional comprehensive plans.
- The NEGRC Council submitted the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources* to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in September 2010. This document will serve as a resource to governments, developers, landowners, and NEGRC staff reviewing Developments of Regional Impact.

Introduction

The type of development that occurs in a region has implications on nearly all facets of planning study, including transportation, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure. This chapter examines projected future development patterns in the Northeast Georgia Region, and discusses areas that will require special attention as the regional planning process unfolds.

Analyzing “development patterns” allows for a broader review than simply looking at land use. It provides insights into relationships between different sectors of a community or region, and helps show intended (or current) scenarios more plainly than land use analysis.

“Areas Requiring Special Attention” are used to discover potential conflicts between desired future development patterns and identified natural and cultural resources, as well as opportunities for quality growth.

Meaning

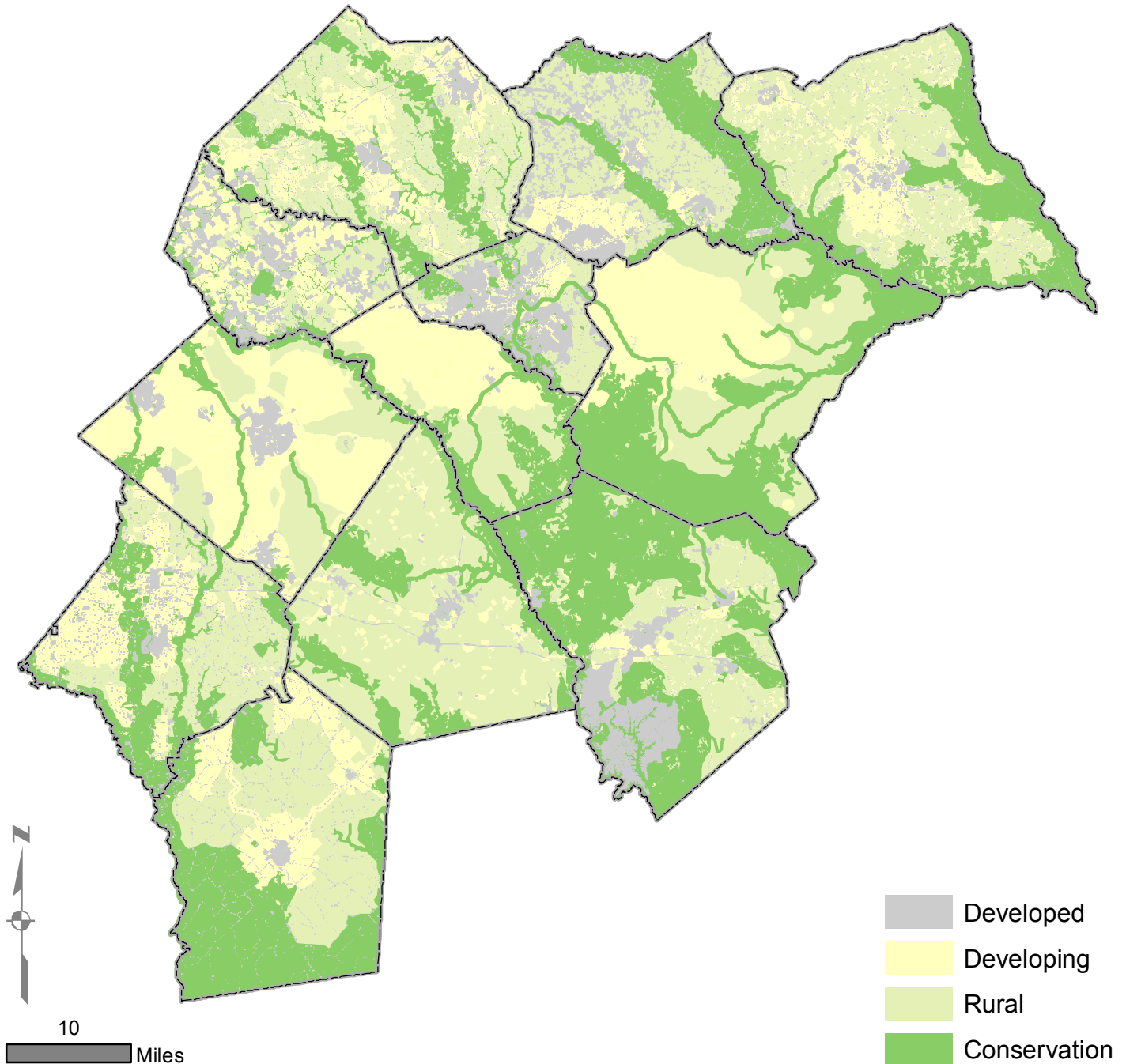
As opposed to traditional land use maps, which often feature upward of ten categories, the **Projected Development Patterns** map that follows utilizes only four classifications of development types:

- **Conservation:** protection of natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas
- **Rural:** not expected to become urbanized or require urban services
- **Developing:** likely will become urbanized and require provision of new urban services
- **Developed:** built-up areas in which urban service provision already exists

The **Areas Requiring Special Attention** map illustrates specific points of interest for consideration during the planning process, especially as they relate to the *Projected Development Patterns* map. These include Regionally Important Resources (RIR) and other natural and cultural resources; areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur; areas in need of redevelopment and/or aesthetic improvements; areas with significant infill opportunities; and areas of significant disinvestment, poverty, and/or unemployment.

