

Joint Comprehensive Plan



**Towns County
Hiawassee
Young Harris**



October, 2021



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	2
Scope	2
Required Plan Elements	2
Public Participation	4
Past Planning Efforts	6
COMMUNITY VISION	7
Community Profiles	7
SWOT Analysis	8
Vision Statements	11
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	15
Broadband Assessment	15
Environmental Assessment	18
Land Use Assessment	20
Recommended Character Areas	23
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM	54
APPENDIX	
Demographic Data	
Area Labor Profiles	
Summary of Public Surveys and Meetings	
Samples of Public Notifications/ Involvement	
Quality Community Assessment	

INTRODUCTION

This document, the *Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan*, serves as the general strategy guide for the governments of Towns County and the Cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris. It provides a set of visions statements and priorities for the communities based on public input and analyses of local conditions. It then uses that information to make recommendations for action items, policies, and programs which the governments should employ to address the needs and opportunities that stand between their current state and their idealized visions.

The 2021 edition represents the mandated 5-year update to this plan, both to satisfy a State of Georgia requirement and to ensure the document remains current, reflecting the present conditions and concerns of Towns County and its Cities. A series of public forums, an online survey, interviews with key stakeholders, an advisory committee, and other means of obtaining comments and questions were used over the course of the year in developing the final product. The update also comes at a unique time in the history of these communities:

- The planning process began in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, which took the lives of thousands of Georgians and greatly affected many local economies. It also remains an active issue as the planning process comes to a close, meaning economic and civic actions in the near-term must still consider pandemic health protocols.
- Even prior to the pandemic, issues such as broadband technology and access to health care were already critical factors driving local economies, particularly rural ones. Towns County and its Cities already face issues with market accessibility and a drain of youth in the labor force, and now see their prospects for economic expansion greatly dependent on factors beyond their conventional control.
- While the community struggles as a center for goods production jobs and other high-paying industries, Towns County has seen sustained growth in tourism and recreational economies. The region has attracted a number of retirees and seasonal residents, as well as seeing daily tourism growth during the summer months.
- Young Harris College is now producing graduates as a 4-year college and plans to expand its campus and programming in the long-term. This provides both challenges and opportunities for the City of Young Harris, as it seeks to balance the interests and needs of full-time residents versus those of the College and its students.

It is against this backdrop that Towns County, Hiawassee, and Young Harris have come together to envision their futures, plan how to maximize their resources, and look to ensure coordination and cooperation in being proactive partners in making those visions a reality. Combined with other guiding documents and initiatives, the Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan illustrates how this can all happen.

Purpose

The purpose of the *Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan* is to lay out a road map for the community's future, developed through a very public process involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the future of the community. The Comprehensive Plan includes the community's vision for the future, key issues and opportunities to address during the planning period, and its implementation program for achieving this vision and addressing the identified issues and opportunities. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, thereby making citizens wish to ensure that the plan is implemented.

Scope

This document addresses the local planning requirements and community development of Towns County, Georgia, and the Cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris. Some consideration has been given to those areas and political entities adjacent to the County that influence local conditions, but all the cited issues, objectives and opportunities discussed herein are solely focused on Towns County and the Cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris.

Required Components

This comprehensive plan serves to meet the requirements and intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as amended in 2013, and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. It is essential that the plan be prepared in compliance with these rules and guidelines in order for Towns County, Hiawassee and Young Harris maintain their Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. Further, State law requires that the local government update its comprehensive plan every 5 years.

"The purpose of Minimum Standards is to provide a framework for the development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans at the local, regional and state government level. They reflect an important state interest: healthy and economically vibrant cities and counties are vital to the state's economic prosperity."

(1) Community Goals: *The purpose of the Community Goals element is to lay out a road map for the community's future, developed through a very public process of involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the future of the community. The Community Goals are the most important part of the plan, for they identify the community's direction for the future, and are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, thereby leading citizens and leadership to act to ensure that the plan is implemented.*

(2) Needs and Opportunities: *This is the locally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities the community intends to address. Each of the needs or opportunities that the community identifies as high priority must be followed-up with corresponding implementation measures in the Community Work Program. The list must be developed by involving community stakeholders in carrying out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or similar analysis of the community.*

(3) Community Work Program: *This element of the comprehensive plan lays out the specific activities the community plans to undertake during the next five years to address the*

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

priority Needs and Opportunities, identified Target Areas (if applicable), or to achieve portions of the Community Goals. This includes any activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems (such as site plan review, design review, etc.) to be put in place to implement the plan.

