

## Miller County

### Potential Issues

1. Graying Population- Projected that 19% of population will be over 65 in 5 years.
2. Large number of Children (<13 years old )- 21 % in 2000. Is it possible to keep them in the community as they age?
3. Outmigration of Youth-Best and brightest.
4. Poverty levels- 38 % of African Americans and 13.9 % of Whites exist below poverty level.
5. Absence of economic opportunities- 45 % of workforce is employed outside the county.
6. Low rates of Educational Achievement-31 % of population haven't completed high school or GED.
7. Absence of Development Management tools in the County. May want to consider actions to protect arable land, such as very large lot (15+ Acres) subdivisions. County should develop means to discourage the spread of residences into agricultural land.
8. Lack of economic diversity-dependent on public sector industry.
9. Low Wages.
10. Lack of Housing Choices.
11. Lack of available Capital.
12. Spring Creek River Protection Ordinance.
13. 35% increase in number of mobile homes in the county from 1990 to 2000.
14. Lack of affordable & subsidized housing.
15. Decreases in single family (city & co.) /multi-family housing (city).
16. No increase in the City's total housing units from 1990 to 2000.

17. 20% decrease in Multi-family housing within the City from 1990 to 2000.
18. Lack of available rental units.
19. Lack of nursing home/retirement facilities for the elderly.
20. Lack of available programs for housing rehabilitation.
21. Several blighted areas in the City of Colquitt
22. Deteriorating Public Housing.
23. Increased demand on public safety.
24. Expansion of the Miller County Courthouse.
25. Need for new voting precincts with adequate parking
26. Need for new School Facilities
27. Need to either replace or renovate water treatment facilities within planning horizon.
28. Need for Healthcare Facility Expansion and Helicopter Pad
29. Need to further develop Public Transportation options

### **Potential Opportunities**

1. Innovative economic development activities – Arts based development- Swamp Gravy, Henny Penny studios- lots of potential ancillary industry spin offs particularly in retail and food services. Efforts to attract designers and other non place dependent, complementary and artistic industries should be undertaken.
2. Strong Cultural Identity- Heritage Vista's, landscapes and built environment such as the city square.
3. Hospital-availability of medical care locally makes area more desirable location for both industry and residents.
4. Pro-active, pro-business and mutually supportive City and County Governments, may want to consider merging County and City administrations.

5. Large amounts of developable land within city.
6. Land and Labor relatively cheap.
7. City residential areas relatively compact, might consider adopting a Traditional Neighborhood District development ordinance to guide the design and layout of future subdivisions.
8. Golf Course, potential area for gated community or other form of home for the aged.
9. Current housing development on West Bremond, 1<sup>st</sup>, and College Street
10. Innovative reuse - Silos as apartments.
11. Multi-family housing units increasing (county).
12. Substandard housing units decreasing - by 38%.
13. Decreasing rental costs.
14. 3 Lending institutions available for purchasing homes.
15. Sheriff and County Jail share building (currently being renovated).
16. Human Service agency collaboration ( DFCS, Headstart, Family Resource Center, WIA, New Life Learning Center, Miller County Collaborative, Colquitt/Miller County Arts Council, African American Coalition).
17. Construction of (2) schools.
18. Miller County Recreation Department.
19. Upgrades of Sewer System and Water lines.
20. Adequate Library facilities.
21. County participates in recycling.
22. Miller County Hospital is being expanded

### **Areas of Special Interest**

Judge Drake Subdivision  
Crooked Oak Golf Course

### **Unique Character Areas**

Cook Town Road  
Colquitt Square  
Spring Creek Corridor  
Arts Complex, east of square

## **Population and Economic Development Assessment**

Miller County and the City of Colquitt face a number of formidable challenges over the 10 year planning horizon. As the City of Colquitt constitutes almost one third of the county's total population and is the county's commercial and administrative hub, it's no surprise that the city reflects both unique issues and county wide concerns.

It is both impractical and, in real terms, impossible to separate a consideration of Miller County's demographics from its current economic structure and potential for future economic development.

Currently, the overall demographic picture for the county is pretty bleak. Unfortunately not alone in the region, Miller County has persistently ranked as one of the state and nation's poorest counties. Historically these counties have been marked by high levels of poverty, high levels of births to unwed mothers, high levels of unemployment, an economy centered on a relatively undiversified agricultural system, low levels of educational attainment and high rates of illness as well as disease. And Miller County is no exception.

The 2000 census shows the county's population at 6,383, of which Colquitt accounts for 1939. While the county's population has increased by 1.6% in the past decade, the total number of city

residents has declined by -6.1% since 1980. Provided that the past trends continue both city and county populations, already aging, will slowly decline to a projected 1,845 and 5,892 respectively in 2015. Neither city nor county populations are entirely homogenous, and when race is factored in, it becomes apparent that the African American population is much more concentrated in the city than in the unincorporated county. Current projections show that African American's will constitute the majority of the city's population by 2015. Even while the total number of people in the county is declining, the total percentage of African American's remains a stable 29%, however African American's are projected to make up 53.7% of the city of Colquitt's citizens by 2015. The population projections for the comparable City of Arlington in neighboring Early County reveal a similar shift in the urban racial composition within an overall framework of slowly declining population.

This change in the racial composition in the City of Colquitt can be explained by the relatively simple fact that while the white population is projected to decrease at a rate of -9%, the African American population is expected to increase at a rate of 5.36%. Underpinning this change in the racial composition of the City of Colquitt, is a complex network of mutually reinforcing cultural, demographic and economic trends, that tend to simultaneously encourage the permanent outmigration of Whites, while creating significant disincentives to an equal movement of African Americans.

Persistent poverty is, perhaps, the most significant factor in limiting the options of African Americans. A shocking 38.2% of the African American population of Miller County are poverty stricken, a number that is almost double the 23.1% African American poverty rate for the state of Georgia. The poverty rate for Whites in Miller County is

also almost double that of Georgia, at 13.9%, which compares unfavorably with the state rate of 8.2%. While the difference in poverty rates point to striking racial discrepancies in regard to economic achievement both within the disparate groups and across racial lines, they can obscure the fact that, in terms of overall numbers of people, the disparity is relatively small, with 604 poverty stricken Whites in comparison to 689 African Americans. Collectively, there are approximately 1293 impoverished people, or 20.79% of Miller County's population. In comparison, Calhoun County, which has a similar sized population has an overall poverty rate of 26.5%, which when broken down to account for race reveals 10.8% of Whites and 37.1% of African Americans are afflicted.

Undoubtedly contributing to both the long term problems of economic diversification and the economic differences between the races are the equally troubling disparities in educational attainment. While a total of 31% of the population don't finish high school, a rate that is 10% higher than the state average, when this segment is further sorted by race we see that the educational attainment of both African Americans and Whites are significantly lower than state norms. The racial divide is particularly marked here, as 49.1% of African Americans fail to complete high school as opposed to 25.1% of Whites. The Georgian non-completion rates are 27.5% and 18.2% respectively. As has been shown in numerous studies, educational attainment is positively linked to economic prosperity; furthermore, the current economic framework demands a relatively highly skilled labor force. Miller County's lack of an educated workforce is an important factor that constrains future economic development.

High poverty rates should not simply be read as the percentage of people who, for one reason or another, fail to connect successfully

with the regional economy. Within relatively small populations, such as Miller County's, high poverty rates indicate current and future strains on the already limited social services such as healthcare, housing and other income assistance programs. It is vital to avoid the trap of stereotypical ideas about the impoverished. Furthermore, with an increasingly elderly population, 17.1% were 65 and over in the 2000 census, there are growing numbers of residents that must live on a small fixed income and who will require Medicaid to meet their medical needs. At the time of writing, the Federal Administration is proposing severe cuts in the funding of Medicaid, thereby forcing state governments to shoulder a larger proportion of the costs or cut accessibility, or, as is most common, a combination of the two. Currently, 31% of Miller County residents receive Medicaid assistance, a rate that is over 10% higher than the State Average of 19.3%. If current population trends continue, it is projected that 44.5% of the county's residents will be over 45 by 2010, 19.1% of whom will be over 65 and thus more likely to depend on Medicaid as their primary avenue to healthcare. Of course, if current Federal policies are carried to their logical end, the graying of the population may become a self regulating problem, in so far as decreased access to appropriate healthcare will fuel higher mortality rates. Even in the absence of a notable rise in the numbers of dead, Federal policy changes may have profound economic and social implications for both County and City. Currently the related economic sectors of Public Administration and Health, Education and Social Services account for 30.69% of the Miller County workforce and 58.6 % of in-County jobs .

Dependency ratios are a good indicator of current economic conditions and point to long term challenges. Premised on the idea that while everyone is a consumer, not everyone is a producer,

dependency ratios measure the number of non-producers per 100 people. Obviously an area with a lower dependency ratio is economically better off than one with a higher one, because a greater proportion of its inhabitants are busy producing goods and services rather than just consuming them. Of course, the overall ratio is further refined by considering the number of non-working youths and the aged. Current studies show that Miller County has a dependency ratio of around 76 per 100. That is to say, for every 100 people aged 18-64 there were 76 dependents, although over half of them would be children, there still remains a significant number of the adult population as non productive economic deadweight.

