City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan 2008-2030 ~ Community Agenda



"Protecting our History and Providing for the Future"

August, 2008

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Purpose

This document, the *Community Agenda* of the *City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan: 2008-2030*, represents the culmination of the City's efforts to plan for the future well-being of its residents and businesses by identifying the critical, consensus issues and goals for the city of Dawsonville. The purpose of planning and community development is to provide guidance for everyday decision-making by local government officials and other community leaders. Implementing the plan will help the community address those critical issues and opportunities while moving towards realization of the unique vision for its future.

The Community Agenda, the last of three documents comprising a local comprehensive plan in Georgia, is the forward-looking element that outlines the community's goals and the actions needed to achieve those goals. It defines the general vision, objectives and strategies for a community for the next 20-25 years. The previous two elements, known as the Community Assessment and the Community Participation Program, provided the supplemental data and analysis necessary to identify the current trends, issues and opportunities confronting a community. That information was then used in public workshops and by various stakeholders to support the development of the Community Agenda.

Profile of Dawsonville

Dawsonville, Georgia is the civic seat and social center of Dawson County. The City was incorporated in 1959 and became the center for county government operations after the construction of a courthouse and jail in 1860. Over time the local economy has flourished and struggled with a mostly agriculture base, but Dawsonville's prevailing identity stems from it's origins as a haven for the production and trade of moonshine. The popularity of this era remains with a cultural festival named after the illegal alcohol, while, more importantly, the production of fast cars used to transport moonshine lead to the community's fascination with auto racing that survives today within a local museum.

Together with Dawson County, Dawsonville also serves as the southern gateway to the Appalachian Mountains and the northern tip of metropolitan Atlanta. The southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail lies in Dawson County, which, combined with the abundant reserved forest within the area, has raised the profile of outdoor recreational activities for locals and tourists alike. But retail commerce and industry has grown in the region, as well, as suburban development and population growth has crept to and beyond the Dawson County line. Georgia Highway 400 and an outlet mall have raised the regional awareness of Dawsonville, and modern technology has helped permit the once small, rural community to blossom with potential for true urbanized amenities.

Today the city proper remains considerably small, with under 1,000 residents within the City boundaries. But Dawson County is growing rapidly, tripling in population to 15,000 between 1980 and 2000. Meanwhile, neighboring Cumming and Forsyth County, located immediately below Dawson County, have grown by almost 40,000 residents in the past 6 years alone. These trends plus recent changes in City limits and plans for economic development mean that Dawsonville will receive significant pressures to grow and evolve in the coming decades.

Location Map

Copy of Signed Transmittal Resolution

COMMUNITY VISION

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

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

General Vision Statement

Discussions with various stakeholders revealed several common themes that contributed to the proposed vision statement for Dawsonville. Participants expressed near unanimous support for recognizing the value of the City's historic urban core for both cultural and economic reasons. There was equal support for characterizing the City as a sustainable and prosperous hometown where residents could live, work and play. These two elements were considered the most valuable to Dawsonville's identity and all other aspects would build from their principles.

"Dawsonville will be a safe, attractive and affordable place for families to live, work and play; Dawsonville will preserve its downtown as a viable destination for business and cultural activities, fostering an environment conducive to pedestrian accessibility, and characterized by the historic structures"

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

"Dawsonville will be a safe, attractive and affordable place for families to live, work and play;	The opening line captures the essence of the desire for the City to be a family-oriented hometown. One that's self-sustaining by providing residents the opportunities to live, work and play within the same community.
Dawsonville will preserve its downtown as a viable destination for business and cultural activities,	This refers to the residents' strong desires to increase their capacity for civic, cultural and commercial activities, making Dawsonville a stronger destination for people and dollars.
fostering an environment conducive to pedestrian accessibility, and characterized by the historic structures"	The final line pays homage to the City's commitment to preserving the form, scale and general structure of their historic downtown, and using that as the foundation of their growth.

Goals and Objectives

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

Revitalize downtown as a walkable destination for shoppers and visitors – Though also referenced within the vision statement, residents wished to emphasize the desire to restore the commercial and social appeal of downtown, making the city a true destination 7 days a week and a more viable location for harboring events and festivals. This is paramount as the City strives to distinguish itself from the outlet mall and the Ga. 400 corridor.

Expand the urban core of the historic downtown so as to connect with the City Hall complex – The City has a general Urban Redevelopment Plan providing guidance on the expansion of sidewalks and application of design guidelines. The Urban Redevelopment Plan also calls for additional measures to improves the pedestrian access between downtown and City Hall, including amendments to land use policies and possibly the development of new streets to continue the urban block pattern southward from downtown.

Continue to maintain high quality levels of service for all residents – Stakeholders expressed strong support for City initiatives at expanding services, providing open communication and improving customer service relations.

Continue efforts to improve the quality and variety of affordable housing – As Dawsonville grows so has the demand for more types of housing, including increases demand for senior housing and multi-family units. The city is encouraged to find ways to encourage this variety while also ensuring a safe standard for all new housing units.

Issues and Opportunities

ensure that a diversity of housing conditions and programs exist to support this variety of household types, particularly for younger residents looking to move into the city and

to

support

elderly residents struggling

themselves.