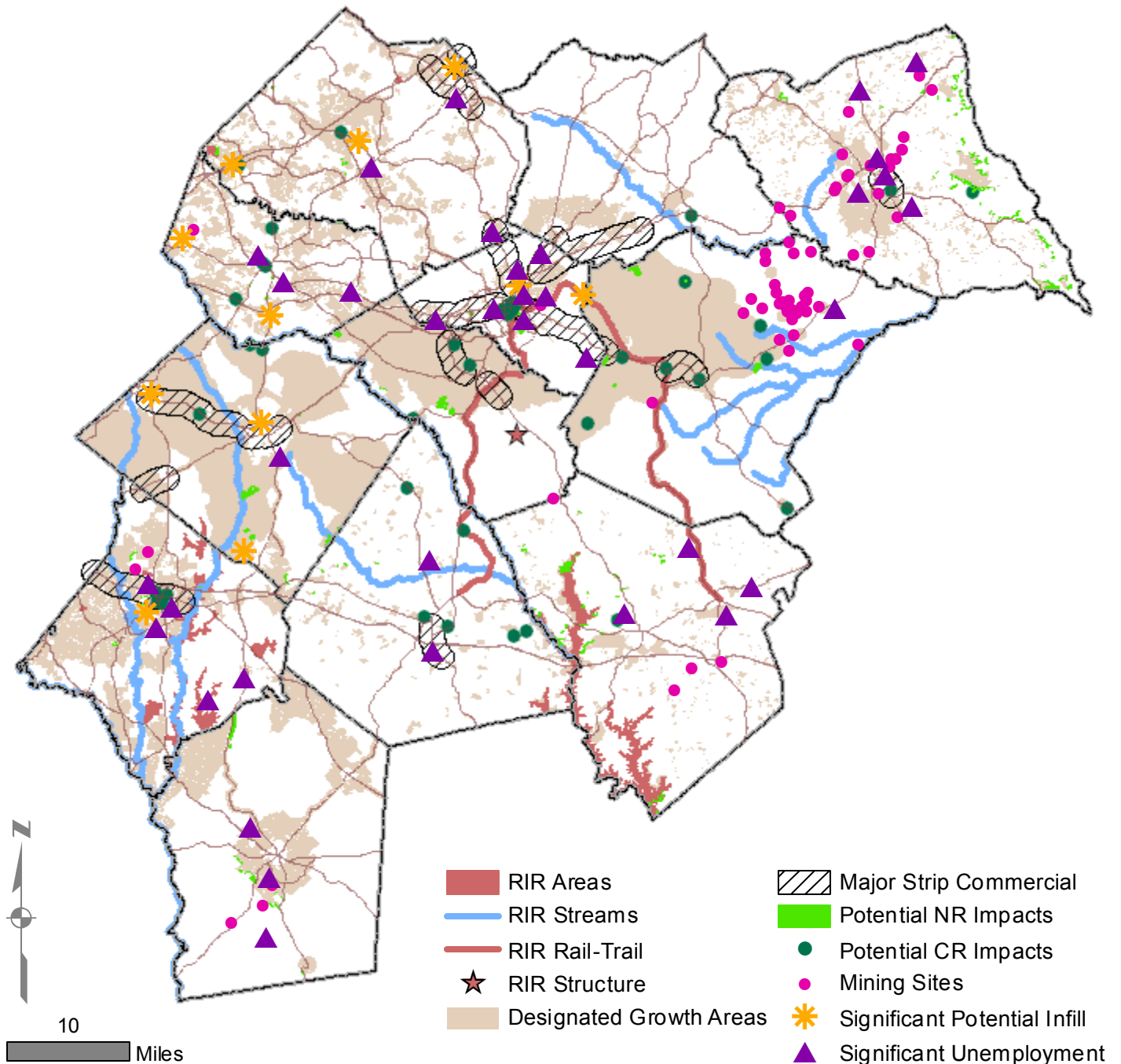
PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

NEGRC compiled datasets of desired future development patterns from each of the region’s communities, assigned each local classification (land use categories such as Residential or Commercial, as well as locally-based “Character Areas” such as Historic Oxford or Village Center) to one of the four classifications of development types mentioned above, and stitched them into one regional dataset and map. Per Georgia planning standards, Regionally Important Resources are included in the Conservation category.



AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

While some of the data sets depicting the information listed previously are displayed in near-row form (RIR, Mining Sites) on the ARSA map, most required analysis or comparison with other data. For example, the Developing lands shown on the PDP map were extracted to form Designated Growth Areas on the ARSA map, and Potential NR (natural resources) Impacts and Potential CR (cultural resources) Impacts were identified by matching known resources to areas designated for growth.



ANALYSIS

In analyzing the PDP map, it becomes clear that Northeast Georgia values retaining its agricultural heritage, exhibited by the fact that over 50% of the region's land mass is designated as Rural. On the other hand, communities anticipate, and are planning for a significant amount of growth. This is not surprising, given the population projections presented previously in this document; physical development is certain to accompany the projected 250% population growth over the next 25 years.

However, designating over one-quarter of the region's land mass for new development (in addition to the nearly one-tenth that already is developed) might not be the most cost-effective or resource-sensitive way to grow. For instance, the potential infill areas identified on the ARSA map point to opportunities for growth concentration where infrastructure may already exist, potentially saving communities the significant expense of extending water and sewerage service, roads, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and other amenities outward into undeveloped areas. Directing growth attention to these infill opportunity areas could also allow communities to safeguard natural resources and preserve habitat and agricultural land. Although the Regionally Important Resource designation process occurred after most Northeast Georgia communities developed their most recent comprehensive plans, counties and municipalities have overwhelmingly succeeded in directing major growth areas away from the resources they have nominated and for which the NEGRC has developed the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources*. In many cases, local governments may also avoid impacts to natural and cultural resources from development of any type by assuring adherence to best practices (see *Resource Management Plan*) and by steering intensive projects away from sensitive areas through site-specific zoning regulations.

Areas that might be candidates for potential redevelopment, aesthetic improvements, or reinvestment (examples of which, as found on the ARSA map, include Major Strip Commercial corridors and Significant Unemployment areas) are scattered throughout the region, and in some cases do not generally follow patterns of existing or projected development. While there are no known large-scale brownfield projects that would trigger significant redevelopment opportunities, the region's many mining sites could present both opportunities and challenges in the future.

Many of the region's communities' comprehensive plans were developed prior to the worst of the recent housing collapse, meaning that the future development patterns illustrated here might not reflect current realities, especially as they pertain to the areas identified as Developing.

Overview

The data contained on the following pages were assembled from a variety of national, state, and regional resources as a first step in the analysis of existing conditions in Northeast Georgia. Resources include:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Geologic Survey
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Georgia Department of Economic Development
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Georgia Department of Transportation
- University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government
- University of Georgia Selig Center for Economic Growth
- NEGRC Planning & Government Services Division
- NEGRC Workforce Development Division
- NEGRC Aging Division

These data both informed and validated the list of Potential Issues and Opportunities described in Chapter Three.

NOTE: The development of the Regional Assessment preceded the release of 2010 U.S. Census data for the State of Georgia.; these data are expected by April 2011.