Currently while Georgia enjoys a per capita income of \$27, 794, Miller county residents lag behind with a per capita income of \$22,175. Just as per capita income lags behind state levels, the Miller County household income distribution patterns also diverge from state norms. Currently 55% of Miller County households earn less than \$30,000 per annum and only 19% earn \$60,000 and above, a general pattern that is only marginally more marked in the City of Colquitt, where the rates are 57 % and 18% respectively. At the state level, household income distribution pattern is more equitable, with approximately 34% of households earning less than \$30,000 p.a. and approximately 29% earning \$60,000 and above.

### **Economic Development**

Although it is a well worn thought, the global economic system has undergone a sea change, tantamount to a scientific paradigm shift in the last 30 years. Miller County's corner of southwest Georgia has, for the most part evaded the tumultuous economic changes that ravaged the once industrial areas of the north eastern United States.



Miller County and the City of Colquitt was largely spared the economic devastation that accompanied the wholesale restructuring of global markets and productive practices primarily because for the majority of the county's history there was little economic activity outside of agriculture and its ancillary industries, such as silviculture.

The post WWII period saw both a dramatic drop in population and a belated movement towards some economic diversification within the region that attended the growing professionalization and capitalization of agricultural practice and the development of local manufacturing activities, primarily in the apparel sector.

Fueled by significant changes in transportation costs, modern industrialized economies slowly began shedding their labor intensive industries in the mid-70s. Many of these companies shifted their productive activities overseas to areas that offered the best competitive advantage *vis a vis* land, labor and capital costs. In the late 80s and early 90s, a more refined business model developed that would ultimately destroy the local apparel manufacturing sector. Apparel companies, in particular, embraced the idea of outsourcing and subcontracting all manufacturing activities to third parties. The ever increasing number of third party subcontractors helped to push already low production costs lower, and manufacturing companies inside the U.S. that were constrained by Workplace Safety Regulations, mandated Minimum Wages and, in extreme cases Union activities, were prevented from meeting their competitors' dramatically lower costs. This 'rush to the bottom' pricing spiral has been felt consistently by different successive manufacturing industries in the County.

The County and City mirror the national economic movement away from material productivity toward the more ephemeral

knowledge economy. However, as noted above, the significantly low rates of academic achievement by a large section of the population, coupled with both the cultural and economic draw of the bigger cities that entices a large number of the best equipped to successfully mesh with new economic imperatives out of the region. A pattern that is reflected in the relatively limited complexity of the growing cultural industries in the area.

The prevailing inequitable income distribution pattern in Miller County broadly mirrors prevalent patterns at the international and national levels in which the middle class squeeze has created an increasing gap between rich and poor, in both real terms and absolute numbers. In the United States, this trend is manifest in the decline and stagnation of real wages over the past 20 years for the bottom 60% of the population. In the US this trend is further exacerbated by the continuing concentration of wealth in an increasingly smaller percentage of elite hands. Broadly speaking Miller County's economy also reflects other national trends particularly the decline in both agricultural occupations and manufacturing jobs.

There are two prominent trends in the local economy that speak volumes about the County and City's existing economic base and future development potential. Currently, of the County's approximately 2731 working people almost half of them, (1237 or 45.29%), work outside the County. Within the County, the single largest employment sector is Health, Education and Social Services sector, which accounted for approximately 630 jobs in 2000 and an estimated 686 in 2005. When aggregated with the Public Administration sector numbers, 170 and 190 respectively, we see that the public sector accounts for between 800 and 876 separate jobs in

the County as whole or 32% of the economic activity in the County and 58.6% of in-County jobs. Employment patterns within the City of Colquitt, unsurprisingly mirrors this trend, with the Public Administration and Health, Education and Social Services sectors constituting approximately 268 jobs out of 737 in 2000 and a projected 289 out 713 in 2005 or 36% and 40% respectively. On the one hand, public sector employment can immunize, to some extent, the local economy from the erratic swings of the business cycle, on the other however, having such a large percentage of the working population dependent on Federal, State and local tax incomes can create serious distortions in the local markets. While a local economy whose public sector is one of the primary income streams is shielded from the pitch and yaw of the market, it is however, remarkably vulnerable to the less predictable shifts in political fortunes. Furthermore, taken in conjunction with the fact that almost half the working population is employed beyond the County limits, the relatively high percentage of public sector workers indicates a lack of local employment opportunities across the spectrum of potential skills and interests.

On the brighter side, the creation of Swamp Gravy, a successful folk life play based on local oral histories, in the City of Colquitt, has resulted in an expanding node of arts and entertainment economic activity that also helps boost tourism and associated service sectors. The arts and entertainment sector is currently receiving a further enhancement with the creation of the Southwest Georgia Film Commission, video and film production companies and the construction of a Soundstage facility. Although any long term investment in the film and video industry is inherently a high risk proposition, even a moderately successful venture, when taken in

conjunction with the existing and potential spin off economic activities, could have profound effects on the local economy and may serve as a brake on the more negative demographic trends. Despite the presence of the very popular historic Tarrer Hotel, and the 18 room Star Motel, the lack of available short and long term rental accommodation in the City and County may well prove to hinder the development of an increasingly complex and interdependent arts and entertainment node. This issue can certainly be overstated given the proximity of hotels in Blakely and Bainbridge.

There is a complex mosaic of overlapping and interlocking state and federal economic development programs, incentives and funds that both the City and County have accessed in the past and continue to use. Of primary importance is the 100% Freeport status enjoyed by the county that means all transient inventory is tax exempt. In addition to this tax incentive, businesses and local authorities have received assistance from the One Georgia Authority, the Department of Labor, Georgia Cities program, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the One Georgia Edge Fund. Alongside these financial resources, residents also have both two year schools like Bainbridge College and four year degree courses at Albany State University readily available within 50 miles of the center of Colquitt.

Future economic development in the area is dependent on a variety of both internal and external factors. At the local level, the continued existence of the Hospital, the maintenance of the School District, Public Administration and the provision of Social Services will be critical to the overall health of the County economy, however, as noted above these sectors are susceptible to changes in funding policy at the National, State and local levels. In so far as global events can impinge directly on the economic structure of Miller County and its

inhabitants, there is the potential in the long run that national fiscal and trade deficits may trigger extensive budget cuts at all levels of government. Of course, the array of potential issues and events that would rattle the economies of almost every small hamlet in the Nation is practically limitless.

At the local level, the most prominent disincentives to business investment in the area are the perceived isolation of the area itself, the lack of a skilled workforce, lack of available housing, under utilized infrastructure and, State Highway 27 and the Railroad notwithstanding, the absence of any easy access to a major interstate artery. Compounding these problems is the lack of an effective brand and image promotion process.

### **Land Use**

Since the population peaked in the 1940s, Miller County's smaller towns have all but disappeared, leaving behind small irregular housing clusters. Of the County's 181, 200 sq acres, some 85% is used as either Agricultural or Forestry land. The City of Colquitt is the county's sole metropolis and functions as the county seat as well as retail center, and, tellingly enough, some 57.8% of the incorporated territory is either unused or agricultural land. While there is no shortage of land either within the city limits or in the county as whole to accommodate any projected future growth, it's availability is another matter.

The County's regulatory structure is minimal. The County adopted a combined Code of Ordinances in 2001 that limits the development of malodorous Poultry houses too close to existing residences and regulates the placement of manufactured housing. The County's Code of Ordinances also regulates floodplain management,

soil erosion measures, parks and recreation, solid waste management and other assorted land uses such as the development and maintenance of bridges and roads. In addition to these limited safeguards both City and County adopted the necessary Part V Environmental protection ordinances between 2001 and 2002. Unfortunately, as yet, the City of Colquitt has yet to adopt a Spring Creek River Corridor Protection ordinance. In stark contrast to the County's relaxed attitude toward land use management, the City of Colquitt's 1998 zoning ordinance divides city territory into 10 distinct zoning districts and helps ensure that incompatible uses do not abut one another. The ordinance allows for a neighborhood commercial district which serves to bring select retail activities into walking distance from more strictly residential districts. Even the most restrictive residential districts allow for the development of small scale community services such as Day Care facilities and the minimum lot size allows for relatively dense residential developments. Colquitt has also adopted a historic preservation ordinance that is focused on maintaining and enhancing preexisting architectural design elements of the City's central square.

The land use pattern in Miller County has remained relatively static over the past 30 years. Housing in the unincorporated areas tends to locate close to existing paved roads and tends to be denser, although this term is used advisedly, closer to Colquitt and thins out as the distance from the city increases. The absence of strict development regulations in the County and the attraction of larger lots, lower taxes and a rural lifestyle leads to this kind of corridor development. There are a number of small housing clusters among the disparate and irregularly spaced homes that could, over the long run, develop into small hamlets and eventually seek incorporation, but

given the current glacial pace of development overall, this is unlikely to occur within the next 50 years. Over the long run, the County government should be developing regulations that encourage residential development in the city. Encouraging residential development within the City's boundaries may seem counter intuitive to the County government, however, it should be remembered that as a general rule of thumb the costs of service provision to private residences that are spread out over a large geographic area often outstrips realizable tax returns. Cost of Community Service studies have been carried out across the United States and consistently show that residential land costs local governments more than it usually returns in the form of taxes.