The Community Assessment produced a summary listing and discussion of potential issues and opportunities identified during the analysis of data and information. These have been refined and prioritized through additional analysis as part of the development of the Community Agenda. These issues must be addressed for Dawsonville to fully achieve the goals and vision identified.

Population

Issues and Opportunities	Implementation Strategies	
<i>Managing potential growth</i> – While the majority of growth anticipated for Dawson County will occur in the unincorporated areas, the City of Dawsonville will continue to grow both naturally and through possible annexations. As it does so the City must work to ensure such growth is done in a manner that does not adversely impact the delivery of public services or greatly alter the character of the community.	Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations.	
<i>Declining size of households</i> – Natural demographic and economic trends are increasing the volumes of smaller households within all of Dawson County. As the community moves to support traditional family and large-household programs and development types, Dawsonville must also	Market Study to assess breakdown of housing trends and cost factors, gauging the influence of development policies.	

Economic Development

Issues and Opportunities

Need to review focus on tourism – The nature of local tourism has moved from the Georgia racing Hall of Fame and Museum (GRHFM) to the North Georgia Premium Outlet Mall, representing a literal and figurative relocation of economic and cultural activity within Dawson County. Dawsonville must work with Dawson County in recognizing the aspirations and possibilities for tourism in the City, the Museum and downtown to ensure a level of economic prosperity.

Need for economic development within Downtown – Regardless of the level of tourism desired for downtown Dawsonville, there must be an influx of reinvestment in the downtown area if it is to remain viable. Programs for revitalizing structures and businesses must be made available and promoted, while the City must finalize long term development plans for the area to begin coordinating capital improvements and implementing proper development policies.

Dealing with transition of economic base – As Dawsonville and Dawson County become more suburban the nature of industrial development and employment opportunities will change. Some aspects of coordinated economic development have become more difficult as the characteristics of the labor force and regional consumer market experience fluctuation.

Increase in Service sector/ hourly-rate employees – One aspect of the economy currently growing is the Service industry, a boon for local consumers but typically a weaker sector in terms of wages and benefits to local employees. Continued growth is encouraged but the City must monitor the overall changes to the economy to ensure a diverse range of employment opportunities available for residents. Implementation Strategies

Downtown Dawsonville Tourism and Marketing Strategy, to develop a coordinated and sustained policy towards promoting downtown.

Review signage for directing people towards the City.

Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities.

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

Downtown Dawsonville Tourism and Marketing Strategy, to develop a coordinated and sustained policy towards promoting downtown.

Maintain partnerships with post-secondary education institutions, Chamber and Development Authorities.

Annual report summarizing economic projects carried out for Dawsonville

Maintain partnerships with post-secondary education institutions, Chamber and Development Authorities.

Annual report summarizing economic projects carried out for Dawsonville

Economic Development (cont'd)

Issues and Opportunities

Increased demand for educational resources – Access to quality post-secondary education has become critical as the modern marketplace requires more and more skill sets. This requires not only the presence of education facilities and programs but regular monitoring of those programs to ensure they provide the level and types of education needed to compete in the work place.

Economic potential of downtown – Dawsonville has enough businesses and attractions to remain a commercial destination for tourism and local consumers alike, while plans for redevelopment will serve to expand this potential. Proper implementation of these plans can provide not only economic balance and prosperity but also aid in the retention of local character and community identity.

Proximity to regional resources - The same metropolitan expansion will also introduce a greater variety of resources to aid in Dawsonville's economic development, including additional technical and education facilities and stronger financial resources. Particularly with improvements in transportation and communication the City will be able to better draw upon these resources for promotion, recruitment and economic expansion.

Implementation Strategies

Maintain partnerships with post-secondary education institutions, Chamber and Development Authorities.

Annual report summarizing economic projects carried out for Dawsonville

Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities.

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

Downtown Dawsonville Tourism and Marketing Strategy, to develop a coordinated and sustained policy towards promoting downtown

Support marketing of regional tourism and amenities within Maysville.

Housing

Issues and Opportunities

Aging housing stock – A notable portion of the City's current housing stock more than 30 years old. Many of these units may require structural maintenance or repair while many more may simply lack the amenities or features to remain economically viable in the face of a rapidly growing housing market. If the natural market and economy is not enabling the City's residents to maintain their homes there is a risk of seeing many units fall into disrepair and concentrations of impoverished units leading to social blight.

Lack of select housing types - The recent growth Dawsonville is experiencing has produced an imbalance in the measure of two housing types; 1) Quality affordable housing for the area's workforce, and 2) special needs housing for the elderly and handicapped. While these sectors are recognized as among the least viable for private developers, failure to provide options within proximity of Dawsonville will only serve to increase the costs for those consumers and likely adversely impact the general economy and local quality of life.

Potential for housing diversity within the City – There is enough space and a number of existing properties within the city to develop alternative housing. Lofts and other units could be provided above shops within downtown, and mixed use and multi-family housing could be incorporated into the city without adversely impacting traffic, utilities or the character of the community. Implementation Strategies

Promote housing revitalization programs to homeowners.

Explore grants for neighborhood improvement projects

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

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations.

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

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations.

