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**2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

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# Acknowledgments

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

## PURPOSE

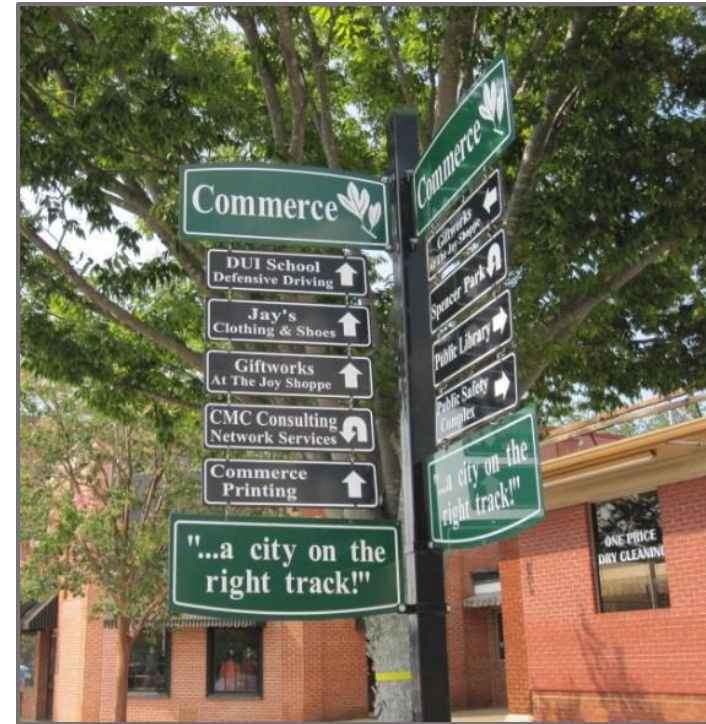
This comprehensive plan, updated for the City of Commerce in 2015, serves as a guide for local government officials and community leaders for making decisions in support of the community's stated vision. Based on input from the public and a Citizens Advisory Committee, the plan identifies needs and opportunities for the community, as well as goals for the city's future, and policies that provide guidance and direction for achieving these goals. The plan also offers insight into what types of land use and development are appropriate in the City of Commerce. A community work program is included that specifies a route for working towards implementation of the plan.

This comprehensive plan should be used as a guide by the local government for assessing development proposals, rezoning applications, and redevelopment plans. Residents, business owners, and developers may access the plan as well, to learn about appropriate land use, development, and the trajectory of growth for the City of Commerce. Essentially, the plan seeks to answer the questions:

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**Where are we?, Where do we want to be?,  
and How will we get there?**

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## PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan process follows the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (“DCA”), O.C.G.A. Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective March 1, 2014. The DCA rules state that the Comprehensive Plan consists of the following three distinct components:



## NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

An analysis of the community’s needs and opportunities will help determine the existing conditions of the city. This will assist the community in identifying the issues that it needs to address and the opportunities on which it can capitalize.

## COMMUNITY GOALS:

Through public and committee meetings, the City’s vision, goals, and policies are developed to determine the community’s future direction. As a part of this component, policies are identified to assist in making decisions that are consistent with community goals. Additionally, character areas, or focused areas of planning with special conditions or needs, are defined. This will help determine which parts of the community are to be enhanced or preserved, and how to guide zoning and policies in the future.

## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM:

The final component of the comprehensive plan, the Community Work Program, outlines steps and strategies for achieving the community’s goals and implementing its plans. The Work Program will include a short term work plan, identifying priority projects, potential collaborations, and funding strategies.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

### NEGRC'S ROLE

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Planning and Government Services Division facilitated the 2015 update of Commerce's plan. Leading community input sessions and Citizen Advisory Committee meetings, the NEGRC team gathered feedback and guidance from the public, and used this information to assemble the Comprehensive Plan and make recommendations that are reflective of the community's desires. The City Council and Mayor hold ultimate responsibility and authority to approve and direct the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan documents.

### PUBLIC INPUT AND CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The 2015 update of Commerce's Comprehensive Plan was driven by public involvement. The planning process began with a public hearing, held on July 30, 2015. Following the hearing, the public was invited to participate in a SWOT analysis of the community. Additionally, a survey was utilized to collect public input, and made available online. The survey questions are located in the appendix along with a summary of the results.

In addition to gathering public input, several work sessions were held with a Citizens Advisory Committee, a group of stakeholders representing various interests in Commerce. This Committee provided valuable feedback, guidance, and recommendations about the comprehensive plan and served the integral role of guiding the plan as a document representative of Commerce's vision. Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee included:

- Joe Leffew – Chairman of Planning Commission
- Stacey Rucker – Local Real Estate Agent
- Melinda Cochran – Member of Planning Commission
- Johnny Eubanks – Member of City Council
- Dylan Wilbanks – Local Attorney
- Kyle Moore – Member of School Board/Former Planning Commission Member
- James Wascher – Finance Director
- Chris Bray – Local Downtown Business and Property Owner
- Les Knoblock – Local Downtown Business and Property Owner/Real Estate Appraiser
- David Zellner – Planning and Zoning

The Comprehensive Plan Update was additionally built upon input that was gathered during public meetings and numerous stakeholder committee meetings that occurred during the development of the *Blueprint Strategy: A Plan for Downtown Commerce*. Driven by a stakeholder-driven process and developed and managed by the NEGRC for the City in 2015, the Blueprint Strategy provides goals, objectives, and action steps for working towards a downtown that fosters a vibrant economic town center and meets the needs of the community.

## **REVIEW PROCESS**

According to the DCA's new rules for comprehensive planning, effective March 1, 2014, the City must transmit the plan to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) when all three components are complete. The transmittal must also include the community's certification that it has considered both the Regional Water Plan and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria. Once it completes its review, the NEGRC will forward the plan to the DCA for review. Once the plan has been found by the DCA to be in compliance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures, the City Council must adopt the approved plan. Adoption must occur at least 60 days, but no more than one year, after submittal to the NEGRC for review.

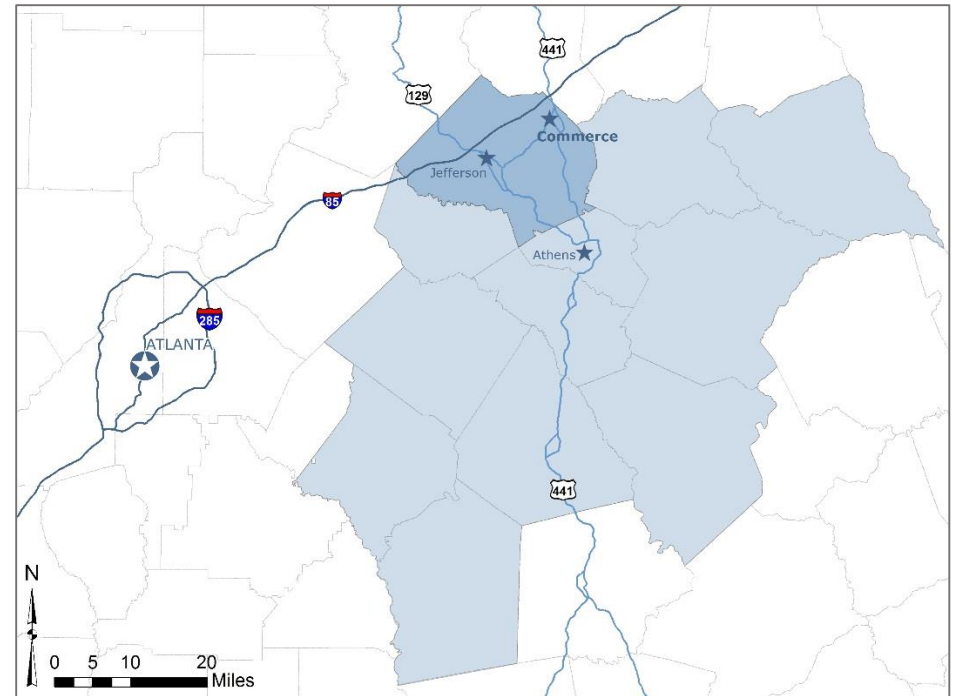


## PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Commerce is located near the foothills of the North Georgia Mountains and adjacent to the Interstate 85 corridor. Originally named Harmony Grove, the City became incorporated in 1884 and initially flourished as a cotton and later textiles market.

Commerce has a population of 6,555 (U.S. Census estimate for 2013) and is located in one of the fastest growing counties in the region. With a population of 61,044 (U.S. Census estimate for 2013), Jackson County's population is projected to grow to 123,728 by 2030.<sup>1</sup>

Commerce has a small town character, with a historic downtown and a supportive and engaged community. Residents of Commerce identified many positive attributes of their City, including its vibrant downtown, good education system, family-oriented and safe community, and its central location to many urban centers. Looking to the future, residents want to maintain and enhance these valuable assets of their community through targeted and managed growth.



<sup>1</sup> *Georgia 2030: Population Projections*. State of GA, Office of Planning and Budget, 2010.

# 2

## NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The needs and opportunities presented in this chapter are divided into five categories: Downtown, Community Amenities and Infrastructure, Housing, Land Use, and Economy. These categories represent the predominant and recurring themes that were identified by the public and steering committee. The list is compiled from needs and opportunities identified by the public while conducting a SWOT analysis, the Citizens Advisory Committee, during development of the Blueprint Strategy, and from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

## DOWNTOWN

### NEEDS

- a. With high vacancy rates in downtown, spaces are in need of being filled with retail businesses
- b. Increase foot traffic is needed to support downtown retail and businesses
- c. In order to attract tourists for leisure and business, lodging opportunities and a greater number and diversity of restaurants is needed
- d. Diversity in retail and service businesses is needed; for example there used to be a grocery store downtown
- e. More activities and destinations are needed to draw people to downtown
- f. Many older structures need to be attended to before they are beyond repair

### OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Retail and office space in downtown is affordable and attractive to start-ups and internet-based retail in need of a store front
- b. With vacant and/or underutilized space in downtown, there is an opportunity for infill to create a vibrant downtown business district

- c. Opportunities for redevelopment exist, including at the Pole Barn site and Oxford property
- d. In close proximity to Banks Crossing, there may be an opportunity to capture visitation from this area to Commerce through targeted branding and marketing
- e. Utilize and promote existing incentives and tools, such as the Opportunity and Enterprise Zones, to encourage business downtown
- f. Expanding and increasing the number of festivals and events can boost tourism traffic and the economy
- g. The Civic Center space can be marketed as a location to hold conferences and events.
- h. Commerce's community has a strong sense of pride and is engaged, creating an opportunity to encourage volunteerism
- i. Commerce has a unique story that can serve to attract both tourists and residents



Retail space along Central Ave.