Should the region and it's labor force become attractive to the Manufacturing sector once again, the City's industrial park is sufficiently large to absorb any medium sized (<100 employees) enterprise.

### **Housing Assessment**

In 2000 a total of 2770 housing units were recorded by the Census Bureau in Miller County. The largest share of these units (1891) is 68% of total housing units are found in the unincorporated areas of the county. The rest of the(862 units) housing stock is located in the City of Colquitt and it represents 31% of the county's total's housing units.

The distribution of the percentage of housing units throughout the county has not changed significantly in the past 10 years. According to the Census, the total number of housing units in the City has remained the same for the past 10 years. The City and County have both had decreases in single-family housing units during this past planning period.

New homebuyers distribute money into the economy immediately for many months after the purchase of their home. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, the construction of 100 homes creates 250 jobs during the first year of construction and 65 jobs per year thereafter. A new homeowner will spend an average of \$8900 to furnish, decorate and improve a newly built home during the first year of ownership. Typically, housing production will follow economic growth, as housing producers will strive to satisfy the demand created.

In Miller County almost 25% of all housing units are mobile homes according to the 2000 census. A high concentration of manufactured homes often equates to a large number of residents with lower incomes and lower educational attainment levels. Decision makers in areas with a large number of mobile homes face a unique set of problems and challenges.

Due to the differences in tax regulations and the cost of the mobile homes, tax revenues generated from mobile homes are significantly lower than traditional single or multi-family units. This situation puts local government at a disadvantage in providing services because of the reduced tax base, especially with regard to funding for education.

Many rural areas do not have adequate housing and mobile homes are a logical alternative to cope with these housing shortages. Communities with high concentrations of mobile homes need to consider alternatives which have the benefits of traditional "stick built" property, but cost less than conventional homes.

One of the fastest growing segments of the population in the City of Colquitt and Miller County are persons over 65 years of age. A large number of homes occupied by persons 65 years of age and older



signal potential problems for decision makers attempting to deliver services to this increasingly vulnerable group. The elderly and indigent are adversely affected by tax increases because they are reliant on low incomes and as a result of that tend to oppose bond referendum's or any other measure that entails higher taxes. Programs that involve reducing the high cost of heating and cooling are necessary to assist these individuals. This group is also frequently the target of criminal activity such as larceny, burglary, and home repair confidence tricks.

Creating affordable housing for elderly resident as with any age group, necessitates taking inventory of residents' needs and desires. A survey conducted by the National Association of Homebuilders revealed the following amenities are favored by elderly homeowners and homebuyers: walking and jogging trails, park areas, communities with security guards, public transportation and clubhouses.

The homeowner vacancy rate and rental vacancy rate is the proportion of homes or rental housing inventory which is vacant and for sale or rent. Vacancy rates provide an indicator of housing availability. A rental vacancy rate of at least 5% is typically required to ensure an adequate supply of rental housing and to provide choice in the housing market. According to the 2000 Census Miller county homeowner vacancy rate was 0.62 and the rental vacancy rate was 11.82. The City of Colquitt homeowner vacancy rate was 1.72 and the renter vacancy rate was 11.15. Georgia home owner vacancy rate was 2.24 and the rental rate was 8.46. These rates and in-migration indicate the need for new units to be developed to expand the selection of housing for both existing household and new growth. With so few competitive market rent units, there is at least some need for modern, quality rental units for local families, workers new to the area,

and others.

One of the greatest deterrents to economic growth within Miller County, as well as South West Georgia, is the lack of affordable housing. Without adequate available, affordable housing economic development efforts that create new job opportunities may not generate the desired effects because the jobs will be taken by people living outside of the County. Statistics from the Housing Authority of the City of Colquitt show that they currently have a waiting list of over 40 families. The Office receives and processes an average of 6 applications a week and the average waiting list time is twelve to fifteen months. Most public housing renters have very low incomes and typical cash rents are under \$100 for family units. Miller County has two public housing projects and both are in need of renovation. Other than the Housing Authority, there are three other subsidized rental developments, Spring Creek Villas, Rentz Apartments and Merritt Apartments. These include an additional 50 privately owned apartments with waiting lists totaling 15 families. The Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program and Rental Assistance or Section 8 as it is still called is administered by the Department of Community Affairs in smaller counties like Miller. At this time, there are only 10 vouchers being distributed in Miller County due to the lack of available housing. Families approved for these vouchers can select from any privately owned rental unit approved by DCA. It is up to private landlords to rent their units to a Section 8 household. Public housing and Section 8 has helped thousands of people during times of economic crisis. However, as each public housing resident's financial situation improves, often their ultimate goal is to pursue the American Dream of owning their own home.

The need for affordable housing in the area has been

exacerbated by a recent (March 2005) tornado that demolished 24 homes and left 80 more uninhabitable. This incident has caused an already circumscribed housing market to become a practically non-existent one. The tornado tore up almost 4% of the county's housing stock. This fact, coupled with the waiting list of the local housing authority and rental complexes, has fostered a housing need of devastating proportions for this rural county.

Local decision makers need to be aware of the importance of delivering programs to people living in a variety of housing environments. They also need to be aware of the role that housing plays in local community and economic development. Without adequate available, affordable housing, economic development efforts that create new job opportunities may not generate the desired effects because the jobs will be taken by people living outside of the county.

### **Communities Facilities Assessment**

The quality and availability of community facilities and services, are a major determinant in the location of new or expanded residential, commercial and industrial development. They are also an indicator of the present quality of life in a community. Planning for the provision of community infrastructure and services will play a continually important role in the wise use and development of land in Miller County and the City of Colquitt.

With the increase in population, more public and private services must be provided to meet the needs of the population. Roads and highways need to be maintained and built. In addition, a demand exists for new property, maintained public utilities, housing and economic development programs, medical facilities as well as quality education programs. Creative ways to fund community services and

programs through the development of new public and private partnerships must be forged to meet these changing community needs and demands.

Education and job readiness programs for the youth of the community must be carefully planned and executed, particularly given that their future employment will comprise a larger share of the labor force than other groups due to the large number of retired individuals. Community decision makers will therefore have to consider how to address special concerns in areas such as funding for education, business activity, labor availability, the delivery of services, health care, issues of parent care and filial responsibility, adequate nursing home facilities, and residential communities with senior citizens support programs.

Miller County and the City of Colquitt's public safety services include law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services and E-911. The provision of these services is expensive, but they must be maintained to retain a continued sense of community well being. The 2000 Census reveals that 17% of the Miller County and City of Colquitt adults (age 25 and older) did not have a high school diploma. In contrast 13.8% of adult Georgians did not have a high school diploma.

Persons with low educational attainment levels also have lower rates of income and higher levels of mortality, illness and crime. Schools are currently seen as one of the key socializing forces in the life of a child. Students who experience frustration and failure in school are likely to encounter the same barriers later in life. There is a strong relationship between income and education. In general, the more education a person has, the higher the income.

In addition, many individuals with low educational attainment

levels also have a high proportion of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug related problems. These include tobacco related illness, liver and heart disease, maternal and child health problems, and unintended injuries.

The county's growing elderly and teen age populations' present authorities with the greatest challenges. Miller County and the City of Colquitt had a higher percentage of the population (17%) over the age of 65. Retirees, living on fixed incomes, are no longer able to afford many of the services they need. They are also more susceptible to crime, therefore requiring more public and private services.

Changes in the age structure have far-reaching social and economic effects because older people frequently are no long active in the labor force, are living on fixed incomes, and generally have different needs than the rest of the population. These needs include specialized health care, handicap-accessible housing, financial assistance, estate planning, recreation and leisure-time facilities. The uncertainty of population growth complicates the balancing of long-range costs and benefits with short-term needs. Population changes impact the entire community in general, but housing in particular because both long term residents and new arrivals must have places to live.

### **Quality Community Objectives Conformance**

In assessing the region's conformance with the Quality Community Objectives, it must be noted that new developments are negligible, future development over the planning horizon is likely to be limited and neither County nor City could be described as regulation rich environments. Of the 16 Objectives listed, both levels of government, with significant assistance from innovative non-profit actors, are shepherding their respective constituencies toward

complying with those that they currently fall short of. Of the directly physical objectives; (Traditional Neighborhoods, Open Space Preservation), both are attained if only due to the absence of any countervailing development pressure.

The more abstract and ideologically laden objectives have been achieved through a combination of minimal, and often State mandated regulation, (Environmental Protection) enlightened self-interest (Heritage Preservation in the City), cultural recalcitrance and antipathy to external pressure either regulatory or ideological (Local Self-Determination, Sense of Place, Regional Identity). Indeed, the reverence for the ideals of rugged independence and the commonly expressed scorn for effete regulations are mirrored in the relative absence of local land use and design ordinances as well as constituting critical aspects of the region's identity and sense of place.