Natural Resources

Issues and Opportunities

Need for greenspace/ Improved management of greenspace - As Dawsonville grows more suburban there is more pressure to not only provide greenspace but to do so in a way that retains the community's rural character, provides actual environmental benefits and coordinates with recreational uses where possible. This issue becomes more critical as new development reduces opportunities while increasing the level of demand for preserved greenspace. As a priority among the greenspace issues discussed above, the City must work to protect the ecology along local waterways to provide direct benefits with flood control, preserving water quality and providing natural buffers and scenic beauty.

Need to review tree and landscaping policies – As the level and variety of development increases the City should review existing policies regarding tree planting/preservation and landscaping requirements. Emphasis should be placed on benefiting the local ecology and targeting lands within environmentally sensitive areas.

Improved resources for natural resource management - Advances in technology and environmental science now allow for more effective management policies. City efforts to protect the environment can outline definitive actions that build upon public awareness and utilize improved sources of information to better achieve preservation objectives.

Implementation Strategies

Consider conservation design regulations for larger development.

Explore options for financing of greenspace acquisition.

Review floodplain and soil information against latest versions from respective authorities.

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations.

Report assessing the city's tree ordinances and landscaping policies.

Consider conservation design regulations for larger development.

Review floodplain and soil information against latest versions from respective authorities.

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

Cultural Resources

Issues and Opportunities

Need to recognize existing resources/ Updated survey of historic resources - Encourage the inclusion of all worthy historic buildings, structures, sites and districts in the National Register of Historic Places and the Georgia Register of Historic Places. This would include buildings, structures and sites deemed notable in the city's history prior to 1957.

Need to support local interest groups. Encourage and support the Dawson County Historical Society's efforts to educate the general public on the importance and benefits of protecting cultural resources.

Need to take advantage of local sources. Utilize regional, state, federal, and university programs that provide funding, staff, and services to enhance future historic preservation programs for the City of Dawsonville.

Need to encourage the adaptive reuse of existing resources. Promote the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and structures.

Need to promote preservation through the use of municipal regulation. Update the city's historic preservation ordinance in order to better protect downtown resources; establish a preservation commission which would solely oversee architectural and design reviews of new construction and external alteration of existing structures within the historic district.

Need to expand local qualifications. Become a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the State Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Natural Resources.

Continue plans to revitalize downtown/ Coordinate new development within the existing community – Plans for downtown Dawsonville do not have the benefit of unified property ownership or financing, and they require additional, more detailed implementation strategies that must be coordinated with several other specialty plans. New development should be designed so as to compliment the existing community. Implementation Strategies

Update historic resources inventory Support new nominations for National Register

Support the Dawson County Historical Society

Report on funding options for historic preservation

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

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

Consider CLG status

Implement Urban Redevelopment Plan

Explore funding options for urban redevelopment plans

Consider design guidelines for areas outside historic districts

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

Community Facilities and Services

Issues and Opportunities

Viability of water and sewer service – Dawsonville is one of several communities purchasing its water and sewer service from the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority. In order for the City to properly plan for and attract quality growth it must ensure the quality and long-term viability of these services.

Demand for a Civic Center – Dawsonville does not have a formal Civic/Conference Center for hosting a variety of indoor events. Renovations are planned for the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame and Museum/ City Hall complex that will provide improved meeting space but there is demand for some small convention space to support local and tourist events.

New/ Expanded schools – The Dawson County Board of Education does have plans for at least one new school and several facility expansions that should accommodate increases in enrollment and allow for the use of modern technology.

New Parks and Recreation Plan – The County adopted a new Parks and recreation Master Plan in 2005 that will guide new land purchases and facility improvements through the next 20+ years. Parks and recreation management is done on behalf of both the County and the City. Implementation Strategies

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services

Confirm future partnership terms and conditions with all utility providers.

Conduct Civic Center Feasibility Study

Annual City review of Dawson County School System 5-year plans to ensure coordination of investment efforts and efficiency of services

Support the Dawson County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Transportation

Issues and Opportunities

Balancing local traffic and commercial traffic – As Dawsonville and Dawson County grow more suburban the major corridors will become viable for multiple uses. Uses that, at times can lead to competing priorities, particularly in balancing through and tourist traffic with that of local residents. The City must balance its overall priorities for growth, character and land use management to ensure clear priorities for all major roadways to ensure an efficient transportation system.

Maintaining the access corridors – Connectivity to Hwy 400 is a chief priority for residents and businesses alike. Yet this also causes the greatest blend of uses and competing demands as discussed above. For example State Route 53 could serve as a commercial destination, gateway, scenic corridor or simple rural arterial. Management of these routes will be critical to determining a vision for the community and the effectiveness of measures to achieve that vision.

Improving access to mass transit – Few opportunities exist for alternative modes of transportation, either as a local service or as commuter service into metropolitan Atlanta. Though demand is not high for such modes at present, both the rate and styles of growth projected for the near future suggest a strong need for such alternatives in order to mitigate transportation concerns for the City.

Long-Range Road Improvement Plan - The city is served by many of the county's roads, specifically Burt Creek Road, and State Routes 53, 9, 142 and 136 located in the north section of the city, also serves as a major corridor. The expansion to the north will prompt development and increased travel demand. There is a need to develop a focused road improvement program to guide public investment in the future, and to connect future land use planning with transportation planning.