POPULATION

Historical and Projected Regional Population

1990	2000	2010	2020	2035
328,223	438,300	585,627	767,691	1,143,941

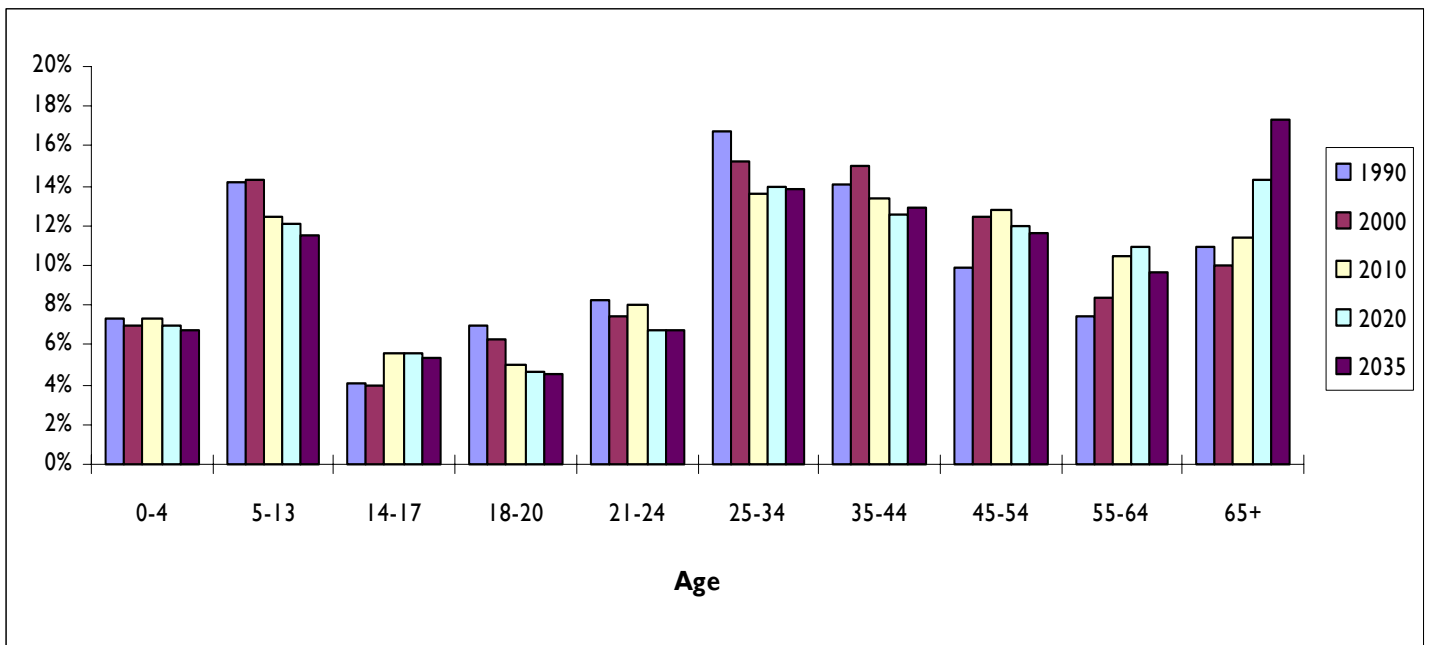
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, projections calculated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia.

Historical and Projected Regional Growth Rate

1990-2000	2000-10	2010-20	2020-35	1990-2035
33.5%	33.6%	31.1%	49.0%	249.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, projections calculated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia.

Historical and Projected Regional Age Distribution as a Percent of Total Population



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, projections calculated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia.

Historical Regional Racial & Ethnic Composition

	1990	2000	Change
White Alone	76.4%	74.1%	-3.01%
Black or African American Alone	21.2%	18.7%	-11.85%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.2%	0.2%	22.21%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.9%	1.4%	55.97%
Other	0.3%	2.4%	746.48%
Latino or Hispanic Origin	1.0%	3.2%	204.18%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. The dramatic increase from 1990 to 2000 in the 'Other' category is likely due to the inclusion of the "One or more races" option, which was new to the 2000 Census.

POPULATION, cont.

Median Household Income

1990	2000	2010	2020	2035
\$25,566	\$39,550	\$42,978	\$48,790	\$62,183

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, projections calculated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia.

Northeast Georgia counties’ median household incomes have historically fallen below Georgia’s; in 1990, the Median Household Income for the state was \$29,021, rising by approximately 46.2% in 2000 to \$42,433. During this same decade, while still below the state figures numerically, the average Median Household Income for Northeast Georgia counties increased by 54.7%.

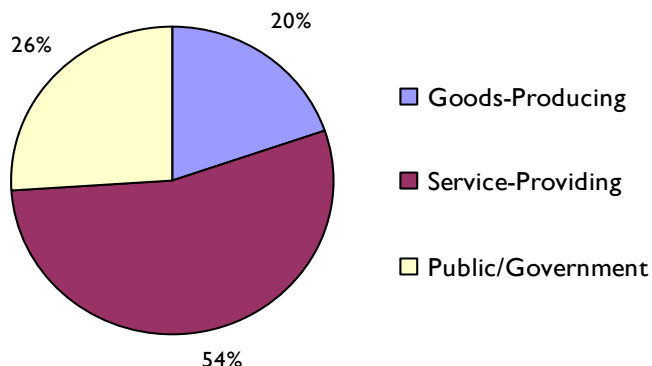
2009 Poverty Estimates by County

	Total Population		Children Under 18 Years	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Barrow	8,724	12.2	3,426	17.1
Clarke	38,764	36.3	7,178	34.3
Elbert	4,180	20.8	1,384	28.9
Greene	3,079	19.9	1,070	33.1
Jackson	8,971	14.3	3,277	19.7
Jasper	2,134	15.5	916	26.5
Madison	5,103	18.3	1,738	25.2
Morgan	2,863	15.5	1,140	23.5
Newton	12,565	12.8	5,748	19.9
Oconee	2,780	8.4	950	10.2
Oglethorpe	2,238	15.8	729	21.7
Walton	10,784	12.5	3,938	17.1

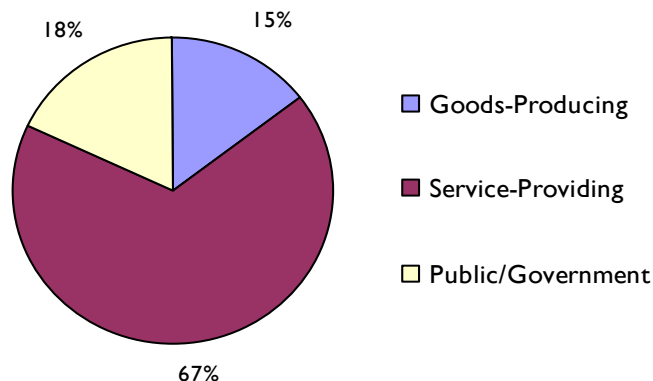
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2009 Northeast Georgia Industry Mix



2009 Statewide Industry Mix



Top 10 Industrial Sectors (1st Quarter, 2010)

Rank	Northeast Georgia Region	Georgia
1	Education Services	Health Care and Social Assistance
2	Manufacturing	Retail Trade
3	Retail Trade	Education Services
4	Health Care and Social Assistance	Manufacturing
5	Accommodation and Food Services	Accommodation and Food Services
6	Public Administration	Public Administration
7	Construction	Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., Remediation
8	Wholesale Trade	Professional, Scientific & Technical Svc.
9	Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., Remediation	Wholesale Trade
10	Professional, Scientific & Technical Svc.	Transportation and Warehousing

Source: Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program.