While the governments and non-profit actors are struggling with the more socially definable QCO's, they are directing considerable energy towards them, (Educational Opportunities-Splotted for new schools, Housing Opportunities-CDC, Shared Solutions-Transit, Water Quality Concerns, Appropriate Businesses-Sound Stage, services, Employment Options-Recently Awarded an EIP grant, Infill Housing), and meeting with varying degrees of success. On the whole, despite a strong geopolitical limit on expanding the housing base within city limits, the city is exploring the possibility of improving and updating its zoning ordinance to include increased protection for the city center and design standards to encourage denser future construction. The County Government is also making an effort to overcome earlier inaction and has undertaken the task of creating development regulations for the unincorporated territory.

Given the above average proportion of elderly residents,

transportation will be one of the most challenging barriers to overcome. This will become increasingly important as aging residents are unable to drive their own vehicles due to poor eyesight and other health concerns. Partially meeting the Transportation Alternatives objective, the county is actively enrolled in an innovative regional transportation program that provides scheduled rides for low income individuals. Proximity to Medical and other community services will need to be maintained and possibly increased in order for residents to fully benefit.

Community decision makers will have to consider how to address concerns in such areas as education, labor availability, health care, issues of parent care, adequate nursing home facilities and residential communities with senior citizens support programs. Local decision makes must determine how to best allocate available resources to fund these vital services.

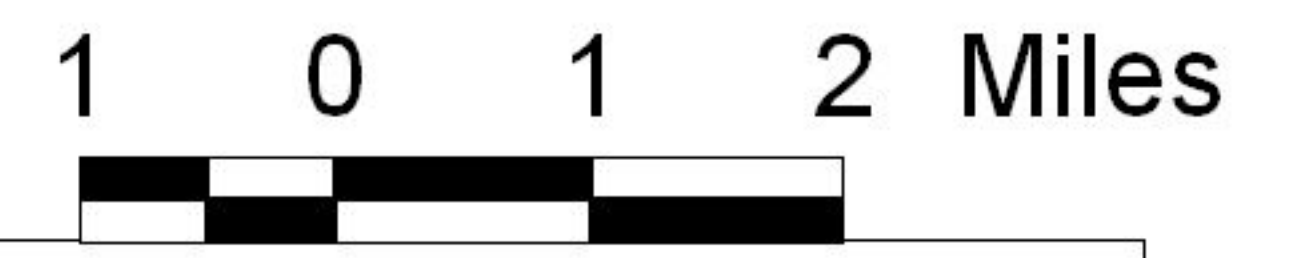
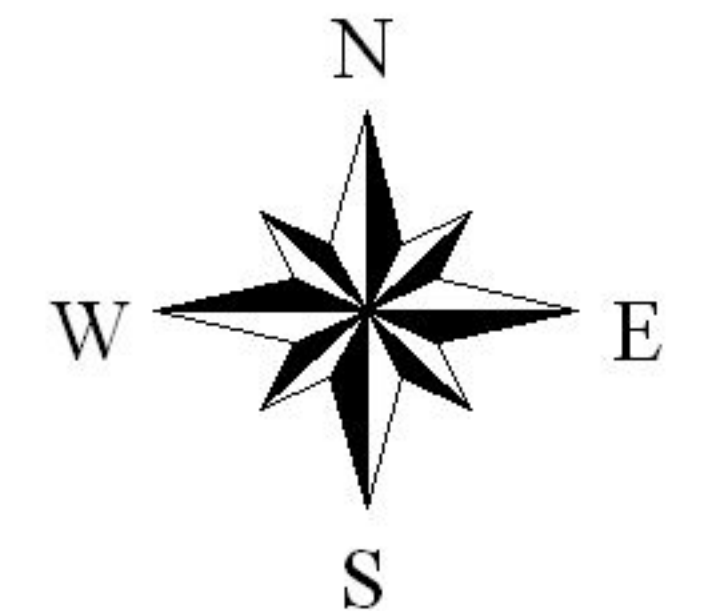
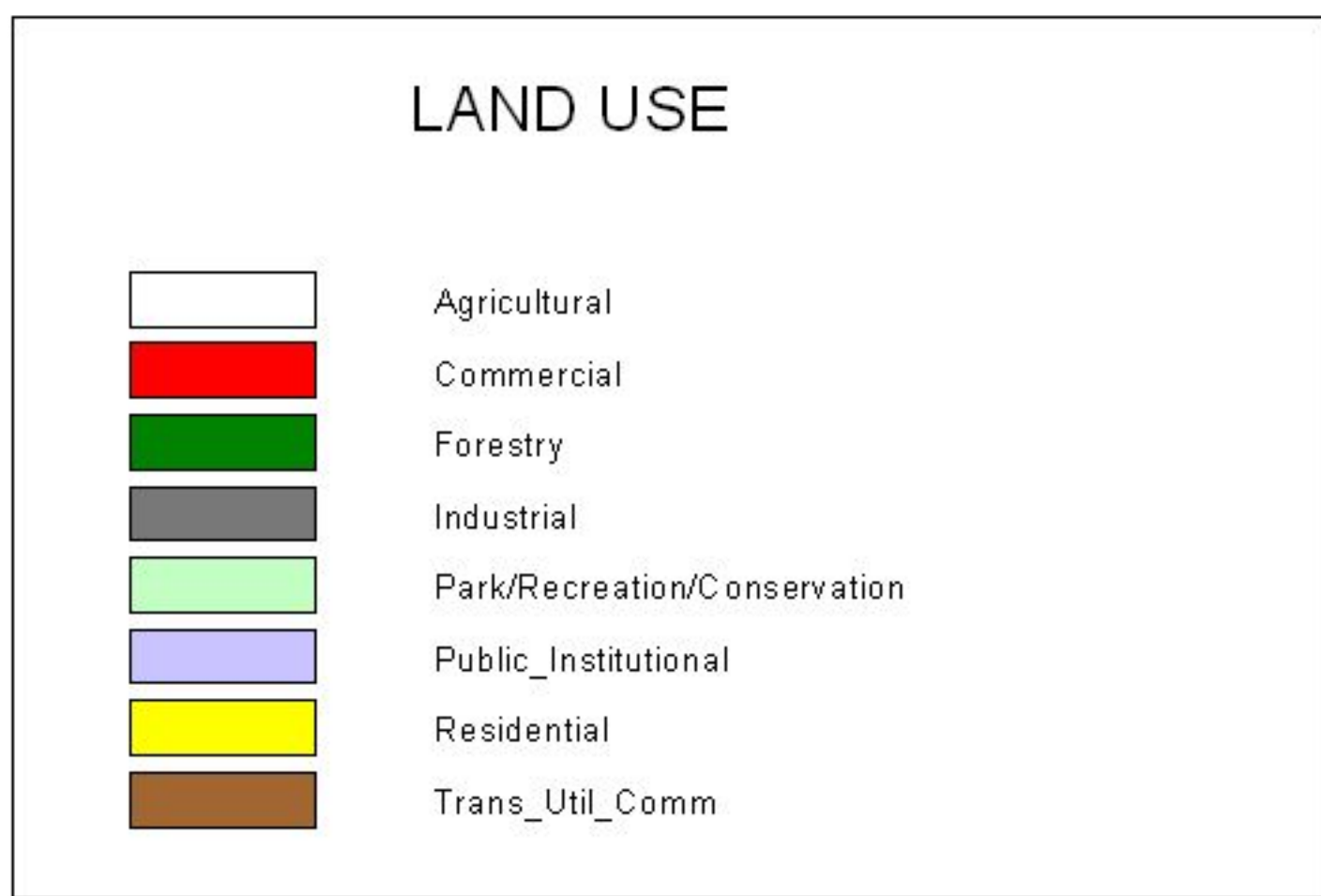
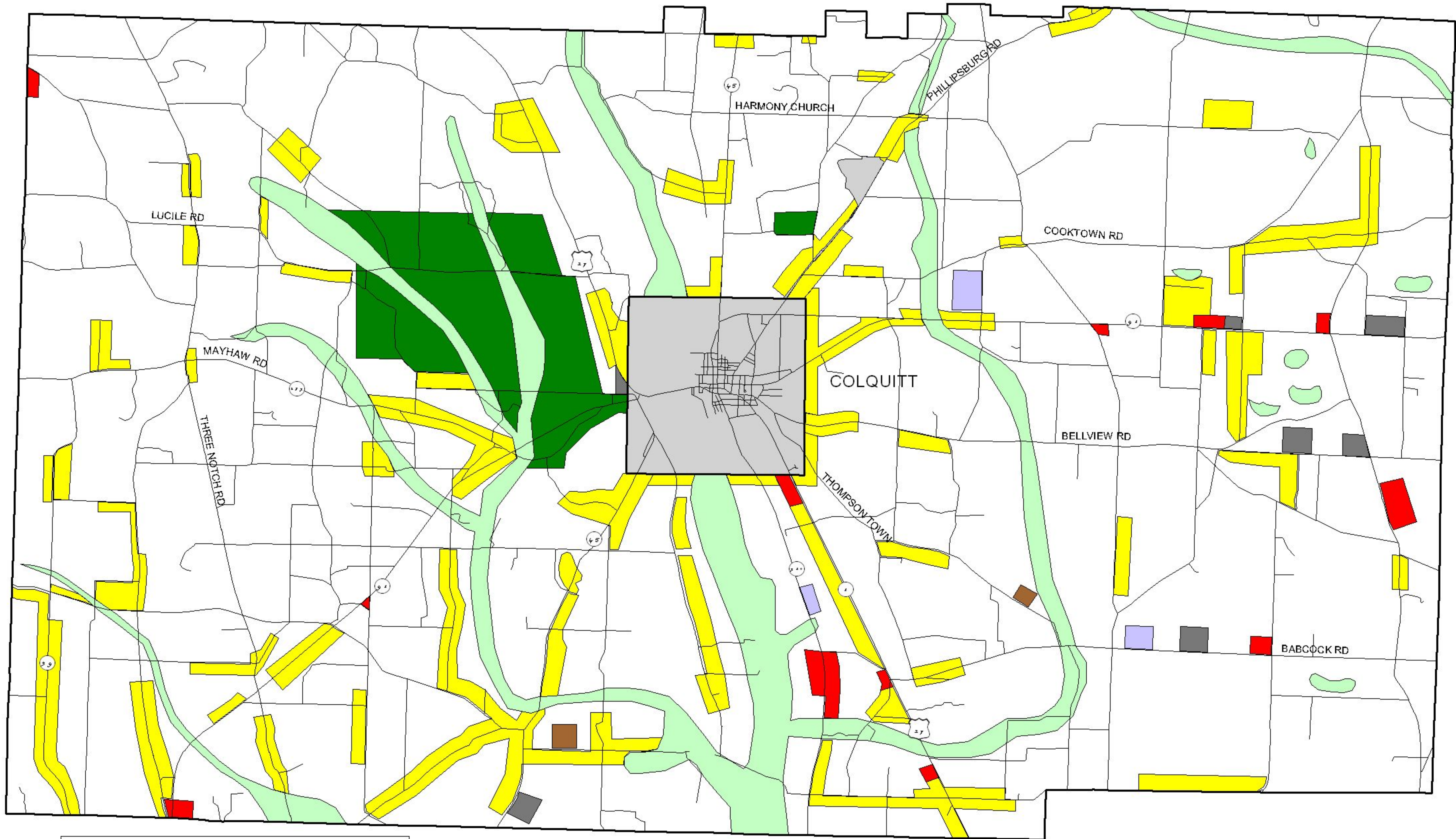
### **Environmental Compliance**