Implementation Strategies

Annual report concerning traffic data and updates to GDOT plans for region.

Update Transportation element of Comprehensive Plan (as needed).

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

Review Rural Transit Plan with GMRDC; Consider options for van service.

Annual report concerning traffic data and updates to GDOT plans for region.

Update Transportation element of Comprehensive Plan (as needed).

Transportation (cont'd)

Issues and Opportunities

Perimeter Road Corridor/ Intersections with Burt Creek and Shoal Creek - Completion of this perimeter road will reduce congestion in the historic district, improve freight movement within the city and county, and safety for local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists sharing the road. A focused transportation study is recommended to determine alternative routes. Findings from this study can guide future public investment in corridor preservation.

Establishment of Pedestrian and/or Bike *Planning* - The city has begun steps to improve pedestrian infrastructure with a long-term master plan that coordinates pedestrian interconnectivity between the historic downtown district and the newer development along Ga. Hwy 53, Ga. Hwy. 9, Allen Street, and Dawsonville By-Pass. There is an opportunity to build connectivity to State Bicycle Highway 90. The development of bicycle and pedestrian routes in the near term may prove beneficial by allowing for coordination with future road improvement projects and establishing a plan before land becomes too scarce or costly.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Issues and Opportunities

Annexation and growth management – The City is under pressure from development to expand boundaries and service areas. This requires not only coordination as part of the Service Delivery Agreement but also effective planning by the City to ensure the proper quality of growth introduced to the area.

Coordination with affiliated organizations – As Dawsonville and Dawson County experience rapid growth and change it becomes more important that the governments are coordinating their actions with those of all affiliated support organizations such as the School Board, Dev. Authority and others. Implementation Strategies

Conduct Perimeter Road study

Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility Master Plan

Update Comprehensive Plan with information from Bicycle and Pedestrian Maser Plan.

Implementation Strategies

Update Service Delivery Agreements.

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

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

Land Use

Issues and Opportunities

Attracting quality infill development – Dawsonville has select properties suitable for infill development but must work to ensure they're developed in ways compatible with the existing and proposed context of the City.

Incompatible land uses – Dawsonville will be subject to competing land uses and development interests along the arterial corridors within the City and in the transition areas between the rural county and the established, urban portions of the city.

Accommodating new growth – Dawsonville will have to plan for incorporating new development into the City via annexation, requiring more studies concerning the expansion of utility service areas and monitoring of trends outside the City limits.

Downtown redevelopment plans Redevelopment plans have already been completed for Downtown and the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame and Museum/ City Hall site, and now the City is working on a similar plan for the central city that will connect the two areas. As these are completed the City will have guidance for attracting and managing development and capital improvements contributing to the revitalization of the central city.

Implementation Strategies

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

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations.

Implement Urban Redevelopment Plan

Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

General Land Use Plan

Dawsonville is still the traditional social center of Dawson County but there has been an economic shift in commercial activity in the county away from Dawsonville east towards the Georgia 400 corridor where it intersects with SR 53. The downtown area is currently a mix of historic and new structures filled with commercial and institutional uses. Some of the historic structures have been renovated, while others have not been well maintained. Growth in local tourism and the increase in demand for institutional space have kept most of the buildings in the traditional town center occupied. However, residential and commercial activity is moving away from the downtown and city to outlying areas of the county and GA 400 corridor.

To better achieve the community's vision, the City will foster more and better infill development to strengthen the vitality of existing areas. While economic growth is desired, the overall form and types of development are equally important for maintaining the City's character. Central Dawsonville should be the focus of increased commercial, cultural and civic activity, taking on a more traditional urban form within a small-town context and scale. New housing will be encouraged with an emphasis on variety of housing types and price points. New single-family detached housing closer to the urban core should exhibit traditional neighborhood forms yet also have sustainable structures and lots that readily retain market value.

The form of development will explore more suburban and rural character further away from central Dawsonville. The main arterial corridors will likely feature some development but this should be focused at nodal intersections while preserving the integrity of the roadways for through traffic. Outlying portions of the City will feature more rural residential activities comparable to those anticipated throughout Dawson County. This will minimize environmental impacts and capital improvement costs outside the urbanized areas.

The north-south axis will feature additional measures for commercial and public activity centers and/or higher density housing, as Dawsonville will strengthen the social connections with Southern Catholic College and the mixed-use village projected for the property adjoining the college. Concentrating the densities and activities between this node and central Dawsonville will preserve the rural character of outlying Dawsonville and Dawson County as identified within the comprehensive plans for both communities.

Lastly, the City will attempt to foster light industrial activity within the Elliott Airport Park to the west. Uses will be preserved to those minimal demands for auto traffic and utilities, while also minimizing the production of nuisances that might impact neighboring properties. Adjoining land uses will be preserved to rural conditions as both a buffer from the industrial activity and to retain the prevailing character of the area.

Quality Community Objectives

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

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

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

While the City lacks the large volume of older housing matching this form, much of Dawsonville's character is derived from the small-town scale of the original urban center and neighboring residential areas. This includes smaller blocks with connecting streets and smaller house lots that encourage pedestrian connectivity. As Dawsonville strives to revitalize and expand its historic urban core, it will be critical that surrounding residential areas be developed in such a way to compliment this scale and form.

