

JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

2008 - 2028

Community Assessment

Prepared for:

Pickens County and Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock



**North Georgia Regional Development Center
Dalton, Georgia**

March 25, 2008

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) “*the purpose of the Community Assessment is to present a factual and conceptual foundation upon which the rest of the comprehensive plan is built. Preparation of the Community Assessment is largely a staff or professional function of collecting and analyzing data and information about the community and presenting the results in a concise, easily understood format, such as an executive summary, for consideration by the public and decision-makers involved in subsequent development of the Community Agenda.*”

Production of the Community Assessment involved the collection and analysis of community data and information to produce the *Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Pickens County and Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock*. This plan represents the final product of that analysis and provides a concise, informative report that stakeholders will use to guide their decision making during the development of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

The *Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2008-2028*, of which this assessment is a portion, updates the *Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2003-2025* adopted in March 26, 2003 by Pickens County and the cities. The *Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2008-2028* will focus on the unincorporated areas and incorporated areas in Pickens County to aid residents of the Cities and County to help define the existing and future demands. The Community Assessment also serves the purpose of meeting the intent of the DCA “*Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning*,” as established on May 1, 2005. Preparation in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining the County’s status as Qualified Local Government.

This plan update has been prepared by the North Georgia Regional Development Center (NGRDC) with the substantial involvement and input from local elected officials from each jurisdiction, the Pickens County Planning Commission, the County’s Community Development Advisory Council, City and County staff, and numerous agency staff and departments.

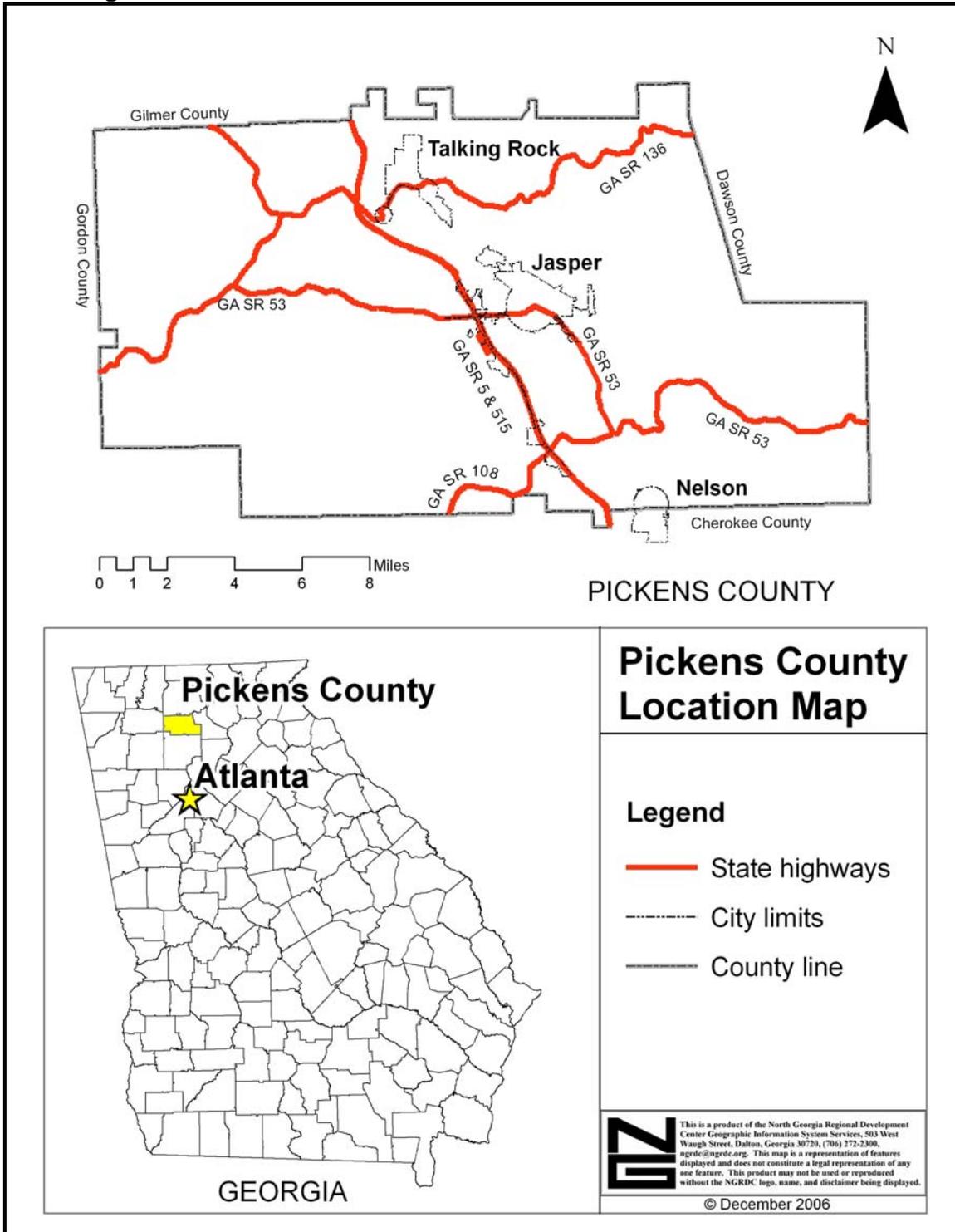
1.2 Scope

The Community Assessment includes the following information, as required by the DCA Standards:

- Listing of issues and opportunities that the community wants to address
- Analysis of existing development patterns
- Analysis of consistency with the Quality Community Objectives (QCO)
- Analysis of supporting data and information

The Community Assessment provides an executive summary of community analysis in order to provide an easy reference for stakeholders who will need to refer to the information throughout the planning process.

1.3 Figure 1-1: Location



2.0 Identification of Potential Issues and Opportunities

2.1 Introduction

The issues and opportunities described below have been identified from a review the *Analysis of Supportive Data and Information*. This analysis included an examination of the QCO's. The *Analysis of Supportive Data and Information* can be found in Appendix A of this report. The report organizes the issues and opportunities by the major topics defined in the State DCA Local Planning Requirements.

The assessment topics are:

- Population
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Community Facilities and Services
- Transportation
- Intergovernmental Coordination
- Land Use

2.2 Population

2.2.1 Issues

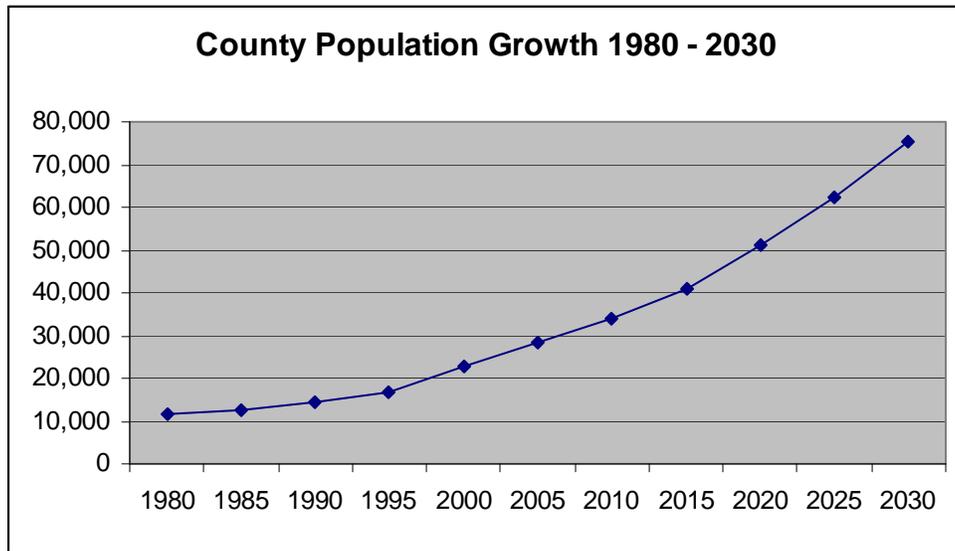
Steady Population Growth

Pickens County lies within a major transportation corridor that has direct access to the City of Atlanta and surrounding metropolitan counties that have experienced rapid growth over the past 30 years. As the metropolitan Atlanta grows, more and more citizens are moving to the outer fringes of the metropolitan region, including Pickens County.

In the past twenty-five years, Pickens County has seen a steady increase in population, although the growth rate has been rapid since 1990 (Figure 2-1). Between 1990 and 2000, the County grew by 59.3 percent well above the State rate of 26.4 percent. By comparison, Cherokee County to the south had a 57.3 percent rate of growth, Dawson County to the east had a 76 percent growth rate, and Gilmer County to the north had a 75 percent growth rate. From 2000 to 2005, the County population increased by 23.75 percent from 22,983 residents to 28,442 residents.

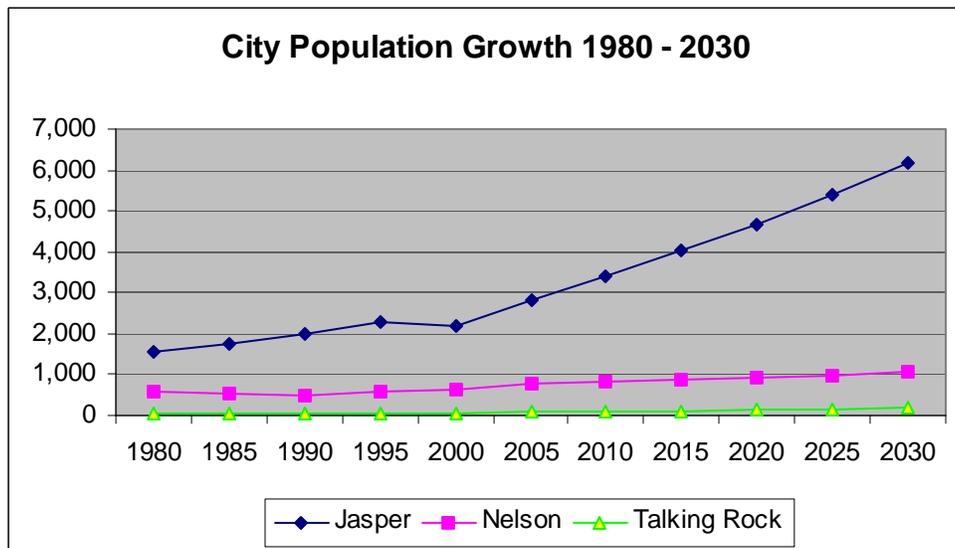
The municipalities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock saw more varied population change between 1980 and 2000, although according to Census estimates, each City grew significantly in the past five years (Figure 2-2). The City of Jasper's population grew by 30.92 percent from 2000 to 2005 increasing from 2,167 residents to 2,837 residents. The City of Nelson saw a change in population from 626 residents to 761 residents from 2000 to 2005, or an increase of 29.57 percent. The most dramatic change was in the Town of Talking Rock, which had a 93.88 percent increase, and almost doubled the population from 49 residents to 95 residents.

Figure 2-1



Source: U.S. Census, 1980 – 2005. Projections prepared by NGRDC.

Figure 2-2



Source: U.S. Census, 1980 – 2005. Projections prepared by NGRDC.

Assuming that infrastructure needs can be provided, projections indicate that the County will continue to grow an average of 21 percent every five years and attain a population of 75,244 by the year 2030. Several factors contribute to this growth trend including the County's close proximity to the Atlanta Metropolitan region, which is easily accessible via State Route 515 (SR 515), a four-lane highway. Pickens County is an attractive place to live, work and play offering a growing economy and many cultural and natural resources. Because of its mountainous terrain and scenic environment, Pickens County is also a desirable location for retiree and recreation home developments.

The municipalities are likewise projected to grow, although at slower rates than the County as a whole. For projection purposes, the average annual rate of growth each

municipality exhibited over the past 25 years was projected forward for the next 25 years. A lot of this growth will depend upon the amount of annexation the Cities undertake. Jasper is expected to experience the most population growth because it has the higher developed water and sewer infrastructure and other public services.

**Table 2-1
Historical and Projected Population Growth in Pickens County, 1980 - 2030**

Year	County				Talking Cities		% Cities of Total Georgia
	Total	Jasper	Nelson	Rock	Total		
1980	11,652	1,556	562	72	2,190	18.80%	5,462,989
1985	12,729	1,769	521	67	2,357	18.52%	5,962,639
1990	14,432	1,982	486	62	2,530	17.53%	6,478,216
1995	16,759	2,274	563	72	2,909	17.36%	7,188,538
2000	22,983	2,167	626	49	2,842	12.37%	8,186,453
2005	28,442	2,837	761	95	3,693	12.98%	9,072,576
2010	34,046	3404	814	107	4,325	12.70%	9,589,080
2015	41,085	4017	870	121	5,007	12.19%	10,230,578
2020	51,121	4660	930	136	5,726	11.20%	10,843,753
2025	62,187	5406	994	153	6,553	10.54%	11,438,622
2030	75,244	6162	1062	173	7,397	9.83%	12,017,838

Source: U.S. Census, 1980- 2005. Projections prepared by North Georgia RDC.

**Table 2-2
Population Percentage Change, 1980 - 2030**

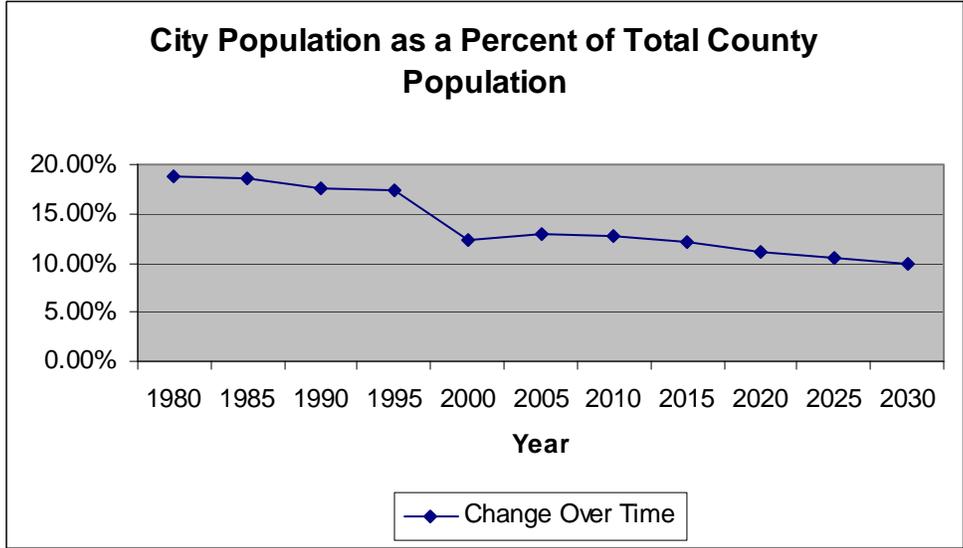
Year	County				Talking Cities	
	Total	Jasper	Nelson	Rock	Total	Georgia
1980-1985	9.2%	13.7%	-7.3%	-6.9%	7.6%	9.1%
1985-1990	13.4%	12.0%	-6.7%	-7.5%	7.3%	8.6%
1990-1995	16.1%	14.7%	15.8%	16.1%	15.0%	11.0%
1995-2000	37.1%	-4.7%	11.2%	-31.9%	-2.3%	13.9%
2000-2005	23.8%	30.9%	21.6%	93.9%	29.9%	10.8%
2005-2010	19.7%	20.0%	6.9%	12.7%	17.1%	5.7%
2010-2015	20.7%	18.0%	6.9%	12.7%	15.8%	6.7%
2015-2020	24.4%	16.0%	6.9%	12.7%	14.3%	6.0%
2020-2025	21.6%	16.0%	6.9%	12.7%	14.4%	5.5%
2025-2030	21.0%	14.0%	6.9%	12.7%	12.9%	5.1%

Source: NGRDC, 2007

Growth Patterns – Cities Versus Unincorporated Areas

Although the Cities are projected to grow, most of the County's population growth is expected to occur in the unincorporated areas. In 1980, a little over 18 percent of the County's population resided in the Cities (Figure 2-3). By 2000, it had declined to 12.3 percent, and by 2030, it is projected that the Cities will contain over a little over 9 percent of the total population. As stated earlier, much of this will be dependent upon the degree of annexation that occurs by the Cities. Growth in the unincorporated areas will require significant investments in infrastructure and services.

Figure 2-3



Source: U.S. Census, 1980 – 2005. Projections prepared by NGRDC.

Changing Demographic Characteristics

The median age for Pickens County has risen steadily increasing from 31.7 in 1980 to 37.9 in 2000. Generally, the age groups 0-4, 5-14, 15-24, and 25-34 are projected to decline as a percentage of total population by the year. The percentage of persons in age groups 35-44 and 45-54 are expected to remain relatively stable, while the percentage of persons in age groups 55-64 and 64 plus are expected to increase. The 65 and older age group is expected to be the fastest growing segment of the population increasing from 13.2 percent in 2000 to approximately 25 percent in 2030. A growing elderly population will require unique planning considerations for transportation services, housing, health care facilities and other services.

The racial make-up of Pickens County is predominantly white and is expected to remain so over the next 25 years. Non-Hispanic blacks accounted for 1.3 percent of the total population in 2000. According to Census estimates, the Hispanic population grew by 38.9 percent from 467 to 765 persons between 2000 and 2005. Given trends nationally and in the southeast, this segment of the population could continue to grow significantly in the future.

2.3 Economic Development

2.3.1 Issues

Lagging Wages

Wages in the County have not kept pace with State and national averages in every employment sector recorded by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Pickens County's average annual wage was 77 percent of the State's average in 2005, and has generally remained in that range since 1990. This is not unusual for rural areas. The State's

average is skewed upward by the large metropolitan areas where wages and cost of living are generally higher than in rural areas. The primary issue for Pickens County is whether the jobs that are being produced pay a sufficient wage to support the cost of living in the County. Most of the recent job creation in the County has been in the service producing sectors, which tend to pay lower wages.

Gap in Education and Training

In Pickens County, segments of the labor force lack education and job training needed to attract higher wage jobs, while other segments of the labor force have education and skill levels that make them overqualified for jobs available in the County. Overall, the latest available numbers for educational attainment show room for improvement. A little over 18 percent of County residents held bachelor's degrees in 2000, as compared to 29.5 percent for the State as a whole. A little over 33 percent had a high school degree, compared to 28.7 % for the State. Education attainment was similar in the Cities with Jasper having 29 percent high school graduates, Talking Rock having 31 percent, and Nelson having 31 percent.

Mismatched Labor Force/Not Enough Jobs in the County

Since higher paying jobs exist in other counties, 51 percent of the County's employed residents leave the County each day for work. Most of these persons work in the Atlanta metropolitan counties to the south, with Cherokee County receiving the highest percentage. Although jobs are increasing in the County, the amount of job growth has not kept pace with population growth.

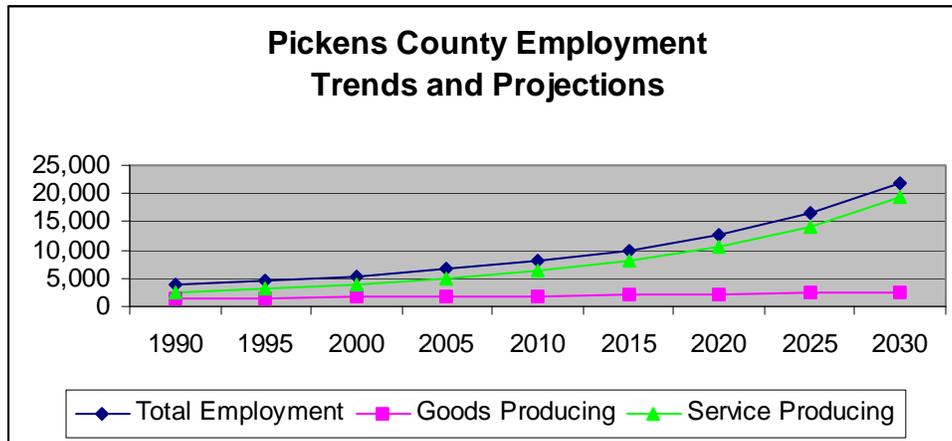
The median household income of Pickens County in 2004 was \$42,679, which was lower than the State of Georgia (\$44,334) and the United States (\$44,473) median income. Meanwhile, average weekly wages for those who work in Pickens County (and may live in other Counties) is significantly lower than the State of Georgia.

2.3.2 Opportunities

Growing Economic Base

Pickens County has seen steady employment growth between 2001 and 2006 increasing from 5,630 to 7,021 jobs (24.7 percent growth) By comparison; the total statewide employment growth was 3.9 percent over the same period. Most of the employment growth in Pickens County has been in the service producing sectors in response to the significant population growth that has occurred (See Figure 2-4). In 2001, service-producing sectors accounted for 71.2 percent of total employment; by 2006, it had increased to 73.9 percent. Goods producing industries (natural resources and mining, construction, and manufacturing) on the other hand have seen modest job growth (primarily in construction) and have declined as a percent of total employment.

Figure 2-4



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1990 – 2006. Projections prepared by the North Georgia Regional Development Center.

Based upon a trend line analysis of historical growth from 1990, projections indicate that total employment could reach 21,803 by the year 2030. Using the historical trends as a basis, and in the absence of a strong manufacturing development program, the projections indicate that the service producing sectors will continue to have the most growth and account for over 88 percent of total employment by 2030.

New Economic Developments

Residential

There are several residential development projects that are underway or are being planned in Pickens County. These include a large-scale planned community that will have 700,000 square feet of commercial space, a golf course and 4,439 homes (Talking Rock Plantation). Another planned community is located at Big Canoe called Potts Mountain and is planned to have 1,250 mixed use units and 396 hamlets with community center and 74,000 square feet of retail and commercial areas. Another proposed large-scale development is the Talking Rock Golf Club, which will have 500 homes, a golf course, 76 condominiums and 19 other residential buildings.

Most of these developments will cater to the retiree/recreation home markets. Studies have indicated active adult retirement communities generally produce positive economic impacts. These studies indicate that the direct and indirect economic impact of one retiree household is equal to 2.5 to 3.7 factory jobs.

Commercial

An 80-acre commercial development is being planned north of SR 53 along SR 515 that will contain a Super Wal-Mart and eleven out parcels planned for other commercial development. This project is anticipated to create upwards of 600 new jobs in the County.

Industrial

The Pickens County Development Authority has been developing a new Airport Industrial Technology Park on 68-acres of land adjoining the airport. Parcels will be leased to technology-based businesses wishing to use the airport as a base of operations.

A new industrial park is also being developed on 108-acres by Mountain City Development near SR 108. At present 52-acres are under development and will soon be available.

The Northeast Georgia Railroad (NGRR) has acquired 100-acres near Tate and plans to build a technology based industrial park.

Joint Development Authorities

The County at present has a full-time Economic Development Director that works with a variety of development authorities in marketing the county and developing projects. Pickens County participates in multi-County Joint Development Authorities with Gilmer (Gilmer County – Pickens County Joint Development Authority) and with Bartow County (Bartow County-Pickens County Authority). Participation in Joint Development Authorities creates additional incentives for job creation.

The City of Jasper also has three development authorities: the Downtown Development Authority of Jasper, the Industrial Development Authority of Jasper, and the Jasper Development Authority.

Educational and Training Opportunities

One institution of higher learning in Pickens County that can provide opportunities for preparing the labor force is the Appalachian Technical Institute (formerly known as Pickens Tech), which opened a campus in Jasper in the August, 1967 and offers a variety of technical and academic training courses. Other nearby institutions include Southern Catholic College in Dawson County (opened near Dawsonville in the fall of 2005), North Georgia College and State University, located in Lumpkin County (91 miles from Jasper), Georgia Institute of Technology (approximately 61 miles from Jasper), Chattahoochee Technical College (approximately 43 miles away from Jasper), Kennesaw State University (approximately 41 miles from Jasper), Georgia State University (approximately 63 miles from Jasper), or North Metro Technical College (approximately 46 miles from Jasper).

Tourist Expansion

Pickens County's abundant natural resources, rich history and culture, and recreational opportunities offer residents and visitors many venues for tourism. Many mountain streams provide ideal settings for a variety of outdoor activities including an abundance of trout fishing waters. Major retail developments are occurring along SR 515 that will draw in visitors from nearby Counties to shop and dine within Pickens County.

Access and Land

The SR 515 corridor connects south to Cherokee County, and has ample land available along this route to accommodate new developments. The State Route creates an important connection to the interstate system. The interstate access creates opportunities for business, industrial and warehousing opportunities in abundance.

2.4 Natural and Cultural Resources

2.4.1 Issues

Water Quality

New developments are on the rise with several large-scale developments in the planning stages within Pickens County that will bring a large-influx of residents into the area. With new developments comes the ever-increasing issue with stormwater runoff that may increase pollution in area streams that do not meet their designated uses based on impacts to water quality. Waters within Pickens County also contain critical habitat for endangered species as well as trout habitat. In addition, development demand within Pickens County can affect downstream waters along the Etowah River that leads to Allatoona Lake, a major drinking water source for the northern metropolitan area.

Air Quality

The Atlanta Metropolitan Region's growth and transportation system has contributed to that region's air quality problem. As development continues to occur in Pickens County, air quality may also become an issue and place the County under air quality non-attainment status. Non-attainment status typically results in a loss of federal highway funding.

Landscape

The eastern portion of the County contains steep slopes and elevations that qualify for protection under the States *Mountain and River Protection Act*. There are other steep slopes throughout the County that contribute to the scenic character of the County with beautiful vistas. Development on these steep slope areas can be detrimental to local water resources through soil erosion and sedimentation problems that are associated with development.

Historic and Cultural Character

Many of the scenic and agricultural areas are now being developed in the County and have resulted in a reduction in farmland by more than 18 percent over the past 20 years. As development continues in the County, there is the possibility of additional impact to the historic and cultural character in the County. Much of the historic and cultural character in Pickens County can be found in the rural areas.

The County needs to protect historic resources by conducting an extensive review of historical, cultural and archeological resources followed by the development of regulations, guidelines and educational/marketing programs specifically tailored to ensure that current residents and future generations will have the opportunity to appreciate the County's history and culture.

2.42 Opportunities

Resource Conservation Plans Underway

The University of Georgia's Institute of Ecology is currently updating the *Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan* (HCP) that has regulatory and policy information to help protect four endangered fish species that exists in this basin. Also, the State of Georgia is currently preparing to adopt a *Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan* that will allow the State to set policies to help protect water resources. These efforts when adopted will aid in controlling and preventing pollution, habitat destruction and flooding.

Preservation of Rural Characteristics and Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Conservation subdivisions, transfer of development rights and other creative zoning regulations and land development practices can be used to preserve and conserve agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas and open space character, while also allowing new construction.

2.5 Facilities and Services

2.5.1 Issues

Meeting the Demands of a Growing and Diverse Population

The County and its municipalities will need to expand a variety of facilities and services over the planning period as each jurisdiction's population grows and becomes more diverse. Critical infrastructure that will need to be addressed include development of new raw water supplies, water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, fire protection, parks and recreation facilities, transportation improvements and school facilities.

2.5.2 Opportunities

Recent Plans

Per recommendations of the last Comprehensive Plan update, the County has prepared a number of facilities and services plans to address future needs. These include a Long Range Transportation Improvements Plan, completed in 2005, a Fire Protection Master Plan completed in 2006, a Recreation Master Plan completed in 2006, and a Transit Development Plan completed in 2007. Each plan forecasts the long range needs and identifies specific improvements for each of these services.

Both the County and the City of Jasper are also independently pursuing the development of long range water supply and wastewater treatment expansion plans.

Multi-Jurisdictional Water and Sewerage Authority

Pickens County, Gordon County, City of Calhoun in Gordon County, City of Chatsworth in Murray County and the Ellijay-Gilmer County Water and Sewerage Authority have recently joined in proposing legislation to create a Coosawattee Regional Water and

Sewerage Authority. This legislation has been approved by the legislature but not yet signed by the Governor. If passed, the Authority would have the powers to construct reservoirs, and provide both water and wastewater services and facilities to its members.

Alternative Financing Opportunities

Upon completion of the last Comprehensive Plan update, the County conducted a feasibility study to determine if Impact Fees could be an alternative method of financing recreation, fire protection and library expansion demands created by new development. This initial study concluded that more detailed planning needed to be done for each of these areas before impact fees could be considered. Now that the above infrastructure and services plans have been completed, some renewed consideration should perhaps be given to determine the feasibility of impact fees as a way to finance needed improvements.

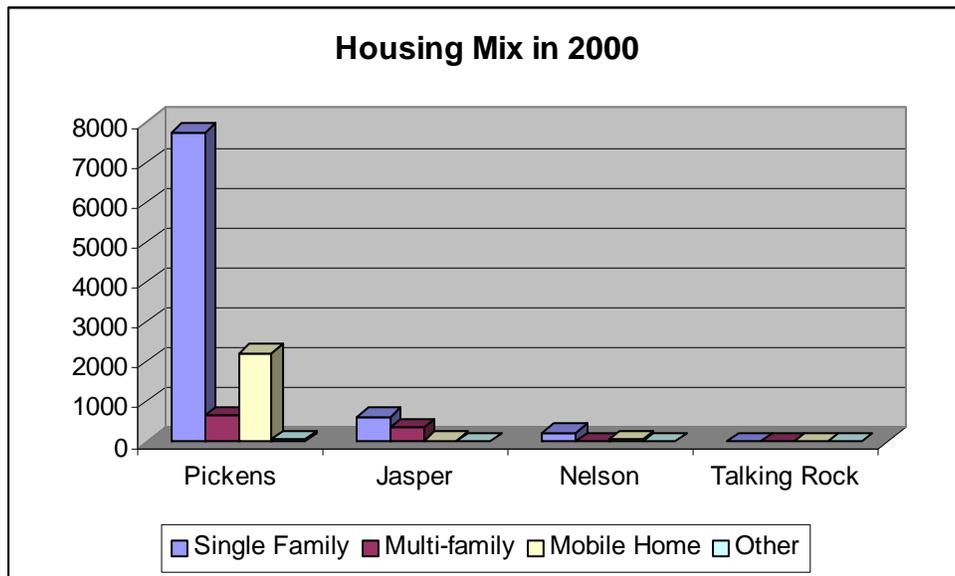
2.6 Housing

2.6.1 Issues

Housing Mix

By far, single-family housing outnumbers all other housing types in Pickens County with 72.2 percent of all housing in 2000. Single-family housing more than doubled from 1980 to 2000 from 3,467 units in 1980 to 7,773 units in 2000. Mobile homes rank second with more than 28 percent of the County residing in mobile homes in 2000 (see Figure 2-5). Multi-family housing made up only 6 percent of total housing stock.

Figure 2-5



Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

The housing mix varies considerably in the cities with Jasper having 61 percent single-family units, Nelson with 86.3 percent single-family units and Talking Rock with 72 percent single-family. Fifty-six percent of all multi-family units in the County are located in the City of Jasper.

New Developments may not meet Affordable Housing Needs

There are a number of large proposed developments in the County. These include Potts Mountain in Big Canoe (DRI #1399) with a proposed 1,250 units of mixed housing and 396 hamlet units; Talking Rock Plantation (DRI # 1630) with a proposed 4,439 residential units with 700,000 square feet of commercial development, and Talking Rock Golf Club (DRI #1227) with 500 single-family units, 76 condominiums and 19 buildings. As listed in the DRI for these planned communities, many of the homes proposed are indicated as “recreational housing” and may be priced out of range for the typical County and City resident. Much of the housing proposed in these communities may not be affordable to the average Pickens County resident and will instead draw new citizens to the County.

Other Special Housing Needs

Pickens County has a growing population of older citizens and as the population grows, so do the needs for special housing to deal with current trends in our society. At present, Pickens County does not meet the needs for special housing for the elderly, as well as the homeless, housing for domestic violence victims, migrant workers, persons with mental, physical, or developmental disabilities, and persons with HIV and housing needs to address recovering substance abusers.

Jobs-Housing Balance

The jobs-housing balance goal seeks a geographic equilibrium between housing and jobs. The underlying theory is that as jobs and housing are more evenly distributed and mixed, people will be able to live closer to their jobs, and traffic congestion and vehicular traffic will be reduced. According to the U.S. Census, more than one-half of the residents (51.6 percent) commute and work outside of the County. In addition, available housing within the county is generally priced to attract the bedroom community resident and prices out a large portion of those who actually work in Pickens County. The median income of residents of Pickens County in 2005 was \$48,423. The average sale price for homes in 2006 was \$239,400, which explains why many of those who work in the County (48.8 percent of all workers in 2000) live in other Counties. No public housing or subsidized housing currently exists in unincorporated Pickens County. There are a number of public housing units within the City of Jasper that are managed by the Jasper Housing Authority.

2.6.2 Opportunities

Housing Diversity Opportunities

Development between 2000 and 2005 increased the number of housing units from 10,687 to 13,073 in Pickens County, an increase of 18.25 percent. While the market has focused on single-family units, as the population continues to grow and diversify, the

housing market provides opportunities to meet an expanded list of housing needs for new residents (e.g. variety of housing types and price points, assisted living facilities, etc.). Projections indicate that the total number of housing units will increase to 22,859 in the county by 2030, an increase of 12,172 units over the year 2000. Based on projections, Jasper may realize an increase of 2,110 housing units, Nelson, 231 units, and Talking Rock, 57 units.

Increased Share of Multi-Family Housing in Pickens County and City of Jasper

Multi-family housing in Pickens County almost doubled from 1990 to 2000 by 45.4 percent increasing from 353 units to 647 units. The City of Jasper also experienced an increase in multi-family housing by 33.8 percent growing from 241 units in 1990 to 364 units in 2000. The City of Nelson only had one unit of multi-family housing in 1990 and had none in 2000. The City of Talking Rock does not have multi-family housing. As the County and Cities grow, there will be a continued need for multi-family housing to accommodate workers that wish to work and live locally.

Mixed Use Activity Centers

Mixed-Use activity centers placed at strategic locations or nodes throughout the County can provide affordable housing options for a wider range of those who would like to live in the County. Undeveloped vacant land still has potential to develop in ways that will enhance the surrounding areas and provide mixed-use activity centers at strategic locations along the major corridors.

Revitalization of Existing Homes to Provide Affordable Housing

Neglected homes/neighborhoods in need of revitalization can provide affordable housing for new residents in areas with existing services and infrastructure and provide the residential base to support existing businesses. As indicated in the housing discussion, there are quite a few homes that are in the 40 year old range that could be updated to support affordable housing in the County and in the Cities. The highest percentage of older homes are found in the cities, with Jasper at 30.6 percent, Nelson at 41 percent, and Talking Rock at 72 percent.

New Regulations Increase Opportunities for Aging in Place Housing

New zoning districts designed to provide a variety of housing types can make it possible to development communities that provide county and city residents with an opportunity to live in one neighborhood throughout the various stages of life, including senior housing.

2.7 Land Use

2.7.1 Issues

Sprawl Development Patterns

The low density, highly scattered residential development pattern occurring in the County is contributing to emerging “sprawl” conditions, which is causing increased traffic on rural roads, traffic congestion and reduced travel times on major transportation

arteries, and impacts on the County's scenic and rural characteristics. If the County grows as expected, these issues will become more apparent.