Both City and County have adopted Criteria 5, Environmental Protection Regulations.

The County and City's Service Delivery Strategy was not consulted in the construction of this assessment.

### **Sources**

Unless otherwise indicated all statistics quoted are U.S. Census figures. All projections are derived from this source as well.



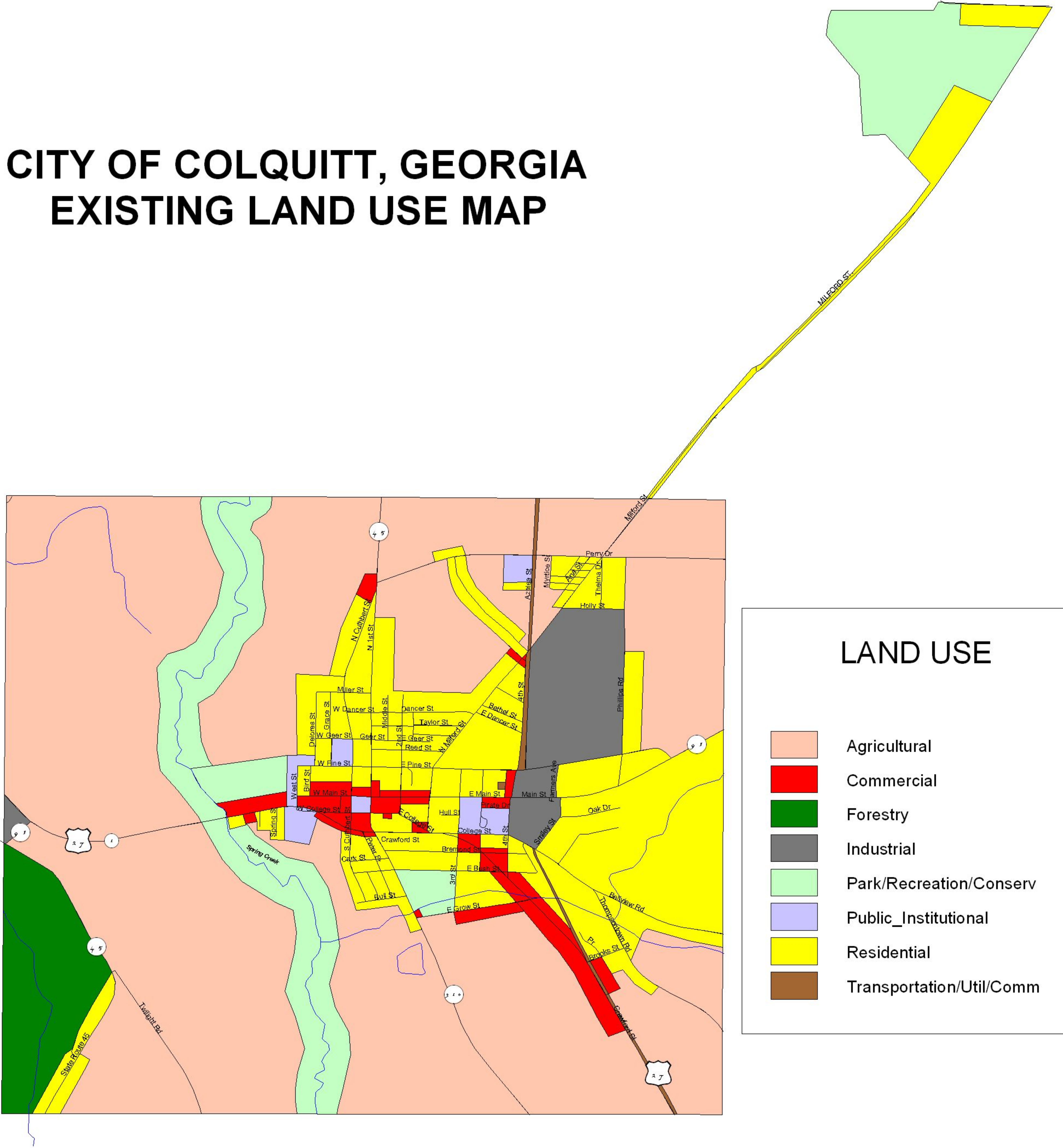
SOUTHWEST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
CENTER

# GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE





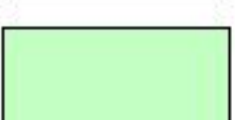
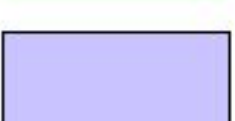