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

Even within Dawsonville's downtown and adjoining residential areas, there remains vacant and sparsely occupied land that could sustain infill development. This would enable the city to achieve a more pure and more sustainable urban core, with a larger population base within the immediate area. This would also maximize the utilities and infrastructure for the City and aid in the preservation of the rural patterns outside central Dawsonville.

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

The Community Vision recognizes the value of Dawsonville's existing downtown core. This downtown area is also in the early stages of revitalization, with plans underway for sidewalk improvements and infill development. Every aspect of future development should support and recognize this area as the social and civic focus of the community. Transportation Alternatives - Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.

Dawsonville and Dawson County remain too rural and isolated for effective mass public transit. However, the City is taking steps to encourage and support additional means for pedestrian connectivity, bicycle lanes and corridors and specialized rural transit programs. Maintaining the vitality of the urban core as well as the overall small scale of the community and nodal development patterns will aid in achieving these objectives.

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

Dawsonville is intricately tied to the region's history and prevailing character, both as part of the Appalachian culture and for the City's connections with automotive racing and the early gold rush period. The City is also poised to increase its role as a social and commercial destination along the tourist routes heading into/from the Georgia mountains. The Vision recognizes this and those measures that build on the City's character would strengthen each aspect of Dawsonville's relationship with the region.

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

The Community Vision illustrates the intention to retain and restore the City's historic resources, as well as building off of these resources in shaping the City's character. Continued efforts to preserve existing structures and promote the region's history will strengthen this aspect of Dawsonville's culture.

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

While Dawsonville's move towards having a more urbanized core and fostering infill development will remove undeveloped land from within the central city, this will also serve to preserve outlying lands from development pressure. The City will also explore specific measures for securing open space and protecting natural landscapes where possible, as this would serve environmental benefits and support the objective of retaining small-town charm.

Environmental Protection - Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining

traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

The City will continue to enforce environmental standards while encouraging development forms that protect sensitive resources (such as wetlands and key watersheds). Appropriate buffers will be employed throughout the City, while conservation developments will be employed in suburban and rural settings. These measures will support the vision of the community while also recognizing the City's commitment to sustaining the region's environmental quality.

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

In achieving the stated vision and sustaining the City's role within the region, it is recognized that only select business types can succeed in and contribute to the character of Dawsonville. The Future Development Plan provides guidance on the form of development acceptable, while additional goals and policies identified within the Community Agenda provide guidance on the effort to attract and foster appropriate businesses for the area.

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

Economic growth will be critical to achieving the vision and stated goals. As such, the City is working to provide employment opportunities and foster a stronger business climate. These measures run parallel to the objectives to revitalize the form and character of Dawsonville.

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

An abundance of housing options is required in order for Dawsonville to achieve the desired population sustainability. Housing choices must support a variety of generations, income levels and household conditions. This will require some work and investment by the City to encourage a strong variety of choices within the urbanized areas, but throughout the whole city and in conjunction with Dawson County this can be accomplished with thoughtful applications of land use management and capital improvements.

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

The city of Dawsonville is expanding the options for educational experience, and the Vision supports continued work in this element. Support for educational facilities and services will only improve the skill sets of local residents and aid economic development, and key goal for the city.

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

Dawsonville recognizes the inter-dependence among the area's communities and the region as a whole. Be it through tourism and marketing, the economic co-dependence of commuting or direct partnerships for providing programs and services. The City must work with other entities as a willing and capable partner in order to achieve the best results for Dawsonville.

Recommended Character Areas

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

Central Dawsonville

Description

This is the physical and social heart of the City envisioned as having more vital, urban areas, a variety of uses and an overall architectural form that belies the established scale and character of downtown Dawsonville. Because of the plans for redeveloping the site around the City Hall this area is notably larger than just the traditional downtown. Included are several of the surrounding and connecting blocks that for the most part maintain the smaller, urban block pattern and similar massing of structures. This also contains the bulk of Dawsonville's commercial and civic sites that establish the City as a public destination. Many of these businesses rely on their collective volume to appeal to customers, playing off the urbanized nature of downtown as part of the attraction.

From the Urban Redevelopment Plan:

"Dawsonville will further define its unique character through traditional town planning principles The downtown will be a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use destination, free from truck traffic and franchise architecture, with proud citizens and small business owners who admire their past. It will preserve historic, cultural, and small-town qualities and maintain and promote aesthetic charm.



"The proposed redevelopment plan is to take place in three phases. A phased approach identifies an effort that is logical in sequence and in priority of need. Phasing will allow the city, acting as the Redevelopment Entity, to build momentum through out the planning redevelopment process, continually gain public input and make the necessary adjustments as the plan progress. "Phase one includes the creation of a new mixed use urban center. This will occur at the (former) Thunder Road Complex where City Hall currently exists.

... The second phase of the urban redevelopment plan is the renovation and reuse of the historic districts in downtown.

... The third phase in the redevelopment plan is the creation of pedestrian improvements and connectivity from downtown to the new urban center."