In addition to the required core elements local comprehensive plans in Georgia must also include the following:

An assessment of Community Broadband Technology Capacity. *The purpose of the broadband assessment is to facilitate the “promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services” throughout each community in recognition of how vital this technology is for economic development. In an effort to provide advance compliance with this standard the County and municipalities will provide a brief analysis of their needs and objectives regarding broadband technology.*

Consideration of the Regional Water Plan and the Environmental Planning Criteria. *During the process of preparing its comprehensive plan, each community must review the Regional Water Plan(s) covering its area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria... to determine if there is need to adapt local implementation practices or development regulations to address protection of these important natural resources. The community must certify that it has considered both the Regional Water Plan and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria when it transmits the plan to the Regional Commission for review.*

As a community that has adopted a form of development regulations the local governments must also include the necessary land use element within their plan to aid in the coordination of their development policies and capital improvement projects.

Land Use Element. *The Land Use Element, where required, must include at least one of the two components listed below:*

(a) Character Areas Map and Defining Narrative. Identify and map the boundaries of existing or potential character areas (see definition in Chapter 110-12-1-.05) covering the entire community, including existing community sub-areas, districts, or neighborhoods.

(b) Future Land Use Map and Narrative. Prepare a Future Land Use Map that uses conventional categories or classifications to depict the location (typically parcel by parcel) of specific future land uses. If this option is chosen, prepare the Future Land Use Map using either of the land use classification schemes described below and include a narrative that explains how to interpret the map and each land use category.

The comprehensive plan was prepared in accordance with minimum procedural requirements for local plans, which include a public hearing prior to substantive work on the plan, and a public hearing prior to transmittal of the comprehensive plan for review by Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) and Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

~

Material for the Purpose, Required Components and Required Procedures has been taken from the appropriate sections of Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ “Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.”

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

Public Participation

As a part of the planning process each local government must provide and implement opportunities to encourage public participation during the preparation of the comprehensive plan. The purpose of this is to ensure that citizens and other stakeholders are aware of the planning process, are provided opportunities to comment on the local plan elements and have adequate access to the process of defining the community’s vision, values, priorities, goals, policies, and implementation strategies.

At a minimum, the public participation program must provide for: adequate notice to keep the general public informed of the emerging plan; opportunities for the public to provide written comments on the plan; hold the required public hearings; and provide notice to property owners through advertisements in the newspaper (legal organ) of the planning effort soliciting participation and comments. In addition, Towns County, Georgia, and the Cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris must provide opportunities for public participation through other means and methods to help articulate a community vision and develop associated goals and implementation program.



***Note:** Samples of notices, articles, survey results, and sign-in sheets can be found in the appendix.*

The 2021 planning process featured an Advisory Committee of 15 people, with various other staff and local officials participating throughout. The Committee met several times in person or online to discuss issues, consider updates to material from the existing comprehensive plan, and offering their thoughts on future development concerns. Their energy and participation rate ensured the discussions were lively and reflecting the current state and interests of the communities.

An additional key component of the public involvement process included three online survey opportunities – One for the general public and one each exclusively for students at the local High School and Young Harris College. The different surveys allowed a comparison between the issues and goals of the established residents versus those of the youth expected to live, work, and play in Towns County by the end of the planning time frame.

2021 Advisory Committee	
Towns County	
Larry Hedden	Retired
Carol Stroud	Business Owner
Debbie Philips	Business Owner
Alisa Richards	Clerk
Cecil Hughes	Retired Builder/ Military
Young Harris	
Deb Edwards	Planning Commission
Steve Conrad	Engineer
Drew Van Horn	Young Harris College
Matt Miller	City Council
Jo Ellen Thornton	Realtor
Hiawassee	
Tyler Osborn	Office Manager
Tony Land	Retired Military
Rob Sollie	Storekeeper
Bill Pearson	Real Estate
At-large	
Denise McKay	Economic Developer

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

The general public survey was widely received, garnering more than 640 responses over the course of 5 weeks. The surveys asked participants to rate various public facilities and services, to comment about growth and development priorities, and to describe the values they see in their community today and hope to see in the future.



In addition to surveys, there were six public forums available six weeks, held at various locations throughout the county. These meetings featured brief presentations about the state of the process at that time followed by discussions about particular topics, such as a SWOT analysis, listing of development concerns, and more. Additional promotion of the planning process and opportunities for public questions was made available at the August general meetings of the Towns County Commissioner and the City Councils for Hiawassee and Young Harris.