Limited Water Availability and Service Areas

There is a shortfall between land development expectations and public water availability. Another source of raw water needs to be developed to sustain the county's expected growth. The water distribution systems likewise need to be expanded to all areas of the county where development is expected. This will allow higher density arrangements and increase tax revenue per acre of development. Service delivery agreements for water distribution are being re-evaluated to assure the most economical delivery of services.

Limited Sewer Service Area

There is a relatively small public sewer service area, which is becoming built up. Sewer service areas should be expanded to accommodate a higher percentage of both residential and commercial new development. This may require the development of new wastewater treatment facilities. The provision of additional sewer service areas would also facilitate clustered housing arrangements, thus increasing tax revenue per acre of development, and minimize the current low-density sprawl development tendencies.

Strip Commercial Development Patterns

Strip commercial development along SR 515 will require special attention in regards to access control, provision of major utilities and services, and infill of appropriate uses. The emphasis for future development patterns along SR 515 should focus on encouraging mixed-use development located along frontage roads and in clustered nodes at the major intersections.

2.7.2 Opportunities

Infill Development

There remains a considerable amount of vacant land within and adjacent to the City of Jasper where both public water and sewer are either available or could be readily extended. These represent significant infill development opportunities without requiring major investments in infrastructure. Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged in these areas. This type of development pattern can provide a wide variety of housing types with a connected pedestrian friendly street system to schools, parks and neighborhood commercial areas.

Green Space Conservation

The County has incorporated Open Space Conservation regulations in its Subdivision Regulations. These rules can be used to encourage clustered housing arrangements thereby preserving agriculture and environmentally sensitive natural resource areas, and minimizing impacts to scenic views. The County's Green Space Program, which was prepared and adopted in 2001 has identified approximately 29,000 acres, which should be preserved as permanent open space. These areas are ideal candidates for the application of open space conservation rules.

2.8 Transportation

2.8.1 Issues

Underserved Population of Elderly, Low Income and Disabled

Pickens County currently operates a rural transit system funded by the Title 49 U.S. Code Section 5311, which is administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and is subcontracted to the North Georgia Community Action Agency, who operates the transit service called M.A.T.S. (*Mountain Area Transportation System*). This transit system currently serves a small fraction of citizens in the County. A Transit Development Plan was prepared in June 2007, and indicates there is a need to expand transit services to the elderly, low income families, the disabled as well as the general public

Few Transportation Alternatives

Generally, county residents must rely on private transportation to meet their travel needs. There are few other transportation alternatives in the County and Cities such as sidewalks and bicycle route facilities. Most sidewalks are located in the city of Jasper and are in generally good condition. There are also sidewalks in Tate, which are in poor condition. The sidewalks in Nelson are in good condition and additional 1.5 miles of sidewalks are being added via a recent Transportation grant. There are no developed bicycle facilities such as designated bicycle lanes or wide shoulders in the county.

Traffic Congestion

According to the Transportation Study completed in January, 2005, the significant issues with the road network are congestion in five major locations: Church Street (SR 53 from SR 515 to Marble Hill; Burnt Mountain Road from Church Street to Cove Road; SR 108 from SR 515 to SR 53 in Tate; Main Street from Hood Road to Camp Road; and Refuge Road from Camp Road to Harmony School Road.

2.8.2 Opportunities

Pickens County Transportation Study

The Transportation Study offer numerous suggestions for relieving congestion as well for providing for alternative transportation choices such as sidewalks and bicycle facilities. The primary challenge will be to find the funding to undertake recommended improvements.

2.9 Intergovernmental Coordination

2.9.1 Issues

Pickens County and the cities have over forty-two intergovernmental agreements governing the provision of vital services from ranging from 911 services to water. Many of these agreements are described in the Service Delivery Strategy Agreement adopted in 2001. Both the City of Jasper and the County agree that these service delivery

agreements need to be re-evaluated. Services under discussion include the delivery of water and fire protection.

3.0 Analysis of Existing Development Patterns

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this analysis is to understand the development conditions and growth patterns currently occurring on the ground in Pickens County and the incorporated areas in the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock. The analysis allows the further exploration of issues and opportunities related to the physical environment. The following analysis considers three aspects of the existing development patterns: existing land use, areas requiring special attention and recommended character areas.

3.2 Existing Land Use

An existing land use map displays the development on the ground categorized into groups of similar types of development at a given point in time. For purposes of this analysis, the Pickens County Existing Land Use Map shows what is on the ground as of May 2007. Data was collected using parcel maps and digitizing the acreage for each land use category. This data then was extrapolated and placed into a geographic information system (GIS) to plot a land use map for the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County. Table 3-1 provides the acreage of existing land use by land use classification. Table 3-2 provides a brief definition of each existing land use classification.

Table 3-1: Existing Land Use Acreage, 2007

Land Use Classification	Unincorporated Area	City of Jasper	City of Nelson	City of Talking Rock
Agricultural	9,424	29	8	0.17
Commercial	1,496	517	10	6
Forestry	8,245	0	0	837
Industrial	1,671	105	46	0
Residential, Multi-Family	23	86	0	0
Residential, Single-Family	26,740	857	385	92
Public/Institutional	1,286	259	5	6
Park/Recreation and Conservation	2,264	65	4	0.6
Transportation, Communication, Utilities, Right-of-Way	5,691	542	98	52
Undeveloped/Vacant	87,197	491	347	315
Water bodies	262	0	0	0
Totals	144,299	2,951	903	1,308.77
Total County Land Area: 149,462 acres		Total Cities Land Area : 5,163 acres		

Source: NGRDC, 2007

Table 3-2: Existing Land Use Category Definitions

Existing Land Use Category	Definition
Agricultural	All pastures, croplands and areas incidental to farming operations and livestock production.
Commercial	All properties dedicated to non-industrial uses including offices, retail sales, and service and entertainment activities.
Forestry	Private forestlands used for commercial timber and pulpwood harvesting.
Industrial	All properties used for manufacturing, processing and assembling products, construction, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining and mineral extraction, and similar uses.
Residential, Multi-Family	All land area containing attached housing types including duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, townhouses and condominiums.
Residential, Single-Family	All land area containing principle structures of single-family detached housing.
Public/Institutional	All properties used for general government activities and institutional uses including churches, public/semi-public agencies, hospitals, cemeteries etc..
Park/Recreation and Conservation	All land used for active or passive recreation, including recreational facilities, parks, nature preserves, national forest and wildlife management areas, and golf courses that are designated or reserved for public or private use.
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	All properties used for public or private transportation, communication, and utility facilities and infrastructure, and road and railroad right-of-ways.
Undeveloped/Vacant	All land that is not used for any of the above listed purposes, including abandoned land, forest areas that are not designated as national forest or reserved for timber production, wetlands, open, barren and grass lands.
Water	Classified as a body of water such as a lake, river, or stream.

Source: NGRDC, 2007

Land classified as undeveloped/vacant makes up the largest part of unincorporated area with more than 60 percent of the total land area. The undeveloped/vacant land is scattered throughout the County with the largest accumulation of undeveloped/vacant land located to the east, southwest and northwest. The next highest land use classification is single family residential with approximately 19 percent of the total unincorporated land area. Single-family residential areas are highly scattered throughout the County in both subdivisions and along county roads. If the proposed Potts Mountain development and the Talking Rock Plantation development are developed, residential land areas will increase substantially over the next 10 to 20

In the Cities of Jasper and Nelson single family residential is the largest land use category. In the city of Jasper, single family residential is located in the north, east and south side of the City. In the City of Nelson single family residential is located primarily in the Cherokee County portion of the City limits. For the City of Talking Rock, forestry is the highest land use at 66 percent of the total land area. Most of this is located in recently annexed property to the north.

The majority of commercial land is located along the SR 515 corridor, along SR 53, and in the downtown Jasper area, although other scattered commercial areas exist at various crossroads.

Most of the industrial land in the county is located in the Tate area as part of the marble mining complex, along SR 515 near the airport, and in the city of Jasper.

3.3 Areas Requiring Special Attention

As growth continues, there will inevitably be impacts to the existing natural and cultural environment as well as the community facilities, services and infrastructure that are required to service existing and future development. These areas may require special attention during the process of developing the Community Agenda and Vision for the County and Cities. The following areas were identified with the aid the Pickens County/Cities Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. A map showing the location of these areas is found in the Appendix.

- 1) Areas of significant natural and cultural resources, particularly where these are likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development.
 - a) Long Swamp Creek and Cove Creek watersheds (both are water supply watersheds for the City of Jasper; Long Swamp Creek also contains endangered species (Etowah Darter).
 - b) Areas with significant slopes and elevations (Burnt Mt., Sharp Top Mt., and other prominent mountain ridges offering scenic views.)
 - c) Talking Rock Creek (contains endangered species, and impaired waters)
 - d) Etowah Habitat Conservation Area (as defined by UGA study).
 - e) Tate Historic District
 - f) Blaine – Old Federal Rd, Indian removal fort; historic cemetery
 - g) Entire length of Old Federal Road.
 - h) Hinton Community
 - i) Foothill Country – from Steve Tate Highway to Yellow Creek Road (scenic views with foothill characteristics).

- 2) Areas where rapid development and change in land use is likely to occur.
 - a) State Route 515 – the primary arterial highway that serves as the gateway to the Appalachian Mountains to the north, and Atlanta MSA to the south. Development pressures extend from Cherokee County line to Philadelphia Road.
 - b) State Route 53 (Church Street)– from State Route 515 into Jasper.
 - c) Steve Tate Highway and Yellow Creek Road from Big Canoe development to Cherokee County line.
 - d) Land in northwest Pickens County that was formerly held for forestry and now available for development (such as the proposed Talking Rock Plantation and Talking Rock Golf Resort)

- 3) Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation.

- a) Jasper urbanizing area. (Generally defined as from Philadelphia Road south to Camp Road, and from SR 515 east to Cove Road).
 - b) Land in northwest Pickens County that was formerly held for forestry and now available for development (such as the proposed Talking Rock Plantation and Talking Rock Golf Resort).
- 4) Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors).
- a) State Route 53 south from Burnt Mt. Road intersection to City limits.
 - b) Old Highway 5 from downtown Jasper to northern city limits.
 - c) Tate Community/Historic District
- 5) Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated.
- No such sites are known to exist.
- 6) Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites).
- a) Areas fronting on State Route 515 from Cherokee County line to north of Jasper.
 - b) Numerous subdivisions scattered around the county.
 - c) Areas east of Jasper between SR 515 and the City and areas south of Jasper between SR 515 and SR 53 to the Cherokee County line.
- 7) Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole.

The city of Jasper exceeds the national average at 15.8 percent of residents below the poverty level for income with many of these residents located in the northeast portion of the city. In the unincorporated area, families that live below the poverty level for income are more prevalent in the southeastern portions of the County in and around the city of Nelson.

**Table 3-3
Poverty in Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock, 2000**

	Pickens	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock
Income Below Poverty Level				
Number	2,080	318	22	0
Percent	9.2	15.8	3.7	0

Note: U.S. Average is 12.4 percent for families with incomes below the poverty level. Source: Census, 2000.

3.4 Recommended Character Areas

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Applying development strategies to character areas in Pickens County as well as within the City limits of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock can preserve existing areas and help others function better and become more attractive. They help guide future development through policies and implementation strategies that are tailored to each situation. The character areas recommended for Pickens County and the Cities listed, define areas that:

- Presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved.
- Have potential to evolve into unique areas.
- Require special attention because of unique development issues.

Character areas are reflected on the Future Development Maps found in the Appendix, and are described in the following Table 3-4.

Table 3-4: Recommended Character Areas

Pickens County	
<i>Character Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
Planned Community	Planned communities are typically of the resort variety, like Big Canoe and Bent Tree, which have increasingly become home to permanent as well as seasonal residents. Other Planned Communities will also include those being proposed like Talking Rock Plantation and Talking Rock Golf Club. Planned residential communities are encouraged to provide unique, flexible, creative and imaginative arrangements and site plans and a mix of uses that result in live, work, play communities.
Rural Development	Rural development areas contain a mix of residential, agricultural and forested land that is likely to face development pressures for lower density (one unit per two plus acres) residential development. Typically these areas will have low pedestrian orientation and access, very large lots, open space, pastoral views and high degree of building separation. These areas typically have limited public water and no sewer infrastructure.
Emerging Suburban Residential	Emerging suburban residential areas are those that have developed or have the potential to develop around the City of Jasper. These areas typically consist of single family residences at different price points served by a system of curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. These residential areas have typically developed in a leap-frog fashion and they tend to lack connectivity. The areas also contain significant tracts of vacant land with development potential. Without intervention, these areas are likely to evolve with low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, and high degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and various street patterns.

Conservation	These areas are primarily undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for suburban development. These areas include scenic views, steep slopes, flood plains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas and other environmentally sensitive areas. These areas may also include very low-density residential development and are suitable for passive recreation opportunities.
SR 515 Corridor	This 4-lane highway from the Cherokee County line to north of Jasper is an emerging commercial corridor containing large scale developments often described as “strip centers” or “big box” development. Other uses include the hospital, multi-family developments, and the Airport Technology Park. The area still contains a significant number of vacant land tracts that are likely to develop. The terrain along the corridor contains significant elevation changes, which present challenges to development.
Steve Tate Hwy/Yellow Creek Rd. Commercial Crossroads	This crossroad and areas along road frontages extending from the crossroads is a recently developing commercial area. The significant planned community developments of Big Canoe and the proposed Potts Mountain are likely to increase the demand for convenience goods and services, and therefore trigger the need for additional commercial development. The area in the vicinity of the crossroads is characterized by scenic views with foothill characteristics.

City of Jasper	
SR 53 (Church Street Corridor)	The SR 53/Church Street corridor between Hwy. 515 and historic downtown Jasper is the primary entrance to the city. The area currently contains a mix of residential and commercial uses as well as a middle school. This corridor is developing rapidly as a commercial corridor. This corridor is characterized by a mix of signage that dominate the landscape, numerous curb cuts that slow traffic and a lack of landscaping. Currently a 2 lane facility, it is planned for widening.
SR 53 South Corridor	SR 53 South Corridor character area is represented south of the Historic Downtown, and includes a mix of older commercial establishments and low-density residential uses. Deep setbacks, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and inconsistent building materials and commercial signage characterize the corridor.
Historic Downtown Jasper	Historic downtown in Jasper includes the central business district as well as surrounding areas on both sides of SR 53 that have the potential to developed or be redeveloped in a manor that is consistent with the historic downtown: traditional building facades, buildings close to the street, and the use of sidewalks.
Traditional Neighborhood	The traditional neighborhood character areas reflect Jasper’s historic housing stock and traditional pattern of development in residential areas. The area consists of moderate to well maintained single-family housing with a distinct identity through architectural design, building placement, street design and landscaping. The neighborhoods are generally thought of as “in-town” due to their proximity and accessibility to the central business district.

Highway 5 Alt. Corridor (North Main Street) – Industrial Corridor	This character area consists of North Main Street (Highway 5 Alt.) and areas to the east along the railroad. It contains a mix of older residential, commercial and industrial land uses, including the Pioneer Industrial Park. Highway 5 Alt. was once the primary north entrance into the city that has since been displaced by SR 515.
Burnt Mountain – Cove Road	The Burnt Mountain – Cove Road area houses the Appalachian Technical College, City of Jasper’s City Hall, the Jasper Housing Authority, a public library, and areas of light commercial.

Other Special Character Areas (Rural Villages)

Town of Talking Rock	Located on the Old Federal Road, Talking Rock is a small, rural village that was one of the earliest settlements in this region, and some of the earliest churches and schools in Pickens were at or near the present site of the town. The Talking Rock downtown currently contains a variety of historic commercial and civic establishments. The remaining areas of the Town consist of low density residential uses.
City of Nelson	The City of Nelson is predominantly residential with half of the developments in Pickens County and half in Cherokee County. The downtown area contains a few small commercial enterprises and a large marble stone plant, which dominates the downtown area.
Tate	The historic center of marble production in Georgia, Tate has declined in recent decades but retains a great deal of charm and historical character. Its setting surrounded by variable topography and variety of land covers helps to make it picturesque. Continued residential development in the area threatens to erode the remaining unique character of the community. Removal of the historic rail depot from Tate also represents a major loss to the community. Design guidelines, proactive land-use planning, and historic preservation are all vital in maintaining the special qualities of Tate.
Hinton	Hinton has historically been the center of a broad rural area surrounding the intersection of Hwy. 53, Carver’s Mill Rd, Hwy. 136, and Bradley Rd. The character of the area is primarily determined by its open spaces and agricultural uses. The commercial uses in Hinton are geared toward supplying goods towards farmers and general merchandise to residents. Several aesthetically unique and interesting buildings (primarily the feed & seed, and the old store) are central in defining the character of the area at the heart of the intersection. The activities at the intersection are surrounded by a broad fringe of rural residential development (interspersed with agricultural uses) that gradually gives way to agricultural uses (interspersed with limited residential use). Hinton is a model of a rural, agricultural village center.

4.0 Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives (QCO's)

This section is intended to meet the Minimum Standards for Local Comprehensive Planning requirement that the Community Assessment include in evaluation of the community's current policies, activities and development patterns for consistency with the QCO's contained in the State Planning Goals and Objectives. The Department of Community Affairs' Office of Planning and Quality Growth created the QCO's Local Assessment to assist local governments in evaluating their progress towards sustainable and livable communities. The assessment is meant to give the community an idea of how it is progressing toward reaching these objectives.

Traditional Neighborhoods			
Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.	*		County, Jasper and Nelson have zone districts that allow a mix of residential and commercial uses. Talking Rock does not have zoning.
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development "by right" so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process.	*		
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.	*		County, Jasper and Nelson have tree-planting requirements for all multi-family residential and non-residential uses. Talking Rock does not.
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		*	Jasper recently completed a tree-planting project in downtown areas. There are no other programs in place.
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	*		All governments conduct routine maintenance and repairs.
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.	*		Most sidewalks are in Jasper and are in good condition. There are also sidewalks in Tate, which are in poor condition. Nelson sidewalks are good. Crosswalk improvements should be made. The recently prepared <i>Pickens County Transportation Study</i> recommends a number of new sidewalk locations.
7. In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.	*		Primarily in downtown Jasper and adjacent neighborhoods.
8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.		*	

9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.		*	Although bike routes are proposed in the recently completed Transportation Plan, no safe bike routes or paths currently exist.
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.	*		Primarily in Jasper.

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant site and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	*		The County Economic Development Department and Chamber of Commerce maintain data.
2. Our community is actively working to promote Brownfield redevelopment.		*	No Brownfields are known to exist.
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.		*	
4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).	*		To a degree, development along SR 515 may be forced into nodal development due to the limited number of access points and restrictions on future driveway cuts.
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some areas.		*	Smallest lot permitted in any jurisdiction is 7,500 square feet; in Jasper it is 13,000 square feet.

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics.	*		Marble industry gives Pickens County its unique, distinct characteristics. Pickens is gateway to Appalachian Mountains via SR 515. Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock downtown areas are unique.
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have	*		Tate National Historic District; Tate Mansion, Tate Gym, and Old Jail on National Register.

taken steps to protect those areas.			
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.		*	
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	*		County and Jasper and Nelson have sign control regulations; Talking Rock does not.
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.		*	
6. If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.		*	Although County has an agriculture zone district, which restricts uses and residential density, there are no programs to preserve agriculture.

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.			
	Yes	No	<i>Comments</i>
1. We have public transportation in our community.	*		Public transportation is provided under contract with the North Georgia Community Action Agency via the Mountain Area Transportation System. A plan was recently completed recommending improvements.
2. We require that new development connect with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.	*		Developments over 40 lots must have more than one entrance/exit.
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.	*		The largest network of sidewalks is in Jasper, although there are limited sidewalks in Tate and Nelson.
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community to provide user-friendly sidewalks.		*	New sidewalks or improvements are provided only through special funding such as Transportation Enhancement grants.
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.		*	
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.	*		The <i>Pickens County Transportation Plan</i> contains proposed bicycle routes.
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas whenever possible.		*	Not in County; to a limited degree in the Cities.

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	*		The one unique feature of architectural characteristics is the prevalent use of locally mined marble.
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.	*		Marble mining is a key industry in the County.
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc.).	*		A key industry in the County is second home/retiree/resort development in the mountain regions.
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	*		
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	*		Marble Festival; scenic views offered by mountain ridges.
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.	*		

Heritage Preservation			
The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.	*		Tate National Historic District.
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.	*		There are no active historic preservation commissions although there are three Historical Societies.
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.		*	

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.	*		Prepared in 2002 as part of statewide initiative. It proposes that 20 percent of the County be preserved as Greenspace.
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	*		Acquisitions have been made by the Mountain Conservation Trust.
3. We have local land conservation program, or we work with State or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.	*		Mountain Conservation Trust is actively working to preserve important areas.
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	*		Applicable in the unincorporated area only.

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resource inventory.	*		Compiled as part of the previous comprehensive plan preparation.
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.	*		
3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.	*		Mountain Conservation Trust is actively engaged in acquiring sensitive areas.
4. Our community has passed the necessary "Part V" environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.	*		County and Cities have adopted Water Supply Watershed; wetlands, groundwater recharge and mountain protection ordinances.
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance, which is actively enforced.		*	

6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	*		Both County and Jasper have landscaping requirements for multi-family and non-residential uses. The City of Nelson has a tree replacement ordinance on all new development.
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	*		The City of Nelson requires this practice.
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.).	*		Jurisdictions have adopted soil erosion and sediment control, flood damage prevention, and mountain protection regulations.

Growth Preparedness			
Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	*		Are prepared by North Georgia RDC and are part of the previous comprehensive plans.
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	*		
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.	*		
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	*		Some improvements and/or additions may be necessary.
5. We have Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	*		A SPLOST plan has been adopted. Master plans have been recently prepared for recreation, fire protection and transportation.
6. We have designed areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.	*		Per previous comprehensive plans.
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	*		
8. We have a citizen-education	*		Activities are well advertised via the

campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.			local press.
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.	*		Activities are well advertised via the local press.
10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	*		Will be developed as part of plan preparation.

Appropriate Businesses			
The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.			
	Yes	No	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths. Assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.	*		Activities are led by the County Economic Developer, who works with an advisory committee.
2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.	*		Activities are led by the County Economic Developer, who works with an advisory committee.
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	*		
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.	*		There are a wide variety of employers in the County.

Employment Options			
A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.			
	Yes	No	<i>Comments</i>
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.	*		County has adopted the "Entrepreneur Friendly" Community program offered by the Georgia Department of Economic Development.
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	*		
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	*		
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	*		This is a small fraction of employment opportunities in Pickens County.

Housing Choices			
A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	*		To some degree; zoning ordinances do allow dwellings as part of another principle use.
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.		*	Older units are affordable, new construction may not.
3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).		*	New housing construction caters to middle to higher incomes.
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.		*	Setbacks and streets in newer neighborhoods are not always consistent with previous patterns, particularly in the Cities.
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.	*		County and Jasper’s zoning ordinance allow these uses.
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.		*	Areas proposed for multi-family development must seek rezoning.
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	*		All zoning ordinances contain multi-family districts.
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.	*		Support for these activities have been provided in the past.
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.	*		To some degree; public housing is available.
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.		*	The smallest lot permitted in any jurisdiction is 7,500 square feet; 13,000 square feet in Jasper.

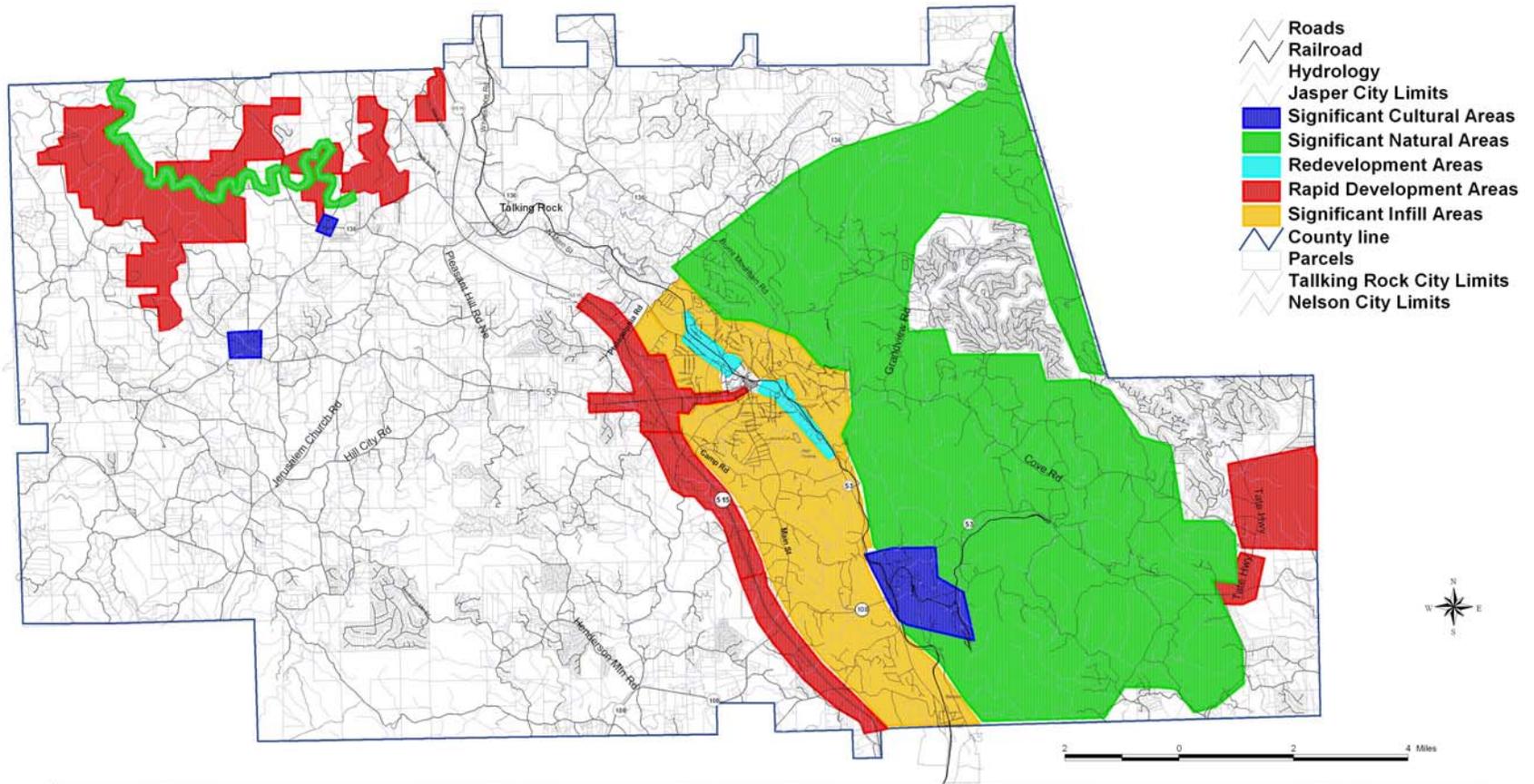
Educational Opportunities			
Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community provides workforce-training options for its citizens.	*		Appalachian Technical College is located in the community.
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	*		
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	*		Appalachian Technical College is located in the community. Other colleges are located in reasonable proximity.
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.		*	To limited degree; job creation has been in retail and services. A high percentage of employed persons commute out of the County to work.

Regional Solutions			
Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.			
	Yes	No	Comments
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.	*		
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	*		Pickens County and the City of Jasper are participants in the Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) initiated by the University of Georgia Institute of Ecology. The County is also a member of the Northwest Georgia Water Partnership.
3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.		*	There is very little joint participation among local governments in the delivery of services. The County and City of Jasper have a “mutual aid” agreement regarding fire protection in areas surrounding the city.
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.	*		To a degree via the Developments of Regional Impacts (DRI) Program administered by the North Georgia Regional Development Center.

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.			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. We plan jointly with our Cities and County for comprehensive planning purposes.	*		This is the 3 rd edition of a joint comprehensive planning process.
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.		*	County wishes to re-do water service areas.
3. We initiate contact with other local government and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft region-wide strategies.	*		Local governments are members of the North Georgia Development Center and Northwest Georgia Regional Water Partnership.
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	*		The County and Cities are members of the NGRDC and participate in their activities.

Appendix

1. Map of Areas Requiring Attention
2. Map of Recommended Character Areas in Pickens County
3. Map of Recommended Character Areas in Jasper

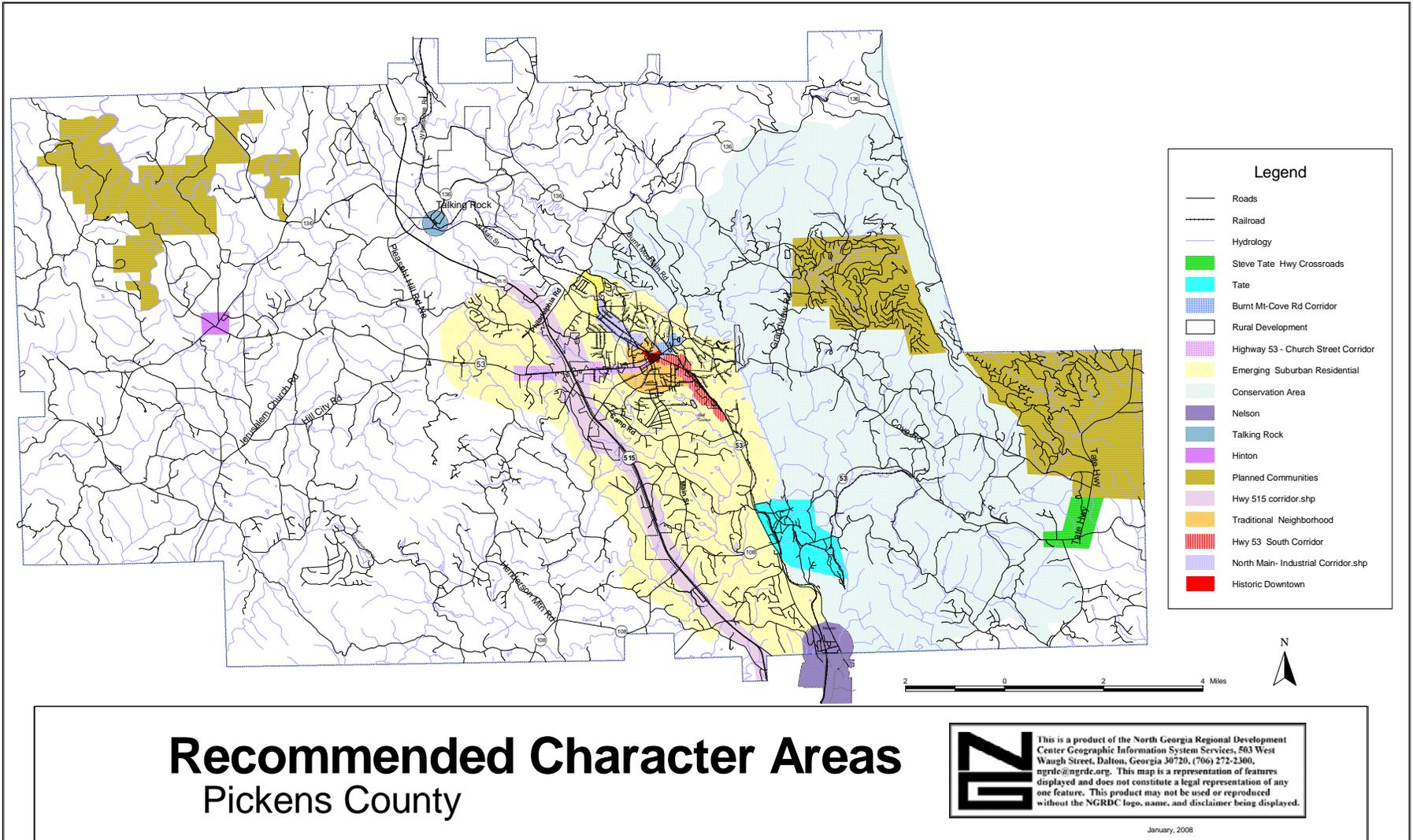


Areas Requiring Special Attention

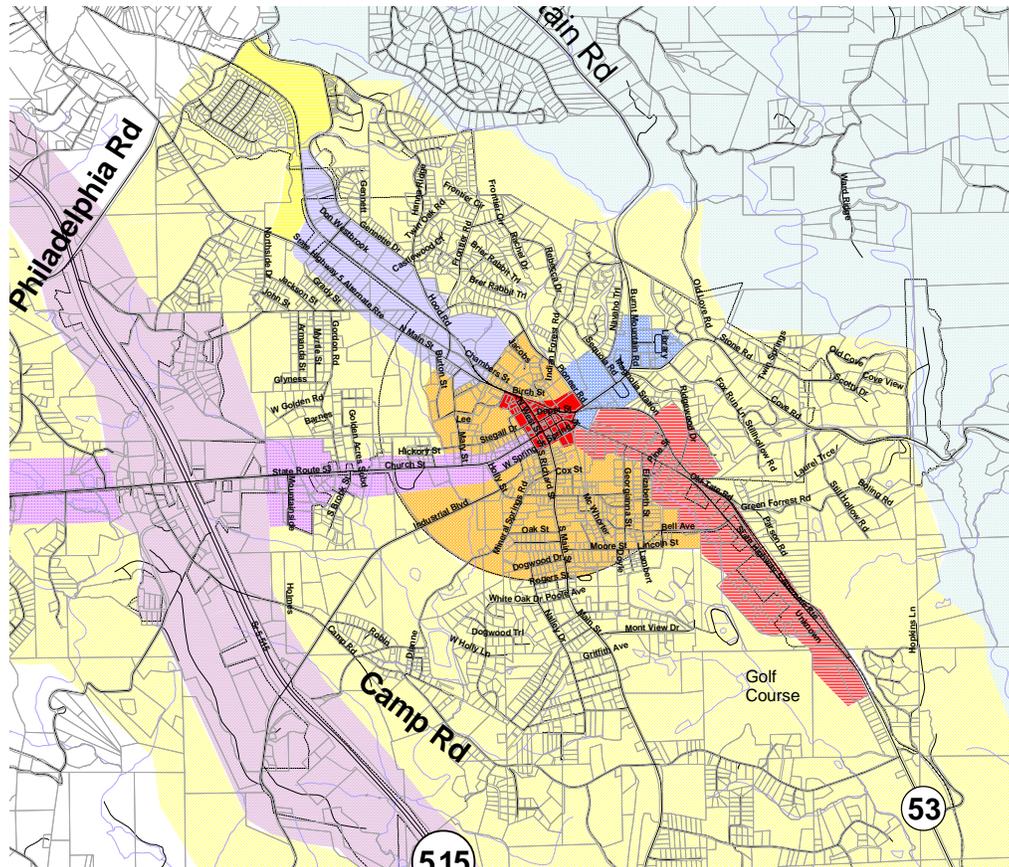
Pickens County


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January, 2008



Recommended Character Areas City of Jasper



Character Areas		
Roads	Highway 53 - Church Street Corridor	Traditional Neighborhood
Railroad	Emerging Suburban Residential	Hwy 53 South Corridor
Hydrology	Conservation Area	North Main- Industrial Corridor.shp
Burnt Mt-Cove Rd Corridor	Hwy 515 corridor.shp	Historic Downtown


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JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

2008 – 2028

Analysis of Supporting Data to the Community Assessment

Prepared for:

Pickens County and Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock



**North Georgia Regional Development Center
Dalton, Georgia**

February 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Joint Comprehensive Plan is to coordinate planning on inter-jurisdictional issues and provide a policy framework for guiding both day-to-day and long range decision making for local government officials and administrators of Pickens County, Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock. The plan represents participation in the coordinated planning process set forth by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, which requires local governments to prepare and maintain a local plan in order to retain their "Qualified Government" status (i.e. eligibility for state grants, loans and permits.)