## COMMUNITY AMENITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

### NEEDS

- a. Parks and recreational equipment is becoming dated and is in need of improvements
- b. More recreational facilities are needed, particularly multi-purpose sports fields
- c. Recreational opportunities are needed to enhance quality of life
- d. Sidewalk infrastructure is needed beyond downtown
- e. More reliable internet connectivity is needed, particularly in residential areas
- f. Water and sewer infrastructure is aging and is in need of replacement
- g. Some residents experience water-pressure issues that may need to be addressed
- h. Maintain the positive public safety level of service in the City and focus on improving ISO rating

### OPPORTUNITIES

- a. With positive existing amenities and facilities such as the library, City school system, and parks and recreation, opportunities exist for attracting new residents interested in these aspects of the community
- b. The hospital has potential to attract health care professionals and those seeking health care to Commerce
- c. With full service utilities provided, the needed resources are available for new business and development

## HOUSING

### NEEDS

- a. The rate of rental occupation is increasing while owner occupation is decreasing, presenting a need for a greater number of residents living in homes they own
- b. There is a limited amount of housing inventory for those with a middle- and higher- income
- c. A balance in housing-stock is needed that corresponds to demand and demographic need
- d. Absentee landlords present a challenge that needs to be addressed
- e. Existing neighborhoods, particularly the mill house area, need to be maintained and enhanced

### OPPORTUNITIES

- a. With a high quality of life, including a good school system and safe environment, there may be an opportunity to attract new home-buyers to the City
- b. Mill houses offer interesting and unique architecture and may provide an opportunity for rehabilitation
- c. There is an opportunity for loft-style apartments in downtown
- d. The City is interested in pursuing GICH as an opportunity to address housing needs

## LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

### NEEDS

- a. Entry corridors that lead to town are in need of beautification
- b. There are a number of vacant buildings located along major corridors that could be redeveloped and occupied
- c. The streetscape and safety concerns along the 98 and 326 corridors needs to be addressed
- d. The City may wish to work to preserve and maintain the rural landscape and greenspace that surrounds the City
- e. Blighted areas in commercial and residential zones need to be addressed for aesthetic purposes and property values

### OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Vacant buildings along corridors coming into the City and in downtown provide opportunities to attract business and for redevelopment
- b. There is an opportunity for infill and redevelopment along the 441 corridor
- c. The City may wish to explore the opportunity for pursuing a land bank to encourage redevelopment
- d. Beautification of the corridors leading into the City may help draw visitors and support community pride
- e. Consider public/private partnerships in development activities

## ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### NEEDS

- a. The tax structure may deter people from living in the City because rates are higher than in the County; Revisiting the combined City/County tax structure is needed
- b. Attracting a larger employer would help create a critical mass and be a catalyst for housing and downtown development
- c. Continued positive partnerships and relationships with industry and business are needed
- d. Incentives are needed for business development in the downtown business district to reinvigorate this area and prevent further greenfield development

### OPPORTUNITIES

- a. With Lanier Technical College located in the community, opportunities may exist to attract jobs that require skilled labor
- b. With access to I-85 there are opportunities to attract distribution centers, manufacturing facilities, and industry in need of proximity to an interstate
- c. Niche retail may be attracted to downtown, through providing brick and mortar space for online presence businesses
- d. With a strong agri-business presence already found in the City, there are opportunities to attract similar businesses to the City
- e. Developing a new-business recruitment packet will help inform prospective entrepreneurs about the City's opportunities and business-friendly environment

# 3

## VISION, GOALS, AND POLICIES

## THE VISION

The intent of this Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Commerce is to collect and refine the most relevant portions of the previous Plan from 2010, and other planning efforts since. The goal of this effort is to produce an accessible and useful document. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will frame the aspirations of the community in the form of a vision that will support and direct the decisions of local elected officials and City staff. Establishing a cogent and realistic vision that defines what the community as a whole values, and is committed to achieving, will inform decisions made day-to-day.

The vision presented in this chapter is structured around a framework of goals and policies that address priorities for the City's future. Priorities for the City were developed by inviting the community to describe what they want their City to become: how it will look and function, and the types of services and facilities it will offer. Additionally, the community was asked to discuss and identify the likely challenges they will face, as well as the assets the City possesses. Building upon these assets will assist in getting from where the City is now, to where citizens want it to be in the future.

During the course of this conversation, distinct patterns became apparent in the descriptions given of the City's challenges and assets. These patterns informed the City's priorities for their Comprehensive Plan, and serve as the framework for the City's vision.

The vision is composed of the following elements, some of which focus on a specific geographic location or a particular need, while others apply to the City as a whole. Each element represents a critical component of the greater vision that the City and its residents are committed to working towards.

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*Through targeted, managed growth and by forming strategic partnerships, the City of Commerce is committed to advancing by:*

- 1. Creating a vibrant downtown by enhancing opportunities for residents to live, work, and play.*
  - 2. Sustaining the City through investing in and improving necessary infrastructure and community amenities.*
  - 3. Seeking a balance in housing-type that meets demand and demographic need.*
  - 4. Managing land use and development in a sustainable manner.*
  - 5. Promoting economic and workforce development.*
-

In order to translate the vision into a reality, this section outlines the goals related to each of the five priorities and lists the policies that the City will follow to achieve them.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### 1. DOWNTOWN

We will create a vibrant downtown where residents can live, work, and play by:

- Promoting opportunities for revitalization of downtown
- Encouraging business development
- Addressing infrastructure needs
- Creating opportunities for downtown living
- Seeking out businesses that provide an entertainment draw to downtown for individuals and families
- Promoting the history and unique story of Commerce to attract tourism

### 2. COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

We will sustain the City through investing in and improving necessary infrastructure by:

- Maintaining our roads
- Expanding the sidewalk network to promote walkability
- Expanding the capacity of water, sewer, and gas systems
- Maintaining the current level of electrical service
- Expanding and improving internet connectivity capabilities
- Upgrading recreational and park facilities
- Developing additional recreational opportunities to improve quality of life

- Seeking out alternative funding opportunities for infrastructure projects
- Maintaining public safety level of service

### 3. HOUSING

We will seek a balance in housing-type to meets demand and demographic need through:

- Utilizing available resources, tools, and funding to enhance and upgrade housing found in existing neighborhoods, particularly in the mill house area
- Addressing vacancy and blight to enhance existing neighborhoods
- Seeking a greater percentage of owner occupied homes
- Maintaining and enforcing standards for new housing developments
- Promoting construction of homes with higher/lasting value

### 4. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

We will manage land use and development in a sustainable manner by:

- Revising and maintaining the City's code
- Addressing the need for beautification along gateways coming into the City
- Continuing to maintain use of the overlay district along gateway corridors
- Promoting industrial development along the I-85 Corridor
- Encouraging infill and redevelopment of vacant buildings through incentivizing use
- Developing a policy for how, where, and why annexation will occur



## 5. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We will promote economic and workforce development by:

- Undertaking a branding and signage initiative
- Utilizing a marketing packet to recruit businesses
- Recruiting employers that will benefit from the workforce trained in Commerce at Lanier Tech, potentially in the health care industry
- Identifying available office space and recruit potential business to occupy
- Pursuing public/private partnerships

# 4

## LAND USE

Under the most recent iteration of the Minimum Standard Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning for the State of Georgia (effective March 1, 2014), communities with zoning ordinances in places are required to incorporate a Land Use Element into their comprehensive plans. Communities must choose to either develop a Character Areas Map or adopt a more conventional Future Land Use Map. The City of Commerce has opted to include Character Areas in the 2015 Update, refining those identified in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to reflect changes that have occurred since its adoption.

**EXISTING LAND USE**

Based upon data provided in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan and by the City of Commerce, the table to the right indicates how land use acreage has changed over the last five years. Commerce has annexed approximately 210 acres into the city limits since the last comprehensive plan was developed.

Of note is the apparent change in residential land use, which has decreased by approximately 130 acres between 2009 and 2015. This decrease in residential land acreage is seen most considerably in multi-family land use. This may be explained by the mobile/manufactures homes which were no accounted for in 2009.

Other significant changes are seen in the Parks/Recreation/Conservation land use category, which has increased by approximately 80 acres. Both industrial and public institutional land use acreage have increased by approximately 40.

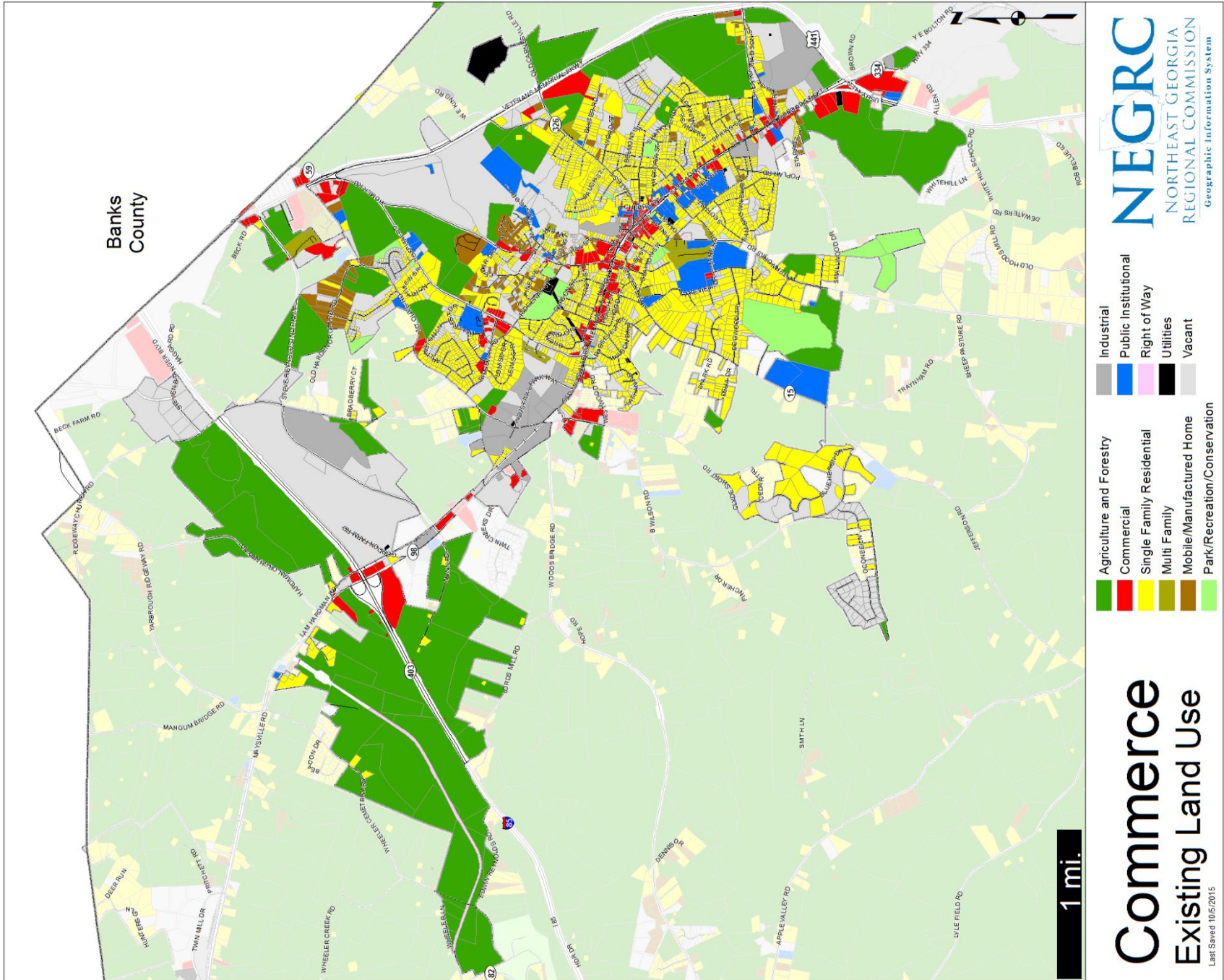
LAND USE SUMMARY 2009 AND 2015

Land Use	2009		2015	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Agriculture and Forestry	2,540	36.7%	2,600	34.1%
Commercial	283	4.1%	302	4.0%
Single Family Residential	1,728	25%	1,496	19.6%
Multi-Family Residential	120	1.7%	63	0.8%
Mobile/Manufactured Home	*	n/a	158	2.1%
Park/Recreation/Conservation	141	2%	220	2.9%
Industrial	270	3.9%	307	4.0%
Public Institutional	206	3%	250	3.3%
Utilities	55	0.8%	55	0.7%
Vacant	1,578	22.8%	1,491	19.6%
ROW	*	n/a	681	8.9%
<b>Total (acres)</b>	<b>6,921</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,623</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2010 Comprehensive Plan, City of Commerce GIS

\*values for these categories were not specified.

This may account for the incongruence in acreage of multi-family land use in 2009 and 2015; additionally a new zoning category was created shifting some residential areas to commercial.



## CHARACTER AREAS

Character Areas are defined as a specific geographic area or district within the community that:

- has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced,
- has potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance, or
- requires special attention due to a unique development issue.

Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more detailed, small-area planning and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the community's goals.

For the City of Commerce, the Character Areas defined in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan were assessed by the steering committee and refined for use in the 2015 update. The committee decided to add a character area to identify commercial places in need of revitalization. For each Character Area, a description of the area is provided, along with allowable land uses within the area, the existing zoning category, and identification of implementation measures to achieve the desired development patterns for the area. The City of Commerce has elected to use the following character areas, which are shown on a map on the following page.

## MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

- Downtown Commercial Core
- Greater Downtown
- Neighborhood Retail Service Mixed-use
- Master Planned Mixed-use
- Highway Commercial
- Revitalization Area

## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

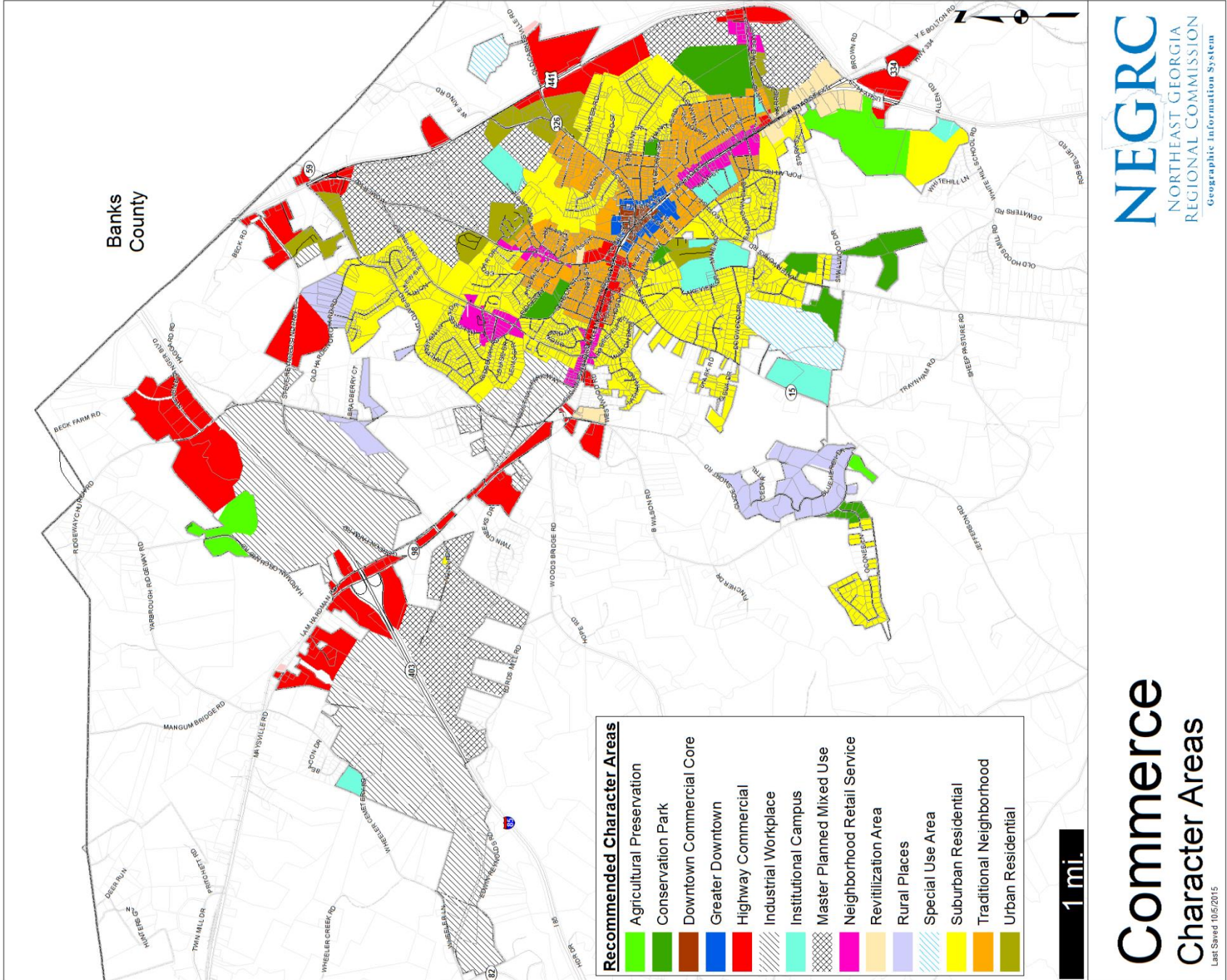
- Urban Residential
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Suburban Residential
- Rural Places

## CONSERVATION AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

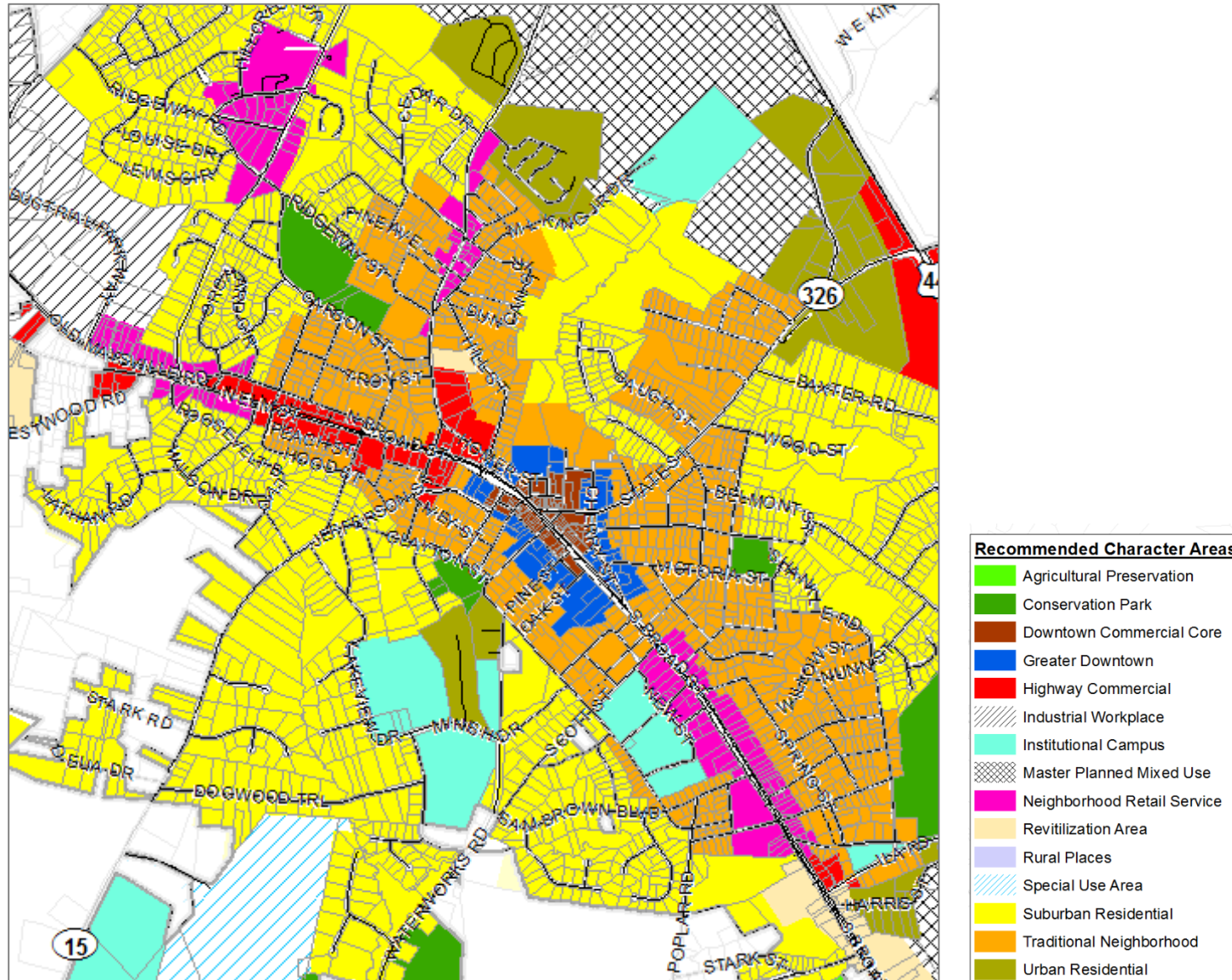
- Conservation – Park
- Agricultural Preservation

## SINGLE-FUNCTION AREAS

- Institutional Campus
- Industrial Workplace
- Special Use Area



### CHARACTER AREA MAP WITH DOWNTOWN FOCUS



## DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL CORE

### DESCRIPTION

The downtown core consists primarily of retail and service businesses, as well as important civic institutional uses such as city hall, a post office, library, civic center, and cultural center. In addition to dining and shopping opportunities, annually-held events and festivals attract residents to the commercial core. Since 1876, the railroad has run through the middle of downtown, impacting the City's layout. With the central location of the rail line, railroad crossings at grade, and businesses and homes that front the tracks, the railroad is a significant feature in the City, greatly influencing the character of and movement throughout downtown.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial (retail and service)
- Secondary: Office, Institutional, Housing

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- CBD (Central Business District); currently allows upper floor residential apartment

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Improve streetscapes to promote walkability
- Preserve sense of place through historic preservation
- Revitalization through infill and redevelopment
- Promote residential use on upper floors of downtown buildings
- Refer to the Downtown Target Area for implementation measures that can be taken to meet the goals of this character area



Historic buildings and the railroad tracks are defining characteristics of the downtown that are valued by residents.



Maintaining and enhancing pedestrian-friendly streetscapes is a development strategy for the downtown commercial core.



## GREATER DOWNTOWN

### DESCRIPTION

Still considered downtown, but with less compact development characteristics, this character area consists of commercial land uses, as well as a mixture of residential and institutional uses. While there are some industrial sites located within the greater downtown, a few industrial buildings have been adaptively reused (e.g., the civic center was an old mill site). There is potential for further conversion of old industrial sites to adapted uses. Greater downtown is transitional in nature, and there is much potential for the downtown core to grow into this transitional area, with concerted effort and economic development incentives.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial (retail and service)
- Secondary: Office, Institutional, Housing

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- CBD (Central Business District)
- OCR (Office-Commercial Residential)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Improve streetscapes to promote walkability through tree plantings and sidewalk extension
- Revitalize area through infill that is compatible in size, design and use, and through redevelopment
- Encourage reuse of older buildings and industrial sites to maintain character
- Refer to the Downtown Target Area for implementation measures that can be taken to meet the goals of this character area



Redevelopment opportunities exist in the greater downtown by repurposing older buildings for new uses, while maintaining the building form found in downtown.



Higher density housing on smaller lots is appropriate within mixed-use areas of the greater downtown and in places transitioning away from this character area into more residential neighborhoods.

## NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL/SERVICE

### DESCRIPTION

This mixed-use character area is found along major thoroughfares or the railroad in a linear pattern. These areas are transitional in nature, with a mix of single-family dwellings on small lots, and adaptive reuse of dwellings for offices, services, and retail.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Single-family Residential
- Secondary: Professional offices, service and retail use

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial District)
- OCR (Office-Commercial Residential District)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Encourage development of compatible, low-intensity neighborhood mixed-use
- Revitalize area through infill that is compatible in size, design and use, and through redevelopment
- Incorporate plazas and/or pocket parks in revitalization efforts
- Improve walkability with connections to adjacent neighborhoods and downtown



U.S. Highway 441 Business has a mixed-use of residences and businesses developed in a linear fashion along the railroad and parallel streets.



Vacant commercial space along Homer Rd can be redeveloped and serve as focal point for adjacent neighborhood.

## MASTER PLANNED – MIXED-USE

### DESCRIPTION

Greenfield sites planned for freestanding, complete communities with residential, commercial, office, civic-institutional, park and recreation uses that are primarily non-auto oriented.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

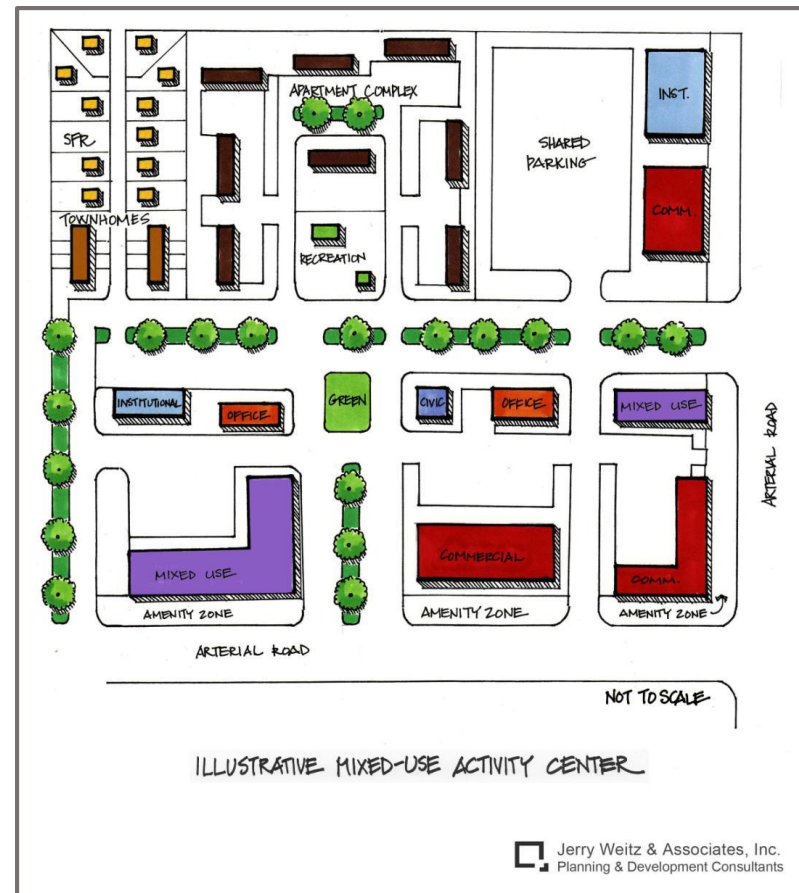
- Primary: Residential, commercial, office, civic-institutional, park and recreation, primarily non-auto oriented commercial
- Secondary: None specified, all uses except industry are appropriate; auto-oriented uses by special use permit

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Combination of current zoning districts, however, a new, master-planned mixed-use zoning district is needed.