MILLER  
COUNTY

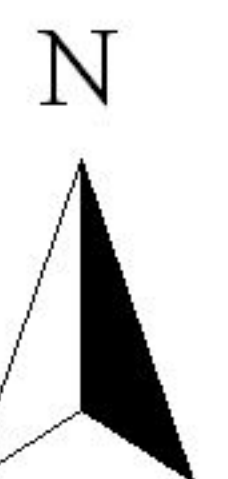


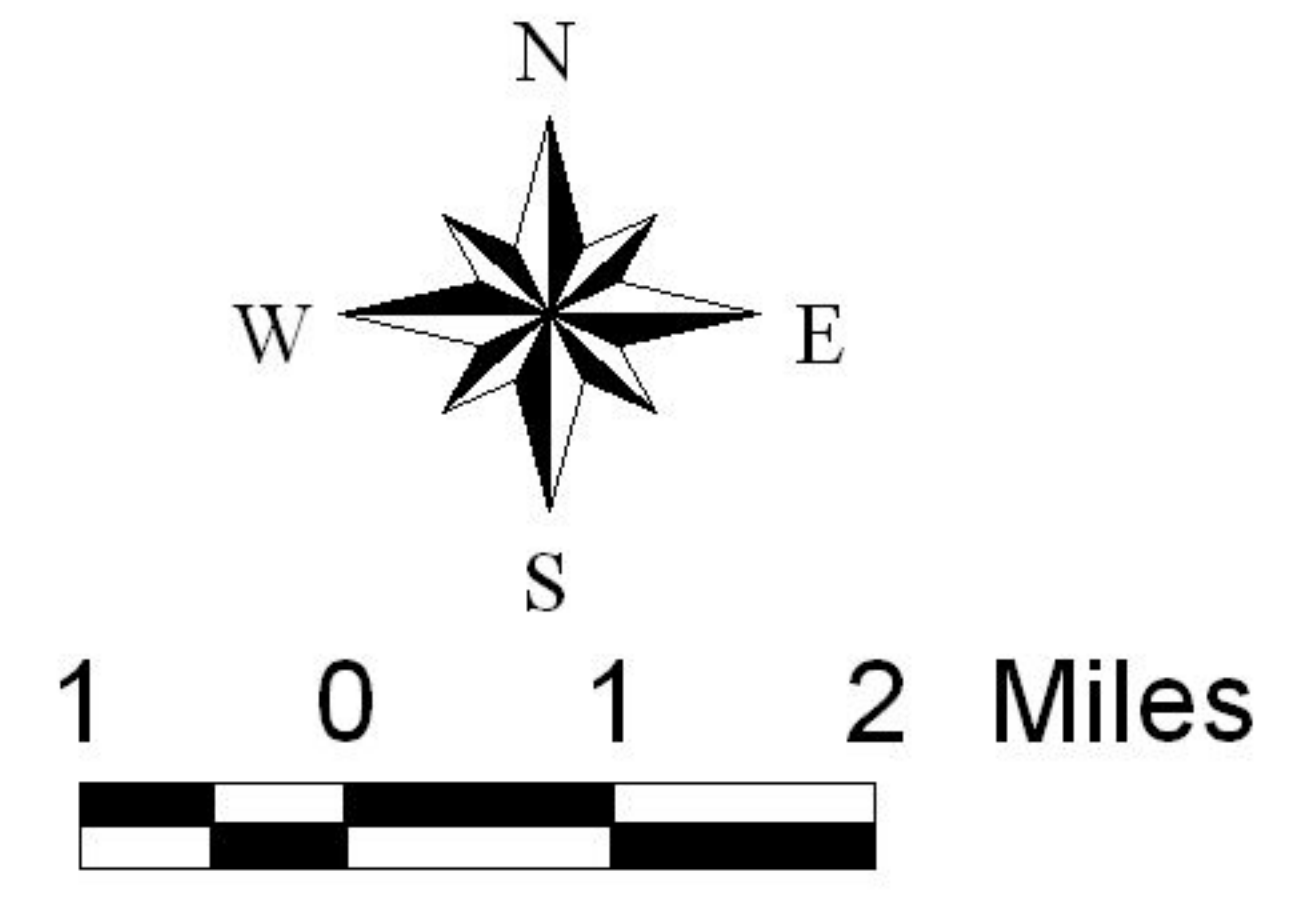
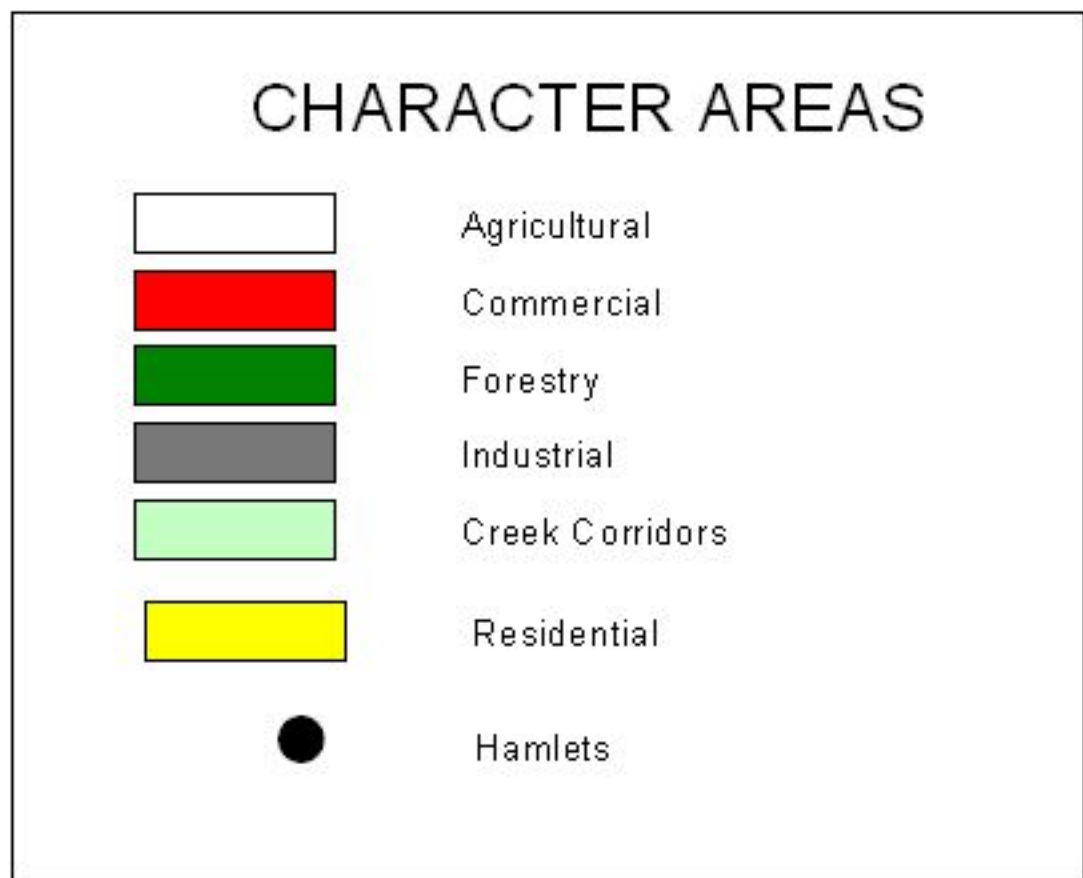
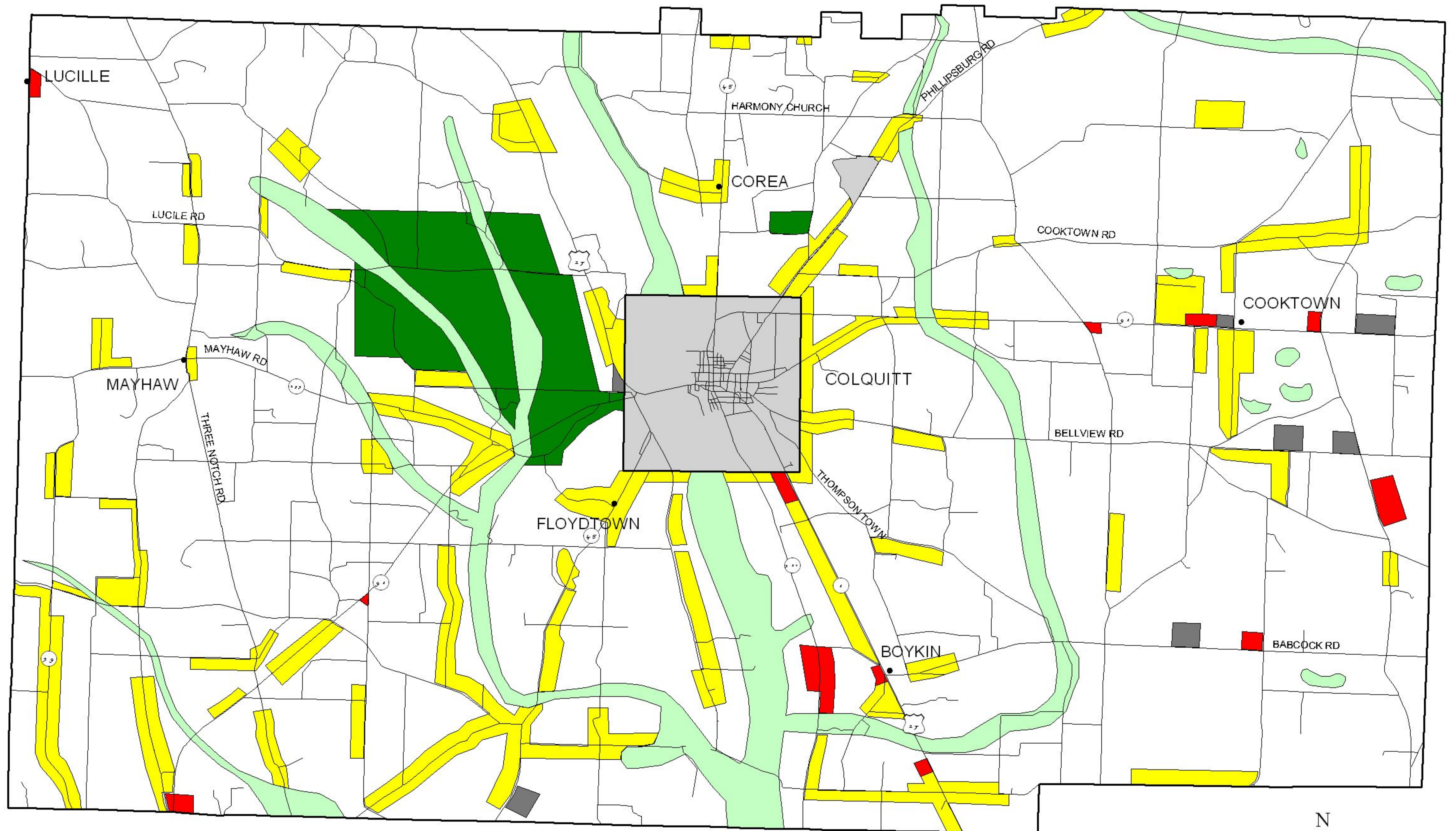
# CITY OF COLQUITT, GEORGIA EXISTING LAND USE MAP