The State's Minimum Planning Standards requires an inventory and assessment of characteristics related to population, economic base, natural and historic resources, community facilities, housing and land use patterns. Based upon this background information, communities are asked to assess current issues and project future needs, and develop policies and implementation strategies. Finally, the process requires preparation of a work program of the specific implementation strategies the local governments propose to achieve within the five-year period after plan adoption. This five-year work program must be updated every five years. The entire comprehensive plan must be updated every ten years.

In addition to being a blueprint for community development and long-term growth, a comprehensive plan is used to guide the drafting of any future regulations and will become the measure by which the courts judge local zoning decisions once land controls are adopted. Therefore, in order to meet legal challenges to its future growth management strategies, a community's land development regulations must be consistent with the goals and policies in its comprehensive plan.

The local governments in Pickens County prepared their first comprehensive plan per the Georgia Planning Act requirements in 1993. This Comprehensive Plan update is for the 2008 through 2028 planning period. New population, employment, housing and land consumption projections were developed. These projections became the basis for determining future needs and opportunities for the county and cities with respect to population growth, economic development, community facilities, natural resources, historic resources and land use. Once needs were identified, recommended goals, policies, and implementation programs and projects were developed. A Future Land Use Map was prepared for each jurisdiction, which when adopted will become the basis for making land use and community development decisions. Finally, the plan update contains a new Short Term Work Program of specific programs and projects each government wishes to undertake in the five-year period after the plan has been adopted.

This plan update has been prepared in consideration of the State's Quality Community Goals and Objectives, which have been adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. These goals and objectives can be found at the Department's web site address as follows: www.dca.state.ga.us

This plan update has been prepared by the North Georgia Regional Development Center with the substantial involvement and input from local elected officials from each jurisdiction, the Pickens County Planning Commission, the County's Community Development Advisory Council, City and County staff, and numerous agency staff and departments.

1.0 POPULATION ELEMENT

Introduction

The population element of this comprehensive plan details some basic demographic characteristics of the population and develops projections on the future changes the county and cities will experience. This allows the local governments to develop and access trends.

Goals

This information will aid the local governments to identify constraints and opportunities that will affect future development. This information also drives economic development, community facilities, and housing and land use elements of the plan. Information provided in this plan will allow local governments to develop projections and the need for community facilities and services that will meet or exceed the city and county needs now and in the future.

1-1 Projection Methodology

The North Georgia Regional Development Center (NGRDC) using a cohort component population model incorporating such demographic indicators as age, sex, race, birth rates, survival rates, and migration rates developed population projections for Pickens County. The model uses 2000 as the base year for its projections. This model assumes a natural aging of specific population age groups or cohorts, and further separates the base population into separate projections for births, deaths and net migration for each cohort. A basic assumption in the model is that net migration, which is the number of in-migrants minus the number of out-migrants, will remain stable over time.

The NGRDC projection method assumes no significant changes in county migration patterns, birth, and death rates through the year 2030. Hence, the natural aging of the base population (2000) minus deaths, plus births, plus or minus net-migration over time equals the projected population.

Projecting population trends at the local county and city level is subject to more distortion than at the national or regional level, due to a reliance on basic assumptions that may not be accurate over time. Thus, the following projections are utilized as a baseline projection during the planning process. Population growth projections are also difficult to predict due to the uncertainty of the land development market. Generally, there are three interrelated factors which are difficult to predict that strongly affect local population growth: (1) employment trends due to the locational decisions of private firms, (2) real estate transactions, and (3) local public policies regarding growth issues, i.e., annexation, infrastructure expansion, etc.

The population projections for Pickens County and the cities are listed in Table 1-1 for select years through 2030. Population change as a percentage is provided in Table 1-2, comparing the county and cities with the State of Georgia.

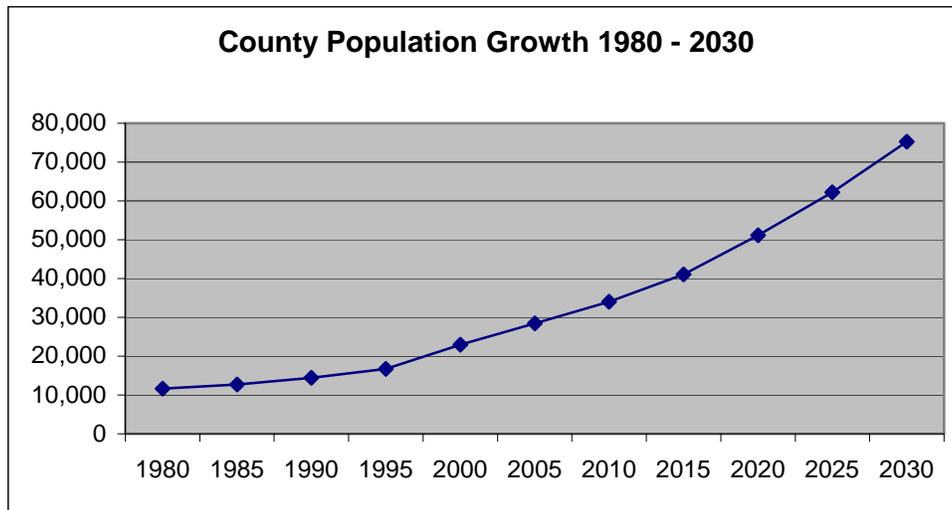
1-2 Total Population

Pickens County lies within a major transportation corridor that has direct access to the City of Atlanta and surrounding metropolitan counties that have experienced rapid growth over the past 30 years. As the metropolitan Atlanta grows, more and more citizens are moving to the outer fringes of the counties, which includes Pickens County.

In the past twenty-five years, Pickens County has seen a steady increase in population, although the growth rate has been rapid since 1990 (Figure 1-1). Between 1990 and 2000, the county grew by 59.3 percent well above the State rate of 26.4 percent. By comparison, Cherokee County to the south had a 57.3 percent rate of growth, Dawson County to the east had a 76 percent growth rate, and Gilmer County to the north had a 75 percent growth rate. From 2000 to 2005, the county population increased by 23.75 percent from 22,983 residents to 28,442 residents.

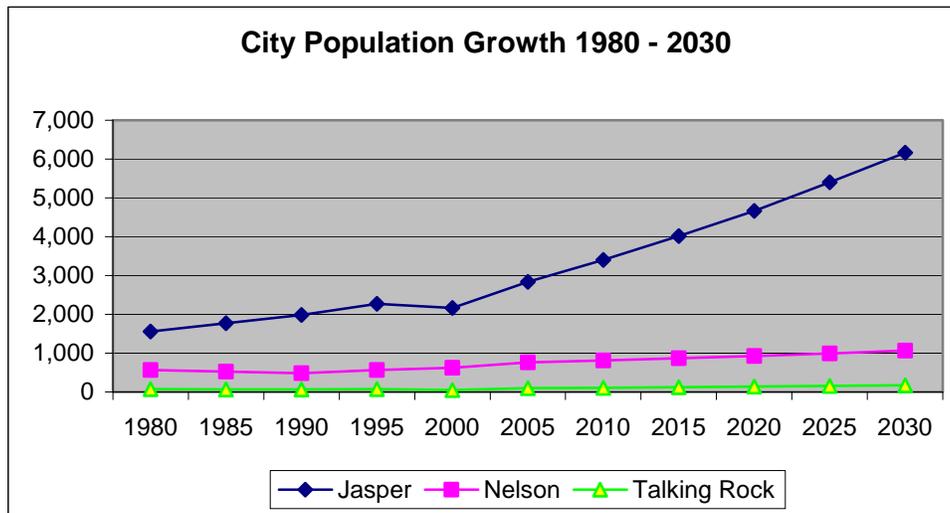
The municipalities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock saw more varied population change between 1980 and 2000, although according to Census estimates, each city grew significantly in the past five years (Figure 1-2). The City of Jasper's population grew by 30.92 percent from 2000 to 2005 increasing from 2,167 residents to 2,837 residents. The City of Nelson saw a change in population from 626 residents to 761 residents from 2000 to 2005, or an increase of 29.57 percent. The most dramatic change was in the Town of Talking Rock, which had a 93.88 percent increase, and almost doubled the population from 49 residents to 95 residents.

Figure 1-1



Source: U.S. Census, 1980 – 2005. Projections prepared by North Georgia Regional Development Center.

Figure 1-2



Source: U.S. Census, 1980 – 2005. Projections prepared by North Georgia Regional Development Center.

Assuming that infrastructure needs can be provided, projections indicate that the county will continue to grow an average of 21 percent every five years and attain a population of 75,244 by the year 2030. Several factors contribute to this growth trend including the county's close proximity to the Atlanta Metropolitan region, which is easily accessible via State Route 515 (SR 515), a four-lane highway. Pickens County is an attractive place to live, work and play offering a growing economy and many cultural and natural resources. Because of its mountainous terrain and scenic environment, Pickens County is also a desirable location for retiree and recreation home developments.

The municipalities are likewise projected to grow, although at slower rates than the county as a whole. For projection purposes, the average annual rate of growth each municipality exhibited over the past 25 years was projected forward for the next 25 years. A lot of this growth will depend upon the amount of annexation the cities undertake. Jasper is expected to experience the most population growth because it has the higher developed water and sewer infrastructure and other public services.

Table 1-1

Historical and Projected Population Growth in Pickens County, 1980 - 2030

Year	County				Total	% Cities of Total Georgia
	Total	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock		
1980	11,652	1,556	562	72	2,190	18.80%
1985	12,729	1,769	521	67	2,357	18.52%
1990	14,432	1,982	486	62	2,530	17.53%
1995	16,759	2,274	563	72	2,909	17.36%
2000	22,983	2,167	626	49	2,842	12.37%
2005	28,442	2,837	761	95	3,693	12.98%
2010	34,046	3,404	814	107	4,325	12.70%
2015	41,085	4,017	870	121	5,007	12.19%
2020	51,121	4,660	930	136	5,726	11.20%

2025	62,187	5,406	994	153	6,553	10.54%	11,438,622
2030	75,244	6,162	1062	173	7,397	9.83%	12,017,838

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

**Table 1-2
Population Percentage Change, 1980 - 2030**

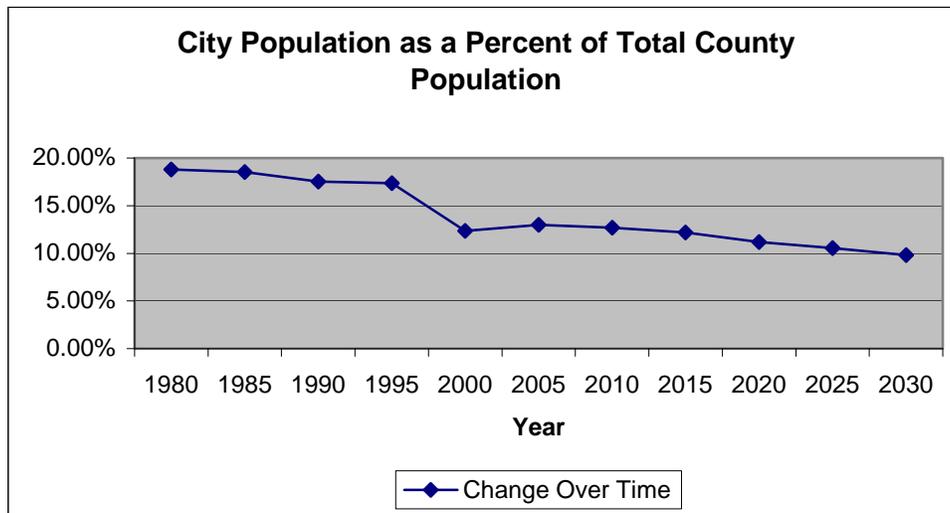
Year	County			Talking Cities		Georgia
	Total	Jasper	Nelson	Rock	Total	
1980-1985	9.2%	13.7%	-7.3%	-6.9%	7.6%	9.1%
1985-1990	13.4%	12.0%	-6.7%	-7.5%	7.3%	8.6%
1990-1995	16.1%	14.7%	15.8%	16.1%	15.0%	11.0%
1995-2000	37.1%	-4.7%	11.2%	-31.9%	-2.3%	13.9%
2000-2005	23.8%	30.9%	21.6%	93.9%	29.9%	10.8%
2005-2010	19.7%	20.0%	6.9%	12.7%	17.1%	5.7%
2010-2015	20.7%	18.0%	6.9%	12.7%	15.8%	6.7%
2015-2020	24.4%	16.0%	6.9%	12.7%	14.3%	6.0%
2020-2025	21.6%	16.0%	6.9%	12.7%	14.4%	5.5%
2025-2030	21.0%	14.0%	6.9%	12.7%	12.9%	5.1%

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

Growth Patterns – Cities Versus Unincorporated Areas

Although the cities are projected to grow, most of the county's population growth is expected to occur in the unincorporated areas. In 1980, a little over 18 percent of the county's population resided in the cities (Figure 1-3). By 2000, it had declined to 12.3 percent, and by 2030, it is projected that the cities will contain a little over 8 percent of the total population. As stated earlier, much of this will be dependent upon the degree of annexation that occurs by the cities. Growth in the unincorporated areas will require significant investments in infrastructure and services.

Figure 1-3



Source: U.S. Census, 1980 – 2005. Projections prepared by North Georgia Regional Development Center.

Changing Demographic Characteristics

The median age for Pickens County has risen steadily increasing from 31.7 in 1980 to 37.9 in 2000. Generally, the age groups 0-4, 5-14, 15-24, and 25-34 are projected to decline as a percentage of total population by the year. The percentage of persons in age groups 35-44 and 45-54 are expected to remain relatively stable, while the percentage of persons in age groups 55-64 and 64 plus are expected to increase. The 65 and older age group is expected to be the fastest growing segment of the population increasing from 13.2 percent in 2000 to approximately 25 percent in 2030. A growing elderly population will require unique planning considerations for transportation services, housing, health care facilities and other services.

The racial make-up of Pickens County is predominantly white and is expected to remain so over the next 25 years. Non-Hispanic blacks accounted for 1.3 percent of the total population in 2000. According to Census estimates, the Hispanic population grew by 38.9 percent from 467 to 765 persons between 2000 and 2005. Given trends nationally and in the southeast, this segment of the population could continue to grow significantly in the future.

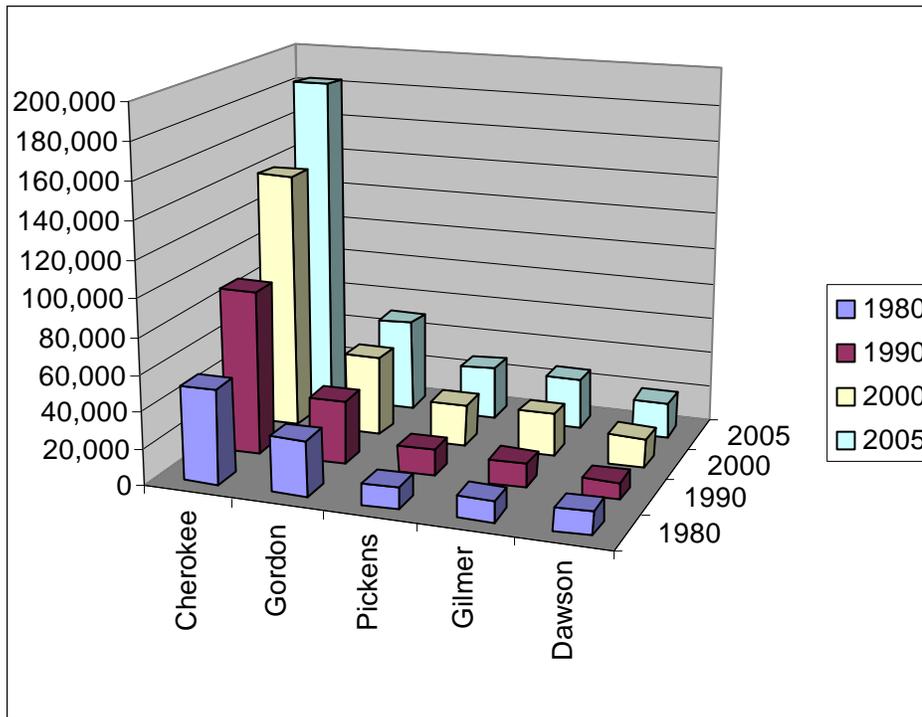
Comparison to Other Counties

Table 1-3
Comparative Total Population, 1980 - 2005

Year	Dawson County	Gilmer County	Pickens County	Gordon County	Cherokee County
1980	12,318	11,110	11,652	30,070	51,699
1990	9,429	13,368	14,432	35,072	90,204
2000	15,999	23,456	22,983	44,104	141,903
2005	19,731	27,335	28,422	50,279	184,211

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Figure 1-4: Surrounding County Comparative Growth



If you compare nearby county growth trends you can see that there has been a steady growth rate in the surrounding Counties over the past twenty-five years with Cherokee County experiencing explosive growth from 1980 to 2005 (see Table 1-3). Cherokee County explosive growth is attributed to the close proximity to the City of Atlanta and was one of the first bedroom communities in the region. Cherokee County growth from 1980 to 2005 was very high at more than 79 percent or tripling its population in that time period. Although Dawson County had a decline in population in 1990, the county grew by more than 37 percent from 1980 to 2005. In comparison, Gilmer County more than doubled from 1980 to 2005 (59 percent). Pickens County growth rate is very similar to that of Gilmer County with Pickens County more than doubling in population from the same time period of by 59 percent. Gordon County in that same time period grew by 40 percent.

1-3 Age Distribution and Projections

As shown in Table 1-4 and Table 1-5, the projected age distribution in Pickens County and the cities for older adults (age 55-64 and 65 and older) are on the rise. This may account for the increase in retirees that have settled in gated communities such as Big Canoe and Bent Tree. The reverse trend is true for younger citizens with project age distribution on the decline. The large size of this population group or cohort will continue to dominate the population mix locally, regionally, and nationally for many years, gradually increasing the median age.

Table 1-4**Historic and Projected Age Distribution by Percent in Pickens County, 1980 - 2030**

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total Population	11,652	12,729	14,432	16,759	22,983	28,442	34,046	41,805	51,121	62,187	75,244
Age 0-4 years	7	7	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	5	5
Age 5-14 years	16	14	13	13	14	13	14	11	11	11	11
Age 15-24 years	17	16	15	13	11	12	15	14	11	11	10
Age 25-34 years	15	16	16	15	14	11	15	11	11	11	10
Age 35-44 years	12	13	14	15	16	16	7	12	11	11	12
Age 45-54 years	10	11	12	13	14	14	7	15	15	13	11
Age 55-64 years	10	10	10	12	14	13	18	14	15	16	15
65 years and over	13	13	13	12	13	15	17	19	21	23	25

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Table 1-5**Historic Age Distribution by Percent in the Cities, 1980 - 2000**

	Jasper			Nelson			Talking Rock		
	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1980	1990	2000
Age 0-4 years	6	7	7	6	8	5	6	2	8
Age 5-14 years	14	12	13	13	10	12	25	11	8
Age 15-24 years	16	13	11	19	14	10	14	21	2
Age 25-34 years	17	16	13	11	13	11	10	13	20
Age 35-44 years	12	15	14	9	13	18	14	5	14
Age 45-54 years	8	11	13	13	10	16	14	16	14
Age 55-64 years	9	9	10	14	13	11	3	18	14
65 years and over	18	17	19	15	18	17	15	15	18

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

Implications

Table 1-5 illustrates the typical age distribution between all of the cities. In 2000, all of the cities had a high distribution of population 65 years or older and is expected to increase over time. It is expected that all jurisdictions will be affected by this aging trend. The 65 and over age group is expected to be the fastest growing segment of the population during the planning period rising from 13 percent in 1980 to approximately 25 percent in 2030. This is expected to strain the services provided by the county for the elderly and prompt improvements in transportation, senior day care, housing, and health facilities.

The 5 to 14 year age distribution group is expected to peak in 2010 at 14 percent and slowly decline during the planning period to 11 percent, which is significantly lower than 17 percent reported in 1980. Overall, the reduction of younger population groups represents the reluctance of young families to have children due to a variety of socio-economic conditions. These include couples marrying and having children at a later age, as well as the higher cost of housing and a reduction in the buying power of wages. It should also be noted that these population projections do not account for major shifts in employment trends, which could significantly affect net migration rates. According to the Census, the size of the older population will increase dramatically in the coming decades, far faster than the rest of the U.S. population. This indicates that policy decisions should be made to increase managed health care in the county.

An abundance of scenic mountain real estate, low cost of living, and proximity to urban amenities in the Atlanta region may make the Pickens County area an even more attractive area for active retirees. Therefore, it is not unlikely that seniors will be the dominant age group in Pickens County.

1-4 Race and Ethnicity

Composition and Change and Comparison

The racial make-up of Pickens County is predominantly white. The 2000 Census indicated that 1.3 percent of the Pickens County population was black, and all other races combined accounted for only 3.4 percent of the population (see Table 1-6). Based on statistical data from the *federal statistical database*, the white population remains the highest percentage of race in the county, but the black population is slowly increasing in the county from 1.3 percent (327 persons in 2000) to 1.6 percent (445 persons in 2005).

Table 1-6
Pickens County Population by Race, 1980 - 2000

Year	White Only	Non-Hispanic Black Only	Other	Hispanic	Total Minority
1980	11,361 97.5%	280 2.4%	NA	NA	NA
1990	14,091 97.6%	245 1.7%	50 0.0%	46 0.0%	341 2.4%
2000	21,897 95.3%	292 1.3%	327 1.4%	467 2.0%	1,086 4.7%
Percent Change					
1980-90	19.37%	-14.28%	NA	NA	NA
1990-00	35.6%	16%	84.7%	90.1%	68.6%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

There was a large shift in the “other” and Hispanic population in Pickens County from 1990 to 2000 surging more than 84 percent between these time periods. This trend will continue based on data derived from the federal statistical database indicating that the Hispanic population will increase from 467 persons in 2000 to 765 persons in 2005, or a 38.9 percent increase in only five-year period.

Historically, the cities of Nelson and Jasper have had the highest percentage of blacks in the county. This was attributed to the early settlement of blacks at these locations seeking employment in the marble mines. In the 2000 Census, the Census indicated that the black population in Nelson had been reduce by 6.78 percent and increased slightly in Jasper by 14.7 percent from 1990 to 2000. The only predominant white population that exists to date is within the City of Talking Rock. The Hispanic and “other” descriptive category are on the rise in Jasper increasing by 87.1 percent in the Hispanic community and by 78.3 percent in the “other” category. The “other” category includes races such as Asian, Pacific Islander or Hawaiian, or American Indian or an Alaska native (see Tables 1-7 through 1-9).

Table 1-7
City of Jasper Population by Race, 1980 – 2000

Year	White Only	Non-Hispanic Black Only	Other	Hispanic	Total Minority
1980	1,435 92.5%	115 7.5%	NA	NA	NA
1990	1,674 94.5%	81 4.6%	8 0.5%	9 0.5%	98 5.5%
2000	1,965 90.7%	95 4.4%	37 1.7%	70 0.3%	202 3.2%
Percent Change					
1980-90	14.2%	-41.9%	NA	NA	NA
1990-00	14.8%	14.7%	78.3%	87.1%	51.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

NA-Not Available

Table 1-8
City of Nelson Population by Race, 1990 – 2000

Year	White Only	Non-Hispanic Black Only	Other	Hispanic	Total Minority
1980	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1990	420 86.4%	63 13.0%	1 0.2%	2 0.4%	66 10.5%
2000	562 89.8%	59 9.4%	4 0.6%	1 0.2%	64 10.2%
Percent Change					
1980-90	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1990-00	25.2%	-6.78%	75%	-100%	-3.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.
 NA-Not Available

Table 1-9
City of Talking Rock Population by Race, 1990 – 2000

Year	White Only	Non-Hispanic Black Only	Other	Hispanic	Total Minority
1980	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1990	62 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
2000	49 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Percent Change					
1980-90	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1990-00	-26.50%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.
 NA-Not Available

Trends and Implications

As these trends continue, there will be a need for more schools, affordable health care, affordable housing, and an increase in jobs market for middle to low-income families.

Educational Attainment

Tables 1-10 and 1-11 shows the most recent available data on education levels and drop out rates for the county and cities. The overall increase in adult (age 25 and over) education is most easily seen in the increase in individuals securing a high school education. The 33.1 percent of high school graduates exceeds more populated Counties, such as Cherokee, and also exceeds the state figure of 28.7 percent. The percentage of individuals attaining some post-secondary education has also more than doubled between 1980 and 2000.

The drop out rate is keeping steady with the State of Georgia average except for the 2005 to 2006 range where the drop out rate in Pickens County exceeds the State of Georgia average slightly.

Table 1-10
Educational Attainment, 1980 – 2000

	Elementary School	High School, no diploma	High School Graduate	College, no degree	College Graduate
Pickens County					
1980	40.8%	21.3%	22.6%	8.4%	6.9%
1990	22.7%	20.5%	30.6%	13.8%	9.0%
2000	11.7%	18.1%	33.1%	18.3%	18.8%
Jasper					
1980	35.0%	21.8%	19.9%	8.0%	15.0%
1990	22.9%	17.2%	32.3%	13.6%	14.0%
2000	17.0%	16.4%	29.0%	19.2%	18.4%
Nelson					
1980	50.3%	23.0%	22.2%	3.4%	1.1%
1990	30.5%	27.8%	33.2%	4.2%	4.2%
2000	13.8%	17.1%	29.6%	16.3%	23.3%
Talking Rock					
1980	58.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
1990	30.8%	7.7%	53.8%	0.0%	7.7%
2000	23.8%	28.6%	31.0%	16.7%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Table 1-11
Dropout Rates, Grades 7 through 12, 2003 – 2006

Location		2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Pickens System	Enrollment	2,073	2,125	2,137
	Dropout Rate	3.1%	3.2%	3.4%
Georgia	Enrollment	736,593	757,707	777,104
	Dropout Rate	3.5%	3.5%	3.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Education

1-5 Income and Assessment

Table 1-12 compares median per capita and household income for Pickens County and the incorporated cities with the State. During the past decade, median household income and per capita income (Table 1-13) in the county and City of Nelson have risen to a level that is very close to the State median. The lowest per capita and median household incomes are found in the Cities of Talking Rock and Jasper.

The significant rise in both per capita and household incomes in the county and City of Nelson is attributed in part to the in-migration of higher educated persons in the past decade who have greater earning power and commute to higher paying jobs within the Atlanta metropolitan area. It is also attributed to a more stable job base in the county. With textile manufacturing employment dropping from 29 percent in 1985 to being almost non-existent in 1999, it is likely that many households have found a more stable, higher paying alternative.

A higher proportion of elderly and single head of household population than the rest of the county causes the lower per capita and household incomes in Jasper and Talking Rock.

Table 1-12
Median Household Income, 1989 – 1999

Year	Pickens County	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock	Georgia	USA
1979	12,515	11,250	9,866	6,500	15,033	NA
1989	25,248	19,967	21,711	20,625	29,021	30,056
1999	41,387	31,944	44,250	33,333	42,433	41,994
2004	42,679	NA	NA	NA	44,334	44,473
% Change 79-89	181.6%	77.5%	120.1%	217.3%	93.5%	-
% Change 89-99	63.9%	60.0%	103.8%	61.6%	46.2%	39.7%
1999 % of GA Income	97.5%	75.3%	104.2%	78.6%	100.0%	-
% Change 99-04	3%	-	-	-	4.28%	6.74%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Table 1-13
Per Capita Income, 1989 – 1999

Year	Pickens County	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock	Georgia
1979	5,474	5,416	4,441	5,474	6,402
1989	11,442	11,754	8,575	8,837	13,631
1999	19,774	19,184	20,604	15,750	21,154
% Change 79-89	109.02%	117.02%	93.09%	61.44%	112.92%
% Change 89-99	72.82%	63.21%	140.28%	78.23%	55.19%
1999 % of GA Income	93.5%	90.7%	97.4%	74.5%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Distribution and Assessment

Table 1-14 indicates the distribution of income within the county and cities. Generally, the distribution of household income within Pickens County among the various income range categories is similar to the characteristics of the State. There are minor variations, but they are not statistically significant to cause concern. Of all the jurisdictions, Jasper has the higher percentage of households in the lower income ranges (\$14,999 or less). Again, this is attributed to smaller average household size due to a higher proportion of elderly and single head of households, and the fact that the city is the location of most of the public housing and other subsidized housing.

**Table 1-14
Household Income Distribution**

Year	Pickens County	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock
Less than \$10,000	719 8.0%	150 15.9%	15 6.0%	0 0.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	536 6.0%	125 13.3%	22 8.7%	2 10.0%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	561 6.2%	70 7.4%	19 7.5%	0 0.0%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	610 6.8%	43 4.6%	14 5.6%	0 0.0%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	600 6.7%	62 6.6%	14 5.6%	5 25%
\$30,000 to \$34,999	638 7.1%	57 6.1%	17 6.7%	5 25%
\$35,000 to \$39,999	624 6.9%	85 9.0%	14 5.6%	2 10.0%
\$40,000 to \$44,999	643 7.2%	25 2.7%	14 5.6%	0 0.0%
\$45,000 to \$49,999	472 5.4%	36 3.8%	16 6.3%	0 0.0%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	1,044 11.6%	90 9.6%	24 9.6%	6 30.0%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	1,002 11.2%	86 9.1%	40 15.9%	0 0.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	781 8.7%	35 3.7%	30 11.9%	0 0.0%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	305 3.4%	31 3.3%	13 5.2%	0 0.0%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	183 2.0%	17 1.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	154 1.7%	15 1.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
\$200,000 or more	110 1.2%	15 1.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Total Households	8,982	942	252	20

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

**Table 1-15
Household Income Distribution and Percent Change by Bracket, 1989 – 1999**

Bracket	Pickens County			Jasper			Nelson			Talking Rock		
	1989	1999	%	1989	1999	%	1989	1999	%	1989	1999	%
Less than \$10,000	1,071 19.8%	719 8.0%	-32.8	197 26.2%	150 15.9%	-23.9	37 20.3%	15 6.0%	-59.5	9 37.5%	0 0.0%	- 100.0
\$10,000 to \$14,999	487 9.0%	536 6.0%	10.0	93 12.4%	125 13.3%	34.4	28 15.4%	22 8.7%	-21.4	2 8.3%	2 10.0%	0.0
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,110 20.6%	1,171 13.0%	5.5	135 18.0%	113 12.0%	-16.3	42 23.1%	33 13.1%	-21.4	4 16.7%	0 0.0%	- 100.0
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,076 20.0%	1,238 13.8%	15.1	103 13.7%	119 12.7%	15.5	39 21.4%	31 12.3%	-20.5	2 8.3%	10 50%	400

\$35,000 to \$49,999	958 17.7%	1,739 19.4%	81.5	105 14.0%	146 15.5%	39.0	16 8.8%	44 17.5%	175.0	3 12.5%	2 10.0%	-33.3
\$50,000 to \$74,999	441 8.2%	2,046 22.8%	363.9	89 11.9%	176 18.7%	97.8	19 10.4%	64 25.5%	236.8	4 16.7%	6 30.0	50.0
\$75,000 to \$99,999	87 1.6%	781 8.7%	797.7	21 2.8%	35 3.7%	66.7	1 0.5%	30 11.9%	2,900	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0.0
\$100,000 to \$149,999	101 1.9%	488 5.4%	383.2	4 0.5%	48 5.1%	1100	0 0.0%	13 5.2%	-	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0.0
\$150,000 or more	69 1.3%	264 2.9%	282.6	4 0.5%	30 3.2%	650.0	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0.0	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0.0
Households	5,400	8,982	66.3	751	942	25.4	182	252	38.5	24	20	-16.7

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Poverty Level and Trends and Expectations

Table 1-16 indicates the poverty levels within Pickens County and within the cities as compared to the State of Georgia and trends in the United States. The City of Talking Rock far exceeded the 1989 average for poverty levels at over 30 percent in the total number of individuals in poverty. This trend may be skewed due to the fact that the total population in Talking Rock is very low and many of the residents are below the poverty level. In the City of Jasper, there are a number of residents living in public housing that are driving this trend in 1989 and in 1999. Overall, this trend is showing a decline over the past decade. This is primarily due to the substantial gains in individuals in the upper income bracket moving into Pickens County, mostly in the gated communities in north Georgia like Big Canoe and Bent Tree.

Table 1-16
Number of Individuals in Poverty, 1989 - 1999

Category	Pickens County	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock	Georgia	USA
1989 Total	14,219	1,768	501	65	6,299,654	241,977,859
# in poverty	1,814	277	49	20	923,085	31,742,864
Percent	12.6%	15.7%	9.8%	30.8%	14.7%	13.1%
Ages 0-17	564	65	13	10	343,068	11,428,916
Ages 0-5	165	15	10	0	107,676	714,726
1999 Total	22,712	2,014	589	50	7,959,649	273,882,232
# in poverty	2,080	318	22	0	1,033,793	33,899,812
Percent	9.2%	15.8%	3.7%	0%	13.0%	12.4%
Ages 0-17	733	109	1	0	365,406	11,746,858
Ages 0-5	292	50	0	0	106,663	3,412,025

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

2.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Introduction

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of economic conditions in Pickens County as well as conditions in the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock. This assessment will include any potential problems and opportunities the county and cities may encounter

during this planning period. This analysis will look at employment, wages, commuting patterns and economic resources for development of an economic strategy for the county.

Goal

The primary goal of this element is to determine the economic characteristics of the county and cities and identify targeted industries to guide public policy, infrastructure development, workforce training and other economic development initiatives.

2-1 Economic Base

Employment in Pickens County is increasing at a rapid rate with a 24.7 percent increase in growth over a five-year period from 2001 to 2006. This is projected to almost triple by 2030 and is primarily due to the proximity of Pickens County to the Metropolitan area, the new influx of retirees migrating into the county and the influx of new industries and economic opportunities that will and or occurring now and in the future.

By far, Service Providing will out pace goods producing over the next twenty years with service providing being more than double than the goods producing market sector. Major growth industries projected to grow rapidly by 2030 include construction, trade, transportation and utilities, information, professional and business services, education and health services, leisure and health services and other services. These are explained further below:

Employment Growth: Growth in Pickens County grew by 24.7 percent (5,630 persons to 7,021 persons) from 2001 to 2006. Data reflected below reflect current and projected employment trends in Pickens County industry sector. Growth in Pickens County in employment is projected to increase by 14,669 persons or by 67.4 percent.

Goods-Producing: This market sector from 2001 to 2006 grew by 12.8 percent and is anticipated to continue this trend until 2030 with this market sector increasing from 1,771 in 2007 to 2,572 by 2030, or a 31.1 percent increase over the next 20 plus years.