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Develop guidelines for mixed-use master-planned developments
- Conduct traffic impact study when necessary
- Seek appropriate developer for development of this character area



Example of mixed-use activity center that includes a mix of residential, commercial, office, institutional, and park space.

## HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

### DESCRIPTION

The highway commercial character area consists of predominately automobile-service commercial uses. Found along U.S. Hwy. 441, U.S. Hwy 441 Business, SR 98, and at I-85 near Banks Crossing, these commercial areas offer larger-scale lodging, big box retail, convenience stores, auto sales, and chain restaurants and retail. These areas are geared towards automobile access.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial
- Secondary: Office and Institutional

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- C-2 (General Commercial District)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Encourage revitalization and redevelopment along existing corridors
- Improve aesthetic of development and streetscape by enforcing overlay district
- Encourage walkability by improving pedestrian environment through connecting gaps in sidewalk and planting trees
- Enforce architectural overlays
- Consider enacting a big-box retail ordinance (to discourage long-term vacancies)
- Encourage infill of compatible development in vacant areas with targeted economic development efforts



Ingles shopping center, located on U.S. 441 is an automobile-dependent shopping area.



Improvements to the pedestrian environment, such as installation of sidewalks and tree planting will encourage walking and improve the aesthetic.

## REVITALIZATION AREA

### DESCRIPTION

Properties located in the revitalization character area are characterized by declining, unattractive, vacant, and underutilized shopping centers. These properties found on generally large tracts of land have a high degree of access by vehicular traffic, large swaths of on-site parking, and minimal greenspace. The City would like to see these areas becoming revitalized through repurposing of buildings and redevelopment of properties.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial
- Secondary: Office and Institutional

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial District)
- C-2 (General Commercial District)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Consider retro-fit to make properties more marketable to prospective tenants
- Offer incentives to prospective developers and tenants
- Consider building new commercial structures at the street front, taking up a portion of the oversize parking lot and creation a shopping “square” around a smaller internal parking lot.
- Include properties in beautification efforts by adding landscaping, trees, etc. to improve aesthetics and attract redevelopment



The former Bi-Lo food store, located Homer Road, is representative of several retail space vacancies in Commerce that should be incentivized for redevelopment.



This largely vacant shopping center is along a major gateway corridor coming into downtown.

## URBAN RESIDENTIAL

### DESCRIPTION

The urban residential character area consists of higher-density neighborhoods with six to eight units per acre. These areas are where multi-family housing is supported and consist of mobile home parks, apartments, condominiums, and townhouses.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Multi-family residential, single-family residential, manufacture homes, duplexes
- Secondary: civic-institutional, active recreation

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- R3 (Two-family Residential District)
- R4 (Multi-family Residential)
- R5 (Single-family Residential District of Manufactures Homes)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Inventory sidewalk network within urban residential neighborhoods and access to surrounding commercial districts.
- Maintain and enhance housing through code enforcement
- Evaluate permitted densities



Example of apartment units in Commerce that are part of the urban residential character area.

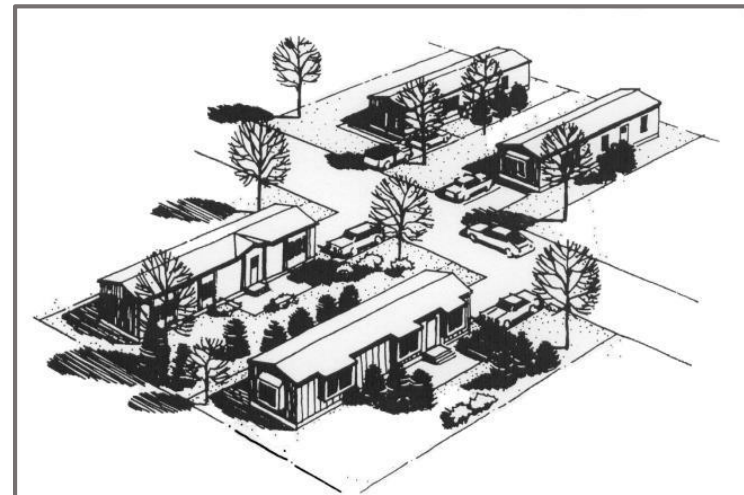


Illustration of a mobile home park that incorporates landscaping a street grid pattern to create a neighborhood feel. Image courtesy *Time-Saving Standards for Housing and Residential Development*.

## TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

### DESCRIPTION

Traditional neighborhoods consist of residential areas located in close proximity to downtown and are largely composed of single-family, pre-1960s homes. Houses are situated on smaller lots within a grid street pattern. These neighborhoods are found primarily north and south of the downtown core and greater downtown character areas.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Residential
- Secondary: Civic-institutional, Parks and Recreation, Accessory dwelling units

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

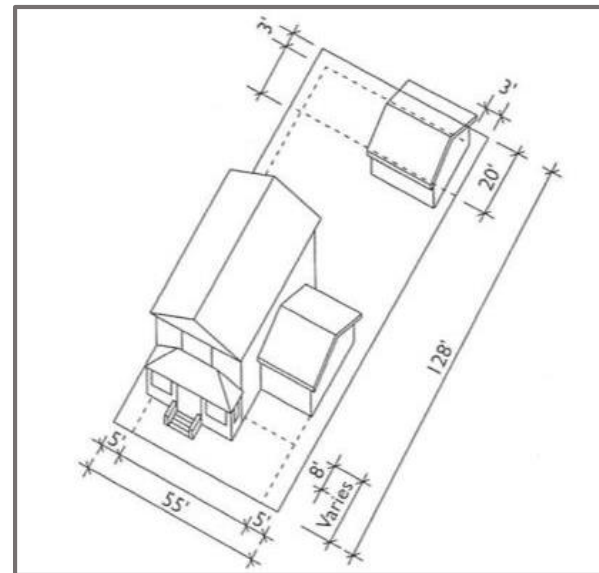
- R3 (Two-family Residential District)
- Traditional Neighborhood Development district needed

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties
- Maintain and enhance housing through code enforcement
- Inventory opportunities for infill of architecturally compatible housing
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections



A traditional neighborhood without sufficient pedestrian amenities.



Narrow lots, shallow front building setbacks, front porches, and garages located to the rear are desirable characteristics in traditional neighborhoods. Image courtesy *Planning and Urban Design Standards*.

## SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

### DESCRIPTION

The suburban neighborhood character area consists of detached, single-family homes on individual lots. Homes are located along curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs with front setbacks typically 25-35 feet or more. Lots range from approximately .5 to 1 acre in size. Suburban neighborhoods are located outside of walking distance to downtown.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Detached, single-family dwellings
- Secondary: civic-institutional, parks and recreation, accessory dwelling units

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- R1 (Single-family Residential, low density)
- R2 (Single-family Residential, medium density)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Inventory opportunities for infill of architecturally compatible housing
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the neighborhood's character



An example of an upper-range home in a suburban neighborhood. There is a need for homes of higher value in the City.



A suburban neighborhood in Commerce with homes of similar architectural design.



## RURAL PLACES

### DESCRIPTION

This character area consists of single-family residential dwellings located in rural areas that are primarily composed of undeveloped and agricultural land. The dominate character and feel is of open spaces and agrarian landscapes. These areas are typically found at the edges of suburban neighborhoods and have very low density. Setbacks of 60-100 feet are typical. Sanitary sewer is not available in these areas.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Detached, single-family dwellings on individual lots (agricultural residential district and single-family estate residential)
- Secondary: Farms, forest, gardens, orchards, livestock, farm buildings

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- AR (Agricultural Residential District)
- R1E (Single-family Estate Residential)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Encourage compatible architectural styles that maintain and reflect the regional rural character



Rural residences are on narrower, unpaved roads adjacent to agricultural land.



Rural settlements along Woods Bridge Road are of similar size and pattern.

## CONSERVATION – PARK

### DESCRIPTION

This character area consists of undeveloped, active or passive recreation areas. The defining character is open and green space, generally located within residential neighborhoods. Recreational facilities consist of picnic tables, playground equipment, ball fields, and passive recreation spaces.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Parks, playgrounds, passive recreation
- Secondary: none

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Not applicable (permitted use in virtually all zoning districts)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Conservation easement guidelines needed
- Pursue purchase of development rights and transfer of development rights program
- Inventory existing parks and equipment to determine need for updates



A playground and gazebo in Commerce's downtown Spencer Park.



Willoughby Park is primarily a passive park with picnicking space.

## AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

### DESCRIPTION

Large tracts of farmland and forests predominate this character area which is rural and agrarian in nature. Ten acres is the minimum lot size to qualify for the current use assessment program, though large farms are considered 35 acres are more. These areas are located beyond the suburban fringe outside of urban service areas.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Farms and farm-related uses and buildings; farm dwellings (single-family)
- Secondary: None

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- A-F (Agricultural Farm District)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Conservation easement guidelines needed
- Encourage the preservation of open space and farm land to maintain character



Agricultural land in Commerce that is in the current use assessment (conservation valuation) program of Jackson County.



Pasture land in the conservation valuation program located in Commerce north of I-85.

## INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUS

### DESCRIPTION

The Institutional Campus character area refers to existing and future sites that consist of free-standing, single-function uses. These include public and private schools, future hospital sites (note the Northridge Medical Center is located within Neighborhood Retail Service character area), large religious institutions, utility offices, major government campuses, and institutionalized residential living facilities.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Public and private schools, hospitals, large churches and other religious institutions, utility offices, government installations, institutionalized residential living facilities
- Secondary: None specified, may be flexible through special use process, may be mixed-uses integrated

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Not applicable (generally permitted in all zoning districts)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Traffic impact study may be required for new or expanded institutional campuses
- Coordinate with school board for infrastructure
- Connect institutional campuses to surrounding neighborhoods with sidewalks to improve walkability



This historic church campus is located off of U.S. Highway 441 Business and part of the institutional campus character area.



The Commerce Middle School campus is an example of an institutional campus.

## INDUSTRIAL WORKPLACE

### DESCRIPTION

The industrial workplace character area consists of manufacturing, industrial, storage, and warehousing sites. These are typically truck-oriented storage and distribution centers and business parks located along major roads and thoroughfares. The industrial workplace areas provide employment that capitalize on accessibility to major roads and highways for movements of freight and goods.

### LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Manufacturing, industrial, storage, and warehousing (usually single function)
- Secondary: Selected business, restaurants, and offices

### APPROPRIATE ZONING

- M-1 (Light Industrial District)
- M-2 (Heavy Manufacturing)

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Formal industrial recruitment strategy and efforts needed
- Campus site planning guidelines are needed
- Consider developing industrial and business park covenants



Maintain a certain quality for signage, such as the Commerce 85 Business Park example.



Industrial buildings are available for in Commerce for tenants with needs for access to major interstate.

## **SPECIAL USE AREA**

### **DESCRIPTION**

This character area refers to single-function special land use areas, for example, a golf course or treatment plant. This character area is assigned to existing facilities only.

### **LAND USE CATEGORIES**

- Primary: any special use as assigned and described
- Secondary: uses accessory or incidental to the principal uses

### **APPROPRIATE ZONING**

- Not applicable (handled through special use permit process)

### **DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

- Specific-use regulations may be needed



Commerce's treatment plant is an example of a special, single-use character area.