The Education Services sector includes establishments providing instruction and training, such as schools, colleges, universities, and training centers. It is more likely that an employee might work in such an establishment in Northeast Georgia than in the state at large due to the presence of the University of Georgia in Athens. While there is a notable presence of establishments and employees providing these education services within the region, there is a lack of employment in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector in comparison to the state. This Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector comprises establishments whose activities require a high degree of expertise and training, including legal advice and representation, accounting services, architectural and engineering services, computer services, and others. The Construction sector is more significant in Northeast Georgia than in the state; these establishments build and engineer projects, including roads and utilities, and include general, specialty trade, and other contractors. The proximity of Northeast Georgia to the sprawling metropolitan Atlanta region likely contributes to the comparative prevalence of employment in this sector.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, cont.

Northeast Georgia Educational Attainment by Age (2000)

	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	All Ages
Some High School	21.5%	17.5%	19.7%	24.7%	47.5%	24.7%
High School Graduate/ GED	24.0%	32.1%	36.6%	33.5%	25.5%	31.1%
Some College	46.8%	26.7%	24.1%	21.9%	12.8%	26.6%
4-Year College Graduate	7.3%	16.9%	11.9%	9.9%	8.2%	11.0%
Post-Graduate Studies	0.4%	6.8%	7.7%	10.0%	6.1%	6.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Of the population aged 25 and over in 2000 throughout the state of Georgia, 78.6% had at least graduated high school, 49.9% had at least had some college education, 24.3% earned at least a bachelor’s degree, and 8.3% had earned an advanced degree.

Employment Wage Statistics (1st Quarter, 2010)

	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage
Northeast Georgia	\$16.00	\$643	\$33,436
Georgia	\$20.95	\$838	\$43,576

Source: Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program.

Northeast Georgia Per Capita Income

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
\$24,536	\$25,723	\$26,488	\$27,406	\$28,912

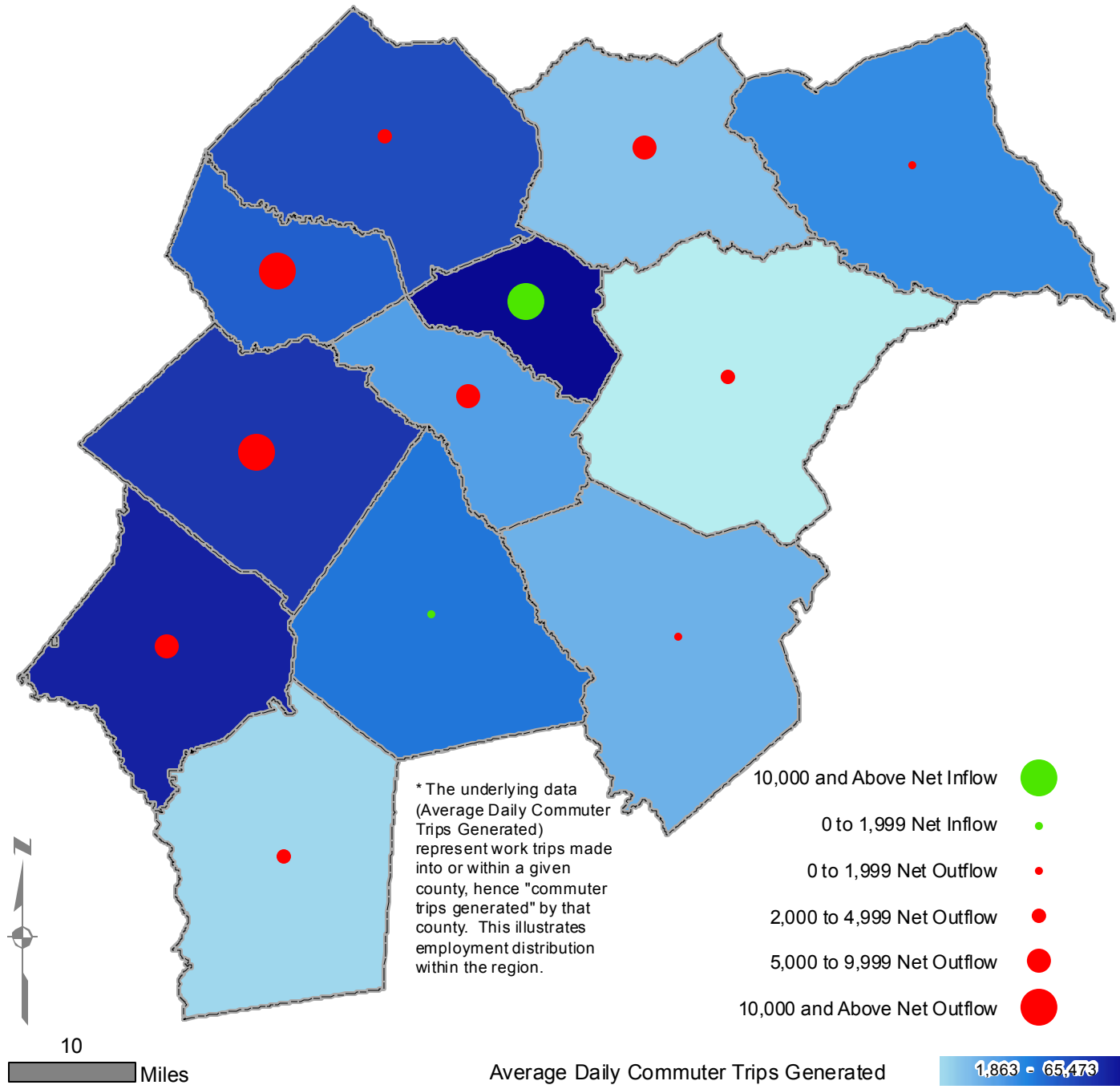
Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile.

Unemployment Rate

	% 2008	% 2009	% Change
Northeast Georgia	6.1	9.5	55.7
Georgia	6.2	9.6	54.8
United States	5.8	9.3	60.3

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile.

COMMUTING PATTERNS



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, cont.