Natural Resources and Mining: The natural resources and mining sector took a rapid decrease from 2001 to 2006 by falling by 39.6 percent in this time period. From 2007 to 2030, this sector is not projected to show a great increase with a projected increased over this time period to be only 2.99 percent over the next 20 plus years.

Construction: The construction sector for employment has boomed from 2001 to 2006 by 32.9 percent and is expected to continue on this path based on the construction patterns that have been seen along SR 515 and SR 53 as well as proposed large-scale developments in the planning stages in the county. The projected employment for this sector from 2007 to 2030 is projected to increase by 52 percent over this time period.

Manufacturing: The manufacturing employment sector grew slightly by 10.23 percent from 2001 to 2006. Historically Pickens County has not been know for manufacturing and projections from 2007 to 2030 show that manufacturing will only grow another 5.5 percent.

Service Providing: Service providing in Pickens County for employment grew by 29.4 percent or 1,183 persons from 2001 to 2006. Service providing is projected to increase dramatically to 71.8 percent (13,998 persons) from 2007 to 2030. That is more than a two and one-half time jump over this time period.

Trade, Transportation, and Utilities: This market sector grew by 29.3 percent from 2001 to 2006 is projected to double by 2030 with this sector growing from 1,464 persons in 2007 to 3470 persons in 2030, or a 57.8 net increase.

Information: The information market sector declined by 7.54 percent from 2001 to 2007, but has been projected to increase up to 57.8 percent from 2007 to 2030. This is possibly the net increase in new technology and business that will occur within the county within the next 20 years.

Financial Activities: Financial market sector for Pickens County had minor change (12.5 percent) from 2001 to 2007. Financial activities for employment are projected to more than double (29.6 percent) from 2007 to 2030. This is anticipated to be the growing demands from the increase in retirees settling into the county.

Professional and Business Services: This market sector from 2001 to 2006 had a modest increase by 26 percent. However, this market sector has been projected to more than triple between 2007 and 2030 from 387 persons in 2006 to 5,823 persons in 2030, or by 92.8 percent. This is also based on the increase in professional and business services that will be built during this time period.

Education and Health Services: This market sector grew steadily between 2001 and 2006 by 19.7 percent and is projected to increase dramatically over the next twenty years to 70.2 percent. This is primarily due to the influx of new residents (mostly retirees) and the added need for new schools to support the increased population that will be living within the county.

Leisure and Health Services: The leisure and health services market sector took a downturn from 2001 to 2006 with a reduction from this time period being at 1.34 percent. This may be due to the lack of services in this area and is reflected in the total number of workers in this category. In 2001, there were 451 persons working in this sector and by 2006, this was reduced to 445 persons. However, projects for 2007 to 2030 indicate that this market sector will rebound and increase by 69.3 percent. This also is probably due to the influx of new retirees and the direct need for services in this category.

Other Services: The market sector "other services" refers to market sectors that are not included in the typical market sector code. These include areas such as automotive, commercial and industrial machine repair, laundry services, religious organizations, and grant making services, civic and social organizations and labor unions. This sector only makes up a small fraction of the employees within the county with 202 persons employed in this market in 2006. However, this market is growing and grew by 40 percent from 2001 to 2006 and has been projected to grow more to 58.4 percent by 2030 and is primarily due to the need for these services to accommodate the new industries and residents entering the county by 2030.

Public Administration: The public administration sector grew at a steady rate from 2001 to 2006 at around 21 percent over this time period growing from 356 persons in this sector to 398 persons in 2006. This sector; however, this sector is projected to grow by an additional 150 persons by 2030 (548 persons) or a 32.8 percent increase from 2007 to 2030. This increase is based on the need for public administration personnel to handle the growing needs of the county and its various market sectors.

Unclassified: This market sector for employment only represents a small fraction of employment in Pickens County. According to the trends from 2001 to 2006, this sector had a rapid decline by more than 300 percent in this time period and is projected to not exist from 2007 to 2030 as this market sector gets phased out over time.

**Table 2-1
Pickens County Employment Trends, 1990 – 2006**

Year	Total	Goods Producing	Natural Resources and Mining	Construction	Manufacturing	Service Producing	TTU
1990	3,922	1,295	352	250	693	2,627	820
1991	3,658	1,103	342	179	582	2,555	809
1992	4,165	1,449	297	196	956	2,716	869
1993	4,011	1,116	306	230	580	2,895	924
1994	4,259	1,168	301	253	614	3,091	971
1995	4,453	1,341	291	283	767	3,112	906
1996	4,625	1,374	285	306	783	3,251	928
1997	4,776	1,405	297	313	795	3,371	965
1998	5,030	1,481	300	347	834	3,549	939
1999	5,413	1,638	347	402	889	3,775	966
2000	5,442	1,593	345	426	822	3,849	1,039
2001	5,630	1,619	416	501	702	4,011	1,125
2002	5,838	1,581	315	537	729	4,257	1,202
2003	5,995	1,532	339	558	635	4,463	1,274
2004	6,135	1,577	311	596	670	4,558	1,286
2005	6,593	1,669	307	627	735	4,924	1,522
2006	7,021	1,827	298	747	782	5,194	1,570

TTU – Trade, Transportation, Utilities, Source: NGRDC.

**Table 2-1
Pickens County Employment Trends, 1990 – 2006 (continued)**

Year	Information	Financial Activities	Professional and Business Services	Education and Health Services	Leisure and Health Services	Other Services	Public Administration	Unclassified
1990	45	259	60	758	239	90	356	0
1991	38	255	64	779	222	97	291	0
1992	41	252	70	880	231	208	265	0
1993	40	266	72	953	262	207	271	0
1994	38	312	98	997	282	222	282	0
1995	46	322	107	1,068	285	96	282	0
1996	47	365	108	1,094	293	100	316	0
1997	47	367	135	1,109	318	87	343	0
1998	52	409	196	1,272	326	91	264	0
1999	56	445	222	1,361	332	108	285	0
2000	57	261	231	1,442	413	116	290	0
2001	57	286	172	1,448	451	121	314	37
2002	64	320	202	1,480	505	133	327	24
2003	69	354	233	1,586	458	138	342	9
2004	80	352	277	1,583	440	141	388	11
2005	71	325	326	1,651	450	181	395	3
2006	53	327	387	1,804	445	202	398	8

**Table 2-2
Pickens County Employment Projections, 2007 - 2030**

Year	Total	Goods Producing	Natural Resources and Mining	Construction	Manufacturing	Service Producing	TTU
2007	7,104	1,771	324	690	756	5,333	1,464
2008	7,401	1,806	325	722	758	5,595	1,520
2009	7,713	1,840	325	755	760	5,873	1,578
2010	8,043	1,875	326	787	762	6,168	1,638
2011	8,392	1,910	326	820	764	6,481	1,701
2012	8,760	1,945	326	852	766	6,815	1,766
2013	9,151	1,980	327	885	768	7,171	1,834
2014	9,564	2,015	327	918	770	7,550	1,904
2015	10,004	2,050	328	950	772	7,954	1,976
2016	10,471	2,084	328	983	774	8,386	2,052
2017	10,968	2,119	329	1,015	776	8,848	2,130
2018	11,497	2,154	329	1,048	777	9,343	2,212
2019	12,062	2,189	329	1,080	779	9,873	2,296
2020	12,665	2,224	330	1,113	781	10,442	2,384
2021	13,311	2,259	330	1,145	783	11,052	2,475
2022	14,002	2,294	331	1,178	785	11,709	2,570
2023	14,744	2,328	331	1,210	787	12,415	2,668
2024	15,540	2,363	332	1,243	789	13,177	2,770
2025	16,396	2,398	332	1,275	791	13,998	2,876
2026	17,319	2,433	332	1,308	793	14,885	2,986
2027	18,313	2,468	333	1,340	795	15,845	3,100
2028	19,386	2,503	333	1,373	797	16,883	3,219
2029	20,547	2,538	334	1,405	798	18,009	3,342
2030	21,803	2,572	334	1,438	800	19,231	3,470

TTU – Trade, Transportation, Utilities, Source: NGRDC.

**Table 2-2
Pickens County Employment Projections, 2007 – 2030 (continued)**

Year	Information	Financial Activities	Professional and Business Services	Education and Health Services	Leisure and Health Services	Other Services	Public Administration	Unclassified
2007	73	365	417	1,945	538	164	368	0
2008	76	370	468	2,050	566	170	375	0
2009	79	376	524	2,161	596	177	381	0
2010	82	382	588	2,278	627	184	388	0
2011	85	288	660	2,402	661	191	394	0
2012	89	294	740	2,532	695	198	401	0
2013	92	400	829	2,669	732	206	408	0
2014	96	406	930	2,814	771	214	415	0
2015	100	413	1,043	2,966	812	222	423	0
2016	103	419	1,170	3,126	855	231	430	0
2017	108	425	1,312	3,296	900	240	438	0
2018	112	432	1,471	3,474	947	249	445	0
2019	116	439	1,650	3,662	997	259	453	0
2020	121	445	1,850	3,861	1,050	269	461	0
2021	125	452	2,075	4,070	1,106	280	469	0
2022	130	459	2,327	4,290	1,164	291	477	0
2023	135	466	2,610	4,522	1,226	302	485	0
2024	141	474	2,927	4,767	1,290	314	494	0
2025	146	481	3,282	5,025	1,359	326	502	0
2026	152	488	3,681	5,297	1,430	339	511	0
2027	158	496	4,128	5,584	1,506	252	520	0
2028	164	504	4,630	5,887	1,586	366	529	0
2029	171	511	5,192	6,205	1,669	380	538	0
2030	177	519	5,823	6,541	1,758	395	548	0

2-2 Labor Force

Employment Status

Employment status data examines the makeup of the labor force, including civilian versus armed forces employment and participation by sex. Pickens County statistics are fairly consistent with the State and national averages with the exception of the armed forces, where employment is somewhat less.

Looking at female employment patterns in 2000, Pickens County had a larger proportion of women in the labor force than the State. Female only labor force grew by 38.2 percent from 1990 to 2000. Female only also grew in the Cities of Jasper by 18.2 percent from 1990 to 2000 and 21.4 percent in the City of Nelson during this time period. The only decline was within Talking Rock with this area declining by 17.6 percent.

The unemployment rate in the county has dropped considerably and only increased the City of Nelson from 1990 to 2000. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Community Snapshots, "between 2000 and 2004, Pickens County's annual unemployment rate averaged 3.5 percent, compared with the state's average of 4.4 percent. Nationally, the unemployment rate for the same period averaged 5.5 percent.

The total labor force has increased in the county by 36 percent from 1990 to 2000 and by 9 percent in Jasper, 28.9 percent in Nelson and decreased by 3.75 percent in Talking Rock.

**Table 2-3
Employment Status, 1990 – 2000**

	Pickens County		Jasper		Nelson		Talking Rock		Georgia	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total	11,281	18,101	1,405	1,653	382	511	49	45	4,938,381	6,250,687
In labor force:	7,376	11,542	852	937	216	304	33	24	3,351,513	4,129,666
In Armed Forces	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	73,135	66,858
Civilian:	7,370	11,538	852	937	216	304	33	24	3,278,378	4,062,808
-Employed	7,003	11,275	803	927	208	292	33	24	3,090,276	3,839,756
-Unemployed	367	263	49	10	8	12	0	0	188,102	223,052
Not in labor force	3,905	6,559	553	716	166	207	16	21	1,586,868	2,121,021
Female Only	5,796	9,384	795	972	205	261	20	17	2,584,722	3,218,245
In labor force:	3,269	5,193	419	454	88	134	11	5	1,547,461	1,912,651
In Armed Forces	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,571	9,018
Civilian:	3,269	5,193	419	454	88	134	11	5	1,539,890	1,903,633
-Employed	3,089	5,039	396	451	84	129	11	5	1,441,381	1,788,233
-Unemployed	180	154	23	3	4	5	0	0	98,509	115,400
Not in labor force	2,527	4191	376	518	117	127	9	12	1,037,261	1,305,594

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2007.

Personal Income

Sources of personal income in Pickens County have grown in Pickens County per capita by 35.1 percent from 1990 to 2000. This amount is keeping pace with the State of Georgia with Georgia per capita income at 36 percent from 1990 to 2000 (Table 2-4). Wages and salaries have not kept pace with the State of Georgia with Georgia more than double that category.

Table 2-4
Sources of Personal Income

	Pickens				Georgia			
	1990		2000		1990		2000	
Total (1,000)	227,472	%	564,209	%	111,414,190	%	228,738,205	%
Wages and Salaries (1,000)	73,652	32.4	150,269	26.6	69,664,766	60.4	140,771,916	61.5
Other Labor Income (1,000)	10,446	4.6	17,680	3.1	10,020,695	8.7	16,118,950	7.0
Proprietors Income (1,000)	20,119	8.8	41,485	7.4	8,207,019	7.1	19,131,386	8.4
Dividends Interest and Rent (1,000)	40,827	17.9	109,852	19.5	20,009,113	17.3	38,054,498	16.6
Transfer Payments to persons (1,000)	32,595	14.3	83,878	14.9	12,630,273	10.9	25,241,518	11.0
Less: Social Insurance Contributions (1,000)	5,802	2.6	11,827	2.1	5,000,559	4.3	10,103,792	4.4
Residence Adjustment (1,000)	55,635	24.5	172,872	30.6	(117,117)	-0.1	(476,271)	-0.2
Income per Capita	15,677		24,156		17,722		27,794	

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2007.

Wages

Average Weekly Wages

Pickens County wages are consistently lower than the state average with two exceptions in 2005 – agriculture, forestry and fishing; and administrative and waste services (Table 2-5). Agriculture, forestry and fishing in Pickens County outpaced Georgia in this sector by 18.9 percent whereas administrative and waste services outpaced Georgia in this sector by 22 percent. Appalachian Technical College is represented in the state government figures and is most likely the reason for the higher wages. The higher wages in retail trade may be attributed to the large automobile dealerships in the county. Wages are much closer to being in line with the regional average for the North Georgia Regional Development Center. This is a change from 1990 to 2000 where Pickens County wages were consistently lower than the state average with two exceptions - state government in 1990 and 1995; and retail trade in 1990, 1995 and 2000 (Table 2-6). This shift is more than likely due to these areas decreasing in the county and new services sector trends are on the rise.

**Table 2-5
Average Weekly Wages, 2005**

Average Weekly Wages-2005					
	Pickens	Georgia		Pickens	Georgia
Goods Producing	\$721	\$788	Service Producing	522	752
Agriculture, forestry, & fishing	582	472	Wholesale trade	682	1,128
Mining	916	1,026	Retail trade	424	473
Construction	682	768	Transportation and warehousing	692	816
Manufacturing	703	811	Utilities	*	1,390
Food manufacturing	*	729	Information	672	1,264
Beverage & tobacco mfg	*	1,226	Finance and insurance	672	1,205
Apparel manufacturing	*	521	Real estate and rental and leasing	444	811
Wood product manufacturing	502	648	Professional, scientific/tech svcs	668	1,187
Printing and related activities	271	824	Management: companies/enterprises	*	1,721
Chemical manufacturing	*	1,074	Administrative and waste svcs	704	549
Plastics & rubber products mfg	*	724	Educational services	564	730
Nonmetallic mineral product mfg	*	801	Health care and social services	604	746
Fabricated metal product mfg	519	719	Arts, entertainment and recreation	297	548
Machinery manufacturing	795	800	Accommodation and food services	208	278
Transportation equipment	*	1,222	Other services (except government)	505	518
Furniture and related product mfg	*	600			
Miscellaneous mfg industries	*	820			
Totals					
Unclassified - industry not assigned	*	928			
Total - Private Sector	586	760			
Total - Government	558	711			
Federal government	715	1,134			
State government	500	656			
Local government	559	632			
All industries	580	752			

The following Georgia industry categories have been excluded from this table: Textile mills, textile product mills, leather & allied product mfg, paper manufacturing, petroleum and coal products mfg, primary metal manufacturing, electrical equipment/appliance, and transportation equipment. These industries do not exist in Pickens County; no comparative data exist. [NAICS replaced SIC in 2001]

Table 2-6
Average Weekly Wages, 1990 - 2000

Average Weekly Wages 1990-2000						
Employment Sector	1990		1995		2000	
	Pickens	Georgia	Pickens	Georgia	Pickens	Georgia
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	n/a	276	267	322	369	403
Mining	407	598	427	734	634	879
Construction	378	434	485	505	561	655
Manufacturing	307	449	457	555	523	721
Transportation & Public Utilities	484	603	628	737	750	949
Wholesale Trade	438	603	503	729	620	988
Retail Trade	241	236	292	275	355	350
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	415	543	467	693	540	967
Services	264	414	377	501	450	657
Federal Government	449	543	519	666	632	847
Local Government	290	386	367	440	462	549
State Government	523	450	545	493	456	588
Non-Classified	n/a	341	n/a	555	n/a	735
ALL INDUSTRIES	330	425	412	506	488	658

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2007.

Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns can be surmised by comparing the number of employed persons residing in Pickens County and the actual number of jobs within the county. The Table 2-7 shows an estimated 51.6 percent of the employed residents of Pickens working outside the county compared to 44 percent in 1990.

Commuting patterns in Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock remained about the same from 1990 to 2000.

Table 2-7
Commuting Patterns, 1990 - 2000

Category	Pickens County		Jasper		Nelson		Talking Rock	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Workforce	6,861 100%	11,116 100%	791 100%	916 100%	202 100%	290 100%	33 100%	24 100%
Worked in State of Georgia	6,856 99.9%	11,053 99.4%	786 99.4%	906 98.9%	202 100%	290 100%	33 100%	24 100%
-Worked in Pickens County	3,838 55.9%	5,318 47.9%	512 64.7%	591 64.5%	89 44.1%	136 46.7%	21 63.6%	15 62.5%
-Worked in another County	3,018 44.0%	5,735 51.6%	274 34.6%	315 34.4%	113 55.9%	154 53.1%	12 36.4%	9 37.5%
Worked outside the State of Georgia	5 0.1%	63 0.6%	5 0.6%	10 1.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2007.

In Table 2-8, 47.9 percent of Pickens County residents worked within Pickens County with the next highest percentage of Pickens County residents working in the adjacent Cherokee County.

Table 2-8
Employed Residents of Pickens County, 2000

Where Employed	Number Employed	Percent of Total
Pickens County	5,318	47.9
Cherokee County	2,191	19.7
Cobb County	938	8.4
Fulton County	741	6.7
Forsyth County	384	3.5
Gilmer County	265	2.4
DeKalb County	250	2.2
Gwinnett County	218	2.0
Other	808	7.3
TOTAL	10,729	100.1

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

**Table 2-9
Persons Working in Pickens County, 2000**

County of Residence	Number Employed	Percent of Total
Pickens County	5,318	62.6
Cherokee County	776	9.1
Gilmer County	770	9.1
Cobb County	268	3.2
Fannin County	185	2.2
DeKalb County	165	1.9
Dawson County	132	1.6
Gordon County	102	1.2
Other	775	9.1
TOTAL	8,491	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

In Table 2-8, quite a few out-of-county residents work in Pickens County with the highest percentage of out of county residents coming from Cherokee and Gilmer Counties.

2-3 Economic Resources

Development agencies, private organizations, and government programs contribute to Regional economic development. The following section discusses these resources, as well as sources of funding for economic development efforts.

Development Agencies

Pickens County has established economic development programs that are carried out by a number of local economic development agencies identified below.

Local Development Agencies

Pickens County

Pickens County Development Authority
Office of Economic Development-Pickens County Chamber of Commerce

City of Jasper

Downtown Development Authority of Jasper
Industrial Development Authority of Jasper
Jasper Development Authority

Agencies of Regional Importance

Multi-jurisdictional Development Authorities

Joint Gilmer County-Pickens County Development Authority
Joint Bartow County-Pickens County Authority

North Georgia Regional Development Center (NGRDC)

The NGRDC receives funding from the Economic Development Administration to provide a variety of technical assistance to local governments, chambers of commerce, industrial development authorities, and downtown development authorities in their economic development efforts. This technical assistance includes assisting local governments in formulating economic development strategies through long-range planning; maintaining a positive relationship with statewide economic developers; assisting communities in preparing themselves for industrial/business recruitment; and, assisting communities in applying for state and federal loan and grant monies to aid in the economic development effort.

Funding Opportunities

This section discusses general grant opportunities, program specific grant opportunities, and loan programs that are available to the county and cities.

General Grant Opportunities

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD)

USDA RD offers a number of opportunities for financing local infrastructure projects, including granting for small municipal and rural water wastewater and solid waste systems and a rural economic development loan and grant program. In addition to grants, the USDA offers loans at a discounted rate to qualifying local governments for infrastructure and community facility projects.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

The ARC awards Area Development Funds on an annual basis. The matching fund program is designed to support eligible applicants (local governments, authorities, and non-profits) to support economic development projects in four goal areas. The goals are to 1) increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation; 2) strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy; 3) develop and improve Appalachia's infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive; and, 4) Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia's isolation. Potential projects must be consistent with the priorities identified in the Governor's annual Strategy Statement. Projects should contribute to an economic development strategy. Final approval on all projects comes from the ARC in Washington, D.C.

Employee Incentive Program (EIP)

The EIP is a State-administered pool of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds that have been set aside to provide funding essential to promote specific local economic projects. Often referred to as "gap financing," the EIP funds are used either as a grant to local governments to provide essential infrastructure, or as a grant to local governments who may then loan the funds to provide essential financing to the prospective company. In either case, the funding must both be deemed essential to bring the project to fruition as well as be the source of job creation for low- and moderate- income persons. A local government may retain repayments from loan funds, including principle and interest, to capitalize their revolving loan fund (RLF). RLF funds may in turn be used to finance future project meeting EIP criteria.

OneGeorgia Equity Fund

OneGeorgia is a community and economic development tool providing financial assistance including grants and loans that promote the health, welfare, safety, and economic security of the citizens of the state through the development and retention of employment opportunities and the enhancement of various infrastructures that accomplish that goal. Eligible recipients of grant and loan funds include general-purpose local governments (municipalities and counties), local government authorities and joint of multi-county development authorities in rural counties suffering from high poverty rates. Applications from Conditionally Eligible Counties (such as Pickens County and Whitfield County) will be considered when proposed projects have regional impact and support, and work jointly on projects with eligible counties (Fannin, Gilmer, and Murray Counties). Equity funds may be used for a multitude of economic development activities provided they are designed to increase employment opportunities.

OneGeorgia EDGE Fund

The Economic Development, Growth and Enterprise (EDGE) Fund is a specialized economic development tool that may be used to enhance Georgia's competitiveness in attracting significant economic development projects. EDGE should not be used when other state or federal programs could be used or when local funds are sufficient to accomplish stated economic development goals. Due to the specialized nature of the program and the limited resources available, potential applicants are encouraged to contact the OneGeorgia Authority.

Generally, EDGE funds are targeted for competitive projects in rural counties suffering from high poverty. "Competitive Project" generally describes a situation in which a business is considering no less than two communities as a site for relocation or expansion where at least one community is outside the Georgia and at east one but not more than one is in Georgia.

OneGeorgia E-911

As of January 1, 2005, there are 11 Counties in Georgia without any basic E-911 service. One Georgia Authority has set aside \$3,000,000 to help these counties establish Regional E-911 service. OneGeorgia Authority defines "regional" as an E-9-1-1 system that is: a) jointly owned by two or more Counties; b) owned by an authority that contains at least two Counties; or c) involves an intergovernmental service agreement between multiple public jurisdictions containing two or more Counties. Award limits will be based on the number of counties combined: 2 counties maximum \$400,000, 3 Counties maximum \$500,000, 4 Counties maximum \$600,000 and 5 or more Counties maximum \$700,000.

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, the provision of such public infrastructure, services, facilities and improvements needed to implement Enhanced 9-1-1 emergency telephone services. These activities may include planning services and technical assistance, the purchase of machinery, equipment and software, technology infrastructure, public utilities, public facilities and services, real property rehabilitation, the acquisition of real property, site preparation and improvements and construction.

Project-specific Grant Opportunities

OneGeorgia BRIDGE

The Broadband Rural Initiative to Develop Georgia's Economy (BRIDGE) is open to Eligible and Conditionally Eligible Georgia Counties (see OneGeorgia above). The program is designed to bring high-speed broadband connectivity to rural Georgia by providing grants to publicly owned infrastructure based on the number of rural Counties receiving new or enhanced high speed broadband services. The BRIDGE fund will grant \$200,000 for single county projects and \$400,000 for projects impacting two Counties. Regional projects serving three or more Counties will not have an award maximum. Funding determinations are based on the strength of the regional application including technology design, strategy and sustainability. Governor Perdue's budgeted five million as initial funding for the BRIDGE.

AirGeorgia

AirGeorgia is a component of the OneGeorgia program specifically targeted toward making infrastructure improvements to Georgia's rural airports part of a plan for rural economic development. The OneGeorgia Authority structured a new financing program with a 15 million dollar budget with a goal to extend rural airport runways to at least 5,000 feet, placing every Georgian within a 30-minute drive of an airport capable of serving 85 percent of the corporate aircraft flying today. The program is targeted to the 49 Level I and Level II airports in rural Georgia and will accelerate a number of projects including runway extensions, installation of navigational aids, weather reporting stations and other projects deemed necessary to increase accessibility of Georgia's rural airports.

Loan program

North Georgia Certified Development Corporation (NGCDC, Inc.) NGCDC, Inc., staffed by the NGRDC, was incorporated in 1981 for the purpose of providing gap financing to small business and industry in the region. Through FY-2007, the organization has provided financing for 140 businesses, which have created 2,256 jobs. Its Revolving Loan Fund has grown from \$550,000 to \$1,004,480 in total assets. The Revolving Loan Fund has financed 81 projects resulting in an area investment of \$17.6 million. NGCDC, Inc. has also packaged 59 Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 loans accounting for an area investment of \$52.5 million. NGCDC, Inc. has a statewide service area, although marketing efforts are concentrated in Northwest Georgia. The Revolving Loan Fund program is available only in Fannin, Gilmer, Murray, Pickens, and Whitfield Counties.

Strategic Industries Loan Fund

The purpose of the Strategic Industries Loan Fund (the "Loan Fund") from the OneGeorgia Authority is to provide loan assistance for the purchase of fixed assets to eligible applicants that are being considered as a relocation or expansion site for an emerging or development-stage company in a strategic industry targeted by Georgia. The Loan Fund is intended to be used only when needed to fill a financing gap that is unmet by the private sector (including venture capital, angel or institutional investors, traditional commercial financing, developer financing, etc.) and when the health, welfare

and economic security of the citizens of the state are promoted through the recruitment, development and retention of emerging and development-stage companies in strategic industries that are creating higher quality jobs.

Entrepreneurial and Small Business Loan Guarantee Fund

OneGeorgia also provides entrepreneurial and small business loans to start new business in Georgia. Applications are available on the OneGeorgia website and are open to all eligible candidates.

2-4 Economic Trends

Table 2-10 listed below indicates the major employers in Pickens County with Pickens County Schools, Piedmont Mountainside Hospital and Pickens County Government leading the highest number of employees.

**Table 2-10
Major Employers in Pickens County**

Employers	Total Number of Employees
Pickens County Schools	720
Piedmont Mountainside Hospital	377
Pickens County Government	310
Lexington Insulators	280
Big Canoe Property Owners Association	170

Source: Pickens County Economic Development Office, Piedmont Mountainside Hospital, U.S. Census and Georgia Department of Labor, 2007.

Unique Economic Situations and New Developments

There are economic trends forecasted or on the books within the county that will change the economic dynamics within the county. Below are the listed trends that are occurring or being planned within the county.

Residential Developments

Talking Rock Plantation

Talking Rock Plantation is a planned residential community on 4,495 acres that will have a proposed 2,900 homes with a 400,000 square-foot of commercial development to serve the community and those passing by the community. Construction is planned to start in December 2008 with final build out fifteen to twenty-five years. The development of regional impacts (DRI) indicates that the property is being built for “recreational housing.”

The Talking Rock Plantation community will be heavily dependent on water and wastewater service with an anticipated water need of .968 million gallons per day for water supply and wastewater. The current water needs in this area is critical and the developer has contracted with a consulting firm to look into the development of a reservoir to service the needs of this community.

Potts Mountain Development at Big Canoe

The Potts Mountain Development is a planned residential community that will have a proposed 1,250 mixed-use units and 396 hamlets with a community center and over 74,000 square-feet of retail and commercial area. Construction is planned to start in October 2008 with final construction ending in 2017. This property has been rezoned and will be located on the north side of SR 53. The community design also includes a location for a new school, a YMCA, a cultural center, and a community pool with clubhouse.

New Retirement Community (C.C.R.C.)

The Pickens County Economic Development Department has indicated that a new retirement community is being planned along Carnes Mill and Whitestone. At present, the size of the community is still in the planning stages.

New Golf Community

A new golf community (Talking Rock Golf Club, DRI # 1227) is being proposed in Pickens County that will include 500 single-family homes, a golf course, 76 condominiums and 19 buildings on-site. The project will be built in phases will completion in 2010.

Commercial Developments

Super Wal-Mart (SR 515)

There is a proposed 80-acre development along SR 515 and just north of SR 53 that will house a Super Wal-Mart and will have out parcels for other retail and commercial developments. Based on this type of development, the development will bring in approximately 600 new jobs to the area. Construction for this new development is still pending upon approvals of state and federal permits.

Industrial

Pickens County Airport Industrial Technology Park

The big 2006 project in Pickens County is the development of a 68-acre technology park adjoining the Pickens County Airport. At present, 17 acres have not been developed. The property has been sold to a private company for development and management. The property itself is located at the end of the 5,000 foot runway seperated by a road. The industrial park is in the shape of a horseshoe and properties are not for sale, but are leased from Pickens County. It is the hope of the county to draw in tenhnology based businesses.

The Pickens County Economic Development Department has indicated that they anticipate by March of 2008 that additional hangers will be added as will a new maintenance facility to handle up to 200 airplanes at the airport, which currently houses 65 airplanes as of 2007. This would be a 67.5 percent increase in the number of airplanes that could be housed at the airport. This would include prop planes and private jets.

New Industrial Park

The Pickens County Economic Development Department has indicated that there is a new 108-acre industrial park being developed by Mountain City Development off of SR 108 in Pickens County. At present, 52 acres are under development in the county.

The Northeast Georgia Railroad (NGRR) has acquired 100 acres south of Tate and is in the planning process to build a new industrial park to draw in additional technology based businesses to the area.

Water and Wastewater

Talking Rock Reservoir - Proposed

As indicated above, a new reservoir is in the initial planning stages and the developer has enlisted the aid of a consulting firm to acquire the necessary state and federal permits to construct a new reservoir to aid in the water needs for a new development in Talking Rock. At present, the size and configuration is not set at this time.

Long-Range Water and Wastewater Plan – Pickens County

The Pickens County Economic Development Department and Pickens County government have contracted with a consultant to develop a long-range water and wastewater study to determine the demands that will be required based on the future 2030 population projections that were developed by the North Georgia Regional Development Center.

Long-Range Water and Wastewater Plan – City of Jasper

Short range plans: Currently, the city is expanding its water treatment plant in order to increase from 2mgd to 3mgd. In the near future, the wastewater plant will be expanded to increase from .8 mgd to 1.5 mgd. There will be a 10-inch water main extended from the existing line located at Mountainside Village to the Cherokee County line with the addition of an elevated water storage tank with a 500,000-gallon capacity. The city has plans to negotiate with Grandview Lake stockholders for the purchase of raw water for the city's future needs. Upon agreement for the purchase of raw water from the lake, the city would extend service lines into the Grandview Lake service delivery area.

Long range plans: There will be a 10-inch water main from Philadelphia Road in the corporate limits to the Gilmer County Line with a 1,000,000 gallon storage tank located in the Whitestone Road area in order to accommodate future commercial and industrial needs. Also, in the long-range plan, the City will install a sewer line from the southern County line to the northern County line on the Hwy 515 corridor.

Long Swamp Creek Reservoir - Proposed

The City of Jasper has had an ongoing Long-Range Water Plan since 1987 and has hired a consultant to research and analyze the possibility of constructing a reservoir on Long Swamp Creek meet future water demands in the City of Jasper.

House Bill 801

In 2007, Representatives Ralston, Meadows, Dickson and Graves introduced House Bill 801. This new bill is for the creation of the Coosawattee Regional Water and Sewerage Authority. The legislative intent of the bill is for the support and encouragement of “comprehensive regional planning in anticipation of growth in the utilization of regional water resources. The General Assembly supports the concept that each member entity should be free to plan and determine its own growth strategy in the utilization of its share of regional water resources as well as to plan for other infrastructure growth in conjunction with community needs and standards.” The members of this Authority will include the City of Calhoun, City of Chatsworth, Pickens County and the Ellijay-Gilmer County Water and Sewerage Authority. This House Bill indicates the need to acquire new sources of water to supply water to the region including the development of new reservoirs to serve the region. The House Bill was introduced to the House on April 1, 2007 and passed by the House on April 13, 2007 and was sent to the Senate. On April 16, 2007 the House Bill was read to the Senate and referred. The House Bill has passed the House and Senate and awaits final approval from the Governor.

Potential New Reservoir in West Pickens County

The *Northwest Georgia Regional Water Resources Partnership* is a culmination of local governments, business and interest groups that was created to look into long-range water quality and quantity issues in 15 western counties (see Chapter 6 for discussion of the Partnership). Based on the water crisis and drought Georgia has been facing and the creation of a State-Wide Water Plan, the Partnership enlisted the aid of local consultants to determine where “potential reservoirs could be placed for future water needs. Based on the study that was conducted, there were 22 potential reservoir sites identified and 1 is located in west Pickens County just off a small stream that leads to the Coosawattee.

The Partnership would also like to create a new *Northwest Georgia Regional Water Authority* to handle the day-to-day operations and to oversee and fund projects like reservoir development in this region. Legislation has been written and the Partnership plans to introduce this legislation either in the 2008 or 2009 legislative session.

3.0 HOUSING ELEMENT

Introduction

This section of the comprehensive plan update will evaluate the composition and quality of the community's housing being provided, and whether there is a "good mix" of types of housing. This section will look into the condition of housing as well as occupancy, housing costs to include cost-burdened households. Other areas to be included are special housing needs for Pickens County and how housing fits within the jobs-housing balance for the county and region.

Goals

The housing element of the Pickens County Comprehensive Plan consists of an inventory and description of housing trends and conditions, and an assessment of the housing needs of the county and cities current and projected population. The inventory and assessment also becomes the basis for the determination of goals and implementation strategies. This assessment and inventory also aids in identification of the barriers that may affect the "non-resident" work force from seeking and acquiring housing in the county or its cities. This includes, housing types and mix, age and condition of housing, owners, renters and vacancy rates, cost of housing, and special housing needs.

3-1 Housing Types and Mix

Composition

Table 3-1 identifies the change of housing stock that occurred in Pickens County between 1980 and 2000. By far, single-family housing outnumber all other housing types in Pickens County and within the city limits of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock with single-family housing more than doubling from 1980 to 2000 in Pickens County from 3,467 units in 1980 to 7,773 units in 2000. Mobile homes rank second in Pickens County with more than 28 percent of the county residing in mobile homes in 2000 (see Figure 3-1).