5

TARGET AREA

## DOWNTOWN TARGET AREA

The Blueprint Strategy, developed for the City of Commerce in 2014-2015 by the NEGRC, focuses on a plan for downtown Commerce. Based on stakeholder discourse, public participation, and community characteristics, the Strategy offers a plan for downtown Commerce that builds upon its existing assets, meets the needs of the community, and fosters a vibrant economic town center. City staff and the stakeholders committee determined that this downtown area will serve as a Target Area within their Comprehensive Plan Update.

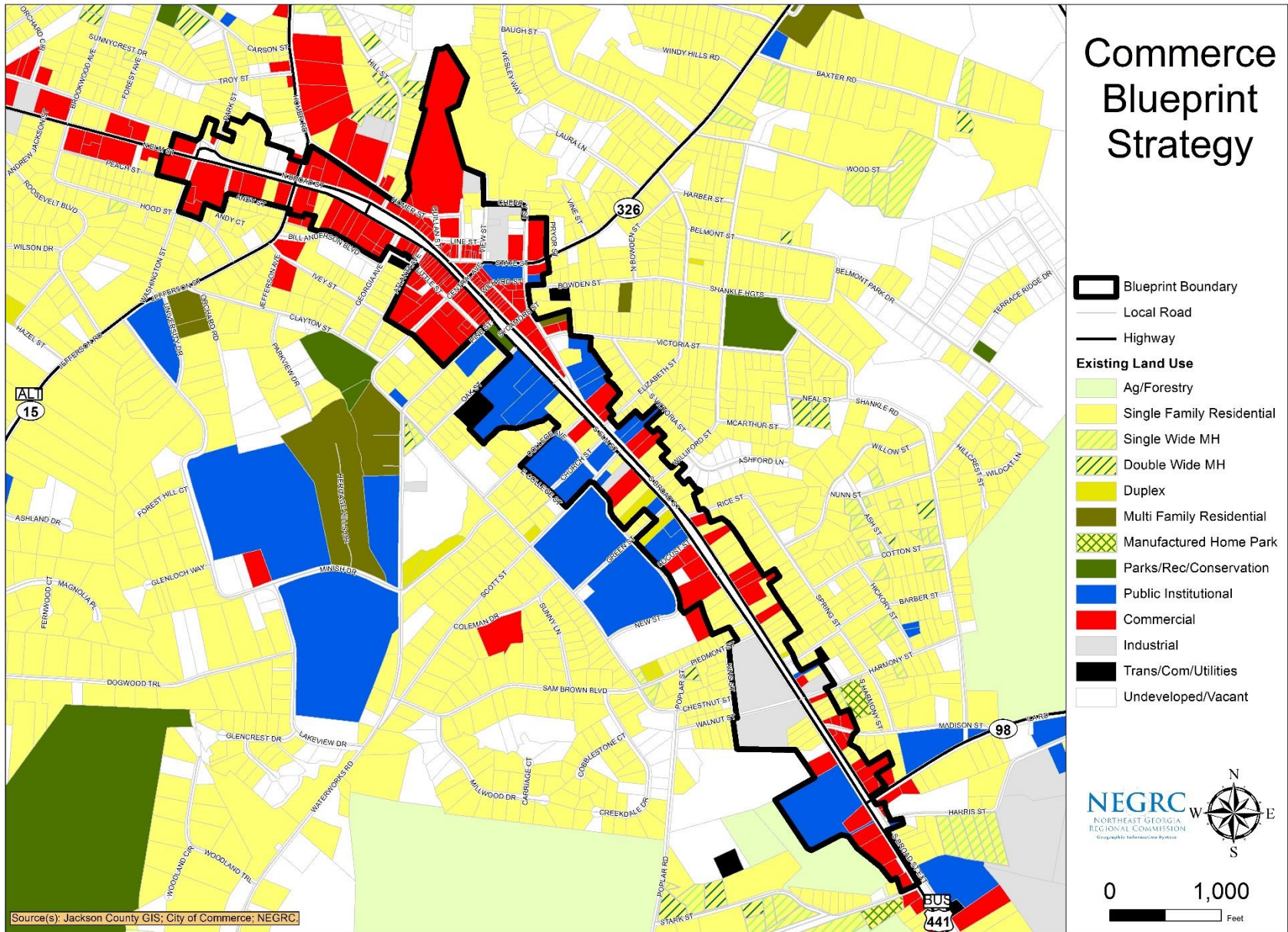
For the Blueprint Strategy, the stakeholders committee determined the boundary around downtown within which the planning effort would occur. The area follows the Broad St. Corridor, with the western limit just beyond the N. Elm St. and Washington St. intersection and the eastern limit at the S. Elm St. and Stark St. intersection. A map of the area is shown on the following page.

The existing land use found within this boundary consists primarily of commercial and public institutional, with some residential, park space, and industrial land use. The chart to the right shows the acreage and percentage of existing land use types found in downtown Commerce. The map on the following page shows the boundary of the downtown Target Area within which the Blueprint Strategy was planned.

DOWNTOWN EXISTING LAND USE SUMMARY		
Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Agricultural/Forestry	0.0	0.0%
<b>Total Residential</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>15.2%</b>
Single Family	25.9	14.7%
Multi Family	0.9	0.5%
Mobile Home	0.0	0.0%
Commercial	55.2	31.2%
Industrial	23.1	13.1%
Public/Institutional	27.4	15.5%
Parks, Recreation, Conservation	0.6	0.3%
Transportation/Utilities	34.8	19.7%
Vacant/Undeveloped	8.8	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>176.7</b>	

Source: Jackson County GIS, NEGRC





As a result of the Blueprint Strategy, four main goals were developed that apply to the downtown Target Area. These are listed below, along with corresponding objectives for each goal. For more detailed information, including action steps to work towards accomplishing each objective, the Blueprint Strategy document may be referenced.

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***Goal 1: Address the needs and opportunities for infill, redevelopment, and revitalization in downtown Commerce***

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Objective 1. Address problems that affect Downtown’s appeal (sewer smell, aesthetics, etc.) with short-term solutions until long-term improvements can be made.

Objective 2. Address issues of blight in Downtown through improved code enforcement on both commercial and residential structures.

Objective 3. Identify and prioritize suitable properties for revitalization efforts, such as infill or redevelopment.

Objective 4. Redevelop the Pole Barn site.

Objective 5. Explore potential for land bank properties in downtown.

Objective 6. Redevelopment of Oxford building.

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***Goal 2: Promote business development in downtown Commerce***

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Objective 1. Continue to attract new business, retail, and restaurants to downtown.

Objective 2. Document and preserve the historic nature of downtown.

Objective 3. Encourage visitation of and tourism in downtown.

Objective 4. Complete a comprehensive branding initiative for downtown.



Pole barn structure in downtown Commerce.

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**Goal 3:** *Address infrastructure needs in downtown Commerce*

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Objective 1. Implement Commerce fiber project and provide free downtown wireless capabilities.

Objective 2. Address aging water and sewer infrastructure.

Objective 3. Identify needs and implement actions to improve parking and flow of truck and pedestrian traffic in downtown.

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**Goal 4:** *Create opportunities for downtown living*

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Objective 1. Determine housing needs and demands in downtown.

Objective 2. Address parking issue for downtown residents.

Objective 3. Ensure consistency in design for the development of housing in downtown.



Retaining wall repair on Broad St.

# 6

## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The Community Work Program chapter includes a listing of specific actions that the City plans to take in order to achieve the vision developed by the plan. This chapter is divided into four tables:

- 1) **REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**  
Identifies the City's accomplishments from the previous comprehensive plan's Short Term Work Program.
- 2) **SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM:**  
Provides a list of projects that can be accomplished over the next five years, including a project description, timeframe, cost, funding source, and responsible party.
- 3) **PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM:**  
Identifies public works and utilities work items the City would like to accomplish over the next five years. For each item, a project description, timeframe, cost, funding source, and responsible party is identified.
- 4) **LONG RANGE AND ONGOING WORK PLAN ITEMS:**  
Work plan items that are long range or ongoing in nature are included in a separate table.

**REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

<b>ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>		
Adopt revisions to soil erosion and flood plain management ordinances	Underway	Updated date: 2015-2016
Attain "Tree City USA" status	Complete	
Strengthen wetlands protection as part of the zoning ordinance rewrite	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
Monitor environmental conditions at "brownfield" (environmentally contaminated) sites, and encourage/apply for remediation grants	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Actively participate in regional habitat protection plan once initiated	Postponed	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
<b>HISTORIC RESOURCES</b>		
Conduct a detailed survey of historic resources (participate in countywide survey)	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
Add eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
Prepare and adopt local historic preservation ordinance establishing local historic districts	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
<b>HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEV.</b>		
Residential Property Maintenance and Housing Code Enforcement	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Pursue additional Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funding, especially for targeted area	Complete	
Encourage non-profit sector to establish community based housing organization to rehabilitate substandard housing	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2020

<b>ECONOMIC DEV./ REDEVELOPMENT</b>		
Reconsider and revise boundary of Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	Underway	Updated date: 2017
Maintain an inventory of vacant industrial lands, vacant industrial buildings, and vacant commercial building spaces; market vacant sites and spaces to new users	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2020
Participate in development of a countywide comprehensive economic development strategic master plan; including industry needs analysis and municipal components at the option of individual cities	Cancelled	No interest from cities/counties
Continue façade improvement program for downtown buildings	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Prioritize and pursue redevelopment opportunities in the DDA boundary	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2020
<b>LAND USE</b>		
Adopt overlay districts for U.S. 441 and SR 98 in conjunction with Jackson County	Complete	
Revise and readopt zoning ordinance to implement comprehensive plan	Underway	Updated date: 2015-2016
Revise and readopt subdivision and land development regulations to implement comprehensive plan	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
<b>URBAN DESIGN</b>		
Beautification projects	Complete/Underway	Item in new STWP
Develop citywide wayfinding program and install gateway features and improvements	Underway	Updated date: 2015-2018
<b>PARKS AND RECREATION</b>		
Provide property and concrete for new Skateboard Park	Cancelled	No interest
Replace gazebo and renovate restroom building at Willoughby Park	Complete	
New picnic and playground area at American Veterans Memorial Park	Complete	
Construct a "Spray and Play" area at the swimming pool	Cancelled	Insufficient funding

Purchase and/or nominate three acres of land for the city's greenspace program	Complete	
Revise parks and recreation plan at five-year intervals	Underway	Updated date: 2020
Pave parking lot at Richard Ridling Park	Complete	
Renovate athletic field with new lighting system, new bleachers, new dugouts, and construct batting cage at American Veterans Memorial Park	Some components complete, others cancelled	Insufficient funding
New playground and construct a restroom facility at Richard Ridling Park	Complete	
Provide new lighting and spectator bleachers on field one and two at Richard Ridling Park	Cancelled	Insufficient funding
Convert swimming pool into an indoor facility	Cancelled	Insufficient funding
New park at Waterworks Road, including purchase of 40 acres adjacent to city site	Complete	
<b>UTILITIES – WATER AND SEWER</b>		
Prepare master plans for water and sewer facilities	Cancelled	No longer needed
Upgrade all GIS to include all Water, Sewer, Electric, Gas lines, and Storm Drains	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Upgrade water mains in Downtown Area	Underway	Updated date: 2015-2016
Upgrade sewer lines	Underway	Updated date: 2015-2016
Inflow and Infiltration Study	Complete	
Maysville Road water extension	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
Edwards Creek II sewer extension	Cancelled	Lack of development
Allen Road sewer extension	Underway	Updated date: 2017-2018
Clyde Short water replacement	Underway	Updated date: 2018-2019
W. Ridgeway water replacement	Cancelled	Lack of funds available
Waterworks Rd sewer line upgrade	Complete	
Davis Bros. pond upgrade	Complete	
Holiday Inn pond upgrade	Complete	
Sewer Jetter/Vac Truck	Complete	
Lift station SCADA	Complete	
South Broad St. water upgrade/relocation	Underway	Updated date: 2019-2020
Sheep Pasture Road water extension	Cancelled	Not enough customer interest
Yarbrough Ridgeway water extension	Cancelled	Lack of funds available
Develop a land survey monument system for City	Complete	