Joint Development Authorities

Facilitated by NEGRC, the Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (Clarke, Elbert, Jackson, Madison, and Oglethorpe counties) is in the process of identifying priorities to guide joint development projects in the near term. As members of the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority, representatives from Greene and Putnam counties meet quarterly to report on unemployment, industrial project activity, and workforce issues. The Joint Development Authority of Jasper, Morgan, Newton, and Walton formed in 1999 to assist in the development of the Stanton Springs Industrial Park, a 1,620-acre industrial site located on the south side of I-20 straddling the Newton-Morgan county border. The Georgia Bioscience Joint Development Authority (Clarke, Barrow, Oconee, Gwinnett counties) was recently awarded (June 2010) a \$50,000 planning match grant to conduct an economic development study of the 55-mile Highway 316 Corridor. A \$500 job tax credit per job is available for those counties within the jurisdiction of a Joint Development Authority; all 12 Northeast Georgia counties are eligible for this additional credit.

Northeast Georgia Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones are designated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in areas displaying “pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, general distress, and blight.” Prior to submitting an application for this designation, a local government is required to have either an enterprise zone or an urban redevelopment plan in place and identify those census block groups exhibiting at least 15% poverty. Opportunity Zones currently exist in the City of Covington, City of Monroe, City of Social Circle, and Walton County. Businesses within these four Opportunity Zones are eligible for the maximum Job Tax Credit of \$3,500 per eligible job created.

Tax Credits

The statewide Job Tax Credit program provides a tax credit for businesses engaged in manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, processing, telecommunications, broadcasting, tourism, or research and development industries. The 159 Georgia counties are ranked and placed in economic tiers based on unemployment rate, per capita income, and percentage of residents with incomes below the poverty level. Credits are applicable to eligible new full-time, permanent jobs created. For businesses in Tier 1 counties, a minimum 5 new jobs are required to receive a \$3,500 credit per job, businesses in Tier 2 counties are required to create at least 10 new jobs for a \$2,500 credit each, Tier 3 businesses must create 15 new jobs for a \$1,250 credit each, and Tier 4 businesses must create a minimum of 25 new jobs for a \$750 credit each. These credits are not generally available for retail businesses unless those businesses are located in one of the 40 least developed counties or in census designated areas near a military base or identified Opportunity Zone.

Tier 1: Elbert

Tier 2: Clarke, Greene, Jasper, Newton

Tier 3: Barrow, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oglethorpe, Walton

Tier 4: Oconee

Georgia Work Ready

As of November 2010, eleven of the twelve counties in Northeast Georgia were either Certified Work Ready Communities or in the process of becoming certified; Jasper County has not applied for designation.

In addition to individual certification, eight Northeast Georgia counties belong to both the Metro Atlanta-Athens Bioscience Work Ready Region (or Innovation Crescent Regional Partnership) and the Supply Chain Management Crescent Work Ready Region: Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton. Each of these overlapping regions also includes the metropolitan Atlanta counties of Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett. Jobs identified as critical to the growth of the life sciences industry include biological technicians, chemical technicians, chemists, customer service representatives, medical and clinical laboratory technicians and technologists, medical and health services managers, microbiologists, and quality assurance technicians. Target industries in supply chain management include truck transportation, general and specialized freight trucking, and warehousing and storage, as this region is competitive in these areas due to proximity to interstate highways, rail, and an international airport.

Colleges and Universities

The University of Georgia was founded in 1785. As of late 2009, the institution employed over 10,000 people and had a student population of nearly 35,000. The main campus is located in Athens.

Athens Technical College is a 45-year old institution offering certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs as well as continuing education classes, adult literacy services, and career development assistance. With a main campus in Athens, satellite campuses are located in Elbert, Greene, and Walton counties.

Founded in 1897, Piedmont College maintains a campus in Athens designed for commuting students. Courses are organized under four schools: Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, and Nursing.

Oxford College of Emory University is located in the City of Oxford, in Newton County. Students may attend school at this small campus for two years before completing a baccalaureate degree at Emory University in Atlanta.

A branch of Troy University, founded in 1887, is located in the City of Covington, in Newton County. This site offers a combination of in-class graduate degree programs as well as online degree programs.

The Georgia Perimeter College-Newton Campus opened in June 2007, in Covington. This site offers associate degree and certificate programs.

The Covington Campus of DeKalb Technical College, serving Rockdale, Newton, and Morgan counties, opened in 1997. General education courses are offered, in addition to degree, diploma, and technical certificate programs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, cont.

Economic Trends

In 2009, the five largest employers in the Northeast Georgia region were:

- Athens Regional Medical Center (Clarke County)
- Pilgrims Pride Corporation (Clarke County)
- St. Mary's Health Care System (Clarke County)
- University of Georgia (Main campus in Clarke County)
- Wal-Mart (Multiple locations)

Between 2008 and 2009, the number of jobs in Northeast Georgia decreased by 6.6%, from 177,829 to 166,130.

(Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile)



Anecdotally, the Director of the NEGRC Workforce Development Division has observed the steadiness of jobs held in the medical fields and a decrease in manufacturing in concert with national trends. In addition, she has noted an interesting increase in those seeking training and subsequently finding steady employment in the trucking industry, likely due to the relative competitiveness of the Northeast Georgia region in the transportation industry as described previous in the “Georgia Work Ready” section.

Related to this phenomenon is the potential Highway 17 widening project supported by representatives from Elbert County in the Northeast Georgia region, as well as those from Stephens, Franklin, and Hart counties in the Georgia Mountains region to the north, and Wilkes and McDuffie counties in the Central Savannah River region to the southeast. This project, estimated to cost approximately \$500 million, could increase the capacity for cargo transportation between the Port of Savannah and Interstate 85, providing an alternative to routing through metropolitan Atlanta. Potential impacts on several Northeast Georgia counties have been discussed, though a formal study has not been conducted; proponents are in the process of seeking funding to implement this vision.

Developments of Regional Impact

NEGRC has been responsible for evaluating the potential regional impacts of large-scale developments that meet a certain threshold, known as Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs). NEGRC staff surveyed the status of DRIs throughout Northeast Georgia between 2005 and 2010. Local government contacts were asked to indicate whether each DRI had been Built, was Developing, or had been Abandoned. While NEGRC staff did not receive detailed information for all projects, a trend was observed in the responses. Of those indicating the project had been built, approximately 78% were categorized as either Wholesale & Distribution or Industrial facilities. Conversely, approximately 89% of projects labeled as abandoned were categorized as either Mixed-Use or Housing. A greater diversity was observed for those projects labeled as developing.