Multi-family housing in Pickens County almost doubled from 1990 to 2000 by 45.4 percent increasing from 353 units to 647 units. The City of Jasper also experienced an increase in multi-family housing by 33.8 percent growing from 241 units in 1990 to 364 units in 2000. The City of Nelson only had one unit of multi-family housing in 1990 and had none in 2000. The City of Talking Rock does not have multi-family housing. As the county and cities grow, there will be a direct need for multi-family housing to accommodate workers that wish to work and live locally.

Figure 3-1

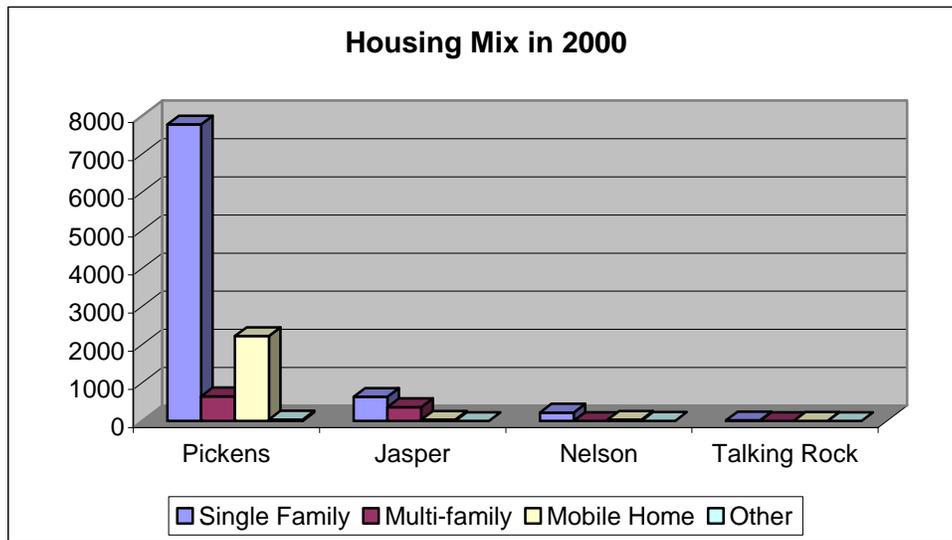


Table 3-1
Number and Type of Housing Units, 1980 - 2000

	Pickens County			Jasper			Nelson			Talking Rock		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Total Units	4,443	6,403	10,687	647	797	1,033	212	223	261	31	24	22
Single Family	3,467	4,538	7,773	438	496	635	183	194	222	25	17	16
Multi-Family	293	353	647	177	241	364	7	1	0	0	0	0
Mobile Home	683	1,468	2,227	32	54	34	22	28	36	6	7	6
Other	0	44	40	0	6	0	0	0	3	0	0	0

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Projected housing units (Table 3-2) indicate an upward trend in the number of housing units increasing by 22,859 units in Pickens County from 2000 to 2030. As for the City of Jasper, this increase is 1,633 units from 2000 to 2030, 231 units for the City of Nelson and 57 total units for Talking Rock from this same time frame.

Table 3-2
Projected Housing Units, 2005 – 2030

Year	County Total	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock
2000	10,687	1,030	261	22
2005	11,981	1,355	331	41
2010	14,572	1,559	361	47
2015	17,584	1,762	386	53
2020	22,326	2,037	421	61
2025	27,159	2,302	451	69
2030	33,546	2,663	492	79
Total Increase	22,859	1,633	231	57

Methodology: Projected housing units exceed the projected number of households by 7 percent to account for anticipated vacancies.

Another means to assess housing activity is development permits. Although not an accurate count of finished construction, it provides a general indication of market trends. A total of 1,948 building permits were issued for "stick built" single-family residential structures between 2002 and 2005, listed below in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3
Residential Housing Permits Issued, 2002 – 2005

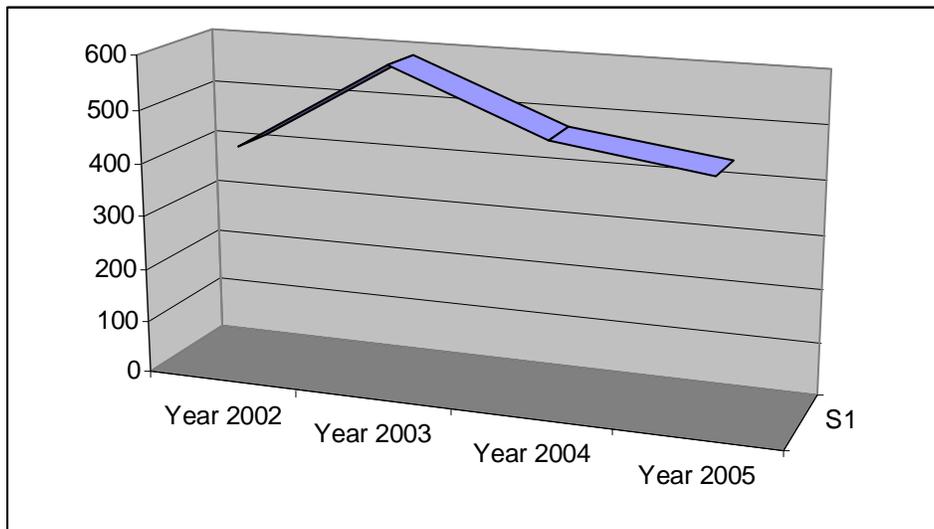
Year	Housing Permits Issued (Total Units)
2002	424
2003	595
2004	484
2005	445

Source: www.georgiastats.uga.edu, 2007.

Recent Trends

Housing permits issued in Pickens County spiked in 2003 with 595 total housing permits issued. After 2003, total housing unit permits began to decline to 445 permits issued in 2005. This equates to a 25.2 percent reduction from 2003 to 2005. Given the recent housing market trends, this is anticipated to decline in 2006 and 2007 (see Table 3-3 and Figure 3-2).

Figure 3-2
Residential Building Permits Issued from 2002 to 2005



Pickens County

Households are defined by the Census as a group of people sharing the same housing unit. A household may, or may not, constitute a family. Census figures indicate that the persons per household ratio in Pickens County decreased from 2.65 to 2.54 from 1990 to 2000. This trend is expected to continue from 2000 to 2030 as retirees and second

homebuyers move into the county (see Table 3-4). This is smaller than the State household size, which was reported as 2.65 in 2000. Furthermore, the overall household size in Pickens County is affected by the rise in the retirement market. According to the 2000 Census, 24 percent of all county households were non-family. Of this category 85 percent of all households consisted of single persons. Of these one-person households, roughly 38 percent were over 65 years. Over sixty-three percent (63.5) of total households were married couples. Over twelve percent (12.3) of the total households were families other than married couples with either a male or female head-of-household.

Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock

These trends also are relatively true for the City of Jasper. Census figures indicate that the persons per household ratio in the City of Jasper decreased from 2.38 to 2.24 from 1990 to 2000 and are projected to decrease to 2.10 by 2030 (see Table 3-5). As for the City of Nelson, Census figures indicate that the persons per household ratio in the City of Nelson decreased from 2.57 to 2.46 from 1990 to 2000 and are projected to decrease to 2.31 by 2030 (see Table 3-6). As for the City of Talking Rock, Census figures indicate that the persons per household ratio in the City of Talking Rock decreased from 2.66 to 2.58 from 1990 to 2000 and are projected to decrease to 2.33 by 2030 (see Table 3-7).

Table 3-4
Historic and Projected Household Size, 1990 – 2030
Pickens County

Year	County Population	No. Households	Avg. Household Size
1990	14,432	5,386	2.65
1995	16,759	6,128	2.59
2000	22,983	8,960	2.54
2005	28,442	11,198	2.54
2010	34,046	13,618	2.50
2015	41,085	16,434	2.50
2020	51,121	20,866	2.45
2025	62,187	25,382	2.45
2030	75,244	31,352	2.40

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 - 2005. Projections by NGRDC.

Table 3-5
Historic and Projected Household Size, 1990 – 2030
City of Jasper

Year	Jasper Population	No. Households	Avg. Household Size
1990	1,982	745	2.38
1995	2,274	799	2.31
2000	2,167	942	2.24
2005	2,837	1,267	2.24
2010	3,404	1,547	2.20
2015	4,017	1,826	2.20
2020	4,660	2,167	2.15
2025	5,406	2,514	2.15

2030	6,162	2,934	2.10
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Source: U.S. Census, 1990 - 2005. Projections by NGRDC.

**Table 3-6
Historic and Projected Household Size, 1990 – 2030
City of Nelson**

Year	Nelson Population	No. Households	Avg. Household Size
1990	486	189	2.57
1995	563	204	2.51
2000	626	254	2.46
2005	761	309	2.46
2010	814	338	2.41
2015	870	361	2.41
2020	930	394	2.36
2025	994	421	2.36
2030	1,062	460	2.31

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 - 2005. Projections by NGRDC.

**Table 3-7
Historic and Projected Household Size, 1990 – 2030
City of Talking Rock**

Year	Talking Rock Population	No. Households	Avg. Household Size
1990	62	24	2.66
1995	72	25	2.66
2000	49	19	2.58
2005	95	38	2.48
2010	107	44	2.43
2015	121	50	2.43
2020	136	57	2.38
2025	153	64	2.38
2030	173	74	2.33

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 - 2005. Projections by NGRDC.

3-2 Condition and Occupancy

Age and Condition

Pickens County

According to the 2000 Census data as shown in Table 3-8, 21.8 percent of all housing units in Pickens County were over 40 years old. The Cities of Nelson and Talking Rock had a substantial amount of housing stock that were more than 40 years old with the City of Nelson at 41 percent and Talking Rock at over 72 percent.

Condition of housing is measured by the Census in terms of adequacy of facilities. Units that have no plumbing or partial plumbing have been steadily declining, and represented only 0.8 percent of the total Pickens County year-round housing stock in 2000, which is slightly lower than the State average of 0.9 percent. Units without complete kitchen

facilities are defined as lacking at least one of the following features: installed sink with piped water; a range or cook stove; or a mechanical refrigerator. Since older structures may be refurbished consistent with modern codes, the lack of plumbing is typically a better indicator of substandard housing.

**Table 3-8
Age Condition of Housing, 1980 - 2000**

	Pickens County	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock	Georgia
Over 40 Years Old					
1980	21.7%	13.3%	58.0%	51.6%	292,662
1990	14.8%	11.8%	56.1%	12.5%	381,827
2000	21.8%	30.6%	41.0%	72.7%	668,334
Lacking Complete Plumbing					
1980	(13.0%) 578	(4.2%) 27	(2.8%) 6	(25.8%) 8	75,618
1990	(2.8%) 1.1%	(0.4%) 2.0%	(1.3%) 0.4%	(0.0%) 1.3%	(1.0%) 0.0%
2000	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Lacking Complete Kitchen					
1980	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
1990	1.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
2000	1.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock

According to Table 3-8, 30.6 percent of Jasper's housing stock was over 40 years old in 2000 compared to 11.8 percent in 1990. This increase is attributed to fewer new homes constructed in the city within the past decade. In terms of housing conditions, Jasper had no units that lack plumbing in 2000. At present, the City of Jasper would like to improve the condition of housing within the city limits.

Talking Rock has the highest number of houses over 40 years old with 72.7 percent. This is due to the fact that no new housing has been developed within the city within the past decade. The city also had no units lacking plumbing in 2000.

The City of Nelson had a decline housing units that exceeded 40 years of age from 58 percent to 41 percent due to the significant increase in new housing in the past decade. The city likewise did not have any units lacking plumbing in 2000.

Owners, Renters, and Vacancy Rates

Since 1990, seasonal and migratory units were included in the owner occupied and renter occupied figures. Consequently, regions, which have a higher seasonal population base, such as Pickens County, are more difficult to statistically evaluate over time. In order to assess a historical trend and comparison between the jurisdictions and

the state, a ratio comparing homeowners to renters is provided in Table 3-9 below, for 1980 through 2000.

**Table 3-9
Owner Occupied, Renter Occupied, and Vacant Units, 1980 - 2000**

	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Vacant	
	Units	Vacancy Rate	Units	Vacancy Rate	Units	Total Rate
Pickens County						
1980	3,231	1.6%	930	6.4%	641	18.9%
1990	4,317	2.4%	1,069	7.0%	1,017	22.3%
2000	7,354	2.1%	1,017	22.3%	1,727	23.1%
Jasper						
1980	324	3.9%	281	5.4%	42	11.3%
1990	409	2.9%	336	4.0%	51	10.1%
2000	504	6.5%	438	5.4%	80	14.6%
Nelson						
1980	174	0.0%	35	0.0%	3	1.4%
1990	155	0.6%	34	2.9%	20	11.5%
2000	217	1.4%	37	11.9%	21	18.2%
Talking Rock						
1980	27	0.0%	4	0.0%	0	0.0%
1990	23	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	4.0%
2000	17	0.0%	2	0.0%	4	18.1%
Georgia						
1980	1,216,432	1.6%	655,220	7.9%	142,187	12.8%
1990	1,536,759	2.5%	829,856	12.2%	271,186	19.2%
2000	2,029,154	1.9%	977,215	8.2%	275,368	8.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Pickens County

In 2000, 1,017 units were renter occupied and 7,354 were owner occupied. The most significant indicator in Table 3-6 is the ever-improving home ownership rate for Pickens County, which indicates more than four homeowners for every one renter. This ratio is considerably higher than the State average, which is two homeowners to every one renter.

Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock

The home ownership to renter ratio in Jasper has remained relatively stable over time and is somewhat less than the State average. Again, the city is the most likely location for multi-family rental housing due to the availability of sewer services. Nelson and Talking Rock are communities with stable populations with high ownership rates where few rental units are available.

Cost of Housing

Pickens County

According to the Census, the median value of housing in Pickens County was \$113,100 in 2000 (see Table 3-10). The value of owner-occupied housing ranged from below \$50,000 to greater than \$113,000. By comparison, the median housing price for the State of Georgia in 2000 was \$111,200. Between 1980 and 2000, the median value reported at the state level increased 157 percent while in Pickens County it increased 388 percent. This increase is largely attributed to the significant amount of new, more expensive homes constructed in the county in the past decade (see Table 3-10).

Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock

Of the three cities, the median value of housing in 2000 was the highest in Nelson at \$122,500, which is 110 % of the State figure for the same time period; and increased 592 percent between 1980 and 2000. This rapid rise in housing value is also due to the significant amount of new more expensive housing, which occurred in the past decade. Conversely, the median value in Jasper (\$104,600) and Talking Rock (\$58,000) is lower than the State, due to little new home development in the past decade.

**Table 3-10
Owner Median Value, 1980 – 2000**

	1980	1990	2000	% Change from 1980-2000
Pickens County	\$25,800	\$59,500	\$113,100	338%
Jasper	\$32,700	\$64,700	\$104,600	220%
Nelson	\$17,711	\$28,600	\$122,500	592%
Talking Rock	\$17,421	\$26,700	\$58,000	233%
Georgia	\$43,284	\$71,300	\$111,200	157%

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

Table 3-11 identifies the median value of rent (shown in current dollars) throughout Pickens County and compares these figures with the State. The monthly median rent was \$470 and compares favorably to an average of \$613 for the State; however median rent increased 200 percent since 1990, compared to a 178 percent increase in median rent for the State. Median rent in Jasper is slightly lower at \$432 and increased 100 percent over the last decade. Median rent in Nelson increased an astonishing 294 percent to \$700. This may be attributed to the city's closer proximity to employment opportunities in Cherokee County. As reported by the Census, median rent in Talking Rock in 2000 was \$1,125. This may be unreliable data, since there were only two rental units in the city and the highest valued housing unit in the city is less than \$150,000.

**Table 3-11
Median Contract Rent, 1980 - 2000**

	1980	1990	2000
Pickens County	137	234	470
Jasper	122	216	432
Nelson	108	238	700
Talking Rock	NA	NA	1,125
Georgia	162	344	613

NA-data not available.

Affordability

Cost Burdened or Severely Cost Burdened

The Census defines “cost burdened” as paying more than 30 percent of income for housing and “severely cost burdened” as paying more than 50 percent of income for housing. Analyzing the incidents of cost burdening in a community helps to identify the need for affordable housing and other supportive programs for low-income households. Census data shows that owner occupied households in the county paid slightly higher percentages of their income for housing than the average State household in 1999 (Table 3-12). The Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock paid slightly lower than the State of Georgia and Pickens County for owner occupied units. The trend in rental housing shows costs lower than the State of Georgia by a small percentage for Pickens County and the City of Jasper. Talking Rock did not have any cost burden housing in the 30 percent range, but had 2 within the 30-49 percent range. The City of Nelson was above the county and State average for cost burdened housing in 1999 for renter occupied units.

Severely cost burdened housing was slightly lower in Pickens compared to the State of Georgia average. Only the City of Jasper was higher than the State of Georgia with 10 percent of the residents severely costs burdened for owner occupied units. For renter occupied units, Pickens County and the City of Jasper exceeded the State of Georgia average on 11 percent. Only the City of Nelson and Talking Rock were below the State average.

**Table 3-12
Number and Percent of Units Cost Burdened, 1999**

	Pickens County	Jasper	Nelson	Talking Rock	Georgia
Owner Occupied Units					
<30% of income for housing	3,877 79%	335 76%	139 78%	12 100%	1,247,460 78%
30-49% of income for housing	698 14%	58 13%	35 20%	0 0%	215,402 13%
>50% of income for housing	298 6%	45 10%	4 2%	0 0%	119,479 7%
Not Computed	28 1%	5 1%	0 0%	0 0%	14,067 1%
Renter Occupied Units					
<30% of income for rent	796 54%	241 53%	16 64%	0 0%	539,813 56%
30-49% of income for rent	274 18%	105 23%	0 0%	2 50%	182,562 19%

>50% of income for rent	237 16%	88 20%	2 8%	0 0%	103,568 11%
Not Computed	180 12%	17 4%	7 28%	2 50%	83,149 9%

3-5 Special Housing Needs

In 1996, a number of agencies within Pickens County collaborated to establish the Pickens County Family Connection Program. Jointly supported by the Health Department, Department of Family and Children Services, the Pickens County Pregnancy Center, Board of Education, North Georgia Community Action Agency, and others, the Program has adopted the following goals and objectives for fiscal year 2007:

Goal 1: All Pickens County children will live in stable and nurturing families.

Benchmark Objective(s):

- Increase the % of mothers whose first birth occurs at age 20 or older from 75.9% in 2002 to 80.0% in 2007
- Decrease the rate of confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect from 22.2 in 2002 to 18.0 in 2007
- Decrease the % of repeat births to girls age 19 and under from 21.3% in 2002 to 10.0% in 2007
- Increase the % of first-time mothers who complete high school or receive a GED from 75.9% in 2002 to 80.0% in 2007

Strategy 1.1: Promote parenting skills through health and education programs.

Goal 2: All Pickens County residents will earn a high school diploma or a GED

Benchmark Objective(s):

- Reduce the % of students absent 15 or more days from 18.0% in 2002 to 5.0% in 2007
- Increase the number of Pickens County residents earning a GED from 90 in 2003 to 110 in 2007
- Increase the % of students graduating from high school on time from 64.8% in 2002 to 72.7% in 2007
- (This is based on the 9th grade class of 1998 and the Graduating Class of 2002.)
- Decrease the dropout rate on State DOE Report Card from 8.1% in 2002 to 5.1% in 2007

Strategy 2.1: Promote positive youth development and or provide caring and supportive role models.

Strategy 2.2: Support access to GED and other literacy programs.

Elderly

The North Georgia Community Action, Inc., aids elderly persons within the county and cities through several programs to include:

Emergency Food and Shelter: The Community Developers help people with the costs of food and shelter when they have economic emergencies not related to disasters.

Home Energy Assistance: The program provides financial assistance to people or families with low incomes to help with the cost of home heating during the winter.

Weatherization: The Agency helps low-income and elderly families reduce the high cost of home-heating fuels by providing attic insulation, caulking, glass replacement, and other repairs to help make homes more energy efficient.

The Housing Authority of Jasper, located at 147 Landrum Circle in Jasper, Georgia provides convention public housing to low-income families, the elderly and disabled. The Housing Authority currently has 152 housing units that people can rent. Rent is based on 30 percent of their income with a waiting list from 6 months to 1 year for the next available units.

Impacts from a Growing Elderly Population

According to a MSNBC report on aging, “a baby boomer turns 50 every 7.6 seconds, and by mid-century, elderly will outnumber young people for the first time in history.” By 2030, the Pickens County elderly population is projected to be 25 percent of the total population, which would equate to around 18,750 persons over the age of 65.

The current dilemma in the nation and in Georgia and in the county is that Americans are living longer. This creates repercussions with new demands and problems. On one end, Americans are living a healthy, wealthy and independent life. On the other end of the spectrum is the isolated and infirm senior, dependent on private and public resources for survival. As this population grows, the elderly population will call for continued innovations in areas such as areas traditionally associated with aging, such as health care and supportive services. Policy changes will have to be made in the county and cities to take advantage of the changing demographic for economic and community that will benefit all. These include new programs for the elderly to meet the future demands of this growing population.

Homeless: According to the 2005 Pickens County Family Connection Evaluation Report, “Figures are not available on the homeless rate in Pickens County. Generally, most people do not even believe that it is an issue. However, the Community Emergency Shelter continues to serve CHILDREN (40 during 2004-2005) and adult parents. Approximately 21 percent of Pickens County residents pay housing costs that place them in the category of “unaffordable housing”. One can only speculate the loss in “positive youth development” for those children whose families are incapable of caring for them and indeed, find themselves in a local emergency shelter.” More efforts should be made to address this issue in the county and city areas.

The North Georgia Community Action, Inc., also aids the homeless and can help homeless individuals and families move off the streets, out of shelters or institutions, or out of temporary living accommodations into more permanent housing.

Domestic Violence: The Pickens County Family Connection also has programs and activities to deal with domestic violence in Pickens County. Through the North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network (Pickens Outreach), they have assisted 5,025 individuals that were victims of domestic violence. This program is funded by a Georgia Department of Human Resources Grant (\$248,814), through federal revenues (\$34,000) and from local funding (\$192,975).

Migrant Farm Workers: The only program within Pickens County is through the United States Agricultural Departments 523 "Self Help Program" that provides very low, to low income families with low interest loans. What makes this program unique is that the potential owner of the home also has to provide building assistance when building other peoples home that have a loan through this program. Simply put, self-help participants reduce the cost of their homes through the "sweat equity" of their labor. The local office in Pickens County does not administer the program, but can put the applicant in contact with the State of Georgia representative in Atlanta, Georgia.

Persons with Mental, Physical, or Developmental Disabilities: The Georgia Department of Human Resources, [Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases](#) provides individuals with mental, physical or developmental disabilities with housing in either an apartment or home with supervision by a human resource representative. There are local offices that assist individuals with these issues. Individuals can contact the Region I Georgia Crisis Center at the following numbers:
For 24 Hour Emergency Assistance

For emergency mental health, developmental disability or addictive disease services, contact:

Georgia Crisis & Access Line
Phone: 1-800-715-4225

For non-emergency mental health and addictive diseases services, contact:
Region 1
Phone: 1-800-646-7721

For non-emergency developmental disability services, contact:

Region 1
Toll Free: 1-877-217-4462

Persons with HIV: The North Georgia Health District "Living Bridge Center" helps patients that have contracted HIV/AIDS to find housing within Pickens County. The housing needs are targeted for patients that either have no insurance or limited insurance coverage. The district office that serves Pickens County is located in Dalton, Georgia at 100 West Walnut Avenue, Suite 92, Dalton, Georgia.

Recovering Substance Abusers: The Georgia Department of Human Resources, [Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases](#) provide

assistance to individuals with substance abuse, but do not provide housing assistance through this program.

Assessment of Housing Needs

Based on the information provided, there are special housing needs that should be addressed in Pickens County. As the county and cities grow, so will the needs for public housing for individuals that cannot take care of their special housing needs. The elderly population in Pickens County will increase dramatically over the next ten years and so will the need for housing for this aging retiree population.

There is also the need for housing programs for recovering substance abusers and persons with HIV. Nationwide 65 percent of people living with HIV cite stable housing as their greatest need next to health care. HUD reports that throughout many communities, persons living with HIV risk losing their housing due to compounding factors, such as increased medical costs or limited ability to keep work due to illness. Estimates indicate that one-third to one-half of people with HIV in the nation are either homeless or in imminent danger of losing their homes.

The lack of affordable housing for people living with HIV and their families is an ongoing concern. Stable housing promotes improved health status, sobriety or decreased use of nonprescription drugs, and a return for some to productive work and social activities. Stable housing is the cornerstone of HIV treatment. Recent studies confirm that people living with HIV must have stable housing to access comprehensive healthcare and adhere to complex HIV drug therapies. Even though stable housing has been shown to be a necessary link to medical and supportive services, accessing housing is difficult as the wait for affordable housing increases.

Affordable housing, such as public housing, subsidized housing or Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers keep waiting lists of applicants. However many housing authorities have closed their waiting lists because of the huge number of people on the lists. If the list is open, the applicant is put on a waiting list until their name gets to the top of the list, which may take years. Compounding the problem of waiting lists is access to housing with the services to care and treat the increasing number of persons living not only with HIV but also with histories of homelessness, mental illness, and substance abuse.

HIV and Homelessness

Studies indicate that the prevalence of HIV among homeless people is between 3-20 percent, with some subgroups having much higher burdens of disease. HIV infection exacerbated by homelessness deserves special attention for the following reasons:

- High morbidity and mortality
- Barriers to care
- Challenges to adherence

Substance Abuse Housing

There are many programs throughout the United States that help persons recovering from substance abuse and studies have shown that these programs offer a safe, structured environment that incorporates a program to help residents recover and regain

necessary life skills. These programs do not currently exist in Pickens County, but should be implemented and funded to assist residents that are in the county and cities that are facing this problematic issue.

According to U.S. Department of Health, programs that provide funding through non-profit agencies statewide help in the development of new or existing transitional services that support enriched housing units to support recovery sustainability for a high-risk, severely impaired chronic alcoholic population and let them get back on their feet. The beneficiaries of these services are often people who have failed to sustain recovery following prior treatment episodes for two reasons: the long-term, severe nature of their chemical dependency, and the lack of access to safe, sober housing with available support services designed to help them transition successfully from treatment to independent living. An estimated 65 percent of these people have special needs or co-occurring mental illness, fetal alcohol effects, traumatic brain injuries, or other disorders that complicate their ability to make this transition without the necessary support.

Support includes assistance with employment, education, and basic independent living skills. There is a significant gap statewide in the continuum of care for recovering alcoholics/addicts in the form of transitional services-enriched housing. This lack undermines the gains made in chemical dependency treatment programs by some of the most high-risk chronic alcoholics who need longer periods of time to recover and to practice skills learned at a more intensive level of service delivery. More transitional services-enriched housing is needed to increase positive outcomes and to maximize the likelihood of positive outcomes for the most severely impaired alcoholics.

3-6 Jobs-Housing Balance

Jobs-housing balance is a measure of the harmony between employment and dwelling units in a specific area. The commonly used metric of this balance is the jobs-housing ratio, which is simply the number of jobs in a community divided by the number of housing units in that community. A low jobs-housing ratio indicates a housing-rich “bedroom community”, while a high jobs-housing ratio indicates an employment center (see Table 3-13).

In a “balanced” community most residents could work relatively close to home, at least in theory. Even though many residents would still commute out of the area by choice or necessity, research indicates that in areas where jobs and housing are in balance, people on average do in fact commute shorter distances and spend less time in their cars, reducing in transportation-related environmental impacts and an improved quality of life.

**Table 3-13
Jobs-Housing Balance for Pickens County, 1980 - 2000**

Category	1980	1990	2000
Population	11,652	14,432	22,983
Average Household Size	2.78	2.65	2.54
Number of Households	4,161	5,386	8,960
Labor Force	NA	7,376	11,542
Employed	NA	7,003	11,275
Employment/Population Ratio	NA	1: 0.48	1: 0.49

Employment/Housing Ratio	NA	1: 1.68	1: 1.25
Employment/Labor Force	NA	1: 0.94	1: 0.97

Source: U.S. Census, 2007.

An ideal community would provide housing for its labor force near their jobs that give the workers transportation choices (e.g. walking, biking, driving, public transit, etc.). Bedroom communities often develop without such balance and require the labor force to use major arterials to reach their jobs resulting in congestion and other quality of life challenges. Governments can use two jobs-housing balance ratios to monitor their community's ability to achieve a balance of jobs and housing: employment (jobs)/housing unit ratio and employment/labor force ratio. According to the Jobs-Housing Balance Community Choices Quality Growth Toolkit prepared by the Atlanta Regional Commission, an employment (jobs) to housing ratio of between 1.3 and 1.7 implies an ideal balance with 1.5 as the standard target. An employment (jobs) to labor force (employed residents) ratio of between 0.8 and 1.25 implies a balance for that ratio with 1:1 as the standard target. Table 3-13 shows the employment to housing ratio and employment to labor force ratio for Pickens County. The 2000 housing ratio of 1:1.25 falls below the standard target range of 1.3 to 1.7. The labor force ratio of 1: 0.97 also falls within the acceptable range of 0.8 to 1.25. . As the county gains more retirement age individuals, this number is anticipated to change dramatically over the next few years.

4.0 NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

Introduction

Minimum planning standards require that all local governments inventory natural resources within their communities, and consider how these may be most effectively utilized, developed, and preserved for the greatest public benefit. In addition, an environmental assessment is required pursuant to all applicable state and federal environmental regulations.

Goals

This chapter is intended to accomplish these requirements and to form a basis for an appropriate land use strategy for Pickens County. All elements in this section abide by the ***Environmental Planning Criteria*** through adoption of locally enforceable ordinances.

4-1 General Description of Pickens County Climate, Topography and Geology

Climate

Pickens County has a pleasant, temperate climate created by its proximity to the Appalachian Mountains, which moderates warm air movements from the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Oceans. Because of these factors and the general elevations in the county, fall and spring are long and mild with temperature ranges between 55 and 80 degrees. Winter temperatures rarely drop below freezing for more than a few days at a time, and temperatures in the hottest part of the summer rarely exceed 98 degrees. The average annual temperature in the county is 58.5 degrees, with approximately 200 frost-free days annually. Precipitation ranges from 48 to 54 inches per year, and is generally heavier in the northern portions of the county than in the south, with winter being the wettest season.

Topography

Pickens County has an area of 241 miles and is twenty-three (23) miles at its greatest distance, west to east, and thirteen and one-half (13-½) miles at its greatest distance from north to south. Pickens County lies within three major physiographic and geologic provinces, the Ridge and Valley Area, the Blue Ridge Mountain Area, and the Piedmont Area. The Blue Ridge Mountain Area constitutes all of the high uplands in the eastern region of the county, and includes the City of Jasper, with elevations ranging from 1,000 to 3,200. This province is characterized by rugged, steep terrain, with small rough-surfaced plateaus, narrow winding valleys, and mountain streams. Map 4-1 shows the physiographic provinces in the county.

The Ridge and Valley Area constitutes the western half of Pickens County, and is characterized by more rounded mountains, with gentle to steep terrain, and wide valleys. Due to poor drainage properties, this type of terrain is more subject to occasional and brief flooding. The Piedmont Area includes the extreme southeast portion of Pickens County, and extends southward into Cherokee County, is typified by uplands up to 1,200 feet in elevation with gently rolling terrain.

Geology

The geology of Pickens County is principally metamorphic, consisting of shale, schists, quartzite, gneiss, and phyllites, plus several other rock formations. Significant mineral deposits in Pickens County include kyanite, granite, feldspar, mica, and marble. Between the communities of Nelson and Tate is considered to be the largest marble vein in the world, which runs a distance of four miles, is one-half mile deep, and three-eighths of a mile wide.

4-2 Environmental Planning Criteria

This section indicates the areas that are covered and required by the Environmental Planning Criteria as they relate to water supply watersheds, groundwater, wetlands, protected rivers and protected mountains.

Hydrologically related resources, such as watersheds, wetlands and aquifer recharge areas are protected by various state and federal regulations including the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* and the *Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972* (FWPCA). State legislation enacted to amend the minimum local planning standards under the Georgia Planning Act includes the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria, which are administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. These rules address development constraints and protective measures for wetlands, aquifer recharge areas and public water supply watersheds under. In addition, the *Mountain and River Protection Act* as passed by the General Assembly in 1991, established minimum planning standards for mountains and river corridors in Georgia.

The following resources in Pickens County have been assessed for ecological significance pursuant to the minimum local planning standards mentioned above.

1. Water Supply Watersheds

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) defines water supply watersheds as the areas of land upstream of governmentally owned public drinking water intakes or water supply reservoirs. In a typical situation, the volume of water in a stream is determined by the amount of precipitation and moisture absorption capacity and speed of absorption of water into surrounding soils. Land cover, slope, soil type and the intensity and duration of rainfall all affect the rate of water absorption, or infiltration. The water that is not absorbed by the soil runs off the land as overflow, or surface runoff. Water released through soil adds to the overflow to form total runoff. As runoff flows into lower elevations, it organizes into drainage basins, the boundaries of which form watersheds. The runoff from a watershed accumulates in streams, which serve to move water out of the watershed to lower elevations. There is one public water supply watershed of less than 100 square miles in Pickens County, which is located upstream from the water intake on Cove Creek, at Cove Road (Map 4-2).

Resource Vulnerability:

Land development within the water supply watersheds may affect the quantity and quality of raw water, which flows into reservoirs or public water intakes. The potential

problems in water supply watersheds include point sources and non-point sources of pollution, or problems caused by increases in impervious surfaces such as buildings, roads, and parking lots. Point sources of pollution include municipal sewage discharges, industrial wastewater, septic tanks, accidental spills of hazardous material, and leachates from landfills or chemical waste dumps. Non-point pollution consists of contaminants which are generated over large areas such as runoff from cropland, managed forests, paved surfaces, construction activities, motor vehicles, or runoff following spills of hazardous materials. Increased development increases loading of non-point pollutants into the streams. Removing vegetation from stream channels and paving over the soil increases the volume and rate of surface runoff, which, in turn, increases the potential for erosion, flooding, and sedimentation (pollution) of the stream.

Required Protection Measures:

To protect drinking water supplies downstream, DNR has established buffer requirements and impervious surface limitations to be applied to watersheds. Watersheds above a public water intake that is greater than 100 square miles in size are exempt from these requirements (See Table 4-1 below).

**Table 4-1
Watershed Protection Criteria**

Watershed Size Sq. Mi.	Reservoir (Y/N)	Reservoir Buffer (Feet)	Perennial Stream Buffer (feet)		Perennial Stream Setback (feet)		Watershed Impervious Surface Density
			W/in 7mi. Radius	Outside Radius	W/in 7mi. Radius	Outside Radius	
>100'	No	None	None	None	None	None	None
>100'	Yes	150'	100'	None	150'	None	None
<100'	No	None	100'	50'	150'	75'	25% or less
<100'	Yes	150'	100'	50'	150'	75'	25% or less

Source: Based upon Georgia Environmental Legislative Acts.