Emergency power Lift Stations	Underway	Updated date: 2019-2020
Hwy 326/Dan Waters Rd water extension	Postponed	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Ridgeway/Hwy 98 water and sewer extension	Postponed	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
On site CL2 generation and chemical feeders	Postponed	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Waterworks Road sewer line extension	Cancelled	Not enough customer interest
Woods Bridge Road water extension	Complete	
Install a 1,000,000 Gallon elevated storage tank on south end of water system	Postponed	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Centrifuge solids separator	Complete	
Automatic Meter Reading	Postponed	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
<b>UTILITIES – GAS</b>		
Continue replacement of older gas mains and services	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Install new gas mains in Steve Reynolds Industrial Park	Complete	
Install new gas mains in Chatham Commercial Area	Cancelled	Lack of development
Install new gas mains in North Concord Rd Industrial Park	Cancelled	Lack of development
Install gas mains for Bouchard Dev. (Medical Complex)	Complete	
<b>UTILITIES – ELECTRIC</b>		
Repair and replace Electric Lines	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Electric Line Extension to Steve Reynolds Boulevard	Cancelled	Not in territory
Two new material handlers -Bucket Trucks	Purchased 1	Will purchase second in 2017
Electric Line Extension to Bouchard Dev. (Medical Complex)	Cancelled	Not in territory

Fiber Optic Back Bone / Wireless Internet	Underway	Updated date: 2018-2020
<b>LIBRARY</b>		
Expand Commerce library by 5,000 square feet	Complete	
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>		
City Hall Repair/Paint	Complete	
Document Imaging System	Underway	In progress internally
<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>		
New police vehicles	Complete/underway	
Improve Insurance Services Organization (ISO) fire insurance rating in city	Underway	
Develop new fire station in Steve Reynolds Industrial Park	Cancelled	New one build in different location
New Police Department Headquarters	Cancelled	No need
<b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>		
Implement the regional comprehensive solid waste management plan short-term work program	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Participate in efforts to begin a countywide stormwater planning program and utility	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
New Backhoe and Brush Truck	Complete	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>		
Participate in countywide public transportation plan; expand rural public transit program	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Complete road repairs and short-range road improvements (see Table 9.2)	Complete/Underway	
Parking lot construction in front of Civic Center	Cancelled	Location has moved
Improve aesthetics and function of city and DDA public parking	Underway	Updated date: 2016-2020

Improve and extend existing sidewalk network	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Extend downtown streetscape	Cancelled	No funding
Widen roads and extend new roads per Table 9.2	Underway	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Park and ride lot at SR 98 and I-85	Cancelled	No need
Establish regional bicycle loop route from Nicholson via SR 334 to the Commerce area then southbound via Waterworks Road, to SR 335 and returning eastbound back to Nicholson	Underway	This item is long range and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>		
Participate in annual intergovernmental coordination summits with county and other major service providers including school districts; host at least one year	Complete/Underway	
Annex unincorporated islands	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Renegotiate existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as recommended in this plan or as otherwise needed or required	Underway	Updated date: 2016-2020

**SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM**

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
<b>DOWNTOWN</b>				
Identify, inventory, and prioritize suitable properties for revitalization efforts, such as infill or redevelopment	2015-2016	Staff time	City (staff time)	DDA
Conduct a marketing study to identify commercial opportunities	2015-2016	Staff time	Various (private investment, RLF funds, etc.)	DDA, Main Street, Economic Developer
Develop a recruitment packet designed to attract new business	2015-2016	Staff time	Various (private investment, RLF funds, etc.)	DDA, Main Street, Economic Developer
Organize additional events and festivals in downtown	2016-2017	Staff time	DDA	DDA, Promotions Committee
Establish a marketing campaign to attract visitors to downtown	2016-2017	Staff time	DDA	DDA, Promotions Committee
Inventory existing and potential living opportunities in downtown	2015-2016	Staff time	City (staff time)	City
<b>COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>				
Inventory sidewalks to determine gaps	2017-2018	Staff time	General fund	City/NEGRC
Conduct a Safe Routes to School program	2016	Staff time	GDOT	City/NEGRC
Install expanded and upgraded water and sewer infrastructure in downtown area	2015-2016	\$500,000	Enterprise/Grant Funds	Public Works

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
Conduct needs assessment for existing park infrastructure	2016-2017	Staff time	General Fund/SPLOST	City
Update existing park infrastructure	2017-2018	Unknown	General Fund/SPLOST	City
Install multi-purpose, rectangular sports fields	2017-2018	Unknown	General Fund/SPLOST	City
Revise parks and recreation plan at five-year intervals	2020	\$10,000	General Fund	Parks and Rec; Consultant
<b>HOUSING</b>				
Develop a GICH team, or similar, to focus on housing needs in Commerce	2015	\$10,000	General Fund	City
Conduct a housing inventory to determine location of blight, vacancy, owner-occupied vs. rental properties, infill, etc.	2015-2016	Staff time	General Fund	City
Develop a plan to promote home ownership	2015-2016	Staff time	General Fund	City
Encourage non-profit sector to establish community based housing organization to rehabilitate substandard housing	2017-2020	Staff time	unknown	Planning and Development
<b>LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT</b>				
Develop a record-keeping system for code enforcement	2015	\$10,000	General Fund	City

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
Inventory property condition and determine options for revitalization of residential and commercial properties	2015-2016	Staff time	General Fund	City
Offer incentives to attract businesses that repurpose vacant or underutilized buildings	2015-2016	Staff time	General Fund	City
Develop a plan for beautification of gateway corridors	2015-2016	Unknown	Gateway Grant/General Fund	City
Review overlay districts to ensure they support architectural and aesthetic standards	2016	Staff time	General Fund	City
Develop a strategy for annexation	2015-2016	Staff time	General Fund	City
Revise and readopt zoning ordinance to implement comprehensive plan	2015-2016	\$20,000	General Fund	Planning and Development
Revise and readopt subdivision and land development regulations to implement comprehensive plan	2017-2018	\$10,000	General Fund	Planning and Development
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>				
Develop a branding initiative to include signage and marketing components	2015-2016	Staff time	Grant Funding/General Fund	City
Develop a strategic marketing plan to attract businesses, employers, and industry; including offering incentives to prospective developers and tenants	2015-2016	Staff time	Grant Funding/General Fund	City
Inventory available office space	2017	Staff time	General Fund	City

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
Maintain an inventory of vacant industrial lands, vacant industrial buildings, and vacant commercial building spaces; market vacant sites and spaces to new users	2017-2020	Staff time	Chamber of Commerce; General Fund	Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce
Reconsider and revise boundary of Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	2017	Staff time	DDA Budget	DDA; City Council
Prioritize and pursue redevelopment opportunities in the DDA boundary	2017-2020	Staff time	DDA Budget	DDA
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>				
Adopt revisions to soil erosion and flood plain management ordinances	2015-2016	Unknown	Comprehensive Plan Contract	Planning and Development; consultant
Strengthen wetlands protection as part of the zoning ordinance rewrite	2017-2018	Staff time	unknown	Planning and Development
<b>HISTORIC RESOURCES</b>				
Conduct a detailed survey of historic resources (participate in countywide survey)	2016-2017	\$10,000	General Fund, DNR grant	DDA
Add eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places	2017-2018	\$2,500 per nomination	General Fund	Preservation consultant
Prepare and adopt local historic preservation ordinance establishing local historic districts	2017-2018	\$10,000	General Fund	Planning and Development; DDA
Investigate participation in and/or implementing historic preservation programs and becoming a CLG	2018-2019	Staff time	DDA	DDA, Promotions Committee, NEGRC

**PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM**

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
<b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>				
Run water line from Water Works Rd to Sheep Pasture Rd. to make loop	2015-2016	\$93,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Purchase new back hoe for department	2017	\$82,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Purchase new outfall line equipment for maintenance and clearing of vegetation	2016-2017	\$110,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Purchase 2 4-wheel drive vehicles to access outfall lines and for inclement weather	2019	\$84,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Implement valve location program to local all valves	2016	\$50,000-\$60,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Install two way pump station or water tank at South end of Commerce	2019	\$100,000-\$300,000	Enterprise	Public Works
Maysville Road water extension	2017-2018	\$150,000	Water and Sewer Fund	Utilities
Allen Road sewer extension	2017-2018	\$75,000	SPLOST	Utilities
Clyde Short water replacement	2018-2019	\$70,000	Water and Sewer Fund	Utilities
South Broad St. water upgrade/relocation	2019-2020	\$80,000	SPLOST	Utilities
Emergency power Lift Stations	2019-2020	\$240,000	SPLOST	Utilities



<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
<b>UTILITIES – GAS</b>				
Replace regulator station on Roosevelt Blvd., kill gas main on Clayton St., and install 4" high pressure gas main on Clyde Short Rd.	2016	\$250,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Extend 4" high pressure line on Maysville Rd to Steve Reynolds Ind. Parkway	2016	\$150,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Complete 6" gas main loop through Dr. Bouchard property and to Steve Reynolds	2019-2020	Unknown	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 3" gas main on Homer Rd with 4" gas main	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Troy St.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Brookwood Ave.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Orchard Cir.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace gas main on Carson St.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace gas main on Pine Ave.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace gas main on Harper St.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Main extension on Clayton St.	2016-2020	\$2,000-\$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2 rectifiers on Shankle Heights and Ridgeway Rd.	2015-2016	\$50,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
Replace 3 trucks	2020	unknown	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
<b>UTILITIES – ELECTRIC AND FIBER</b>				
Purchase bucket truck	2017	\$160,000	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department
Purchase fiber equipment (splicer, trailer, TDR)	2015-2016	\$40,000-\$50,000	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department
Hire fiber crew staff person	2017	unknown	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department
Fiber Optic Back Bone / Wireless Internet	2018-2020	\$750,000	One Georgia Wireless Cities; General Fund	Utilities
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
Improve aesthetics and function of city and DDA public parking	2016-2020	\$100,000 annually	DDA; General Fund; Grant	DDA
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Document Imaging System	2016-2020	Staff time	General Fund	City

**LONG RANGE AND ONGOING WORK PLAN ITEMS**

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</b>
<b>DOWNTOWN</b>				
Address issues of blight in downtown through code enforcement of commercial and residential structures	Ongoing	Staff time and legal fees	Local merchants, façade grant, private funds	Main Street Design Committee, Code enforcement
<b>COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>				
Work to maintain public safety level of service and increase ISO rating	Ongoing	Staff time	General Fund	City
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>				
Monitor environmental conditions at "brownfield" (environmentally contaminated) sites, and encourage/apply for remediation grants	Ongoing	Staff time	Possible grant (EPD, GEFA)	Planning and Development
Actively participate in regional habitat protection plan once initiated	Long range	Unknown	Unknown	Planning and Development
<b>HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</b>				
Residential Property Maintenance and Housing Code Enforcement	Ongoing	Staff time	General Fund	City
Maintain standards for new home development	Ongoing	Staff time	General Fund	City
Promote construction of homes with higher/lasting value	Ongoing	Staff time	General Fund	City
Develop guidelines for mixed-use master-planned developments	Long-range	Staff time	General Fund	City/Consultant
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT</b>				
Continue façade improvement program for downtown buildings	Ongoing	Staff time	DDA Budget	DDA

<b>UTILITIES – WATER AND SEWER</b>				
Upgrade all GIS to include all Water, Sewer, Electric, Gas lines, and Storm Drains	Ongoing	\$345,000	General Fund	Utilities
Hwy 326/Dan Waters Rd water extension	Long Range	\$320,000	SPLOST	Utilities
Ridgeway/Hwy 98 water and sewer extension	Long Range	\$400,000	SPLOST/developer	Utilities
On site CL2 generation and chemical feeders	Long Range	\$360,000	Water and Sewer Fund	Utilities
Install a 1,000,000 Gallon elevated storage tank on south end of water system	Long range	\$800,000	SPLOST	Utilities
Automatic Meter Reading	Long range	\$600,000	General Fund	Utilities
<b>UTILITIES – GAS</b>				
Continue replacement of older gas mains and services	Ongoing	\$200,000	Gas Operating Budget	Utilities
Identify and replace all PVC services	Ongoing	\$12,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Install CNG Station	Unknown	\$1,000,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
<b>UTILITIES – ELECTRIC AND FIBER</b>				
Repair and replace Electric Lines	Ongoing	\$300,000	Electric Operating Budget	Utilities
Continue to expand fiber	Ongoing/As needed	Unknown	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department
<b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>				
Implement the regional comprehensive solid waste management plan short-term work program	Ongoing	Per plan	Staff function; General fund	Public works
Participate in efforts to begin a countywide stormwater planning program and utility	Ongoing	TBD	General Fund	Public Works