## LAND USE

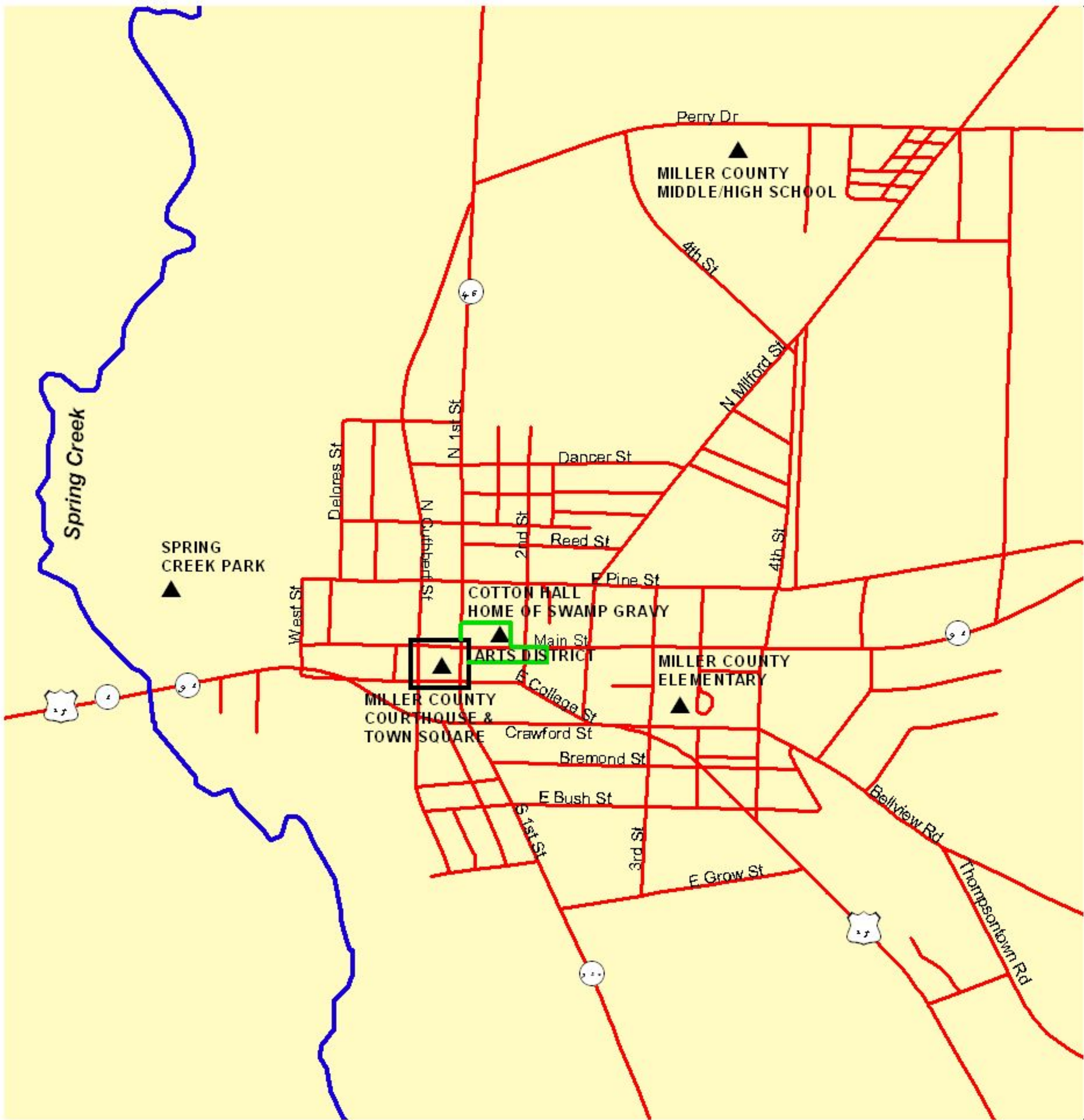
-  Agricultural
-  Commercial
-  Forestry
-  Industrial
-  Park/Recreation/Conserv
-  Public\_Institutional
-  Residential
-  Transportation/Util/Comm





**MILLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
CHARACTER AREAS**

CITY OF COLQUITT  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
CHARACTER AREAS

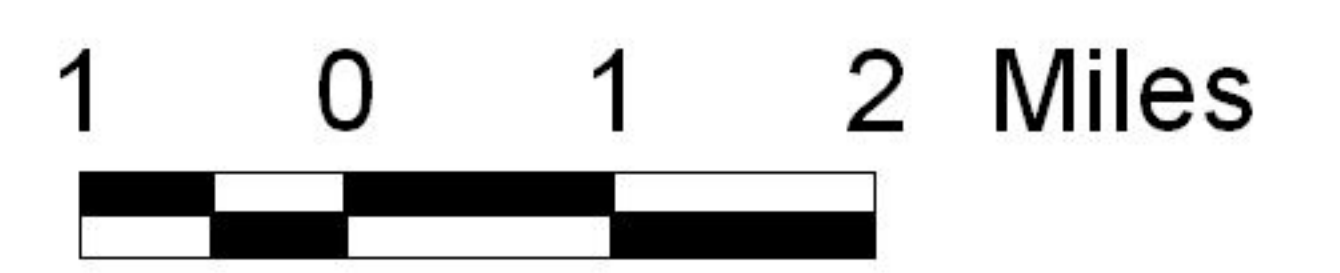
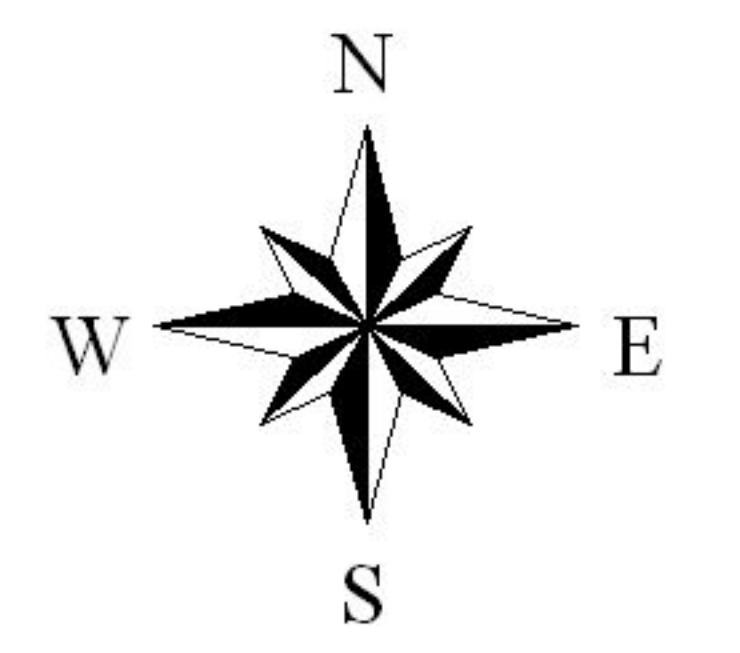
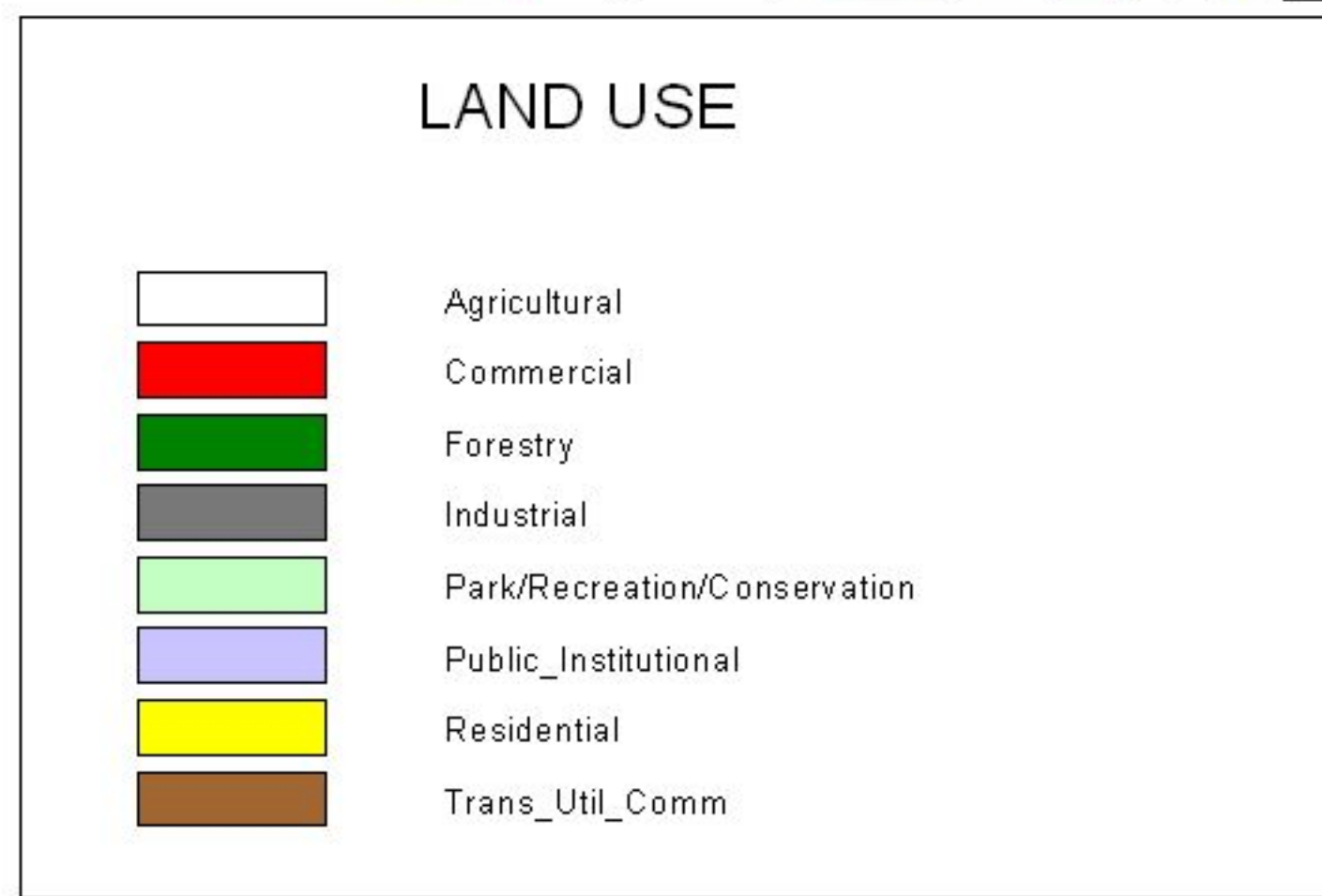
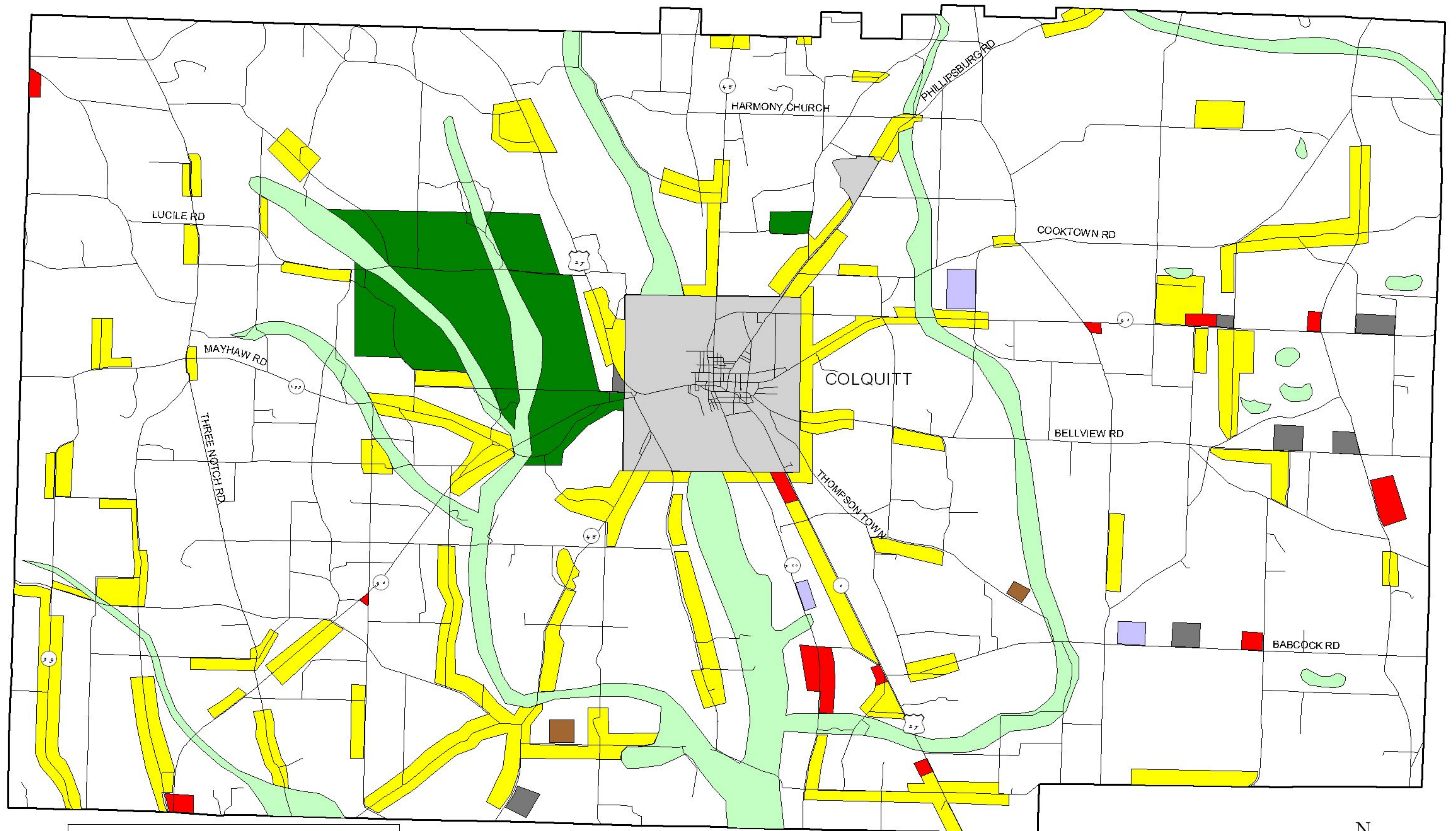