Work has already begun on the redevelopment surrounding City Hall, and new sidewalks have been installed as part of recent TE funding cycles.

Land Use Types

Commercial Office Civic/Institutional Mixed-use Multi-family

Quality Community Objectives

Traditional Neighborhoods Infill Development Sense of Place Transportation Alternatives Regional Identity Heritage Preservation Environmental Protection Appropriate Businesses Housing Choices

Implementation Strategies

Maintenance of Comprehensive plan Implement Urban Redevelopment Plan Update of development regulations (as needed)

Airport Industrial Park

Description

This refers to the existing airport on the City's western fringe. This is a private facility with select, small-scale manufacturing and air service related industries already on site. The potential exists for this site to harbor additional, similar uses capable of developing employment options for area residents.

To attain the City's vision and stay within the context desired by Dawson County, this development should be done with minimal impact on the neighboring properties and the prevailing rural character of the area. Business types should feature low-to-modest levels of employment and minimal demands for public services so that the location does not require significant improvements to infrastructure or utilities, thus supporting measures to preserve rural land uses outside the airport. Structures should be modest and preferably concealed from view outside the property.

<u>Land Use Types</u> Small industrial facilities Warehouse facilities

Quality Community Objectives

Infill Development – Maximize existing land *Appropriate Businesses* – Utilize existing facilities and employment base *Employment Options* – Provide additional job opportunities for the area

Implementation Strategies

College/Village Center

Description

This refers to the land including the Southern Catholic College site and immediately adjacent areas, particularly those that might someday be annexed into the City. This area is reserved for mixed use developments that will foster and support neighborhood and sub-regional scale commercial and public activity centers. Development at the major intersection and leading southward towards Central Dawsonville should exhibit a village form and scale that includes a mix of uses within the same block and/or building, small block sizes with marginal frontage parking and prominent pedestrian amenities that provide access throughout the area.

Ancillary development outside the public and commercial aspects of the village center should provide some housing in a traditional neighborhood or middle-to-high density scale so as to support the village and minimize local automotive traffic. Additional housing can be provided of more suburban scale or as part of a specialized development, but pedestrian connectivity is encouraged throughout these areas and roadways must minimize the use of cul-de-sacs and dead end routes. Further, such developments are encouraged to pursue conservation design applications for environmental protection and to ease the transition between village densities and rural Dawson County.

Land Use Types

<u>Quality Community Objectives</u> <u>Traditional Neighborhoods</u> <u>Sense of Place</u> – Compliments nodal center and general character of City <u>Transportation Alternatives</u> – Encourages pedestrian friendly scale and form <u>Appropriate Businesses</u> – Encourages business types and forms that support the village <u>Employment Options</u> – Encourages commercial and office activity <u>Housing Choices</u> – Provides for variety of housing types <u>Educational Opportunities</u> – Supports SCC <u>Regional Cooperation</u> – Compliments Dawson County's vision for the area

Implementation Strategies

Maintenance of Comprehensive plan Develop Village Center development regulation

Urban Neighborhood

Description

This is the area immediately outside of Central Dawsonville that features a mix of uses, including modern subdivisions and shopping centers, and is most often characterized by the transition from downtown to more rural Dawson County. Its designation is both the result of this need to transition between extreme densities and the desire to strengthen the urbanized core of Central Dawsonville.

As development in this area will comprise mostly of residential uses and smaller-scale commercial activities, it has been designated Urban Neighborhood. As implied, the scale and form of new development should compliment (not necessarily be equal to) that found in Central Dawsonville, particularly with regards to the density of land use, size of blocks and capacity for pedestrian accessibility. Streets should maintain connectivity, especially with downtown, and properties should limit frontage parking areas. Residential uses may include subdivisions, but these should minimize cul-de-sacs, feature multiple access points and emphasize connectivity with the City as a whole.

Heavier commercial and public activity centers may be reserved for key nodal locations, at the intersection of arterial roadways. This would maximize the infrastructure while preserving the traffic flow, minimizing the number of curb cuts along arterials or traffic flow on collector roads.

Land Use Types

Quality Community Objectives

Traditional Neighborhoods – Preferred scale and form of housing *Infill Development* – Maximizes existing land over new development *Sense of Place* – Support role and character of Central Dawsonville *Transportation Alternatives* – Encourages pedestrian accessibility *Appropriate Businesses* – Reserves business types to select areas and conditions *Housing Choices* – Encourages variety of residential development

Implementation Strategies

Maintenance of Comprehensive plan

Consider amendments to development regulations encouraging/requiring traditional neighborhoods

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Description

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

Land Use Types

This is an overlay that interacts with other development districts and as such does not dictate land use, per se, but rather guides the form and nature of any development within these areas.

Quality Community Objectives

Heritage Preservation – Supports the protection of the areas landscape and archaeology *Open Space Preservation* – May include and support measures to protect open space *Environmental Protection* - Is a direct measure of protection for critical areas *Regional Cooperation* – Supports State and regional initiatives for resource protection

Implementation Strategies

Potential Growth Area

Description

This area represents the periphery of the city immediately beyond the perimeter road that has been designated for potential expansion of the city, both politically and in general form. Both Dawson County and Dawsonville recognize the role of the urbanized core in harboring an economy of scale for housing and select businesses that will allow the region to sustain itself economically and relieve growth pressures outside the city.