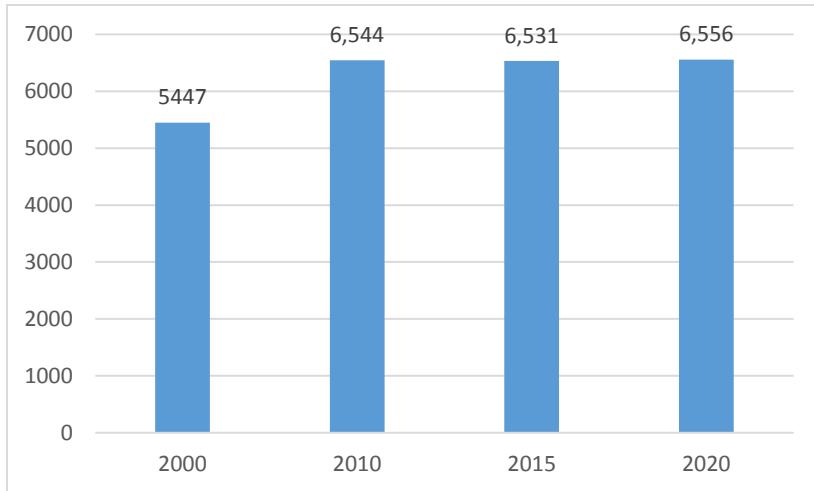
Seal 3 miles of road each year	Ongoing	Dependent on road/contract	General Fund	Public Works
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
Participate in countywide public transportation plan; expand rural public transit program	Ongoing	Funded	NEGRC; County General Fund; GDOT	County Public Works
Improve and extend existing sidewalk network	Ongoing	TBD	Capital Program; Grants	DDA
Widen roads and extend new roads per Table 9.2 (see Comp Plan, 2009)	Long Range	Unknown	Various Sources	Public Works; Jackson Co.; GDOT
Establish regional bicycle loop route from Nicholson via SR 334 to the Commerce area then southbound via Waterworks Road, to SR 335 and returning eastbound back to Nicholson	Long Range	Unknown	County capital funds; state funds; federal funds	Intergovernmental Partnership
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>				
Annex unincorporated islands	Ongoing	\$5,000 (legal)	General Fund	City Manager; Planning and Development
Renegotiate existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as recommended in this plan or as otherwise needed or required	Ongoing	Staff time		City Manager; Various Departments

# APPENDIX

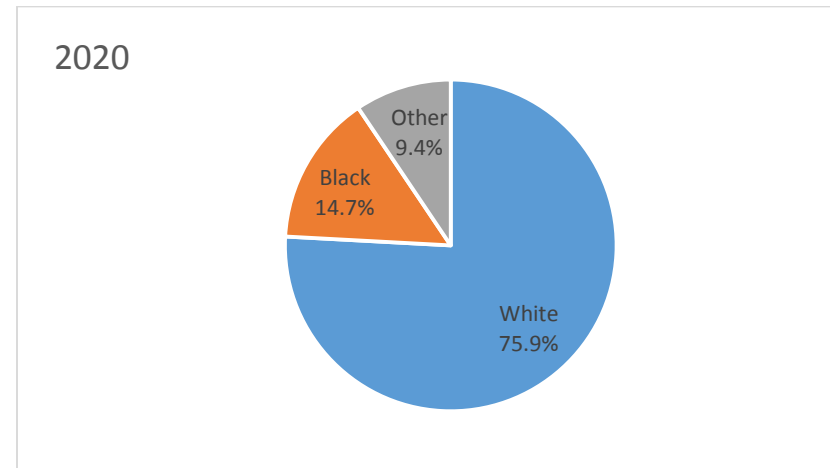
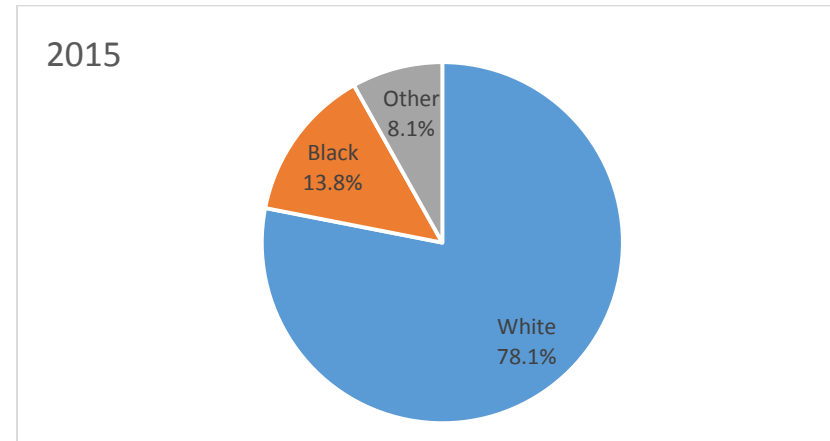
## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Demographic data is provided here to provide City staff with current and forecasted population trends. Sources for this data include U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI Business Analyst Online, and the American Community Survey.