▲ CHARACTER AREAS



0.1 0 0.1 0.2 Miles



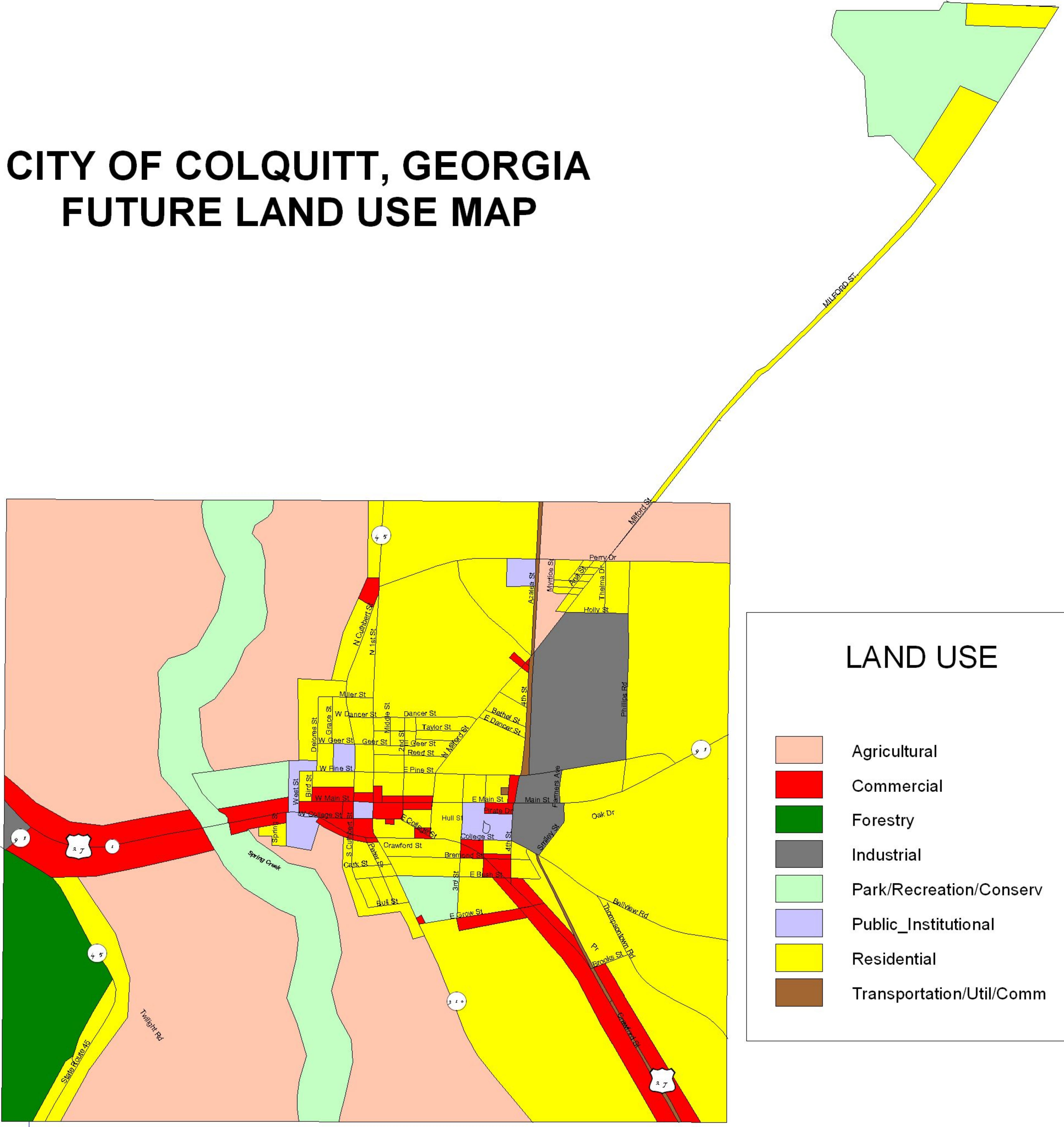


SOUTHWEST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
CENTER

# GENERALIZED FUTURE LAND USE MAP

MILLER  
COUNTY

# CITY OF COLQUITT, GEORGIA FUTURE LAND USE MAP



## LAND USE

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conserv
- Public\_Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Util/Comm