Development here will mirror the patterns established by the neighboring Urban Neighborhood and Suburban Residential areas. Much of the development is expected to be residential, with some commercial, office and light industrial possible where conditions (such as utilities, arterial node access) allow. He overall scale is encouraged to remain modest, close to the densities fostered within the Urban Neighborhood district but also providing for a transitional buffer between Dawsonville and rural/suburban Dawson County.

Land Use Types Residential Commercial* Office* Light Industrial*

*=Conditional: Property conditions must meet requirements of zoning category

Quality Community Objectives

Employment Options – Provides for additional space for a variety of employment centers *Housing Choices* – Encourages more residential use *Regional Cooperation* – Compliments Dawson County's vision for the area

Implementation Strategies

Rural Residential/ Agricultural

Description

This represents the remaining, outlying portions of the city that have been recently annexed, almost exclusively to the west of downtown. There are no immediate plans to alter their general form or land use, and long terms plans suggest these areas will remain predominantly residential. Present levels of agricultural activity will continue as development pressures will allow, but neither the City nor the County will pursue capital improvements in this region to facilitate new development.

This area will be fostered as a haven for larger residential uses and rural/conservation subdivisions to facilitate a buffer between the higher densities of Dawsonville and the rest of Dawson County. Most development should entail large lots, with an average approaching or, preferably, surpassing 5 acres per unit. Non residential activity should be kept to a minimum and compliment the rural character of the area, such as churches, neighborhood scale markets and services with limited parking and traffic generation.

Land Use Types

Rural Residential Agricultural Silvicultural/ Forestry Conservation Churches

Quality Community Objectives

Traditional Neighborhoods – Encourages continuance of existing, rural patterns
Sense of Place – Encourages continuance of existing, rural patterns
Regional Identity – Supports vision for the overall area as a rural, mountain community
Heritage Preservation – Encourages continuance of existing form and land uses
Open Space Preservation – Discourages high density; Preserves natural landscapes
Environmental Protection - Discourages high density; Preserves natural landscapes
Appropriate Businesses – Prohibits inappropriate activities; Supports agricultural business
Regional Cooperation – Compliments Dawson County's vision for the area

Implementation Strategies

Arterial Nodes

Description

The arterial roads within and around Dawsonville serve to connect the city with the outside world while also providing access for local traffic. By nature these roads must retain high levels of service while handling larger volumes of local and through traffic. Outside of downtown area most of the uses along the corridors are auto-oriented, with larger conventional parking lots, wider spaces and lower heights.

To balance the differing issues of supporting commerce and the flow of traffic, development should be concentrated at select nodes, notably the major intersections along the perimeter road. Development at these nodes may not require architectural standards but must accommodate standards for setbacks, accessibility and signage that could differ from adjoining character areas. These uses should still aspire for minimal amounts of impervious surface and compliment the small-town scale of the existing urban form. Development at these nodes should also seek over time to foster a mix of uses and pedestrian connectivity, allowing the nodes to evolve into village centers if possible and thereby minimizing the demands for local traffic.

Land Use Types

Commercial Light industrial Office Civic/Institutional

Quality Community Objectives

Transportation Alternatives – Encourages development of pedestrian connectivity *Employment Options* – Provides additional locations for employment centers *Regional Cooperation* – Compliments Dawson County and DOT plans for the arterial roads

Implementation Strategies

Burt Creek Road

Description

The arterial road leading north from Central Dawsonville will serve as a main street corridor linking downtown with the College/Village Center planned for the area surrounding Southern Catholic College. When that Village Center becomes fully built out, it will become a hub of social and commercial activity that should be directly tied to Central Dawsonville so that the two nodes compliment each other and minimize the growth pressures in outlying rural areas.

As such, this corridor will foster a mix of uses not readily desired for arterial roads with greater demands for accommodating through-traffic. This will include a variety of commercial, office and other public activities that mirror the scales and forms provided within the Central Dawsonville and College/ Village Center districts. Development should retain as urbanizing, small-town character with limited frontage parking and elements of pedestrian connectivity where possible. The street should also be preserved for ease of traffic flow but with lower speeds.

Land Use Types

Commercial Mixed-use Office Residential

Quality Community Objectives

Sense of Place – Encourages development that compliments Central Dawsonville Regional Identity – Strengthens Dawsonville's relationship with SCC and the proposed village center Appropriate Businesses – Encourages neighborhood scale businesses Educational Opportunities – Supports the development of SCC Regional Cooperation – Compliments Dawson County's vision for the area

Implementation Strategies

Perimeter Road/ Perimeter Road Extension

Description

This arterial already exists along the eastern side of the City, with the possibility of completing the loop sometime in the future. While this will alleviate a degree of truck and through-traffic that can adversely impact the urban street fabric of downtown Dawsonville, there is also the concern about detracting from downtown's commercial appeal if that traffic is redirected.

To balance these needs and to preserve the viability of the corridor for through traffic, this area is being recognized as its own area. It will work with the Arterial Nodes areas to encourage the concentration of development along these roads at key intersections, thereby restricting the remainder of the corridor from volumes of curb cuts that may restrict traffic flow.