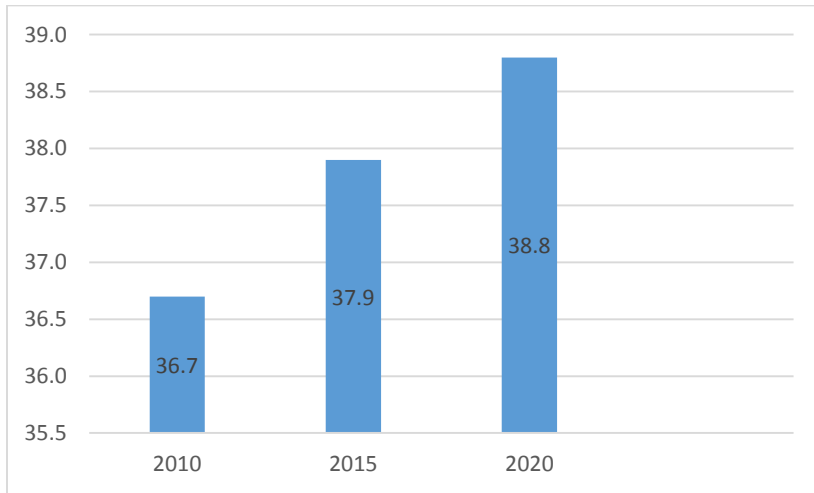
### TOTAL POPULATION



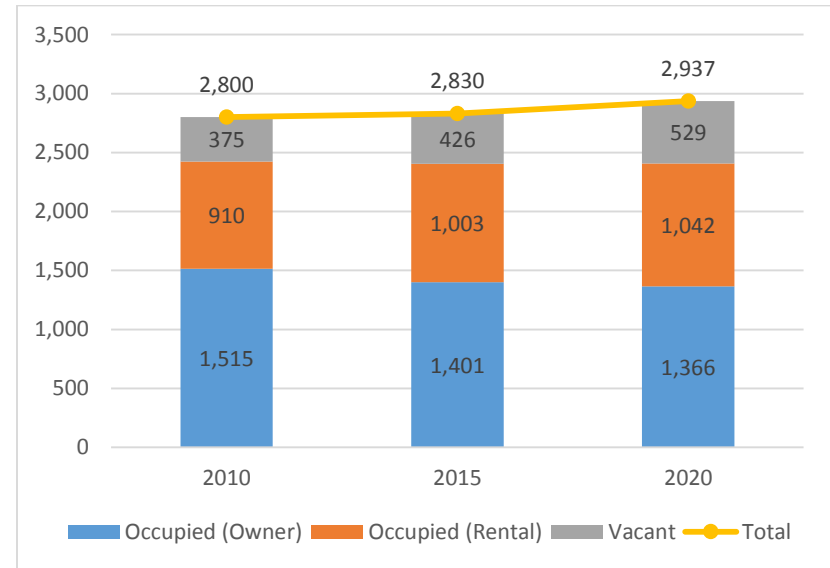
### RACE 2015 AND 2010



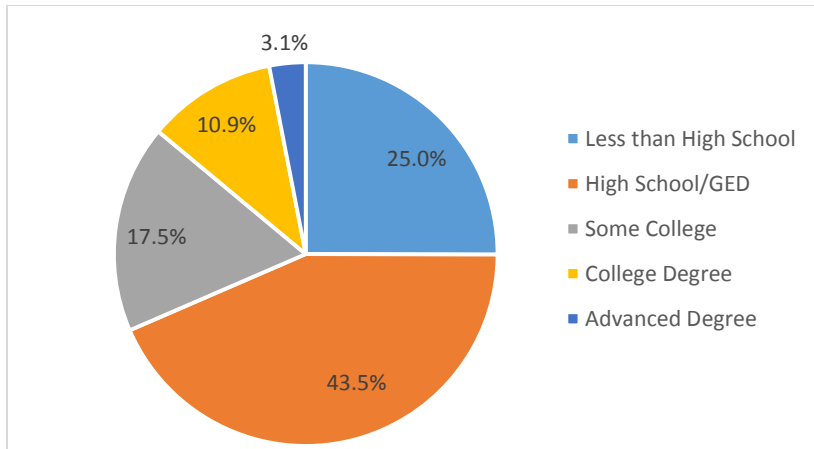
### MEDIAN AGE



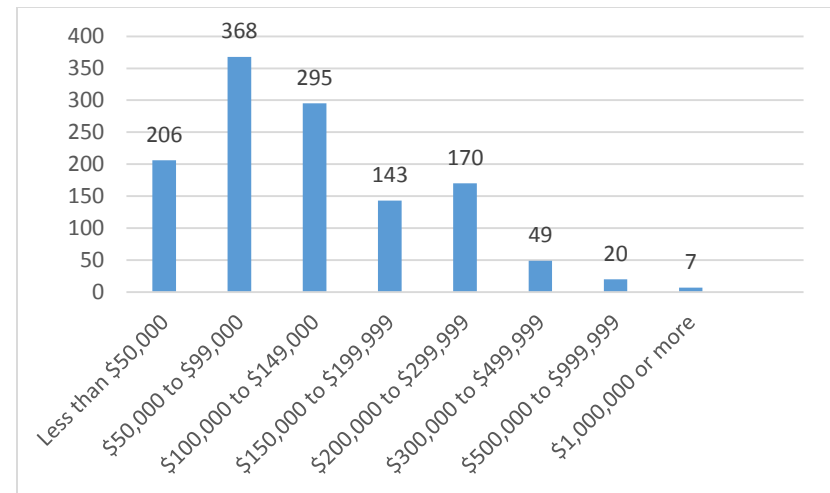
### HOUSING UNITS



### 2015 HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT (25+)

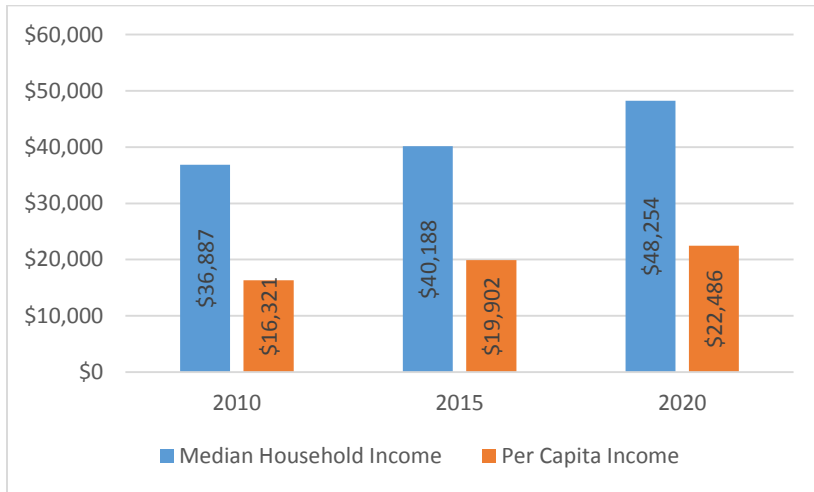


### HOUSING VALUES IN 2013

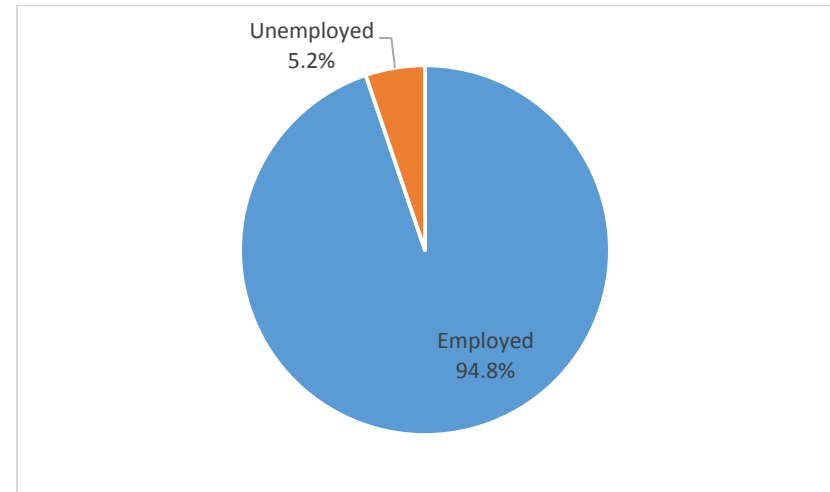




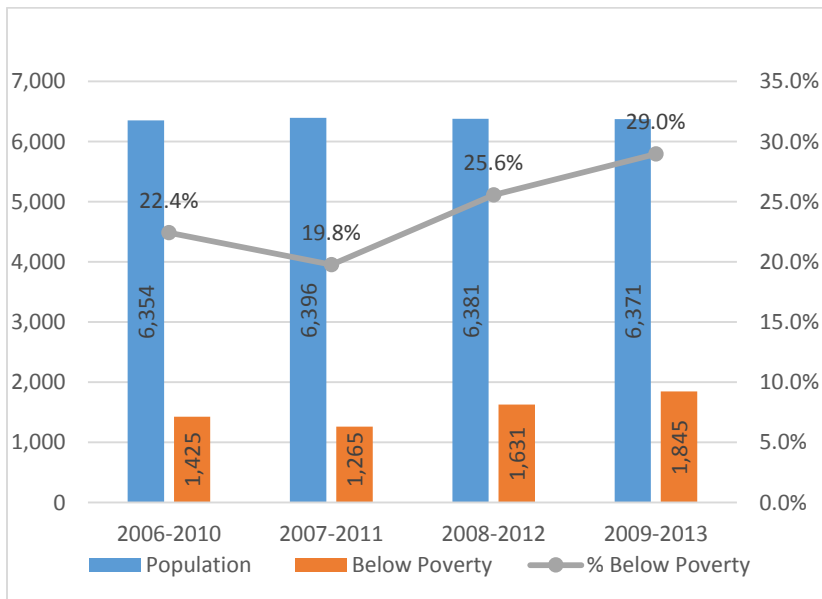
### INCOME



### 2015 EMPLOYMENT OF WORKFORCE (16+)



### POPULATION BELOW POVERTY



## PUBLIC-INPUT SURVEY RESULTS

The following tables represent the results of the public input survey from Polldaddy.com. The results of each survey question were divided into ranges or categories depending on the question. This allowed for a snapshot of the results and what participating residents think of as the most important challenges and strengths for Commerce’s future.

While each question revealed answers that addressed aspects of the City of Commerce, upon reviewing the results, there were a few noticeable recurring themes. Many residents stated that current parks and recreation facilities were lacking and needed much improvement as well as requested more parks and recreation spaces. Commonly, the request for more parks and recreation facilities was based on the thought that the City already has an excellent school system. So, while many residents see the school system as a strength, they think it could be made even better with improved sports and play facilities.

One other main recurring topic was the costly utility providers within the City. Several residents mentioned that the high cost in utilities, such as electricity, is likely deterring many young families from moving to the area which could provide a reasoning for the lack in mid-range housing.

Other recurring topics included, but are not limited to, the desire to not add any additional low income or rental housing, encourage economic growth in the downtown area through small businesses not big box stores, and overall beautification and improved landscaping of the City including the entrance corridors, parks and recreation facilities, older historic buildings, and the downtown area.

### 1. What is your age?

Age Range	#
20-25	4
26-31	3
32-37	5
38-43	6
44-49	4
50-55	1
56-61	1
62-66	4

### 2. Please indicate your gender.

Gender	#
Male	11
Female	16

### 3. How long have you resided in Commerce?

Time Range	#	%
Over 20 Years	13	45%
11-20 Years	7	24%
1-5 Years	6	21%
6-10 Years	2	7%
Less than 1 year	1	3%

4. What are three defining characteristics of Commerce that you would like to see preserved?

Attribute	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	No Opinion
Appearance/aesthetics	2	12	9	4	1	0
Community Atmosphere	4	14	8	3	0	0
Crime rate/Safety	9	13	3	1	2	1
Emergency Services	10	10	4	2	1	2
Parks & Recreation	3	8	9	5	3	1
Shopping Opportunities	2	5	7	14	1	0
Cultural Opportunities	1	3	8	12	3	1
Housing Affordability	3	5	14	5	1	1
Employment Opportunities	1	1	6	13	7	1

5. Please indicate your opinion of the following attributes of the City of Commerce:

Characteristic	# of Responses
Small town feel	12
Safety	6
Community Spirit/Involvement	6
School System	3
People	1
Distinctive Downtown	5
Approachable & Responsive Government	3
Family Friendly	1
Historic Preservation	6
Good Race Relations	1
Green Space	1
Neighborly	1
Railroad Track Preservation	1
Duck Pond Project	2
Civic & Cultural Center	1

6. What development patterns (in Commerce and elsewhere) would you NOT like to see occur in town?

Pattern	# of Responses
New buildings for new businesses	2
Antique/consignment shops, loan companies, tattoo parlors, tobacco stores, DUI schools, junk car lots	5
Big box stores	1
Low Income Housing	8
Growth	3
Non-Commerce Natives in Commerce Government	2
Additional Rental Housing	3
Not reusing older historic buildings	4
Big 'fancy' restaurants	2
Large subdivisions	1
Bars/Liquor stores	3

7. What are the most pressing development-related issues that will affect the City of Commerce in the future?

Issue	# of Responses
Drug use	3
Overall Positive Growth	2
Parks & Recreation Facilities	7
Attracting Young Professionals	1
School System	3
Downtown Economic Development	7
Teen Pregnancy	1
Lack of Middle-Upper Class Housing	2
Utility Rates	3
Parking	1
Lack of Low-Income Housing	2
Mismatch between government plans & Community Needs	2
Deterioration of Public & Private Property	1
Low home ownership rates	4
Absentee Landlords	1
Crime	1
Attracting New Residents	1
Keeping Commerce clean	2
Increasing Job Availability	1

8. Are there any particular places in the community that require particular attention? What are they, what is the problem, and what would you do to fix it?

Place	# of Responses
Downtown Landscaping	2
Encourage absentee landlords to maintain their properties in town	1
Older historic properties should be either demolished or better maintained	1
Improve existing & create more parks and recreation facilities	4
Do not offer government or discounted housing	2
Entrance corridor landscaping	2
Encourage businesses to occupy vacant shopping centers with tax incentives	3
Improve Mt. Vernon Mills property	1
Make an effort to find businesses to occupy the old WalMart building	1
Encourage small business growth downtown	2
Develop a target market	1
Address cost of utilities	1
Encourage historic preservation	1
Address updates in civic center	1
Parking next to Ward Funeral Home	1
Address housing downtown	2

9. What is Commerce's greatest need?

Need	# of Responses
Parks & Recreation Facilities	4
Positive Growth	1
Attract younger demographics	1
Diversity of business in town	2
Homes for sale around \$200k	1
Affordable housing	1
Parking	1
Community Pride	1
Shopping	1
Improved Utility Providers	1
Jobs	1
Downtown economic development	1
Connect outskirts development to the downtown area	1

10. What is Commerce’s greatest strength?

<b>Strength</b>	<b># of Responses</b>
<b>People</b>	4
<b>Location</b>	3
<b>Small Town Feel</b>	5
<b>School System</b>	4
<b>Parks</b>	1
<b>Small Business Owners</b>	1
<b>Well-kept infrastructure</b>	1
<b>Shopping Opportunities</b>	2
<b>Community</b>	4
<b>Low Crime Rate</b>	2
<b>Public Services</b>	1



NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Commerce Comp Plan Update  
Steering Committee Meeting #1  
July 30, 2015 - 6:30 PM  
Civic Center

NAME	EMAIL
Kyle Moore	kyle.erte.moore@gmail.com
Dylan Wilbanks	dylan@wilbankslawfirm.com
Les Knowlton	lesknowlton@winastream.net
MEHNDIA COCHRAN	melindalcochran@gmail.com
Johnny W. Embanks	johnny.embanks@boldor.aeb.com
CHRIS BRAY	ChrisMcBray@gmail.com
Stacey Rucker	StaceyRucker@gmail.com
David Zeller	dzeller@commercega.org
Rick Billingslea	

# NEGRC

NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Commerce Comp Plan Update  
Steering Committee Meeting #2  
August 20, 2015 – 5:30 PM  
Civic Center

NAME	EMAIL
David Zellner	davidz@commercega.org
Vusath Stankland	CivicCenter@commercega.org
James Wascher	jmw@commercega.org
Dylan Wilbanks	dylan@wilbankslawfirm.com
Johnny W. Eubanks	johnny.eubanks@baldor.com
LES KWOBLOCK	LEKWOBLOCK@WINDSTREAM.NET
MEL COCHRAN	melinda.cochran@gmail.com
Kyle Moore	kyle.erle.moore@gmail.com
STACEY RUCKER	stacey.rucker@gmail.com
CHRIS BRAY	Chris.McCoyBray@gmail.com











# Resolution

## A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR THE CITY OF COMMERCE, GEORGIA

WHEREAS, the City of Commerce, Georgia has engaged in a process to update a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, the process follows the rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning; and

WHEREAS, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Planning Government Services Division facilitated the 2015 update of the Plan by leading community input sessions and Citizens Advisory Committee meetings; and

WHEREAS, the update of the plan involved public input, work sessions with the Citizens Advisory Committee and stakeholders representing various interests in Commerce including input gathered in the development of the Blueprint Strategy: A Plan for Downtown Commerce; and

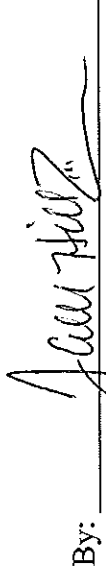
WHEREAS, the City has transmitted the Plan to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission which has reviewed the plan and forwarded the Plan to DCA for review; and

WHEREAS, the Plan has been found by the DCA to be in compliance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures;

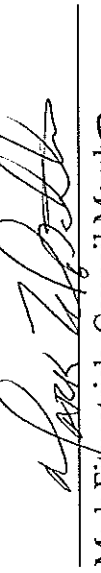
NOW THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the City of Commerce, Georgia that the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Commerce, Georgia is hereby approved and adopted.

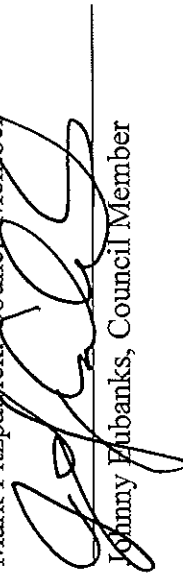
IT IS SO RESOLVED, this 19 day of October, 2015.

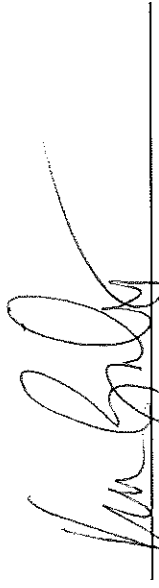
### CITY OF COMMERCE

By:   
J. Clark Hill, Mayor

  
Archie Chaney, Council Member

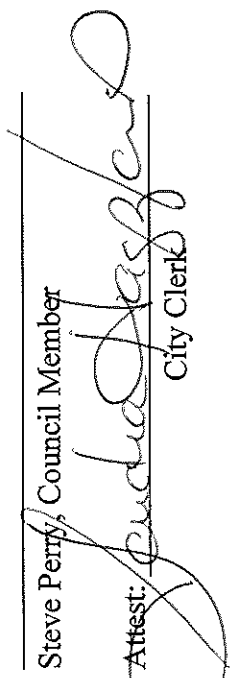
  
Mark Fitzpatrick, Council Member

  
Johnny Fubanks, Council Member

  
Keith Burchett, Mayor Pro Tem

  
Donald Wilson, Council Member

Steve Perry, Council Member

Attest:   
Linda Haspel  
City Clerk

[Seal]