Adequacy of Existing Regulations:

The cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock and the county have all adopted local Soil Erosion and Sediment Control ordinances, which are adequately enforced and provide water quality protection. In addition, both the City of Jasper and Pickens County, which contain water supply watershed areas adopted the State required Water Supply Watershed Protection regulations in January, 2001 and have established an effective administration and enforcement system to assure that the local water supply watershed is adequately protected.

2. Ground Water Recharge Areas

Ground water is contained in underground geologic formations called aquifers. Water in aquifers is released to the surface through wells and springs or by seepage into lakes, streams, and wetlands. Some lakes, streams, and wetlands depend upon ground water springs or seepage for supplemental water during drought periods. Aquifers store ground water used for public and private drinking water supply and irrigation. The metamorphic geology throughout Pickens County creates deep crystalline aquifers, providing an important water supply for rural areas.

Aquifer recharge is the process by which precipitation infiltrates soil and rock to add to the volume of water stored in pores and other openings within them. While recharge takes place throughout practically all of Georgia's land area, the rate or amount of recharge reaching underground aquifers varies from place to place depending on geological conditions.

As defined and mapped by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Georgia Geologic Survey, there is one probable significant recharge area in Pickens County, southwest of Jasper, near Sharp Mountain. (See Map 4-2.) It should be pointed out that mapping of these areas by the Geologic Survey was done at a 1:500,000 scale, meaning that only the largest recharge areas could be included. In Pickens County, these are relatively flat areas of thick soils that from a development point of view may also be favored sites for commercial or industrial development, as well as citing for landfills. It is the State's intent that these are areas where groundwater protection efforts should be directed.

Required Protection Measures:

To maintain "Qualified Local Government" status, local governments must adopt, implement and enforce ordinances for recharge areas at least as stringent as those of DNR, however they are free to exceed these standards. Ground water quality is particularly important in Pickens County because much of the county is still dependent on well water for domestic use. Centralized sewer systems currently cover only a small fraction of the county's land area, leaving many aquifer recharge areas vulnerable to infiltration from septic tank drainage fields.

Adequacy of Existing Regulations:

Pickens County adopted the State's minimum protection regulations for groundwater recharge areas in January 2001 and has established an effective administrative and enforcement program to assure adequate protection.

3. Wetlands

Federal law defines freshwater wetlands as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for

life in saturated soil conditions." Generally, wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Under natural conditions, wetlands help to maintain and enhance water quality by filtering out sediments and associated non-point source pollutants from adjacent land uses. They also store water, thereby stabilizing dry weather stream flows and flood hazards. In addition, wetlands serve important functions as fish, wildlife, and plant habitats.

To avoid long-term impairment, uses of wetlands should be limited to timber production and harvesting, wildlife, and fisheries management, wastewater treatment, recreation, natural water treatment or purification and other uses permitted under *Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act*.

In an effort to protect and manage the nation's fresh water wetlands, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has adopted the Section 404 program of the Clean Water Act. EPA and USACE share the primary responsibility for enforcement. Subsequently, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources adopted the Section 404 program standards into their "**Part V**" environmental standards.

DNR has recently made satellite photography of wetlands and forestland available to the public. These maps are not accurate at the site level, but do provide valuable up-to-date information, which could be used to alert building inspectors and other local enforcement personnel when development appears to be occurring in violation of 404 permitting regulations. (See Map 4-2)

Adequacy of Existing Regulations:

Pickens County and cities of Jasper and Talking Rock contain wetlands within their jurisdictions and have adopted the State's minimum protection regulations for wetland areas in 2001 and established an effective administrative and enforcement program to assure adequate protection. The City of Nelson does not contain wetlands within its jurisdiction.

6. Protected Rivers

At present there are no protected rivers in Pickens County.

7. Protected Mountains

See Steep Slope Areas/Protected Mountains in Section 4-3, which covers this element in the Comprehensive Plan update.

4-3 Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

This section identifies other sensitive areas located within Pickens County, which includes any public water supply sources, steep slopes, floodplains, soils, plant and animals, or any other sensitive areas that are of significance in the community.

Public Water Supply Sources

Public water services are provided by multiple organizations in the county, which include purchasing water from the City of Calhoun and Cherokee County Water & Sewerage Authority. Specific service areas for each provider are indicated on Map 4-3. The Pickens County Water and Sewer Authority currently serves the rural areas of the county. The City of Jasper purchase water from the Cherokee County Water and Sewerage Authority on an as needed basis. The remaining water supplies come from a number of City of Jasper owned mines located throughout the county. The City of Jasper has had an ongoing Long-Range Water Plan since 1987 and has hired a consultant to research and analyze the possibility of constructing a reservoir on Long Swamp Creek meet future water demands in the City of Jasper.

The Cherokee Water Authority supplies water for the City of Nelson and the Water Authority handles all aspects of service including billing.

The City of Jasper also maintains its own water treatment and distribution facilities. The city draws its water from an intake located on Cove Creek. Water supplies during low flow periods are augmented by pumping water from a nearby underground abandoned marble mine.

Steep Slopes/Protected Mountain Areas

Steep slopes generally have more shallow soil coverings, which are more vulnerable to erosion and vegetative loss. The minimum environmental criteria outlined in the State's Minimum Planning Standards requires that local governments identify mountain slopes with a percentage slope of twenty-five percent (25 percent) or greater for at least 500 feet horizontally, and with an elevation of 2,200 feet or greater. Only a small area within the eastern area of the county meets the steep slope criteria (see Map 4-4) although there is a large amount of land with a twenty-five percent or greater slope. The soil associations of Pickens County, which are predominant in the steep sloping areas, include Ashe-Edneyville-Tusquittee, Tallapoosa-Madison-Hayesville, and DeKalb soil associations. These eastern mountain ranges fit the requirement for being protected mountain areas.

Historically, development within Pickens County has occurred with little regard for erosion control on steep slopes. Unfortunately, steep mountain slopes generally offer scenic vistas, and thus are often the most desirous sites for home building. Soil destabilization due to the grading of building sites has a detrimental impact upon vegetation and the water quality of small streams and lakes. Responsible grading practices should be addressed through education of the public about the issue and in creation of land development regulations.

Floodplains

Flooding is the temporary covering of soil with water from overflowing streams and by runoff from adjacent slopes. Water standing for short periods after rainfalls is not considered flooding, nor is water in swamps. Flooding is rated in terms which describe

the frequency and duration of floods and the time of year when flooding is most likely to occur. In compliance with the other requirements under the *National Flood Insurance Program* (NFIP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified and mapped areas, which are prone to flooding. The 100-year flood level is the national standard on which the floodplain management and insurance requirements of the NFIP are based. The affected areas in Pickens County are identified on Map 4-5.

Floodplains in their natural or relatively undisturbed state are important water resource areas. They serve three major purposes: natural water storage and conveyance, water quality maintenance, and ground water recharge. Unsuitable development can destroy their value. For example, any materials in the floodplain eliminate essential water storage capacity, causing water elevation to rise and resulting in the flooding of previously dry land.

Soils

The soils of north Georgia, including Pickens County, are closely related to the physiographic and geologic formations of the area, which are the Red-Yellow Podzolic group, described as moderately deep to shallow soils on sloping uplands, with adequate to poor draining properties. According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), there are eight major soil associations in Pickens County, which are described as follows:

**Table 4-2
Soils in Pickens County**

Soil Type	Soil Description
Talladega-Tallapoosa	Chiefly steep and very steep, shallow, channery and cobbly soils that have a yellowish-red, loamy subsoil; on hills and low mountains.
Ashe-Edneyville-Tusquittee	Mainly steep, stony soils than have a yellow-brown to dark yellowish-brown, loamy subsoil; on mountain edge tops, in coves, and at base slopes.
Tallapoosa-Madison-Hayesville	Chiefly steep to very steep, cobbly soils that have a yellowish-red to red, loamy and clayey subsoil; on upland hillsides.
Chewacla-Cartecay-Toccoa	Somewhat poorly well-drained soils on low bottomland.
Wickham-Masada-Hiwassee	Well-drained soils that have a yellowish-brown to dusky red, loamy and clayey subsoil; on terraces and benches.
Hayesville-Madison	Well-drained soils that have a yellowish-red clayey and loamy subsoil; on narrow ridge tops or uplands.
DeKalb	Chiefly steep, stony and flaggy soils that have yellowish-brown and reddish-brown loamy subsoil.

Source: Natural Resource Conservation Service, 2007.

Various properties of soils are important in determining how land can be used safely and economically; slope conditions affect lot size and density of development, and in some instances, may prevent certain types of development due to unavailability of sewer and

other public services. Soil erosion is particularly problematic in certain areas of Pickens County, which offer a combination of both shallow soils and steep terrain. Knowledge of these conditions is helpful in the preparation of land use plans, zoning, and subdivision standards.

Table 4-3, indicates their relative suitability for select land uses, based upon a variety of site characteristics, such as erosion control, drainage, percolation, etc. Soil suitability is subdivided into the three classifications listed below.

Slight: Soil associations included in this classification can be expected to impose only slight limitations on particular uses. Difficulties or hazards in construction or maintenance due to soil conditions can readily or economically overcome.

Moderate: Soil associations included in this classification can be expected to impose moderate limitations on particular uses. Difficulties or hazards in construction or maintenance due to soil conditions can be corrected only with minor economic expenditure.

Severe: Soil associations included in this classification can be expected to impose several limitations on particular uses. Difficulties or hazards in construction or maintenance due to soil conditions will often be too costly to overcome, as well as impractical.

**Table 4-3
Suitability of Soil Associations for Land Uses in Pickens County**

Soil Associations	Residential-Sewer	Residential-Septic	Light Industry	Agriculture
Talladega-Tallapoosa (13)	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
Ashe-Edneyville-Tusquitee (16)	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
Tallapoosa-Madison-Hayesville (17)	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
Chewacla-Cartecay-Toccoa (18)	Severe	Severe	Severe	Moderate
Wickham-Masada-Hiwassee (19)	Slight	Slight	Moderate	Slight
Hayesville-Madison (20)	Slight	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
DeKalb (23)	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
Hayesville-Madison (30)	Severe	Moderate	Severe	Moderate

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

Common Plants and Animals in Pickens County

Georgia encompasses parts of five distinct physiographic provinces: the Appalachian Plateau, the Valley and Ridge, the Blue Ridge, the Piedmont, and the Coastal Plain. Pickens County lies solely within the Piedmont province, which provides habitat for animal species listed in this section. Common plant species that exists within Pickens

County include pine trees, mostly loblolly (*Pinus taeda*), while yellow poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) make up 20 percent of the forest trees and are large, exceeding 50 centimeters in diameter. White oak (*Quercus alba*), northern red oak (*Q. rubra*), black oak (*Q. velutina*), and post oak (*Q. stellata*) are important on mesic sites, together with several species of hickories (*Carya glabra*, *C. tomentosa*, and *C. cordiformis*).

Common mammalian species in Pickens County include rabbits, squirrels, deer, raccoon, opossum, muskrat, beaver, mink, fox, bat and an occasional bear. Small game species can adapt more easily to habitat encroachment than larger animals such as deer. Deer range in a variety of habitats, even heavily urbanized areas, but specific habitat is required for escapes, fawning areas and winter food supply. Doves, quail and waterfowl are the primary game birds in the area. Other birds include hawks, owls, crows, and a wide variety of songbirds.

Most lakes and streams in Pickens County contain largemouth bass, sunfish and catfish. Pickens County contains several trout streams designated under the *Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act* as *Trout Stream Protection Areas*.

4-4 Significant Natural Resources of Pickens County

This section describes specific significant resources within Pickens County that are believed to warrant consideration during the planning process.

Significant Geological Areas

Prominent natural features in the county identified by DNR and the NGRDC include Mount Oglethorpe, which has the highest elevation in the county, 3,280 feet and Cove Mountain Cave. A series of scenic waterfalls exist on Pendley and Clear Creeks, flowing from the Appalachian highlands. Many other natural areas exist upon private lands throughout the county and are unmapped.

Significant Wildlife in Pickens County

Trout streams are designated as either seasonal or year-round streams as indicated in Map 4-6. A year-round stream indicates a year round habitat capable of supporting reproduction and a seasonal stream, an intermittent habitat. Trout streams in the North Georgia Appalachian Uplands are considered especially vulnerable due to the effects of soil erosion and pollutant discharge from forestry and agricultural practices. Table 4-4 list the seasonal and year-round trout streams in Pickens County.

**Table 4-4
Trout Streams in Pickens County**

Seasonal Trout Streams
Amicalola Creek watershed upstream from Dawson County Road 192
Cove Creek watershed upstream from Pickens County Road 294
Fisher Creek watershed
Pin Hook Creek watershed
Year-Round Trout Streams
Ball Creek watershed
Bluff Creek watershed

Cartecay River watershed
Darnell Creek watershed
Hobson Creek watershed
Little Scarecorn Creek watershed
Long Swamp Creek watershed upstream from Cove Creek
Mud Creek watershed
Rock Creek watershed
Salacoa Creek watershed
Scarecorn Creek watershed upstream from Georgia Highway 53
Sevenmile Creek watershed
Sharp Mountain Creek watershed
Soap Creek watershed
Talking Rock Creek watershed upstream from S1011 (Georgia Highway 136)
Town Creek watershed
Wildcat Creek watershed

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, 2007.

Significant Rare Plant(s) and Animals in Pickens County

DNR's Freshwater and Wildlife Inventory Program, pursuant to the "*Wildlife Preservation Act*" and "*Endangered Species Act*" of 1973, identified the listing of plants and animals in this section for Pickens County. Protected species means those species of plant and animal life, which the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has designated and made subject to the protection of these acts. Accordingly, the degree of protected status is based upon the following criteria:

1. Endangered species - means any resident species, which is in danger of extinction throughout all of a significant portion of its range, or one, which is, designated as un-endangered under the provisions the federal *Endangered Species Act of 1973*.
2. Threatened species - means any resident species, which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range or one that is designated as threatened under the provisions of the federal *Endangered Species Act of 1973*.
3. Rare species - means any resident species, which, although, not presently endangered or threatened as previously defined, should be protected because of its scarcity.
4. Unusual species - means any resident species, which exhibits special or unique features and because of these features deserves special consideration in its continued survival in the State.

DNR maintains a listing of plants and animals, which are under current state protection or potential protection, based upon an evaluation of all environmental risk factors. The following species, identified in Table 4-5 have all been classified as "rare in occurrence" under the state inventory program, although some may not presently be in a protective status. DNR has developed recovery plans for two species (Cherokee darter and the Etowah darter).

**Table 4-5
Listed Species in Pickens County**

Species	Latin Name	Federal Status	State Status
Bird			
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T	E
Fish			
Amber darter	<i>Percinia antesella</i>	E	E
Blue Shiner	<i>Cyprinella caerulea</i>	T	E
Cherokee darter	<i>Etheostoma scotti</i>	T	T
Etowah darter	<i>Etheostoma etowahae</i>	E	E
Goldline darter	<i>Percinia aurolineata</i>	T	T
Plant			
Piedmont barren strawberry	<i>Waldsteinia lobata</i>	No federal status	T

T-Threatened, E-Endangered

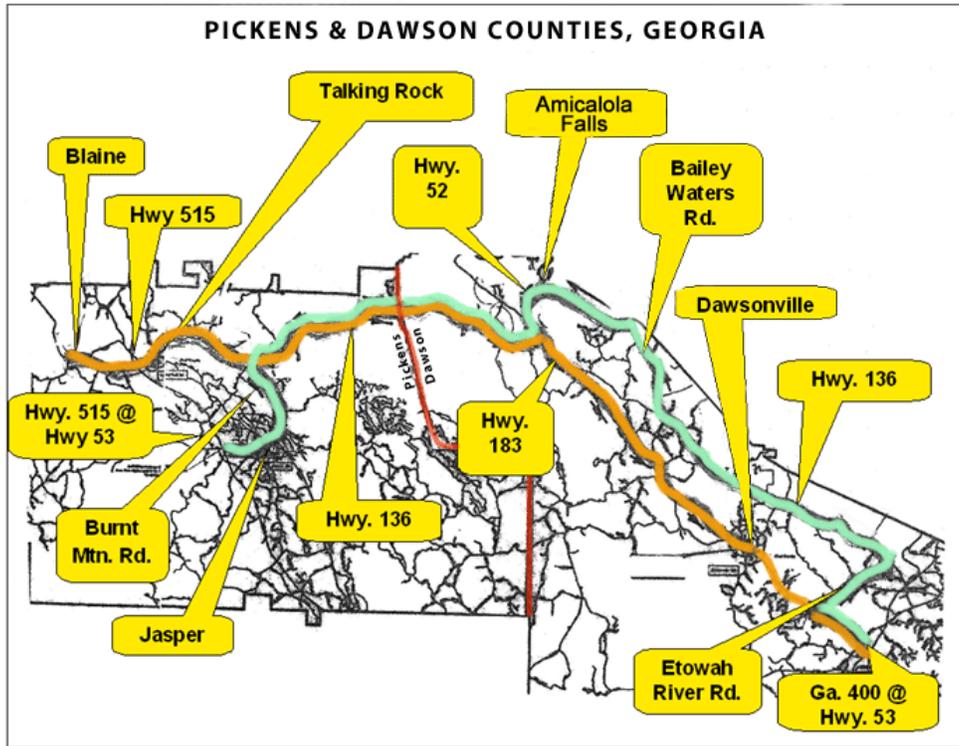
Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007.

Significant Scenic Areas

The Georgia Department of Transportation is proposing to develop the Appalachian Scenic Byway that runs through Pickens and Dawson County. The DOT defines a scenic byway as “any designated highway, street, road, or route that features certain intrinsic qualities that should be protected or enhanced.” The Georgia Scenic Byways Program seeks to identify, preserve, promote and protect treasured corridors throughout the State. A scenic byway preserves the natural beauty, protects the culture, and helps manage growth and tourism along the designated route. A Scenic Byway protects the scenic, historic, natural, cultural, archeological, and recreational qualities of a community. The Amicalola Scenic Byway provides a corridor of roads that showcase the history, scenic views, and nature of Dawson and Pickens Counties (see Figure 4-1). This new byway is one of twelve byways selected by GDOT.

In Pickens County, the byway starts in west Pickens County around Blaine and heads east along SR 515 and passes through Talking Rock. The other route originates in Jasper along SR 53 and Burnt Mountain Road and also heads east along SR 136 before entering into Dawson County.

Figure 4-1, Amicalola Scenic Byway



Significant/Prime Farmland

Prime farmland, which indicates areas with soil types that are most suitable and productive for agricultural purposes, was interpreted and mapped by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1978, now referred to as the NRCS, for Pickens County. According to the 1978 data, there were 21,298 acres of prime farmland. As of 2007 data provided by the Georgia Farm Bureau, prime farmland has been reduced to 17,372 acres, which is more than an 18 percent reduction in prime farmland.

As a land use, farming contributes to the county economically as well as preserving its traditional rural appearance, although, farming within environmentally sensitive areas can produce chemical pollutants with more negative impacts on water quality than other types of development. Consequently, as rural development occurs, land use policies and controls should promote the continuance of farming where environmentally appropriate and compatible with future land use goals. Due to regional development in North Georgia, the value of agricultural land will become increasingly inflated with respect to residential development demand, resulting in a continual loss of agricultural property and open space.

Some rural areas in the county experiencing increased development have devised land use regulation systems to protect productive farmland. The difficulty with any new land regulation system, however, is achieving a proper balance between private property rights and public benefits. Common preservation techniques include open space zoning, enabling farmers to cluster development on marginal productive uplands, or dedication of conservation easements, restricting land to agricultural activities. Another and more controversial technique, is establishing transfer development rights (TDR's), which

separate development density rights from the agricultural property. TDR's are permits of entitlement for development and may be utilized by the owner to develop other property holdings or sold to a buyer. This allows a farmer a reasonable economic return on land, in accordance with true market value, while maintaining the benefits that working farms provide.

Pickens County and cities of Jasper and Nelson are participating in the Georgia Community Greenspace Program and are proposing to set aside 53 percent of all agricultural lands as permanently preserved greenspace. Implementation of these goals will do a great deal to protect and preserve a dwindling resource in the county.

Significant Forest Resources

Commercial forestry is a major industry in the State of Georgia and represents an important economic asset in Pickens County. According to the Georgia Forestry Commission, approximately 121,341 acres of the total land area of Pickens County in 2007 was forested. Of that total, approximately 100 percent was in private hands.

Significant Water Resources

The water resources of Pickens County are indicated on Map 4-6. There is little surface water in Pickens County, which can be classified as a major resource. The majority of water bodies are manmade reservoirs and the predominant streams are minor tributaries, with flow rates of less than 400 cubic feet per second. Consequently, groundwater supplies a large percentage of the drinking water for the county. The exception to this is the City of Jasper, which maintains a water intake on Cove Creek. Water is also supplied by Cherokee County to the south.

Surface water quality is affected by sedimentation and other pollution caused by development, agricultural activities and forestry. Long Swamp Creek from SR 53 to the Etowah River is in violation of water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria. Additionally, Talking Rock Creek from Highway 136 west to the Gilmer/Pickens County line is in violation of fecal coliform bacteria. Pickens County will need to develop a water quality management program to address the pollution levels in this stream. Pickens County will need to develop a water quality management program to address the pollution levels in this stream.

4-5 Significant Cultural Resources

In this section, historic and archaeological resources (i.e., Cultural Resources) are identified that evidence the county's history and provide it with many of its distinctive qualities. Many of these offer opportunities for new and/or continued uses while other may provide economic development opportunities—most typically in the form of tourism. In more general terms, these historic buildings and sites evidence the county's past as a largely rural community. Map 4-7 shows the significant cultural resources in the county. Some of these areas listed on the map have not been described based on the limited amount of information that exists for these sites and would need to be investigated in further details.

Residential resources are found scattered all over the county with clusters in towns such as Talking Rock, Jasper, Nelson, and Tate, and in cross-roads communities such as Blaine, Marble Hill, Hinton, and Ludville, as well as resort communities like Tate Mountain Estates. Historic commercial buildings are found in similar community locations and are represented by stores, service stations, and similar structures. Institutional sites, such as churches and schools, tend to be clustered around population centers. Historic industrial resources are grouped in the Long Swamp Creek area including Tate, Marble Hill, and Nelson. Rural resources consisting of agriculturally related structures and sites are scattered throughout the county, largely in the fertile valleys and gentle slopes of the western sections of the county.

Preliminary research indicates that resources in Pickens County can be roughly classified in seven general time periods: pre-1816, 1816 - 1838, 1838 - 1860, 1860 - 1882, 1882 - 1930, 1930 - 1945, and 1945 – 1953 (see Table 4-6).

**Table 4-6
Cultural Timeline in Pickens County**

Timeframe	Information
Pre-1816	Indian territory (mainly Cherokee) - Resources from this period are archaeological in nature.
1816 - 1838	Federal Road Era - Most resources from this period are archaeological. Other resources include sections of the Federal Road.
1838 - 1860	Early Settlement - A number of resources have been identified from this period including residences, outbuildings, and churches. Most of these resources are found in the northwestern portion on the county, particularly along the path of the Federal Road. They are vernacular and of frame and log construction.
1860 - 1882	Civil War & Reconstruction - Very few resources from this period are found, and no significant sites associated with the Civil War are known.
1882 – 1930	Railroad Era -Many historic resources date from this period including residences, commercial buildings, churches, and public buildings (e.g. depots and schools). Historic properties in Jasper, Tate, and Nelson date principally from this period. Vernacular rural resources from this time are found throughout the county. Resources associated with a 1920's mountain resort development are found in the northeast on Brunt Mountain. Resources associated with the marble industry concentrated in the Long Swamp Creek area are also numerous and significant.
1930 - 1945	Depression Era and World War II- The most significant of these resources are public buildings.
1945 - 1953	Post-war Era- Generally characterized by housing and commercial buildings.

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

With very few exceptions, the historic resources of Pickens County are vernacular in character and very few, most notably the Tate House, were designed by an architect. An interesting trait is the vernacular use of marble throughout the county, especially

notable in the Marble Valley area. Marble appears as a common building material for foundations, piers and chimneys, and curbing for wells. Generally, it appears to have been chosen simply as an available and cheap (often discarded) material. Marble is also frequently used as a symbol of community pride, and is a primary building material for numerous public buildings. It often provides accents on commercial, residential, and other structures.

Historic Resources in Jasper

Downtown Jasper is the site of significant historic resources, including the following, all on North and South Main Street:

The 1949 Pickens County Courthouse, a Stripped Classical, two-story, marble building, with elements of Moderne. Designed by architects Bothwell and Nash, the Courthouse was built with convict labor from marble donated by the Georgia Marble Company. A National Register application was submitted to the Historic Preservation Division in fall of 2007 and officially accepted by the State Historic Division in January 2008. The official nomination has been forwarded to the National Agency in Washington, D.C. for possible inclusion into the national register.

The 1906, National Register-listed, Old Pickens County Jail, a two story brick jail, with a rusticated marble ashlar facade. The upper story is distinguished by three bays separated by engaged turrets rising above a residential-style front porch supported by square columns of rusticated, marble ashlars. Romanesque Revival and Victorian Gothic elements are discernable. Lee Prather was the artisan responsible for the marble work.

Historic Resources in Pickens County Communities

Talking Rock

Ludville High School, a vernacular frame building, was built in 1877 in Ludville, in the west of Pickens County, where it served as the first school for advanced grades in the county. In 1882, the building was moved to the Town of Talking Rock, where it served as the Talking Rock Academy until 1933. In 1940, the schoolhouse was converted into a community center, and served as such until it was closed in 1975. Between 1998 and 2002, the building was restored as the Talking Rock Schoolhouse Teaching Museum.

Talking Rock Baptist Church

The first Baptist church and probably the first church of any denomination in what is now Pickens County was the one at Talking Rock. James Morrison deeded Land for this church soon after the Indians were removed in 1838. A log church house was built and the Baptists began to hold their services here in about 1839.

The Village of Tate (unincorporated) together with the Georgia Marble Company is a National Register Historic District. The District incorporates two properties individually listed earlier: the Neo-Classical Revival, pink marble Tate House (a.k.a. the Pink Palace), and the Tate Gymnasium. The District holds the mines and industrial buildings, and a collection of vernacular mill houses, along with the marble-faced Tate School, and other significant community structures. The Georgia Marble Company produced marble

and sculpted architectural elements for structures of national importance including 20 colossal Corinthian columns for the east facade of the U.S. Capitol Building. The Company was involved in projects such as the Lincoln Monument, the U.S. Supreme Court Building, the Federal Reserve Bank, the New York Stock Exchange Annex, the U.S. Patent Office, and many others.

The Old Pickens County Jail

See above.

The Cagle House

The 1872 Cagle House is significant as a rare example of an intact, frame I-house in the Highlands region of the State.

Archaeological Resources

Unlike historic structures that need attention and active preservation, archaeological resources are often best protected when left undisturbed. However, their extent can be gauged by a preliminary survey for archaeological resources by the Oglethorpe Power Corporation in 1989 as part of an environmental review analysis for a proposed hydroelectric project in the Rich Mountain/Scarecorn Creek area. The field survey discovered 46 archaeological sites, some with both historic and prehistoric components. They vary from small prehistoric lithic scatters to larger, revisited prehistoric campsites and historic house sites. The University of Georgia also maintains the Georgia Archaeological Site File that catalogues all discovered sites, and the type of information that they have or may provide. In order to preserve these resources, studies are made of the immediate impacted area for federally funded projects, such as in the case of highway construction or power plants. If significant resources are found, plans are made to minimize or avoid adverse effect. General areas may be targeted for their potential to yield archaeological resources for projects of local origin. Resources often cluster around geographic features like fertile valleys and waterways and around natural transportation routes like old roads or ridge trails. Such areas should be examined closely for archaeological potential and the site file should be consulted in the planning stages for most projects. In Pickens County, prime areas for archaeological resources are the Old Federal Road, watershed areas of Talking Rock, Salacoa, Long Swamp, and other creeks, and mountain ridges.

4-6 Habitat Preservation and Greenspace

This section indicates the habitat preservation efforts being conducted by the county and cities to further augment protection and preservation of natural areas within the county and cities.

Habitat Preservation in Pickens County

Up until the early 1990's the Georgia Department of Natural Resources administered the Coosawattee/Talking Rock Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which lies in Pickens, Gilmer, and Gordon Counties. Approximately 2,025 acres of the WMA (Talking Rock area) was in the northwest corner of Pickens County; however, the Georgia Department

of Natural Resources lost its leases on this property due to development pressures. Wildlife Management Areas provide an important habitat for breeding, hiding, and foraging for many of the regional animal species. However, because lease agreements are subject to cancellation, these reserves cannot be classified as a permanent protective wildlife habitat. Although there are substantial property tax reductions available to participating private and corporate landowners, the benefits are offset by the loss of other economic uses. Thus, the security of the habitat will be largely decided by the demand for commercial use or development.

Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper and Nelson have prepared a Greenspace Preservation Plan, which proposes to set aside approximately 29,917 acres as permanent greenspace. Implementation of these goals will substantially aid in habitat preservation efforts.

At present, 1,208 acres for Greenspace have been set aside to date. This includes 768 acres acquired by the county to protect the City of Jasper's Water System along Long Swamp Creek and Cove Creek, Burnt Mountain Estates has set aside 240 acres, Big Canoe has set aside 150 acres and there is a conservation subdivision in the county that has set aside 50 acres as part of the Conservation Subdivision ordinance that requires a 40 percent set aside for greenspace.

Greenspace Plan

Pickens County governments have chosen to participate in Georgia's Community Greenspace Program, which was created in 2000 by state statute. The intent of the program is to provide a flexible framework within which populous and rapidly growing cities and counties can develop a program of community greenspace preservation. The requirement is that if local governments want to participate and receive a share of \$30,000,000 for greenspace acquisition, they must prepare a plan to set aside 20 percent of their land area as connected and open greenspace.

Pickens County and the participating cities of Jasper and Nelson propose to set aside 20 percent of the total county land area or approximately 29,917 acres into permanent greenspace within the next 30 years. The primary types of lands that will be targeted for protection are 60 percent (6,000 acres) of 100-year flood plains, 50 percent (18,175 acres) of steep sloped mountain lands and ridges, 5 percent (2,000 acres) of lands designated as agricultural, and 18 percent (2,017 acres) of land designated as forestry. (See Future Land Use Map for a depiction of areas proposed for green space preservation.) At the current time the only land permanently preserved consists of 1,668.81 acres protected by the Mountain Conservation Trust and 56 acres of the Dawson WMA.

The preservation of these areas as greenspace will serve multiple purposes including:

- Ensure water quality protection for streams, lakes and wetlands through reduction of erosion;
- Protection of areas that serve as natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species;
- Scenic view protection;

- Protection of archaeological and historic resources;
- Protection of agricultural and forested lands; and,
- Providing opportunities for parks and other sites for outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors in a natural.

Pickens County and cities of Jasper and Nelson propose to implement the greenspace plan in a variety of ways. One, they intend to purchase the highest priority land areas such as the most significant mountain areas within the county's water supply watershed. Secondly, the local jurisdictions will rely on the use of conservation easements, which is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and another party that restricts the development of a tract of land. A local trust (Mountain Conservation Trust) has been established to receive and manage any such conservation easements. Third, the local jurisdictions will also enforce existing environmental regulations and create effective land use ordinances, policies, and regulations that will promote good development while protecting greenspace. On such measure will include the adoption of open space conservation design guidelines within local subdivision regulations, which will allow developers to set aside land dedicated to greenspace, while retaining permitted housing density through clustering arrangements.

5.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of existing community facilities and future needs for Pickens County and the cities in the areas of water supply and treatment, sewerage system and wastewater treatment, fire protection, public safety, parks and recreation, stormwater management and solid waste facilities. Proposed policies and implementation actions have been developed based upon the needs assessment. The following goals are germane to the broad topic of community facilities in general and are stated here rather than under each individual facility type. Map 5-1 indicates the Community Facilities in Pickens County.

Goals

Assure that all necessary and vital community facilities and services are provided in a timely, cost effective manner commensurate with the needs of a growing population and economic base of Pickens County and the incorporated cities. Achieve excellent coordination and cooperation between the cities, the county and State agencies in the planning and provision of needed facilities and services. Existing community facilities are continually maintained and improved in a manner to assure an excellent quality of life for existing and future residents.

5.1 Water Supply and Treatment

Water Supply and Treatment

Public water services are provided by multiple organizations in the county. Specific service areas for each provider are indicated on Map 5-2. The Pickens County Water and Sewer Authority currently serves the rural areas of the county and has 2,600 customers that are mostly residential users. It is estimated that approximately 6,500 persons are served based on a rate of 2.5 persons per household in 2005. The Pickens County Water and Sewer Authority also furnish Talking Rock resident's water.

Pickens County purchases water from various sources including a maximum purchase amount of water from the City of Calhoun at 1.5 MGD (million gallons per day) and from Cherokee County Water & Sewerage Authority. At present, Pickens County purchases 50 percent of its water needs from Cherokee County Water & Sewerage Authority (200,000 gallons per day). Pickens County has a permitted groundwater withdrawal limit to 350,000 gpd with an average monthly demand of 100,000 gpd. The remaining water supplies come from Palmer Springs located throughout the county that can produce up to 50,000 gallons. Water lines serving the western and north central parts of the county have been completed.

The Cherokee Water Authority supplies water for the City of Nelson and the Water Authority handles all aspects of service including billing.

The private communities of Bent Tree and Big Canoe furnish water to their residences through their own treatment facilities and distribution systems. Both rely on local lakes for the water source. Bent Tree serves approximately 1,080 customers (2,743 residents) with an expected eventual build out of approximately 1,600 customers (4,064 residents).

Total consumption is unknown, but their permitted capacity out of 460,000 from Chestnut Cover Creek and 460,000 from Lake Tamarack. Based on the type of community they have, the number of residents year-round fluctuates due to seasonal residents occupying the homes on-site. Big Canoe currently serves 2,500 residential customers (approximately 6,000 persons). Total consumption is has been averaging 500,000 gallons per day or 83 gallons per person per day.

The City of Jasper also maintains its own water treatment and distribution facilities. The city draws its water from an intake located on Long Swamp Creek. Water supplies during low flow periods are augmented by pumping water from a nearby underground abandoned marble mine that is estimated to hold 500 million gallons. Current water treatment and permitted capacity is 2 million gallons a day (mgd). 1.0 mgd comes from surface water and 1 million gallons come from a well. Current consumption is approximately 1.1 million gallons from 5,200 customers or 83 gallons per person per day. The system serves approximately 13,208 persons within its service area. Facility upgrades were completed in 1995 to meet the *Safe Water Drinking Act of 1993*. Capacity could be increased to 3.1 million gallons per day with the acquisition of the proper permits from the State of Georgia.

5.2 Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment

Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment

The City of Jasper has the only existing public sewage system and wastewater treatment facility within the county. The wastewater treatment plant was constructed in 1986. Capacity of the plant is 800,000 gallons per day and current use is an average of over 500,000 gallons per day from 1,350 customers. Sewage collection services are provided only within the city limits area.

The City of Jasper is currently permitted for 800,000 gallons per day; however, the city has plans for an expansion from this current withdrawal rate to 1.5 million gallons per day. The City of Jasper is currently completing an expansion of its sewer services within the city.