I. REGIONAL PLAN		Yes	No	N/A	Explain (required for "Yes" or "No" answers)	Recommendations (in the Developer for Improving the Project)
PART 1: REGIONAL CONSISTENCY ASSESSMENT						
JURISDICTION:					Date RCA Completed, MD/YYYY:	
DRI #:					RC DRI Reviewer:	
TENTATIVE NAME OF DEVELOPMENT:					Action Triggering Review:	
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT:		SELECT ONE				
Is the development consistent with the Regional Development Map and Defining Narrative?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Is the development consistent with the Guiding Principles of the Regional Plan?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
II. REGIONAL RESOURCE PLAN AND RIRs		Yes	No	N/A	Explain (required for "Yes" or "No" answers)	Recommendations (in the Developer for Improving the Project)
If within one mile of any area on the RIR map, is the development consistent with the Guidance for Appropriate Development Practices in the Regional Resource Plan?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
III. INTERJURISDICTIONAL IMPACTS		Yes	No	N/A	Explain (required for "Yes" or "No" answers)	Recommendations (in the Developer for Improving the Project)
Does the development avoid or mitigate negative effect on public facilities (roads, stormwater / floodplain management, water quality, etc.) in neighboring jurisdictions?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Are neighboring jurisdictions aware of, and prepared to manage, impacts of the development on public facilities (roads, stormwater / floodplain management, water quality, etc.) in their jurisdictions?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Are other affected jurisdictions, including school boards, aware of, and prepared to manage, the impacts of this development?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
IV. TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS		Yes	No	N/A	Explain (required for "Yes" or "No" answers)	Recommendations (in the Developer for Improving the Project)

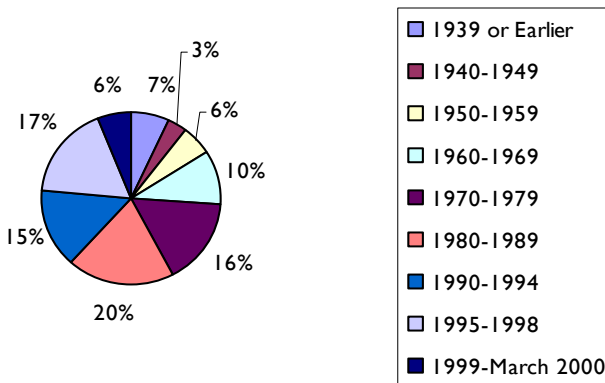
HOUSING

Historical and Projected Total Housing Units

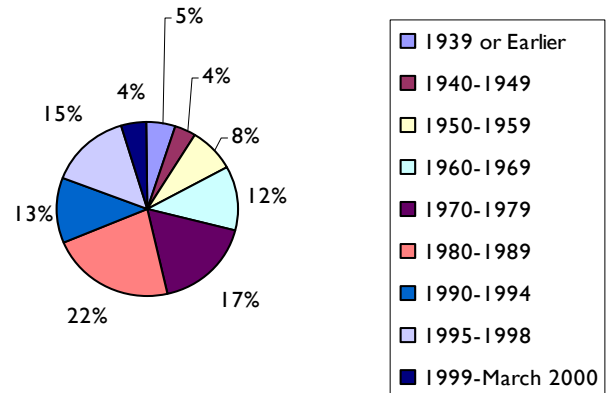
1990	2000	2010	2020	2035
129,532	173,328	219,288	294,336	439,041

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, projections calculated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia.

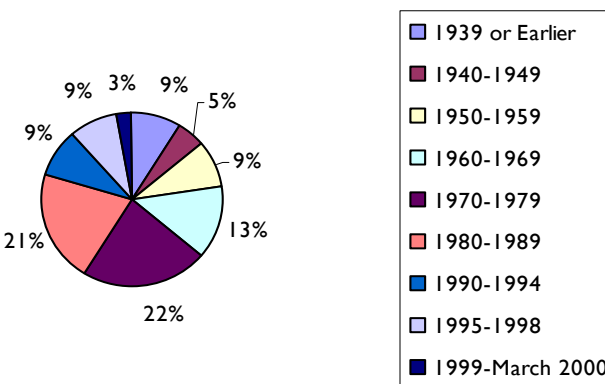
Age of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in 2000 (Region)



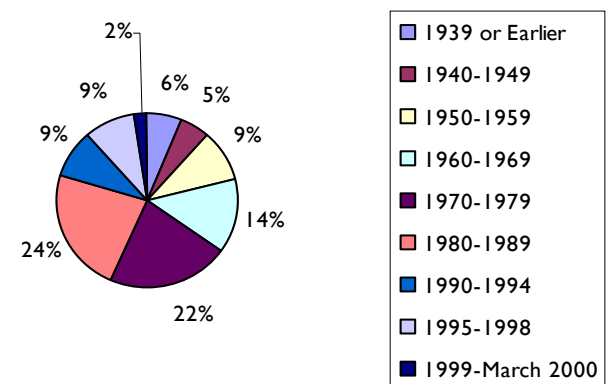
Age of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in 2000 (Georgia)



Age of Renter-Occupied Housing Units in 2000 (Region)



Age of Renter-Occupied Housing Units in 2000 (Georgia)



2009 New Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits

	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Total Units
Barrow	79	0	79
Clarke	90	18	108
Elbert	32	0	32
Greene	127	0	127
Jackson	148	0	148
Jasper	48	0	48
Madison	58	0	58
Morgan	34	0	34
Newton	54	0	54
Oconee	71	2	73
Oglethorpe	58	0	58
Walton	61	64	125
Region	860	84	944

Source: University of Georgia Selig Center for Economic Growth.

HOUSING, cont.

Cost-Burdened Households

A cost-burdened household pays between 30 and 49 percent of its household income on housing costs, while a severely cost-burdened household pays at least 50 percent. In 2000, Clarke and Newton counties showed the greatest percentages of cost-burdened (13.64% and 13.45%, respectively) and severely cost-burdened (19.23% and 8.61%, respectively) households within the region. Both of these counties showed higher percentages of cost-burdened households than the state of Georgia and the U.S.

A New Measure of Affordability

Another way to measure affordability is to combine transportation costs with housing costs. The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) has developed the H + T Affordability Index, an online tool for measuring housing and transportation costs for Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) regions. In Northeast Georgia, Clarke and parts of Madison and Oconee counties comprise the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study MPO, or MACORTS. Using 2000 U.S. Census data, CNT has estimated that 59.8% of households in MACORTS counties pay at least 45 percent in housing and transportation costs combined. By county, this is calculated as follows:

- Clarke: 55.2%
- Madison: 62.9%
- Oconee: 76.6%

Portions of Barrow, Newton, and Walton counties are included in the Atlanta MPO. The percentage of households paying at least 45 percent of their incomes on combined housing and transportation costs in these three counties are as follows:

- Barrow: 44.9%
- Newton: 44.6%
- Walton: 46.6%

In total, these six counties represent 73.5% of the total population of Northeast Georgia.

Substandard Conditions

In 2000, approximately 1% of housing units in Northeast Georgia lacked complete plumbing facilities; this is the same percentage observed at the state level. Most of these units were found in Clarke (175 units), Newton (173 units), and Walton counties (173 units).