Land Use Types

Commercial* Light industrial* Office* Civic/Institutional*

*= Conditional: Development is encouraged to locate at Arterial Nodes where possible.

Quality Community Objectives

Regional Cooperation - Compliments Dawson County's vision for the area

Implementation Strategies

Potential Annexation

Description

These areas currently lie outside City limits but have been identified as possible growth areas for the city based on agreements with Dawson County and the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority. Annexation will be encouraged for development that is concurrent with adjoining land use and development patterns and with the general principles outlined for the City within the Comprehensive Plan.

Due to prevailing trends and expected management policies, the majority of any annexation will be residential in nature. Preferences for traditional neighborhoods or rural, conservation subdivisions will be based on adjacent uses at the time. Additional consideration will be given for neighborhood scale mixed-use developments, office and/or commercial use for those properties with sufficient infrastructure and utilities, with a preference to locate these uses at nodal intersections along the north-south arterials emanating from the city.

Land Use Types

Residential Rural/Agricultural Commercial* Office* Civic/Institutional*

*= Conditional: Development is encouraged to locate at Arterial Nodes where possible.

Quality Community Objectives

Regional Cooperation – Compliments Dawson County's vision for the area Open Space Preservation – Discourages high density; Preserves natural landscapes Environmental Protection - Discourages high density; Preserves natural landscapes

Implementation Strategies

Maintenance of Comprehensive plan Update of development regulations (as needed) Maintenance of intergovernmental agreements with Dawson County

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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

Policies

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

- ✓ For each partner organization, designate a Council member to serve as liaison.
- ✓ Support marketing of regional tourism and amenities within Maysville.
- ✓ Support new nominations for National Register
- ✓ Support the Dawson County Historical Society
- ✓ Support the Dawson County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- ✓ Maintain partnerships with education institutions, Chamber and Dev. Authorities.
- ✓ Promote housing revitalization programs to homeowners.

Long-Term Activities and Ongoing Programs

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

- ✓ Annual City review of Dawson County School System 5-year plans to ensure coordination of investment efforts and efficiency of services
- ✓ Annual report concerning traffic data and updates to GDOT plans for region.
- ✓ Annual report summarizing economic projects carried out for Dawsonville
- ✓ Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services
- ✓ Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities.
- Monitor and sustain land use management policies through Comprehensive Planning and development regulations.

Short-Term Work Program

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

(See attached spreadsheet)

Report of Accomplishments

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

(See attached spreadsheet)

Short-Term Work Program: 2009-2013 City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan

		Estimated	Funding	
Year	Action	Cost	Source	Responsibility
2009	Conduct Civic Center Feasibility Study	\$5,000	DCA	Planning Dept.
2009	Report confirming utility partnerships	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2009	Study considering design guidelines throughout city	\$3,000	City general fund	Planning Dept.
2009	Explore funding for Urban Redevelopment Plan	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2009	Update Service Delivery Agreement	\$5,000	City general fund	Admin
2009	General review/ update development regulations	\$10,000	DCA, City	Planning Dept.
2009	Continue water system improvements	\$50,000	City, Loans	Public Works
				Planning Dept./ Public
2010	Consider reopening City streets	NA	NA	Works
2010	Study considering Certified Local Government status	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2010	Study considering conservation design regulations	\$3,000	City general fund	Planning Dept.
2010	Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility Master Plan	\$10,000	DOT, City	Planning Dept.
2010	Develop Property Redevelopment Guide	\$3,000	DCA, City	Planning Dept.
2010	Downtown Dawsonville Tourism and Marketing Strategy	\$5,000	DED, City	Admin./ Dev. Authority
2010	Conduct Housing Market study	\$5,000	DCA, City	Planning Dept.
2010	Update historic resources inventory	\$10,000	City general fund	Planning Dept.
2011	Conduct Perimeter Road study	\$5,000	DOT	Planning Dept.
2011	Explore grants for neighborhood improvement	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2011	Review/ Update Comprehensive Plan	\$3,000	DCA, City	Planning Dept.
2012	Report on funding options for greenspace acquisition	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2012	Report on funding options for historic preservation	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2012	Update floodplain and soil information	\$5,000	LWCS, DNR	Planning Dept.
2012	Review Rural Transit Plan with GMRDC	NA	NA	Planning Dept.
2013	Review of tree/landscape ordinances	\$3,000	City general fund	Planning Dept.
2013	Report assessing street signage in city	\$3,000	City general fund	Public Works

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

- WHEREAS: The State of Georgia requires its local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan for the purposes of coordinating future development policies and the investment of public services and facilities; and
- WHEREAS: The City Council, as the governing authority of the City of Dawsonville, Georgia, has participated in developing an update to the City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan; and
- WHEREAS: The City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan, 2008 2030 was prepared in accordance with the Rules and Procedures of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and
- WHEREAS: The elements for the City of Dawsonville Comprehensive Plan, 2008 – 2030 – The Community Assessment, the Community Participation program and the Community Agenda - have all been reviewed and approved by the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs;

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

Adopted by the City Council this <u>3rd</u> day of <u>November</u>, 2008.

ane Cox, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kim Cornelison, City Clerk