5.3 Other Facilities and Services

Other Facilities and Services

Fire Protection

Nine fire districts exist within Pickens County (Map 5-3), seven of these districts are public. The communities of Bent Tree and Big Canoe operate their own department separate from the county. Big Canoe and Bent Tree are career departments using security personnel cross-trained in firefighting. Only the City of Jasper employee fourteen paid firefighters and also has between eleven and thirteen volunteer firemen. Bethany Salem, Grandview, Hinton, Talking Rock, Tate, and Yellow Creek rely on volunteers for fire protection in the county. Most of the county with exception of the western part of the county near Hinton is within a five-mile radius of a station with at least a one-mile overlap with neighboring stations.

Each station listed above has a separate Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating that range from five to nine depending upon the availability of public water service. Total fire fighting vehicles serving these departments include twelve engines, seven tankers, two rescue vehicles, and one brush truck.

The Bent Tree and Big Canoe private communities operate their own volunteer departments within their respective communities utilizing one engine and one rescue vehicle for Bent Tree and one engine in Big Canoe.

The Cherokee County Fire and Emergency Services serve the City of Nelson.

The City of Jasper provides its own fire protection within its city limits and immediate surrounding areas. About a quarter of all Pickens County population and housing are within the City of Jasper Fire Department fire service area. The City of Jasper because of growth and other uncontrollable operating costs has increased its budget from \$150,000 to over \$700,000 in a matter of a few years for fire protection. The City of Jasper is in negotiations with Pickens County that may lead to restricting the fire service delivery area to the city limits or be compensated by the county for fire service protection outside of the corporate limits of Jasper. The City of Jasper intends to allow the county to contract with the city for fire service, as any city would contract with the county for public safety, such as the jail or sheriff's department. The department generally provides second response to other county departments. The City of Jasper Fire Department has an ISO class 5 rating. They currently have three (3) engines, of which two (2) are fully operational and one (1) is held in reserve. They also have one (1) pumper/tanker and one (1) rescue vehicle.

Analysis of Fire Protection Needs

Although Pickens County relies heavily on volunteer firefighters, the presence of full time firefighters at each station would allow for better control of day-to-day operations and maintenance.

Currently, all volunteer departments elect a part-time Fire Chief from among themselves to facilitate coordination among the many departments. As service demands grow due to continued population growth, a full time county Fire Chief should be appointed and financed by the county to facilitate a clear channel of command, to improve organizational structure and communications, and develop a consolidated long range plan to meet future needs.

The NGRDC recently completed a Fire Protection Services Plan and has determined that immediate needs for the county included needed funds of \$2,250,000 for fire service improvements, \$450,000 for 911 and \$4,500,000 for 2002 water improvements and other monies for EMS, sheriff and roads. These improvements are proposed to be funded by a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) levy. Just over half of the fire portion of the SPLOST was planned for tankers and pumpers. The pressing need for new equipment and rising steel prices moved this funding forward so that all departments currently have adequate pumpers and tankers for their current ISO ratings.

The Grandview 2 Fire Station was constructed with SPLOST funds. A second station was planned but the accelerated purchase on fire engines has delayed construction. At present, SPLOST collections are currently behind projections.

Based upon the study conducted in 2006, the county has estimated that it will need to purchase seven pumpers, seven tankers, eighteen engines and two ladder trucks between 2007 to 2025 will be needed in addition to existing equipment to maintain the current level of service. The total estimated cost (in present values) of this equipment is approximately \$8,300,000. In addition, existing stations will need to be expanded and new stations constructed to accommodate this equipment. The county is proposing that since these improvements will be required by new population growth, impact fees should pay for the improvements, and intends to develop a detailed capital improvements plan as a basis for such fees. The study indicated that based on the growth of the county would require the construction of ten new fire stations between 2007 and 2024 at a projected cost of \$300,000 per station.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Pickens County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services in the unincorporated areas, which is located in the county courthouse at 50 North Main Street. In addition, they have satellite offices in Tate, Bent Tree, East Foothills Shopping Center in Marble Hill, and a west precinct in Hinton, Georgia. The sheriffs department has 83 employees up from the original 46 total employees in 2003, or almost double in a four year time period. These include 56 sworn officers, a drug task force, criminal investigators, and the sheriff. They currently have 51 total vehicles at their disposal, including thirty-five uniform patrol cars and eight special purpose vehicles (command center etc.). Based on the number of officers, the level of service in the unincorporated areas is 1.97 per 1,000 residents.

The county jail facilities are also operated by the Sheriff's Department and are located at 2985 Camp Road. The jail has a capacity for 156 inmates. The county has been averaging 81 inmates in 2007, which is up by 11 inmates from the 2006 prisoners per day. The new facility was designed with a rated capacity of 156 beds (Phase I), with all support infrastructure (i.e., kitchen, laundry, medical, booking/intake, property storage, administrative office, etc.) and is planned to support up to 500 inmates in future housing pod additions when funds become available.

The Jasper Police Department consists of thirteen (13) full time officers and one (1) full and time clerk and one (1) assistant. They have a total of seven (7) patrol vehicles at their disposal and one Chevy Blazer that is utilized for bad weather conditions. The city contracts with Pickens County for use of the county jail.

The City of Nelson has a Police Chief, one (1) full time officer and six (6) part time officers to serve a population of 761 residents in 2005. They have three (3) vehicles for use in law enforcement. The City of Nelson will be adding more sworn full time officers

in the near future. They also contract with Pickens County for use of the county jail for holding prisoners.

The City of Talking Rock does not have a police department, but rather contracts with Pickens County for law enforcement services.

Map 5-4 shows the location of the county Jail, Fire Stations, EMS, Police Stations and the Sheriff's office.

Analysis of Law Enforcement Needs

Based upon national averages, the Sheriff's Department is currently understaffed and intends to increase sworn officer capacity to 1.30 per 1000 population. Municipal law enforcement personnel ratios appear to be adequate for current needs. The City of Jasper annexed considerable land adjacent to SR 515. As a result, the city is in the initial planning stages to establish a police precinct facility in that area to improve response times and traffic monitoring. Additionally, the Police Chief has requested to the city for one (1) additional officer to be hired.

Proposed Policies and Implementation Actions

Policy: Provide law enforcement services commensurate with the unique needs of the area.

Implementation:

1. Acquire additional radar traffic enforcement and vehicle surveillance equipment to existing police vehicles in the City of Jasper.
2. Provide additional police officer(s)
3. City of Jasper to construct a police precinct facility on State Route 515.
4. Provide additional law enforcement personnel and equipment in the Sheriff's Department as needed to meet law enforcement and court administrative demands.

Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical service is provided by Pickens County. There are four (4) stations with one located at the intersection of Camp Road and SR 515, one at the intersection of SR 53 and Canton Highway, and one at the intersection of SR 136 and SR 53 West and one located at Cove Road. The service maintains four (4) ambulances on call and two in reserve for a total of six (6) ambulances, and is staffed by twenty-six (26) full time and approximately twenty-seven (27) part time employees.

Analysis of Emergency Medical Service Needs

The county has recently determined that to meet growing population demands and improve response times throughout the county it needs to provide two new stations with ambulance equipment and staff. The county is in the planning stages and the exact location of these stations is unknown at this time. The estimated cost for the improvements is approximately \$1,240,000. This includes adding twelve new employees (6 per unit) and purchasing two (2) new ambulances. The county intends to pay for the expanded service with a Special Purpose Sales Tax levy. Once the new stations are constructed and equipped the county's long-range emergency medical service needs will be met except for replacing and adding equipment as demand increases.

Proposed Policies and Implementation Actions

Policy: Improve and maintain adequate emergency medical services and response times to all county residents.

Implementation:

1. The county to construct two new stations with ambulances.
2. Add ambulances, personnel and equipment as necessary to meet growing population demands.

911 Center

Pickens County has an Emergency 911 center located at 35 West Church Street. The center is responsible for all emergency calls pertaining to fire services, emergency medical services, and police services for the county and all the municipalities within the county. The center's equipment provides only basic 911 services, which consists of receiving calls and transferring information to the appropriate emergency service agency. The center staff consists of seventeen (17) full time and three (3) part time employees.

Assessment of 911 Center Needs

The current equipment has been upgraded. Based on an assessment of needs, the 911 center needs to add an additional two (2) full time employees in the next five years to accommodate the call center needs. The county would have to budget an additional \$50,000 to \$70,000 for adding new employees to the system.

Proposed Policies and Implementation Actions

Policy: Improve the delivery of emergency services in all areas of the county and the incorporated cities.

Implementation:

1. Acquire and budget funds to hire two (2) full time call center employees.

Parks and Recreation

County Park Facilities

Pickens County has two community parks (Roper Park and Lee Newton Park). Roper Park is the only park directly operated by the Pickens County Recreation Department. Lee Newton Park is run as a collaborative effort between Pickens County, the City of Jasper, and the Chamber of Commerce, but is not considered park of the recreation system Pickens. At twelve acres, Lee Newton Park is smaller in acres than a typical community park, but its function as festival ground for countywide events makes it more of a community park than a neighborhood park.

Roper Park is built on a narrow site of a former airport. The park is currently using twenty-eight acres, through the county has purchased an additional thirteen acres adjacent to the existing park. According to the *Pickens County Parks and Recreation Master Plan* done in February 2006, the additional park land is also a narrow strip of land at a different grade and may prove difficult to use.” Only two of the eight ball fields are lighted and none have irrigation systems. Roper has a playground, outdoor swimming pool, picnic areas, administrative offices, concession and restrooms for visitors to the park. The only public swimming pool in the county is located at this park, which has become a maintenance issue for the county. Lee Newton Park serves mainly as an event ground hosting the Marble Festival and other gatherings, though its fields, trail, and picnic area are conducive to passive recreational uses. Lee Newton Park is approximately twelve acres in size.

An eight member Pickens County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board guide recreation planning and policy development. Day-to-day management, administration and maintenance are handled by the Pickens County Parks and Recreation Department, which has a small full-time staff including a director.

City Park Facilities

The City of Jasper maintains two park facilities. Lee Newton Memorial Park is located on SR 53 across from Jasper Middle School and is jointly owned by the city and county. The city maintains all of the park grounds, including the gazebo, covered pavilion and the restrooms, which were built in 2006. The Chamber of Commerce maintains the community building as it is part of their office space. The city does provide recreation, as it has the only community recreation youth football program, cheerleading program and traveling baseball program in Pickens County. The other recreation programs that the city offers are the fishing programs at the Cove; which are separate events for children, elderly and handicapped individuals.

These facilities are connected to the middle school by a pedestrian tunnel under SR 53. Jasper also maintains a park on the corner of Burnt Mountain Road and Pioneer Road, adjacent to the Appalachian Technical College. The park has two lighted tennis courts, two lighted baseball fields, a fishing lake, picnic area, two restroom facilities, a paved

walking path around the perimeter of the park and a concession stand. There are no city sponsored recreation activities; however, the city maintains a schedule for park use.

The City of Nelson owns and operates a seven-acre park, which contains an unlit ball field, playground, a multi-purpose court and walking trail.

The City of Talking Rock owns a 1-acre park, which contains a picnic area and a small playground.

5.3 Other Facilities and Services

Other Facilities and Services

Other recreation facilities in county are privately owned and include Bent Tree and Big Canoe Resorts each with their own amenities like golf courses, fishing lakes, hiking trails, and tennis courts. Two private organizations, the Baptist Assembly and the Salvation Army, also own camp facilities (Camp Grandview) in the northeastern part of the county.

Analysis of Recreation Needs

A common tool to assess long-range needs is to determine the current level of services for various recreation facilities per 1000 population and apply this level of service to future population growth. Table 5-1 shows the existing level of service for each recreation facility in the county.

**Table 5-1
Current Inventory and Level of Service for Existing Recreation Facilities**

Facility Type	Pickens County	Jasper	Talking Rock	Nelson	Totals	Level of Service Per 1000 pop
Park Land (acres)	43.1	30.6	1	7	81.7	2.87
Tennis Courts		2			2	0.07
Ball fields (lighted)	2	2			4	0.14
Ball fields (unlighted)	6			1	7	0.246
Picnic Shelters	1				1	0.035
Restrooms	1	2			3	0.105
Concession Stands	1	1			2	0.07
Playground	1		1	1	3	0.105
Swimming Pool (sq. ft.)	3,500				3,500	123

Note: Based on 2005 population of 28,442. Source, NGRDC, 2007.

According to the February 2006 *Pickens County Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, acreage level of service and park deficiencies were assessed based on National Recreation Parks Association (NRPA). Based on this assessment the NRPA recommend that ten acres of core parkland be available for every 1,000-community members. Based on the level of service needs for the county and the current population, the county would need a level of service of 1.84 acres per 1,000 rather than ten acres per 1,000. To meet the NRPA guideline, Pickens County would need to provide 287 acres of active parkland for its current residents. Based on population projections, and assuming no new parkland was developed, by 2025 this parkland deficit could climb to 595 acres.

Population projections show the county's population 50 percent greater in 10 years, and more than doubled in 20 years. Predictably, its recreation needs will have grown equally. Based on the February 2006 *Pickens County Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, by 2025 and a predicted population in excess of 65,000 residents and as high as 75,000 residents in 2030, by 2025 and using the NRPA guidelines its shows that Pickens County will need a large number of recreational improvements in the county. Table 5-2 indicates the predicted improvement and park editions for the county to reach a level of service by 2025.

**Table 5-2
Future Recreation Facility Needs Based Upon Current Levels of Service**

	2025
Parkland Acres	287
Gymnasiums	3
Swimming Pools	3
Baseball Fields	26
Soccer Fields	16
Walking Trails	15 Miles
Community Center	30,000 square-feet

Source: February 2006 *Pickens County Parks and Recreation Master*.

The Master Plan also has several recommendations. These include updating and improvements to existing parks and also recommend a new large-scale park to address the deficiencies in both park acreage and facilities in the county. Having a large-scale park (100 – 200 acres) with a wide range of recreation options would be the best option. The Master Plan recommends the following recommendations for Pickens County in the future:

- 200-acre park
- 40-50 percent greenspace
- 30,000 square-feet community center with indoor basketball courts, activity rooms, and park offices
- 24,000 square-feet indoor aquatic center

- 25,000 square-foot performing arts center with adjacent amphitheater
- 15,000 square-foot maintenance complex
- Walking Trail
- Baseball complex with 8 lighted fields, in two wheels with restroom and concession
- Soccer complex with 4 lighted fields, bleachers, and restroom/concession building
- 1-lighted football field with bleachers
- Tennis complex with 8 lighted tennis courts
- 2-acre skate park
- 3 picnic areas with shelters
- 4 playgrounds for both toddlers and older children. 1 playground designated for special-needs
- Adequate parking (at least 1,700 spaces)

Based upon this analysis, the cost to provide the facilities needed by the year 2025 is approximately between 24.55 million and 25.5 million with 2 to 5 million for land acquisition (based on 2006 day costs). These numbers are subject to change due to the availability of enough land in the county and these prices will rise with inflation. The county is proposing that since these improvements will be required by new population growth, impact fees should pay for the improvements and intends to develop a detailed capital improvements plan as a basis for such fees.

Although there are three private country clubs/golf courses in Pickens County, there are no public golf courses in the area, and the City of Jasper has plans to determine the feasibility and appropriate location for such a facility. The city anticipates that development of such a golf course would probably be a public/private sector venture.

Proposed Policies and Implementation Actions

POLICY: Provide recreation facilities and programs that meet both active and passive recreational needs of the residents of Pickens County and the incorporated cities.

Implementation:

1. Acquire land to address the acreage deficiencies in the county (approximately 234 acres).
2. Update facility deficiencies (see below).
3. Add new facilities as indicated.
4. County preparation of a Capital Improvements Plan and Budget for recreation facilities needed in the future, and implement through Impact Fees as the primary financing mechanism.

5. Take full advantage of the existing Burt Mountain areas for passive recreation (enhancing trails and building new trails).
6. Construct new large-scale park that would replace Roper Park as the main park in the county.
7. Overhaul Roper Park fields and add a multi-purpose field.
8. Improvements to the sports facility at Jasper City Park (fields, irrigation, restrooms, seating and access).
9. Improve Lee Newton Park by enhancing performance area.
10. Improvements to city Parks (general maintenance).
11. Continue to use School fields with moderate use until new parks are online.
12. Utilize State Greenspace funds, State and Federal grants, and other sources for continued acquisition of land to be conserved as open space and passive recreation areas.

City of Jasper Recreation Upgrades - Proposed

The City of Jasper is in the preliminary planning and design stages of a natatorium that will also include civic center facilities and gymnasiums on property currently owned by the city. The surrounding area will be made up of walking trails and greenspace. This was not included on the SPLOST referendum proposed by the county in 2008; however, the City of Jasper is hopeful that it will be funded partially by SPLOST proceeds on a future referendum.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is governed in Pickens County under the provisions of their development codes (Chapter 38). This includes all unincorporated areas within the county. The cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock have provisions in their ordinances that address stormwater management in regards to any land disturbing activities.

Solid Waste Management Facilities

No solid waste management facilities exist in Pickens County. Pickens County contracted out its sanitation needs in 2001 to Watkins Sanitation. Solid waste that is collected in the county and cities is transported to an out-of-county landfill in Cherokee county for disposal. Other solid waste is recycled such as metal and aluminum is sorted and transported to a recycling center in Cartersville, Georgia. Pickens County did operate a three-phase sanitary landfill in the county, but portions of this landfill were capped and closed in 1986, 1988 and 1993.

The City of Jasper provides solid waste collection to its citizens utilizing its own personnel and equipment. Waste Management provides a landfill facility in Cherokee County for the disposal of solid waste collected in the City of Jasper.

5.4 Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy (SDS)

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, "The Service Delivery Strategy gives local governments and authorities the opportunity to reach agreement on the delivery of services in an effective and cost-efficient manner to Georgia's citizens." The Service Delivery Strategy Agreements between Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock were signed into agreement on September 29, 1999 and adopted in 2001.

Both the City of Jasper and the County agree that these service delivery agreements need to be re-evaluated. Services under discussion include the delivery of water and fire protection.

Table 5-3 below indicates the various Service Delivery Strategies that exist in between the county and cities. Animal control is handled by Pickens County as indicated. Also, the City of Jasper and Pickens County aid in animal control by donating funds to a 501 (c) 3 organization entitled Pickens Animal Rescue to take care of lost or abandoned pets found in the cities and county areas. At present the City of Jasper donates \$1,500 annually and Pickens County generally donates between \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually to this organization.

**Table 5-3
Service Delivery Strategy to Incorporated and Unincorporated Pickens County**

Service Provided	Organization Providing the Service	Service Area	Funding Source*
911	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund Telephone Fee
Airport	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund User Fees
Ambulance Service/Emergency Medical	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund Service Fees
Animal Control	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Building Inspection	City of Jasper	Jasper	General Fund
Keep Pickens Beautiful	Pickens County, City of Jasper, City of Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock	General Fund
Cemetery	City of Jasper	Jasper	General Fund
Coroner	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
County Extension Service	Pickens County	All county and cities of Jasper and Nelson	General Fund University of Georgia
Courts (Traffic)	City of Jasper, City of Nelson, Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund Fines
Courts (Other)	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund Fines
Cultural Programs	City of Jasper	Jasper	General Fund
Economic Development	City of Jasper, Pickens County, City of Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock	General Fund
Elections	City of Jasper, City of Nelson, City of Talking Rock, Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Emergency Management	Pickens County, City of Jasper, City of Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock, Nelson	General Fund
Emergency Rescue	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper, Talking Rock, City of Nelson	All county and all cities	General Fund
Fire Protection	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper, Nelson, and Talking Rock	All county and cities	General Fund

Source: Pickens County, 2007. *Funding sources is from all general funds from county and cities General Funding Budget.

Table 5-3 (continued)

Service Delivery Strategy to Incorporated and Unincorporated Pickens County

Service Provided	Organization Providing the Service	Service Area	Funding Source*
Georgia Forestry	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund State of Georgia
Indigent Defense (Superior Court)	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Jail	Pickens County, City of Jasper	All county and cities	General Fund
Land Development	Pickens County, City of Jasper, City of Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock	General Fund User Fees
Law Enforcement	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	General Fund
Law Library	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Library	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper and Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock	General Fund
Parks & Recreation	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	General Fund
Planning Commission	Pickens County, City of Jasper, Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock	General Fund
Public Health Services	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Public Works	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	All county and cities	General Fund
Road Construction & Maintenance	Pickens County, Cities of Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	All county and cities	General Fund (LARP), SPLOST for Nelson in Cherokee portion of city.
Senior Center	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Sewerage Collection & Disposal	City of Jasper	Jasper	Water & Sewer Fund (User Fees)
Social Services	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund

Source: Pickens County, 2007. *Funding sources is from all general funds from county and cities General Funding Budget.

Table 5-3 (continued)

Service Delivery Strategy to Incorporated and Unincorporated Pickens County

Service Provided	Organization Providing the Service	Service Area	Funding Source*
Solid Waste Management & Recycling	Pickens County, City of Talking Rock, City of Nelson	Pickens, Nelson, Talking Rock	General Fund
Stormwater Management	City of Jasper	Jasper	General Fund
Street Lights	Cities of Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	Jasper, Nelson, Talking Rock	General Fund
Tax Assessor	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Tax Commissioner	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund Tag Fees
Tourism Services	Pickens County, City of Jasper, City of Talking Rock	Pickens, Jasper, Talking Rock	Pickens-Hotel/Motel Tax Jasper-Hotel/Motel Tax Talking Rock-General Fund, Festival Fund
Voter Registration	Pickens County	All county and cities	General Fund
Walking Path Lights	Pickens County, City of Jasper	Pickens, Jasper	General Fund
Water Supply & Distribution	City of Jasper, Pickens County	Jasper, Pickens	Jasper-Water Fund, Pickens-General Fund, Bonds, User Fees
Zoning	City of Jasper, City of Talking Rock	Jasper, Talking Rock	General Fund

Source: Pickens County, 2007. *Funding sources is from all general funds from county and cities General Funding Budget.

Based on the Service Delivery Strategies that have been listed, the only SDS that will have to be resolved is between the City of Jasper and Pickens County on the delivery and distribution of water services in unincorporated areas of the county. Negotiations are underway to resolve this issue.

Currently, actions are underway to update the Service Delivery Strategy for Pickens County and the cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock.

6.0 Intergovernmental Coordination

Introduction

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, “Intergovernmental Coordination element provides local governments an opportunity to inventory existing intergovernmental coordination mechanisms and processes with other local governments and governmental entities that can have profound impacts on the success of implementing the local government’s comprehensive plan. The purpose of this element is to assess the adequacy and suitability of existing coordination mechanisms to serve the current and future needs of the community and articulate goals and formulate a strategy for effective implementation of community policies and objectives that, in many cases, involve multiple governmental entities.”

Also included in this discussion will be the Pickens County Service Delivery Strategy, any joint planning and service agreements, special legislation), or joint meetings and/or work groups for the purposes of coordination.

Goals

The intergovernmental element provides an inventory of existing intergovernmental coordinating mechanisms and processes and the primary goal for this section is to assess the suitability of existing coordination mechanisms of existing and any future mechanisms that may need to be addressed.

6-1 Adjacent Local Governments

Within Pickens County there exists three adjacent local governments, which include the incorporated Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock, with the City of Jasper being the county seat. These local governments have been working with each other since the early 1990’s with the completion of the first Joint Comprehensive Plan in 1993.

Adjacent local governments outside Pickens County include Cherokee County to the south with the City of Canton as its county seat. To the east of Pickens lies Dawson County with the City of Dawsonville as its county seat. To the north lies Gilmer County with the City of Ellijay as its county seat. Lastly, to the west lies Gordon County with the City of Calhoun as its county seat. Table 6-1 indicates all of the local governments (Cities/Towns) adjacent to Pickens County.

**Table 6-1
Adjacent Local Governments**

County	County Seat	Other Cities/Towns in the County
Cherokee County	City of Canton	Waleska Ballground Keithsburg Buffington Freehome Hickory Flat Holly Springs Union Hill
Dawson County	City of Dawsonville	Juno Silver City
Gilmer County	City of Ellijay	Cherry Log Cartecay Whitestone East Ellijay
Gordon County	City of Calhoun	Fairmont Cash Ranger Redbud Sonoraville Sugar Valley Nicklesville Plainville Oakman

6-2 Pickens County Service Delivery Strategy (SDS)

In 1999, the Georgia State Legislature passed House Bill 489 (HB 489) that allows intergovernmental coordination between local municipalities. In that same year, Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock adopted a Service Delivery Strategy (SDS). The SDS documents the coordination and delivery of services in Pickens County and is being updated as part of the comprehensive plan update process for water service delivery for the county.

Specific SDS services provided in the county and cities is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this supporting documentation and Table 6-2 indicates the SDS's that are covered under these agreements between the county and cities:

Table 6-2
Service Delivery Strategy's Covered by Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock

911	Law Enforcement
Airport	Law Library
Ambulance Service/Emergency Medical	Library
Animal Control	Parks & Recreation
Building Inspection	Planning Commission
Keep Pickens Beautiful (CCC)	Public Health Services
Cemetery	Public Works
Coroner	Road Construction & Maintenance
County Extension Service	Senior Center
Courts (Traffic)	Sewerage Collection & Disposal
Courts (Other)	Social Services
Cultural Program	Solid Waste Management & Recycling
Economic Development	Stormwater Management
Elections	Street Lights
Emergency Management	Tax Assessor
Emergency Rescue	Tax Commissioner
Fire Protection	Tourism Services
Georgia Forestry	Voter Registration
Indigent Defense (Superior Court)	Walking Path Lights
Jail	Water Supply & Distribution
Land Development	Zoning

Source: Pickens County Government, 2007.

Work Groups for the Purposes of Coordination

There are several “wok groups” that that Pickens County coordinates with for the purposes of planning that include water, habitat conservation, independent special authorities, independent special boards, committees, commissions, councils, and SupraLocal programs. These “work groups” are listed below by category.

Water Resources

Northwest Georgia Regional Water Resources Partnership

Pickens County government as well as the City of Jasper participates in the Northwest Georgia Regional Water Resources Partnership (NGRWRP). This group consists of fifteen county working groups that consist of the following Counties and Regional Development Centers (RDC's) listed in Table 6-3.

Table 6-3
Northwest Georgia Regional Water Resources Partnership

Coosa Valley Regional Development Center				
Bartow	Catoosa	Chattaooga	Dade	Floyd
Gordon	Haralson	Paulding	Polk	Walker
North Georgia Regional Development Center				
Fannin	Gilmer	Murray	Pickens	Whitfield

Source: Northwest Georgia Regional Water Resources Partnership, 2007.

This group is not only limited to local governments and RDC's, but also includes water permit holders, industry, cities within this boundary, and environmental and advocacy groups in this fifteen county region. The purpose of the Partnership are to monitor and contribute to the development of federal, state and local water policy similar to that being development by the Metropolitan North Georgia Planning District within the Metropolitan Atlanta area as well as with the development of a State-wide Water Management Plan being developed by Georgia EPD. Other goals of the Partnership include educating the public on water related issues, seek funding and facilitation in the development of regional water related assessment and planning that has been underway by the Partnership since its inception. All these activities are coordinated with the activities of all federal, state and local entities. Currently the Partnership is underway to seek legislation to allow the Partnership to become a regional authority so that plans and policies that are developed can be funded and implemented.

As part of the goal of the Partnership, they seek to assess the current and future water quantity and quality needs of the region and has adopted an objective to complete a Comprehensive Water Management Plan for the fifteen county region.

Habitat Conservation

Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan

The Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) strives to enhance the Etowah watershed through protection of aquatic species and water resources, ensuring continued economic prosperity and quality of life for future generations.

The HCP planning process is overseen by a steering committee composed of representatives from each of the counties and municipalities within the watershed. The steering committee is assisted by a team of scientists, policy analysts and educators from the University of Georgia, Kennesaw State University and the Georgia Conservancy, funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At present, Pickens County and the City of Jasper assist in these efforts for aiding in the protection and preservation of these resources.

6-2 Independent Special Authorities

Jasper/Pickens County Land Bank Authority

The City of Jasper and Pickens County have an interlocal cooperation agreement for the purpose of establishing a land bank authority. The Authority has the right to acquire delinquent property and accept real property to do with at their choosing.

Pickens County Hospital Authority

The Pickens County Hospital Authority works in conjunction with the North Georgia Health District to service the needs of county and city residents.

Pickens County Water & Sewerage Authority

House Bill 978 established Pickens County Water & Sewer Authority in 1969. The Water & Sewerage Authority is considered a political subdivision of the State of Georgia and has all powers that come with this designation. The Authority consists of five members with one member serving as chairman and one member serving as vice-chairman. The board members meet regularly on report information back to Pickens County.

6.3 Independent Special Boards/Committees/Commissions/Councils

Pickens County Economic Development Council

The Pickens County Economic Development Council works in conjunction with the Pickens County Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Department of economic issues and trends that are occurring in the county and have developed strategies to draw businesses and employment to the county.

Pickens County Jail Advisory Committee Board

The Pickens County Sheriff's Department works in conjunction with the Pickens County Jail Advisory Committee Board on issues and improvements required or needed for jail operations within the county and cities. The Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock also assist in this process.

Pickens County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

The Pickens County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board works in conjunction with the cities and county on park and recreational needs and services in the county and cities.

Pickens County Planning Commission

The Pickens County Planning Commission works in conjunction with the Pickens County Planning and Development Department and also assists the Cities of Nelson and Talking Rock.

Pickens County Water System Advisory Board

The Pickens County Water System Advisory Board works in conjunction with the City of Jasper and the county Water Department on water supply needs and services in the county and cities.

City of Jasper Planning and Zoning Commission

The City of Jasper operates its own planning and zoning commission and oversees new developments that are planned within the corporate limits of the city.

6-4 School Boards

The Pickens County Board of Education is responsible for providing education services countywide. The School Board does not have a SDS with the county or cities.

6-5 Independent Development Authorities

Area Planning & Development Commission (NGRDC)

The North Georgia Regional Development Center assists Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock with all of their planning needs.

Pickens County Development Authority

Pickens County has a development authority that assist with development issues within the boundaries of Pickens County.

Joint Development Authority of Bartow County and Pickens County

The Authority consists of seven directors. Three directors are from Bartow County and are appointed by the Commissioner of Bartow County. Four directors are from Pickens County and are appointed by the Commissioner of Pickens County. The directors serve for terms of two and four years.

Downtown Development Authority of Jasper

The Downtown Development Authority of Jasper works with the City of Jasper in aiding in drawing in new economic developments within the downtown corporate limits of the city.

Industrial Development Authority of Jasper

The Industrial Development Authority of Jasper works with the City of Jasper in drawing in new industrial developments within the corporate limits of the city.

Jasper Development Authority

The Jasper Development Authority aids the City of Jasper in revitalizing and with new development in Jasper.

6-6 SupraLocal Programs

Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is a federal-state partnership that works with the people of Appalachia to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.

Air Quality Non-Attainment Areas

According to the Georgia Clean Air Campaign, Pickens County is within air quality attainment with “good” quality air. However, south of Pickens County lies Cherokee County that is listed as being a non-attainment area for ground level ozone. Bartow to the southwest is also listed as being a non-attainment area for ground level ozone. As Pickens County continues to grow and attract more vehicles, this trend may change over the next ten years.

Bike and Pedestrian Plan

In June of 2005, the North Georgia Regional Center was contracted by the Georgia Department of Transportation to assess the possibility to develop a bike and pedestrian plan to aid in the relief of congestion, conserve fuel, and to meet the needs of the transportation disadvantaged populations. The goals of this plan are to promote bicycling and pedestrian travel, provide a regional system in the county and promote a coordinated and continuous bicycle and pedestrian planning and development at the regional and local levels. This plan and program have been initiated and is still in progress.

Greenspace Programs

Pickens County and cities of Jasper and Nelson are participating in the Georgia Community Greenspace Program and are proposing to set aside 53 percent of all agricultural lands as permanently preserved greenspace. Implementation of these goals will do a great deal to protect and preserve a dwindling resource in the county. The county and City of Jasper work in tandem with a local trust called the Mountain Conservation Trust for the preservation of greenspace resources.

Water Protection Plans

Pickens County currently does not have a water protection plan for the county. The City of Jasper had a source water assessment (SWAP) conducted in 2002 as required by the Safe Drinking Water Act. The City of Jasper does not currently have a water protection plan; however the City of Jasper has conducted a vulnerability assessment and has an emergency response plan for the water system. To augment water needs in Jasper, Jasper withdraws water from a well. Under Georgia rules and regulations, the City of Jasper is required to have a wellhead protection plan, which Jasper has on file with Georgia EPD.

Regional Transportation Plans

The North Georgia RDC prepares and handles all regional transportation plans for the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county.

Mountain Protection Plan

Pickens County developed a Mountain Protection Plan and applies to any area in mountain is defined as all land area 2,200 feet or more above mean sea level, that has a percentage slope of 25 percent or greater for at least 500 feet horizontally, and shall include the crests, summits, and ridge tops which lie at elevations higher than any such area. This plan is part of Pickens County law (Chapter 26, Article IV).

Transit Development Plan

Pickens County developed a Transit Development Plan in 2007 at the request of the Georgia Department of Transportation for the purpose of assisting Pickens County is assessing its public transit needs and in the development of a plan of actions to address these needs.

Fire Protection Services Plan

The North Georgia Regional Development Center developed a Fire Protection Services Plan for Pickens County in 2006 for the purposes of assessing fire protection in the county and future needs to serve incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county.

Solid Waste Management Plan

Pickens County developed a solid waste management plan in 2002 as a comprehensive, cooperative and coordinated effort of all public and private entities in the county. This plan addresses waste, collect, waste reduction, disposal, future landfills, public education and involvement, and financing. At present, the March 13, 2002 Solid Waste Management Plan is required to be updated in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan and will be updated accordingly.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Pickens County developed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2006 to conduct a needs assessment for current and future recreational needs in the county and city areas. From this plan recommendations have been made for future parks and recreation facilities to develop a master plan and implementation strategies.

Strategic Plan for the Arts

The Appalachian Arts and Cultural Project working under a Capacity Building grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts (Georgia Government), has sent out surveys to over 1,200 residents in Pickens County to gather information on arts programming that would enhance the quality of life in Pickens County. Based on the survey results, citizens have indicated that there is significant support for the arts in Pickens County. Next steps include how to implement art program in the county.

7.0 Transportation and Land Use Connection Element

Introduction

Transportation planning is a process for identifying current and future transportation needs and developing solutions to meet those needs. Its purpose is to provide policy and program options and implementation strategies to elected officials and transportation partners so they can make transportation investment decisions which meet the community needs.

Goals

The ultimate goal is to maximize the benefits derived from the transportation system while reducing the associated negative aspects such as congestion and pollution. Ideally, transportation planning will result in a transportation system which accomplishes and supports economic vitality, increases safety, increases mobility, accessibility, and connectivity, protects the environment, improves quality of life and promotes efficient system management.

While vehicular and truck traffic is typically the primary focus of transportation planning, this transportation element also highlights other aspects in the transportation network including bicycle, pedestrian facilities, public transportation, parking, railroads, port facilities, airports, park & ride and vanpools and how transportation and land use are connected.