Homeless

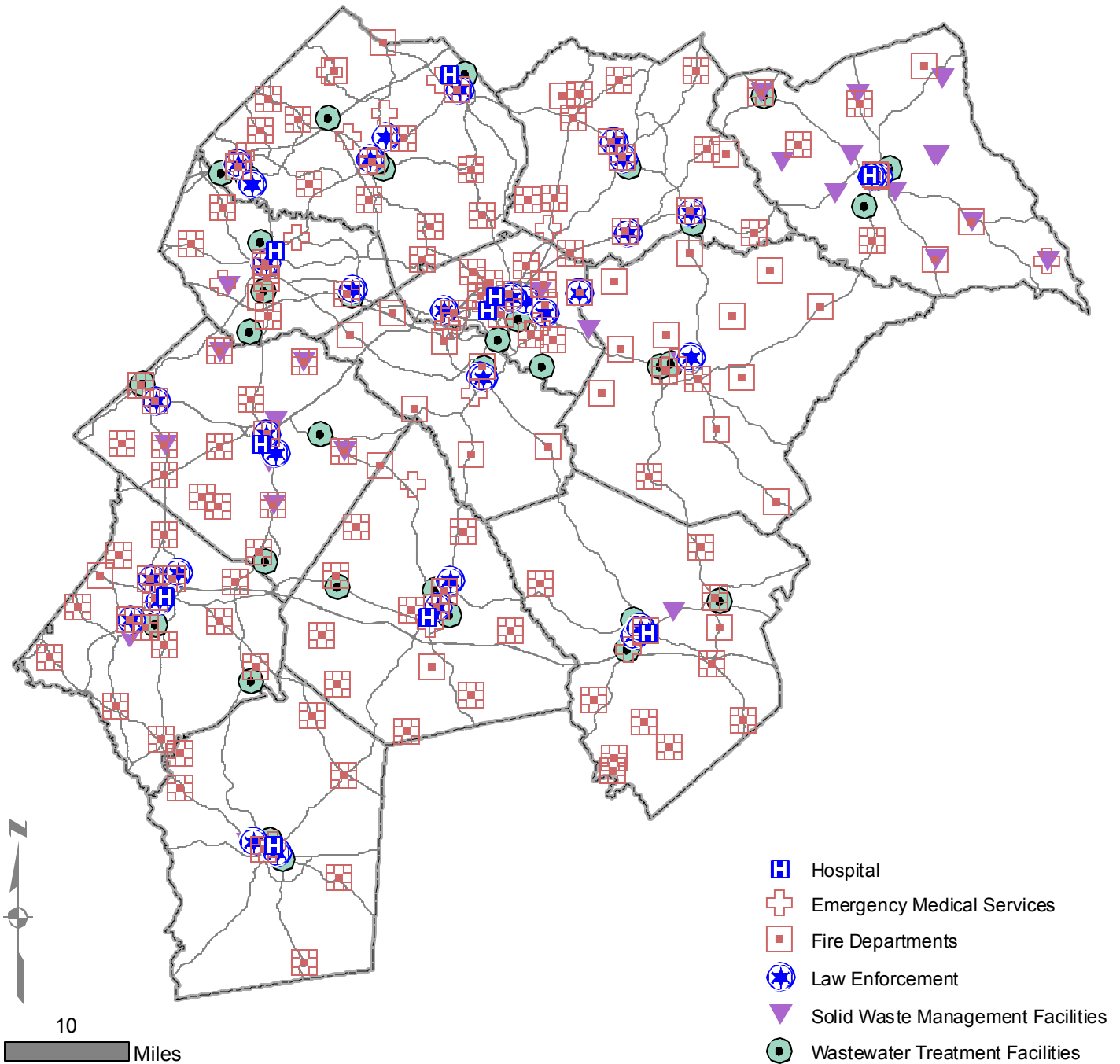
The State of Georgia contains seven Continuums of Care (CoCs) that work to collect and share data on the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population within their respective jurisdiction. One of these is located in Athens-Clarke County. DCA manages the Georgia Balance of the State CoC, using a statistical sampling methodology developed at Kennesaw State University to arrive at a predictive count of unsheltered homeless persons. The total number of beds includes those in emergency and transitional shelters, including shelters providing services for domestic violence victims.

2008-2009 Homeless Persons and Bed Inventories

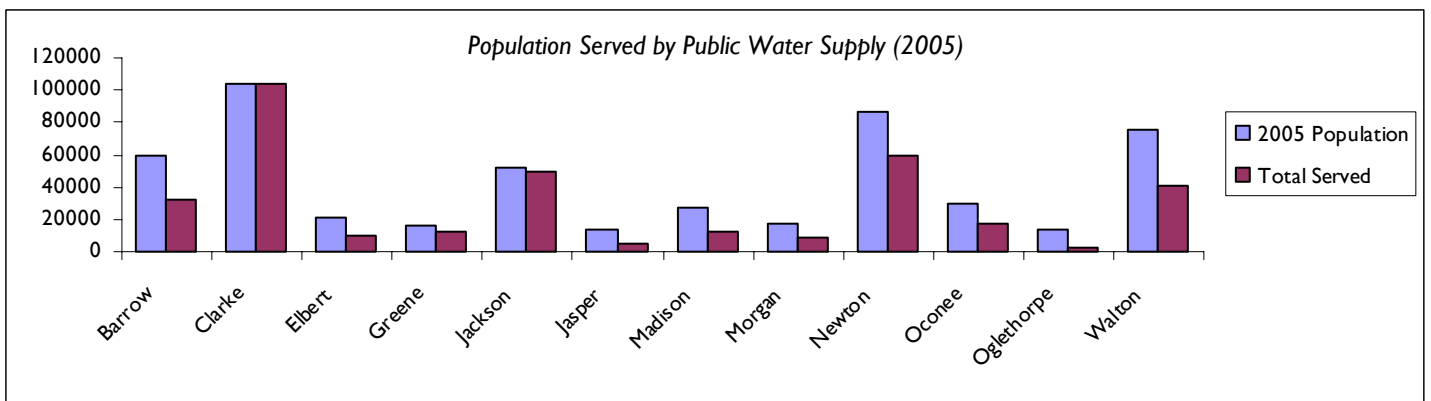
	Sheltered Homeless	Unsheltered Homeless	Total Homeless	Total Beds
Barrow	54	63	117	69
Clarke	228	206	434	213
Elbert	9	52	61	18
Greene	4	44	48	15
Jackson	169	80	249	180
Jasper	0	30	30	0
Madison	0	17	17	0
Morgan	0	22	22	0
Newton	0	99	99	0
Oconee	5	10	15	5
Oglethorpe	0	21	21	0
Walton	0	81	81	0
State	8,994	12,101	21,095	10,139

Source: 2008 & 2009 Continuum of Care Housing Inventories and 2009 Homeless Count and Predictive Model, *Georgia's 21,000: 2009 Report on Homelessness*.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES



- Hospital
- Emergency Medical Services
- Fire Departments
- Law Enforcement
- Solid Waste Management Facilities
- Wastewater Treatment Facilities



Source: U.S.G.S., *Water Use in Georgia by County for 2005*; and *Water-Use Trends, 1980-2005*

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority

Created in 1994, this collaboration of officials representing Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, and Oconee counties initiated the development of the Bear Creek Reservoir in southwest Jackson County. The project was completed in 2002, and provides treated water to Barrow, Jackson, and Oconee counties. Clarke County receives raw water for processing at its treatment plant. The Authority continues to meet every two months at NEGRC for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the Reservoir Management Plan.

Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority

This collaborative is comprised of representatives from ten Northeast Georgia counties, excluding Newton and Jasper. In 2004, the Authority completed a full Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP), and has just completed an update to its Implementation Program, per the Georgia minimum planning standards. According to this update, the average waste disposal rate in the 10-county area is approximately 4.59 pounds per person, per day, nearly 0.3 pounds more than the 2009 national average of 4.3 pounds per capita. A stated goal in the updated Implementation Program is to reduce this rate by ten percent over the next ten years. An updated Short-Term Work Program was provided for the region and for each individual county through 2013; the Authority will be required to complete a full SWMP by 2014.

Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is a multi-state regional economic development agency that was established in 1965. Four Northeast Georgia counties are part of the Appalachian Region: Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison. NEGRC is considered the “Local Development District” for these counties, and is eligible to obtain funding for a variety of projects which address the following four strategic goals:

- Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation.
- Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy.
- Develop and improve Appalachia’s infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive.
- Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia’s isolation.

The Appalachian Regional Commission compares three-year unemployment rates, per capita market income, and poverty rates from each Appalachian county with national averages. Five economic status designations are then used to classify the counties: distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment. For 2011, Elbert has been designated as “at-risk,” while Barrow, Jackson, and Madison are considered “transitional.”

Non-Attainment Designations

In 2009, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD)

recommended that the following Northeast Georgia counties be designated as non-attainment due to the presence of ground-level ozone averaged over 8 hours: Barrow, Clarke, Newton, and Walton. In 2004, Barrow, Newton, and Walton counties were designated as non-attainment areas based on their respective levels of fine particle pollution.

Water Planning Regions

Northeast Georgia is divided among three water planning councils identified at the state level by river basin, as follows:

- Middle Ocmulgee: Jasper, Newton
- Upper Oconee: Barrow, Clarke, Greene, Jackson, Morgan, Oconee, Walton
- Savannah-Upper Ogeechee: Elbert, Madison, Oglethorpe

Each of these councils is charged with developing regional water plans outlining the preferred water management practices in support of meeting future needs and including forecasts for water and wastewater demand. These plans are to be submitted to EPD in final form by June 2011.

2010 Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking

In July 2009, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) contracted with NEGRC to develop the *Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking*. A Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force was assembled to guide the planning process, resulting in a proposed network of bike lanes, paved shoulders, and shared-use paths and a list of recommended planning tools, policies, and programs. The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force continues to meet quarterly to support plan implementation.

Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources

In 2010, NEGRC prepared a resource management plan for designated regionally important resources (RIRs) in accordance with the regulations established by DCA. Designated resources were placed into one of three categories: Conservation, Heritage, and Water. Development practices, policies, and protection measures were developed for each resource category as guidelines for landowners, developers, and local governments. NEGRC will utilize these guidelines when reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) proposed within one mile of an area included on the RIR map.

Tourism

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) Tourism Division has grouped all 159 counties state into nine “travel regions.” Northeast Georgia counties are split among three of these, as follows:

- *Northeast Georgia Mountains*: Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, Madison
- *Historic Heartland*: Clarke, Jasper, Oconee, Morgan, Newton, Walton
- *Classic South*: Greene, Oglethorpe

Introduction

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs publishes a Local Assessment form to be used in analyzing consistency with its Quality Community Objectives (QCO); this Assessment is also designated for use in regional analyses for consistency with QCOs. The Yes/No questions asked in the form were evaluated in two ways: first, by analyzing each of the region's communities' individual responses as found in their comprehensive plans and forming a regional average answer, and additionally, by answering applicable questions (those that are not strictly localized) as if they had been asked of the region at-large. The following summary provides a general, regionalized assessment of the QCOs.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

	Yes	No
Traditional Neighborhoods	Clean/safe public space programs Some trips can be made on foot (esp. re: schools) Schools located in or near neighborhoods	Mixed-use/compact development Street tree requirements/planting
Infill Development	Inventories of areas ripe for potential development Small-lot development (<5,000 SF)	Brownfield/greyfield redevelopment promotion Nodal development focused on intersections
Sense of Place	Distinct characteristics History/heritage protection Signage regulation	Ordinances regulating development aesthetics Guidebook to illustrate desired development types Farmland protection
Transportation Alternatives	Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking Shared parking for retail/commercial uses	Focus on non-automobile transportation/transit
Regional Identity	Aesthetic, economic, agricultural, historic, educational, and cultural commonalities and interdependence	

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

	Yes	No
Heritage Preservation	Historic districts and historic preservation commissions	Ordinances to ensure that new development complements historic resources
Open Space Preservation	Greenspace planning and preservation Allowance for conservation subdivisions	
Environmental Protection	Inventories/protection programs for natural resources Environmental and tree preservation/re-planting ordinances and enforcement Stormwater best management practices Regionally Important Resources Protection Plan	

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Yes	No
Growth Preparedness	Shared 20-year population projections (LGs, SDs, etc.) Designated growth areas based on natural resources Public information relatively easy to obtain	Capital improvements program that supports growth plans
Appropriate Businesses	Economic development efforts based on communities' strengths/weaknesses and sustainability, diversity, and compatibility with existing businesses	
Employment Options	Small business development (entrepreneur support) Jobs for skilled/unskilled labor Professional/managerial jobs	
Housing Choices	Housing diversity meets communities' needs (incl. MF)	Traditional development patterns, especially those that follow communities' original growth patterns Community development corporations that build low-income/special-needs housing
Educational Opportunities	Workforce training related to available opportunities Higher education	Job opportunities for college graduates

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

	Yes	No
Regional Relations	Participate in regional economic development and environmental organizations/initiatives Coordinate to increase efficiency of service provision Coordinate planning activities with adjacent LGs	(Potential for more region-wide coordination)
Regional Cooperation	Communication/coordination on problem-solving and planning	