7.1 Road Network

Roads and Highways (State Routes)

Pickens County has an extensive system of roads as shown on Map 7-1. Major highways serving the county are State Routes (SR) 108, 136, 53, and 515. SR 53 serves as the principle east-west access, while SR 515, which is a divided four lane serves as the principal north-south route. A review of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) data indicates that in Pickens County there are 0.85 miles of Interstate System Roads, 73.29 miles of State Routes, 366.63 miles of county roads and 20.35 miles of City streets, which totals 461.12 miles of roads in the county and cities. Of that amount, only 76.6 percent of the roads are paved.

The county adds between 6 to 10 miles of new grade and pavement to existing roads every year and accepts approximately 15 miles of new roads through subdivision development. The county also requires a minimum street design standard, which are enforced by the county under adopted subdivision regulations. Subdivision developers are required to provide a 60-foot right of way, storm drainage facilities, and utilities to county standards. The developer maintains the roads for at least one year and sometimes longer by agreement before it is deeded to the county.

Each year the GDOT prepares a three-year *State Transportation Improvement Program* (STIP), 2008 - 2011, which identifies road improvements, public transit, bridge replacement and transportation enhancement projects to undertaken with Federal funds. Major projects proposed include:

- Realignment of SR 53 from County Road (CR) 271 (Carter Mountain Road) to CR 187 (Davis Road)
- Realignment of SR 1365 from SR 136 Connector to SR 515
- Work on Passing Lanes on SR 53 from east of CR 36 (Old Mil White Road) to east of Steve Tate Road
- Bridge Replacement on SR 136 over Talking Rock Creek north of SR 53
- Miscellaneous Improvements on SR 136 at two locations between CR 305 and CR 224 (Emergency Slope Repair)

There are over 50 projects slotted over the next 20 years that are dependent on funding. At present, these projects are either on hold or have been eliminated from the list.

A crash analysis was conducted as part of the safety examination for Pickens County roads (see Table 7-1). At present, there were 9 road segments that were above statewide averages.

**Table 7-1
Crash Rates in Pickens County, 2000 - 2002**

Routes	Crash Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles			Above State Average?
	2000	2001	2002	
Statewide Average Crash Rates				
Rural Principal Arterial	143	137	141	
Rural Major Collector	188	185	195	
Corridor				
SR 53 – rural principal arterial				
From Gordon County line to SR 136 Connector	251	255	196	*
From SR 136 Connector to SR 515	213	285	280	*
From SR 515 to SR 108	445	479	405	*
From SR 108 to Dawson County line	170	229	211	*
SR 108 – rural major collector				
From Cherokee County line to SR 515	207	195	303	*
From SR 515 to SR 53 east	247	316	173	*
SR 136 – rural major collector				
From Gilmer County line to SR 515	362	276	163	*
From SR 515 to Dawson County line				Yes, except for 2002
SR 136 Connector – rural major connector				
From SR 53 to SR 136				*
SR 515 – rural principal arterial				
From Cherokee County line to SR 53				No except for 2003

From SR 53 to Gilmer County line				No
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Source: GDOT, STIP.

Bridges

There are a total of 81 bridges in Pickens County. Of this amount, 3 bridges span over railway, 4 span over road, 56 span over water, 16 span over culverts, and 2 were classified as unknown (bridges that did not span over railway, road, or water, but were bridges). Some of these bridges were constructed as early as 1912 (Georgia Northeastern Rail Road) and as late as 2005.

According to the January 2005 *Pickens County Transportation Study*, one bridge in the county located at Chamber Street in Jasper over the Georgia Northeast Railroad to Woodbridge Inn is in poor condition and is recommended that it be replaced.

Connectivity

According to the January 2005 *Pickens County Transportation Study*, there are connectivity issues on many of the surface roads in the county. This included smoothing of bad curves, providing standard lane widths and improved shoulders, two lane road extensions, and widening to add turn lanes along sections of roadway.

According to the study, improved connectivity is needed in the county on all major roads (SR 53, SR 136, SR 515, and SR 108), especially in and around Jasper, because the roadway network currently sends all traffic including long-distance truck traffic through the center of town. There are also suggested interchange improvements that include:

- Construction of an interchange at the intersection of SR 53 and SR 515
- Construction of an interchange at the intersection of SR 108 and SR 515
- Construction of an interchange at the proposed westward extension of Camp Road and SR 515

It is also suggested to have intersection improvements made in the county due to a traffic analysis of “dangerous intersections”, especially at the following locations:

- SR 53 at SR 515
- SR 515 at Antioch Church Road
- SR 515 at Philadelphia Road
- North Main Street at Hood Road

Signalization Issues

There are signalizations issues that have been identified in the January 2005 *Pickens County Transportation Study* and are mainly dealing with railroad crossings. This includes new signal equipment replacement at two locations in Tate along SR 53 and within the city limits of Jasper along Main Street.

7.2 Alternate Modes

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

In 2005, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) contracted with the NGRDC to assess bicycle and pedestrian needs in the NGRDC Counties. In a study entitled *Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*, this study was done in order to determine if adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities would address traffic congestion, possibility of fuel conservation, and to meet the need of the transportation disadvantaged populations. The goals of the study including promoting and encouraging bicycling and pedestrian travel as a viable form of transportation as well as a healthy form of exercise and decreased impact on the environment. Additionally the study sought to provide a goal of having a regional system of bicycling and pedestrian facilities that would be convenient and accessible for all users.

To conduct this study a public advisory committee (PAC) was developed and public meetings were held in the region to gather input from the local citizenry. The end result was a plan adopted by the Georgia Department of Transportation that went into effect on June 23, 2005.

Based on this plan, multiple bicycle routes were developed throughout Pickens County. These routes have varying levels of difficulty (see Table 7-2). There are over 93 miles of bicycle routes within Pickens County with the majority being in the orange category with approximately 71.93 miles and red routes consisting of approximately 21.62 miles. The green routes are within park areas and are all under a mile. Map 7-2 shows the proposed bike routes in Pickens County.

Table 7-2
Pickens County Bicycle Route Levels of Difficulty

Route	Difficulty	Features
Green	Least	Generally has at least three of the following features: low traffic volumes, slower speed traffic, lane widths adequate to provide cyclist room to maneuver and terrain is relatively flat
Orange	Moderate	Generally have at least three of the following features: traffic volumes are moderate, moderate speed traffic, lane widths adequate to provide cyclist room to maneuver and terrain is moderately rolling.
Red	Most Difficult	Generally have at least three of the following features: heavy traffic volumes, high-speed traffic, and lane widths less than desired and steeper terrain.

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

These routes, although approved, do not yet contain the proposed improvements, such as additional lane width, dedicated bicycle lands. "Share the Road" signs have been installed in a few locations along the routes. The bicycle routes are listed in Table 7-3 with their proposed improvements.

**Table 7-3
Proposed Improvements for Pickens County Bicycle Routes**

Route	Location	Proposed Improvements
1	Pickens County line heading southeast and just west of Talking Rock.	Bike Route (Signs Only)
1	From Talking Rock heading east to SR 136	Wider shoulders or lanes
1	SR 136 at junction of Burnt Mountain Road heading east to county line.	Bike Routes (Signs Only)
1a	From SR 136 heading north on Jones Mountain Road to county line.	Wider shoulders or lanes
2	Starting on Nelson heading northeast along State Highway 5 going through the City of Jasper then connecting to North Main Street passing south of Talking Rock to the county line.	Wider shoulders or lanes
3	Starting on Tate Highway heading northeast on Cover Road and then turning north onto Grandview Road and ending on SR 136.	Wider shoulders or lanes
4	Starting in west Pickens County at the county line heading northeast and connecting to Hill City Road, this route then connects to Pleasant Hill Road NE going through Talking Rock and then connecting to Whitestone Road before exiting the county.	Wider shoulders or lanes
4a	The route begins at the intersection of Hill City Road and Henderson Mountain Road and heads south for approximately 4 miles before connecting to route 7a.	Bike Routes (Signs Only)
4b	This route starts at the intersection of Hill City Road and Jerusalem Road and goes the entire length of this road intersects with SR 53.	Wider shoulders or lanes
5	The route originates on the county line (eastern portion of the county) along Tate Highway and intersects with SR 53. The route ends at SR 53 and then begins again heading north along Tate Highway.	Wider shoulders or lanes
6	This route begins at the intersection of SR 108 and heads north along Main Street before ending in Jasper.	Wider shoulders or lanes
6a	This route begins at the intersection of Camp Road and heads east towards State Highway 5.	Wider shoulders or lanes
7	This route begins at the county line on SR 108 and turns east, northeast and ends at the intersection with State Highway 5.	Wider shoulders or lanes
7a	This route originated with route 4a and then changes to route 7a on Henderson Mountain Road and heads southeast before intersecting with route 7 at SR 108.	Wider shoulders or lanes

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

The NGRDC is working with local agencies and entities to assist with funding to help implement the strategies of the plan. This includes adding new wider shoulders for bicycles and sidewalks for pedestrians, which is discussed below.

Sidewalks

Most sidewalks are located in the City of Jasper and are in good condition. There are also sidewalks in Tate, which are in poor condition. The City of Nelson sidewalks are good and they plan on adding an addition 1.5 miles of new sidewalks that were funded by a *Transportation Equity Act* (TEA) grant. Also, based on Transportation Plan, crosswalk improvements should be made on all sidewalks. The recently prepared Transportation Plan also recommends a number of new sidewalk locations. This is also indicated within the *Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan* discussed above. Most of the sidewalks in Pickens County either have inadequate sidewalks or no sidewalks at all with disconnected segments throughout the county and city areas.

**Table 7-4
Proposed and Existing Sidewalks in Pickens County**

Existing	
Tate	Sidewalks exist on Rabbit Town Road, portions of New Town Road from Rabbit Town Road south to SR 53. Sidewalks also exist along SR 53 and North Railroad Street.
Nelson	Sidewalks exist on portions of Blue Ridge Street and a small section of Kennesaw Avenue.
Jasper	Only a few sidewalks exist in the City of Jasper and most are on the main streets.
Proposed	
Jasper	There are proposed sidewalk improvements in the city limits that would extend sidewalks on North Main Street and State Highway 5 and along Main Street, Camp Road, along SR 53 heading west out of Jasper.
Pickens County	Portions of Pickens County would have sidewalks along SR 53 outside the City of Jasper and along Main Street, State Highway 5 and along Gordon Road in the unincorporated portions of the county.

Source: NGRDC, 2007.

Public Transportation/Others Without Automobiles

Pickens County contracts with the North Georgia Community Action Agency to operate the county public transit system, d/b/a the Mountain Area Transportation System (M.A.T.S.). The M.A.T.S. program is funded by the Title 49 U.S. Code Section 5311 program, which is administered by Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

Three shuttle busses operate on a fixed-route/demand-response schedule Monday through Friday from 7:00 am until 4:30 pm, excluding holidays. The vehicles provide curb-to-curb and shared-ride service; individual fare service is provided with 24-hour advance notice. Prearranged charter service is available after regular operating hours and on weekends. Transportation service is provided to the general public, including social service agencies, the Senior Center, medical facilities, daycare centers, shopping areas, banks, work sites, social activities, educational facilities, etc. Charter, contract

service, and fare box services are available to destinations outside the county within insurance, route, and schedule constraints. The operating and administrative budget have declined from 2005 to 2006 with the 2006 operating budget at \$126,655 with total expenditures at \$119,326 for the same year. The total number of passenger trips has declined approximately 23 percent, from a high of 21,55 in 2004 to 16,427 in 2006. The only increase for number of trips increased for seniors and has declined for all other passenger categories. As indicated in the *Pickens County Transit Development Plan* (June 2007), “generally M.A.T.S. system is perceived as a service primarily intended for the elderly and handicapped residents in the county” and more marketing efforts should be conducted to dispel this perception.

7.3 Parking

Surface Parking Facilities in Need of Retrofitting or Redevelopment

There are two areas in Pickens County that have parking issues. The City of Jasper has inadequate parking spaces on Main Street. This shortage of parking spaces is mostly during peak hours (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner times). The other parking area is at the Pickens County Courthouse. Parking spaces are limited during court services.

7.4 Railroads, Trucking, Port Facilities, Airports, Park & Ride Facilities and Vanpools

Railroads, Trucking, Port Facilities, Airports, Park & Ride Lots, Vanpools and Overall Impacts on transportation in Pickens County

Rail Service

The Georgia Northeastern Railroad (GNRR), short line freight railroad which runs from the town of Elizabeth, Georgia (now within Marietta, near Atlanta) to the City of Blue Ridge. The railroad hauls approximately 11,000 carloads annually. Goods hauled are mostly timber, grain, poultry, and marble products. The GNRR's subsidiary, the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway, also operates a branch from this line at Blue Ridge. GNRR own the first 43 miles from Elizabeth to Tate and lease the tracks from Tate to McCaysville from the GDOT. The GNRR provides freight service to Pickens, Gilmer, Fannin, Cobb and Cherokee Counties Monday through Friday and on Saturday and Sunday as needed. They currently provide service to approximately 25 customers that ship or receive a wide variety of products, which require unique rail service.

Imerys Mining Corporation owns and operates a railroad system for the export of marble. The main headquarters and storage facilities are located in Tate.

The overall impact of railroads in the county and in the cities is nominal with the only impacts from trains crossing roads that intersect with the rail line. At present, the GNRR only has on average of two trains that pass through the county per day.

Trucking

Heavy truck traffic on SR 53 is a major concern. A large percentage of regional truck traffic traverses major thoroughfares in the county. For 2006, the truck percentage was around 9.8 percent along SR 53. The problem is particularly acute in downtown Jasper.

Some of this traffic could be rerouted around Jasper along SR 515 and SR 108. Traffic volumes along Pickens County roads are high with average annual daily trips around the 15,000 range along major corridors.

Port Facilities

Since Pickens County is a land-locked county, there are no port facilities located in the county.

Airport Facilities

The Pickens County Airport, which was constructed in the late 1970's. Pickens County Airport is located in Pickens County in northwestern Georgia approximately 47 miles northwest of Gainesville and 40 miles northeast of Cartersville. The airport can be accessed from the north and south via SR 5. Other highways and SR's in the vicinity include Interstate 575; SR 76; and SR 53 and SR 108. The airport, situated on 114 acres, is owned and operated by Pickens County. The airport accommodates a variety of aviation related activities that include recreational flying, police/law enforcement, ultralights, and experimental aircraft.

Pickens County Airport has one runway, Runway 16/34, 5,000 feet long by 100 feet wide with medium-intensity runway lighting (MIRL), precision approach path indicators (PAPI), and a partial parallel taxiway system. The airport has a rotating beacon, a segmented circle, a wind cone, a non-directional radio beacon (NDB), and NDB and global positing system (GPS) approaches to Runway 34. Current landside facilities and services include a full-service fixed-base operation (FBO), a fuel concession providing aviation gas (AvGas), and a 900 square foot terminal/administration building. There are 30 auto parking spaces, 20 apron parking spaces, and 12 hangar spaces.

A review of the airport's historic demand levels shows that based aircraft increased from 38 in 1990 to a current level of 44 (42 single engine and 2 multi-engine aircraft). By 2021, the airport's based aircraft are expected to reach 55. The airport has approximately 6,000 annual aircraft takeoffs and landings divided between local and itinerant operations. This figure is projected to increase to 8,188 by 2021. By the end of the planning period, the airport is expected to reach 6 percent of its available annual operating capacity. Also, the Pickens County Economic Development Department has anticipated that the creation of the Pickens County Airport Technology Park may even push the number of aircraft to as high as 200 by 2030. The airport will have a positive impact in the county brining is needed jobs and revenue. The impacts to the road network will be minimal. Table 7-5 indicates current and forecasted demand at the airport up to 2021.

**Table 7-5
Current and Forecasted Demand, Pickens County Airport, 2003 - 2021**

Pickens County Airport	2003	2006	2011	2021
Based Aircraft	44	47	49	55
Operations	6,000	6406	6952	8188
Local	4526	4833	5245	6177
Itinerant	1474	1573	1708	2011

Demand/Capacity Ratio	5%	5%	5%	6%
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Source: Georgia Aviation System Plan Airport Summary Report, Georgia DOT, 2003.

The current capital improvement plan for the airport indicates that the county will continue to expand the airport facilities over the next five-years spending a grand total of \$13,840,000 for these new upgrades as indicated below:

Fiscal Year 2008

Construct south parallel taxiway (Phase I Site Preparation)
 Environmental Assessment (EA) for Runway Extension
 Land Acquisition – South Apron Extension
 Rehabilitation of Runway
 Total cost: \$4,150,000

Fiscal Year 2009

Construct New Terminal Building
 Construct South Parallel Taxiway – (Phase 2 Paving)
 Construct Terminal Apron Expansion
 Land Acquisition – Airport Industrial Park
 Total costs: \$2,700,000

Fiscal Year 2010

Construct New Hangar
 Construct Runway Extension – (Phase I Site Preparation)
 Construct Safety Area Upgrades
 Construct South Apron Expansion – Phase 1
 Relocate Existing Hangar
 Total costs: \$4,075,000

Fiscal Year 2011

Construct Hangar
 Construct Runway Extension – Phase 2
 Construct South Apron Expansion – Phase 2
 Total costs: \$1,700,000

Fiscal Year 2012

Construct Hangar
 Construct South Apron Expansion – Phase 3
 Install Security Improvements
 Total costs: \$1,215,000

Park & Ride Lots

The county and GDOT have facilitated the opportunity for carpooling among the commuters by establishing two “Park & Ride” lots. One is located at SR 53 and Mary Street in Jasper and contains 160 spaces (Park & Ride # 621); and the other is located at SR 108 and SR 515 near Tate and contains 22 spaces (Park & Ride # 633). Visual observations indicate that these lots are utilized on a consistent basis, but that sufficient spaces remain for additional commuters.

With more users of park and ride lots increases, this reduces the total number of vehicles that can impact the local road network. The January 2005 Pickens County Transportation Study suggests that the predominant commuting pattern in the county is along SR 515 with commuters traveling to Atlanta during peak morning and evening hours and indicates that the Park and Ride facilities be upgraded. The study suggests the following:

- Expand Park and Ride lot at SR 108 and SR 515, which only has 22 spaces
- Add a new Park and Ride lot at the future Camp Road Extension at SR 515
- Add a new Park and Ride lot at Steve Tate Road and SR 53

Vanpools

The Cumberland Community Improvement District (CID) created the Commuter Club in Pickens County in 1996 to help thousands of individuals and businesses in the Cumberland Galleria area save money while improving both the environment and their quality of life. The Commuter Club is partly funded by the CID vanpool riders pay \$50.00 per month for this service. The pick-up point in Pickens County is located at the Home Depot in Jasper and the destination is located at Interstate North Parkway/Overton Park/Circle 75, where commuters may pick-up Metro Atlanta Transit Authority (MARTA) transportation to other localities. At present, there are 11 vanpool riders utilizing this service. No plans have been made to expand this service, but could be warranted since a good majority of Pickens County residents work outside the county.

7.5 Transportation and Land Use Connection

Communities that integrate transportation and land-use policies are better able to manage growth, improve the efficiency of travel, and contain infrastructure costs. Highways have shaped growth and will continue to do so. However, highways and roads can either lead to congestion or underutilization. Land use also plays a major role in how traffic patterns and commuting to and from home, work or for everyday activities.

Congestion

According to the January 2005 *Pickens County Transportation Study*, significant issues with the road network are with congested areas along 5 locations. Increased traffic volume has occurred on several major roadways, primarily in the City of Jasper, during the past 15 years. The report indicates that the most congested roadway segments include:

- Church Street (SR 53) from SR 515 to Marble Hill
- Burnt Mountain Road from Church Street (SR 53) to Cover Road
- SR 108 from SR 515 to SR 53 in Tate
- Main Street from Hood Road to Camp Road
- Refuge Road from Camp Road to Harmony School Road

Underutilization

The M.A.T.S. has been underutilized over the past several years. The total number of passenger trips has declined. In 2004, the average passenger trips per vehicle were

596; in 2005 it dropped to 520; and in 2006, it fell to 456. The only increase for number of trips increased for seniors and has declined for all other passenger categories. As indicated in the *Pickens County Transit Development Plan* (June 2007), “generally M.A.T.S. system is perceived as a service primarily intended for the elderly and handicapped residents in the county” and more marketing efforts should be conducted to dispel this perception. The plan also indicates “an estimation of future demand indicates that the overall population is growing rapidly in Pickens County. Consequently, the transportation disadvantaged populations (low income, elderly, disabled, persons without vehicles, etc.) are also likely to grow, and the system will need to expand in future years.”

Evaluation of the Role of Land Use on Transportation

Land Use Categories and Classification Systems

Existing Land Use

Since Pickens County's existing land use characteristics have direct impacts on future growth potential, the preparation and analysis of an existing land use map is important as the basis for preparation of the future land use plan. The following sections contain an inventory of the current amount of land in each land use category, with an analysis of the patterns of land use throughout the county and the cities.

Mapping Methodology

An existing land use map displays the development on the ground categorized into groups of similar types of development at a given point in time. For purposes of this analysis, the Pickens County Existing Land Use Map (Map 7-3) shows what is on the ground as of May 2007, as collected for the preparation of the *Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Pickens County and Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock*. Data was collected using parcel maps and digitizing the acreage for each land use category. This data then was extrapolated and placed into a geographic information system (GIS) to plot a land use map for the incorporated and unincorporated areas by land use in the county and city areas. Table 7-6 provides a brief definition of each existing land use classification. Table 7-7 indicates the existing land use in the county and cities.

Table 7-6: Existing Land Use Category Definitions

Existing Land Use Category	Definition
Agricultural	All pastures, croplands and areas incidental to farming operations and livestock production.
Commercial	All properties dedicated to non-industrial uses including offices, retail sales, and service and entertainment activities.
Forestry	Private forestlands used for commercial timber and pulpwood harvesting.
Industrial	All properties used for manufacturing, processing and assembling products, construction, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining and mineral extraction, and similar uses.
Residential, Multi-Family	All land area containing attached housing types including duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, townhouses and condominiums.

Residential, Single-Family	All land area containing principle structures of single-family detached housing.
Public/Institutional	All properties used for general government activities and institutional uses including churches, public/semi-public agencies, hospitals, cemeteries etc..
Park/Recreation and Conservation	All land used for active or passive recreation, including recreational facilities, parks, nature preserves, national forest and wildlife management areas, and golf courses that are designated or reserved for public or private use.
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	All properties used for public or private transportation, communication, and utility facilities and infrastructure, and road and railroad right-of-ways.
Undeveloped/Vacant	All land that is not used for any of the above listed purposes, including abandoned land, forest areas that are not designated as national forest or reserved for timber production, wetlands, open, barren and grass lands.
Water	Classified as a body of water such as a lake, river, or stream.

Table 7-7
Pickens County Existing Land Use in Acres

Land Use Classification	Total County	City of Jasper	City of Nelson	City of Talking Rock
Agricultural	9,424	29	8	0.17
Commercial	1,496	517	10	6
Forestry	8,245	0	0	837
Industrial	1,671	105	46	0
Residential, Multi-Family	23	86	0	0
Residential, Single-Family	26,740	857	385	92
Public/Institutional	1,286	259	5	6
Park/Recreation and Conservation	2,264	65	4	0.6
Transportation, Communication, Utilities, Right-of-Way	5,691	542	98	52
Undeveloped/Vacant	87,197	491	347	315
Water	262	0	0	0
Totals	144,299	2,951	903	1,308.77
Total County	144,299			
Total Cities			5,162.77	

Source: NGRDC, 2007

Pickens County

Pickens County contains a total of 144,299 acres of land and are dedicated to some type of development including forestry, agriculture, parks, recreation, and conservation lands (See Table 7-7 for a detailed breakout of each category for land use distribution.) Approximately 87,197 acres remain undeveloped within the county. Most of this land

consists of woodlands and dormant agriculture lands. The county also contains approximately 262 acres of water bodies.

Assessment

Although most of Pickens County is still rural in character, it is becoming more of a “bedroom” county for the Atlanta metropolitan area to the south. This is evident by the considerable population growth that occurred in past decade.

Historically, the majority of development within Pickens County occurred in the central lowland areas along the major transportation alignments (Old Highway 5 and railroad) from Talking Rock south to the county boundary including the municipalities of Jasper and Nelson, which are also located within this corridor. This is still true, although in recent years development activity has shifted to areas along SR 515, a four-lane highway that replaced Old Highway 5 as the principle north-south corridor.

Residential development, aside from the Jasper urban area and the planned communities of Bent Tree and Big Canoe, is highly scattered throughout the county. This pattern is expected to continue particularly along county roads that are now served by public water service. Currently, on a countywide basis including the municipalities, approximately 1.9 acres of land is consumed for each single-family dwelling. If the cities are removed from the calculation, the land consumption per dwelling goes up to 2.1 acres. This overall low density is attributed to the fact that there is a relatively small public sewer service area in the county, and that much of the county’s soils and slope conditions require large lots to accommodate on-site sewage treatment systems. Because the county is growing rapidly, the low density, highly scattered development pattern found throughout the unincorporated area is contributing to “sprawl” conditions such as higher traffic congestion, increased travel times and loss of the county’s rural characteristics. This is anticipated to continue due to the fact that large-scale development communities are planned for the county (Pott’s Mountain and Talking Rock Plantation) that will bring in an anticipated 4,000 plus homes and commercial development.

Although growing, there is a limited amount of commercial development in the county, which is highly scattered and located principally along the major highway corridors. There is also 1,671 acres of industrial land, most of which is attributed to the extensive development along SR 53 and SR 515.

The county contains a variety of expansive natural areas that are in private undeveloped, agricultural and forestry land holdings, a number of steeped slope mountain ridges, and a considerable amount of flood plains, which are important environmental resources and have limited development potential. The county and cities have acknowledged the importance of these characteristics, and have adopted a Green Space Plan that proposes to set aside approximately 29,917 acres of these areas for permanent green space preservation.

Historically, the only jurisdiction in the county having a zoning ordinance was the City of Jasper. However, in 2005, the county Planning Commission adopted its first zoning ordinance (Chapter 67). Without zoning to guide development in the past, land use patterns have become highly scattered. One consequence of this scattered pattern is that some developments are occurring in areas where the roads and water utilities are

inadequate to accommodate the amount of traffic and water consumption generated by the development. Some effort should be made to guide new developments to areas that have the infrastructure capacity to accommodate it.

City of Jasper

Jasper contains a total of 2,951 acres of developed land, of which 857 acres are dedicated to single-family residential development. (See Table 7-7 for a detailed breakout of each category and Map 7-4 for the pattern of land use distribution.) Approximately 491 acres remain undeveloped in the city. Most of this land consists of woodlands and dormant agriculture lands, which is changing and will continue to change over time as development continues along SR 515 and SR 53.

Assessment

The City of Jasper is the county seat and is located in the central area of Pickens County. Historically, a compact development pattern occurred within the city, which is primarily centered on a commercial axis that runs from the northwest side of the city to the southwest, along SR 53 and North Main Street. The downtown area also contains a central core of commercial development that is currently thriving. The city has been revitalizing the streetscape infrastructure (sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and other pedestrian amenities), which should assist in maintaining the vitality of the downtown area. In the past few years, the city has extended its boundary to considerable land along the SR 515 corridor, and is providing sewer service to this area in anticipation that substantial new development will continue to occur along this corridor in the future.

Single-family residential is the most prominent use within the city limits with the abundance located to the north of Main Street and SR 53. Multi-family land uses are located out from the central commercial core with no certain area being dominated.

The majority of industrial development is located within a developed industrial park along an axis created by the railroad, which runs approximately parallel to SR 53 and North Main Street. Commercial land is the second most abundant land use in the city. Most of the agricultural uses are located in the southern portions of the city with the majority of the lands being located along Industrial Boulevard.

The city adopted Subdivision Regulations and a Zoning Ordinance in 1997, which were designed to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1993. The adopted zoning districts allow a reasonable mix of uses and should serve the city well for many years. Specifically, all commercial districts allow loft dwellings, and both commercial and industrial districts allow multi-family structures, which facilitates a good jobs-housing balance within the city.

The city still contains a considerable amount of vacant land (491 acres) in the residential, commercial and industrially designated areas, which would be highly suitable areas for infill development.

City of Nelson

The City of Nelson contains a total of 903 acres of development (See Table 7-7 for a detailed breakout of each category and Map 7-5 for the pattern of land use distribution).

The predominant land use category is residential. No agricultural or forestry lands are present within the municipal boundary of the city. Approximately 346 acres remain undeveloped within the city.

Assessment

Nelson is a small rural community located in extreme southern Pickens County with approximately half of the city in Pickens County and the other half in Cherokee County. Whereas it was once located on a major highway (Old Highway 5); it has now been bypassed by SR 515, which replaced Old Highway 5 as the primary north south corridor through the county. As a result, development patterns have not changed a great deal within the past 10 years. The downtown area contains a few small commercial enterprises and a large marble stone processing plant, which dominates the area. With continued expansion of the Atlanta metro area northward and with reasonably good access to SR 515, the city's greatest development opportunity is for residential uses, particularly in the southern portion of the city within Cherokee County. As residential growth occurs, commercial development will occur as well.

The city adopted its first zoning ordinance in 2000, which conforms to current land use patterns.

Talking Rock

The City of Talking Rock is in the northwest area of the county and contains a total of 1,308.77 acres of development. (See Table 7-7 for a detailed breakout of each category and Map 7-6 for the pattern of land use distribution). The predominant land use category is forestry followed by residential. Approximately 315 acres remain undeveloped within the city.

Assessment

Talking Rock is also a small, rural community. Like Nelson, it was once located on a major highway (Old Highway 5), which has now been replaced with SR 515 that bypasses the city. A small commercial district exists in the center of the city along SR 136. Although once completely vacant, several downtown buildings have been recently renovated and are now occupied by antique outlets and other tourist oriented businesses. The town is beginning to promote its historical heritage and is seeing some renewed interest in historic preservation development opportunities. There is no industrial land in the city and none is anticipated in the future.

The city also recently annexed a considerable amount of land, which is currently in agriculture and forestry use. As the population continues to grow in the county, it is likely that some residential development will occur in these newly annexed areas. There is a planned community for the Talking Rock area that if developed would bring in over 2,600 homes and 700,000 square feet of commercial development that would considerably alter the city population and economic trends for the area. This development would occur over the next twenty-years based on the information that was provided to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

The city adopted its first zoning ordinance in 2002, which conforms to current land use patterns.

Map Appendix

The following maps are provided in the *Analysis of the Supporting Data to the Community Assessment* and are labeled by Chapter number as they are referenced in the supporting data:

Map 4-1	Physiographic Provinces
Map 4-2	Environmentally Sensitive Resources
Map 4-3	Water Service Areas
Map 4-4	Steep Slopes/Protected Mountain Areas
Map 4-5	Flood Plains
Map 4-6	Significant Water Resources and Trout Streams
Map 4-7	Significant Historic Resources
Map 5-1	Community Facilities (Public)
Map 5-2	Water Service Areas
Map 5-3	Five-Mile Road Radius of Fire Stations
Map 5-4	Community Facilities (Public Safety)
Map 7-1	Road Network
Map 7-2	Proposed Bike Routes and Facilities
Map 7-3	Existing Land Use – Pickens County
Map 7-4	Existing Land Use – City of Jasper
Map 7-5	Existing Land Use – City of Nelson
Map 7-6	Existing Land Use – City of Talking Rock

TRANSMITTAL RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the North Georgia Regional Development Center has prepared an annual update to Joint Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock; and WHEREAS, the annual update of the Joint Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the rules established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Compliance Requirements and the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and a Public Hearing was held on February 21, 2008 at Appalachian Technical College.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Mayor and the Council of the City of Nelson does hereby submit the annual update of the Community Assessment and Public Participation Plan for the period 2008 - 2028 to DCA for Regional review, as per the requirements of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

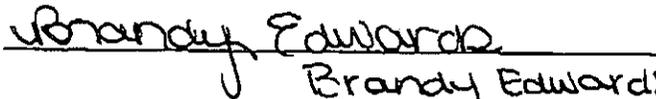
Adopted this 3rd day of March 2008.

BY:



William Walker - Mayor

ATTEST:



Brandy Edwards - City Clerk

TRANSMITTAL RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the North Georgia Regional Development Center has prepared an annual update to Joint Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock; and WHEREAS, the annual update of the Joint Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the rules established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Compliance Requirements and the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and a Public Hearing was held on February 21, 2008 at Appalachian Technical College.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Mayor and the Council of the Town of Talking Rock does hereby submit the annual update of the Community Assessment and Public Participation Plan for the period 2008 - 2028 to DCA for Regional review, as per the requirements of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Adopted this 4th day of March 2008.

BY:

The Town Council, with 4 members present

ATTEST:

Mayor Peter Q. Cagle Jr.

FEB 29 2008

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
PICKENS COUNTY, GEORGIA

ROBERT P. JONES
Sole Commissioner



DEBORAH WATSON
County Clerk

TRANSMITTAL RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the North Georgia Regional Development Center has prepared an annual update to the Joint Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock; and,

WHEREAS, the annual update of the Joint Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the rules established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Compliance Requirements and the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and a Public Hearing was held on February 21, 2008 at Appalachian Technical College.

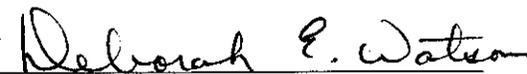
BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Commissioner of Pickens County does hereby submit the annual update of the Community Assessment and Public Participation Plan for the period 2008 – 2028 to DCA for Regional review, as per the requirements of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Adopted this 22nd day of February 2008.

BY:



ATTEST:





City of Jasper
200 Burnt Mountain Road
Jasper, GA 30143
Phone: 706-692-9100
Fax: 706-692-9104

Mayor
John Weaver

Mayor Pro Tem
Hazel Mosley

Council
Marcia Craft
Tony Fountain
John Foust
Jim Looney

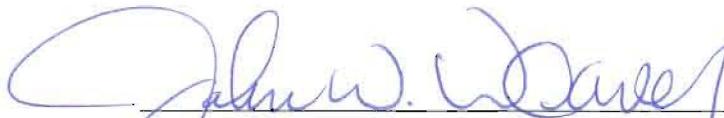
--TRANSMITTAL RESOLUTION--

WHEREAS, the North Georgia Regional Development Center has prepared an annual update to Joint Pickens County and the Cities of Jasper, Nelson and Talking Rock; and

WHEREAS, the annual update of the Joint Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the rules established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Compliance Requirements and the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and a Public Hearing was held on February 21, 2008 at Appalachian Technical College.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Mayor and the Council of the City of Jasper does hereby submit the annual update of the Community Assessment and Public Participation Plan for the period 2008 - 2028 to DCA for Regional review, as per the requirements of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Adopted this 3rd day of March 2008.



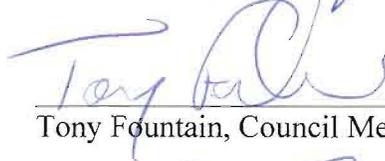
John W. Weaver, Mayor



Hazel Mosley, Mayor Pro Tem



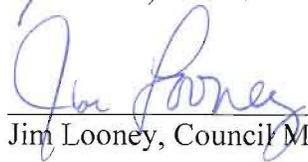
Marcia Craft, Council Member



Tony Fountain, Council Member



John Foust, Council Member



Jim Looney, Council Member

ATTEST:

Signature: 

Title: Interim City Clerk