The information collected during the public processes was used by the Committee in updating the vision statements, goals, and priorities for each community. This was critical in determining which factors stakeholders considered most critical in developing a strategy that could preserve the rural character and beauty of Towns County while also enabling targeted growth and development that would strengthen job opportunities and economic diversity.



City Of Hiawassee
Published by Liz Ordiales · August 11 at 12:49 PM ·

In person meeting at City Hall TOMORROW August 12th 7PM, Please tell us your thoughts on the future of Towns County. This will guide us to plan for the next 5-10 years....AND...

If you haven't completed the Survey Please do!
DON'T COMPLAIN....GET IN THE GAME!!!!... See More

SURVEYMONKEY.COM
Public Survey - 2021 Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan
Take this survey powered by surveymonkey.com.
Create your own surveys for free.

Get More Messages for City Of Hiawassee
You can add a Messenger button to your post to get more messages for City Of Hiawassee.

✕

683
People Reached

44
Engagements

-
Distribution Score

Boost Post

5

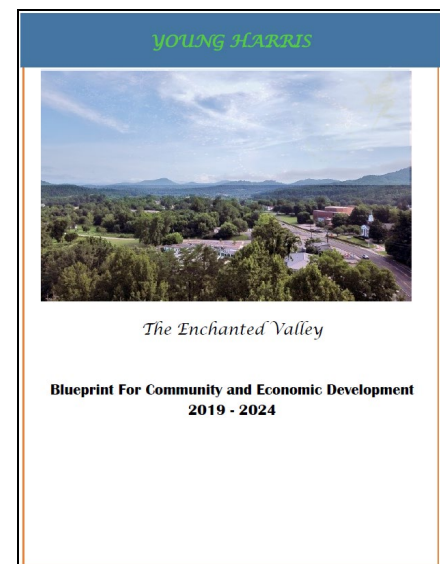
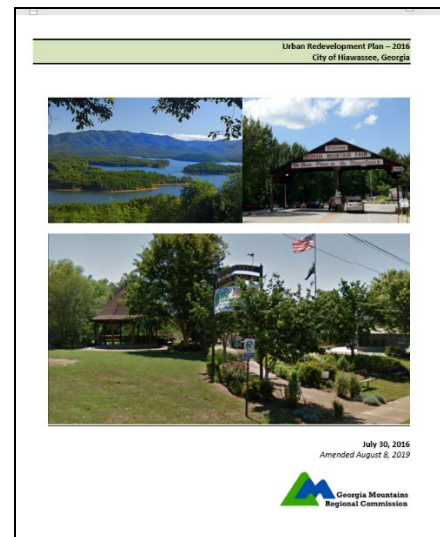
4 Shares

Past Planning Efforts

There have been several recent planning efforts that contribute to the level of community and economic development directed at Towns County and its municipalities. In conjunction with the DDA, Hiwassee recently completed the *2018 Downtown Strategic Plan*. This was an effort led by the Carl Vinson Institute to help the community prioritize specific projects to revitalize downtown in a singular vision based on past planning efforts. This document serves as the current strategic guidebook for the Downtown Development Authority.

This 2016 *Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP)* for Hiwassee was designed to assess Hiwassee's urban core along the US 76 corridor to establish an effective, multi-faceted, redevelopment plan that will stimulate the local economy by attracting new businesses to available land and vacant properties. Recognizing the importance of encouraging new development, redevelopment, and revitalization in areas that are suffering from increasing levels of poverty, are underdeveloped, or suffer from blight-conditions. The URP established a series of planning recommendations and design criteria that promote a quality, more marketable economic environment. Each location highlighted in this assessment has the highest potential for adaptive-reuse and infill development. This document and the Downtown Strategic Plan enable the City to coordinate improvement projects for realizing the various objectives for the district, as well as providing the underlying analysis used in the City's application for Rural Zone and Enterprise Zone status.

Young Harris produced their *Blueprint for Community and Economic Development* in 2019. This effort featured a community driven process to fuse the ambitions for both the college and the City and create a singular guide for specific improvement plans in the community. This represented the first major partnership between the two factions and the result is a coordinated scheme to take Young Harris forward in a way that everyone feels advances the local economy while retaining the specific character of the city. The comments of the Blueprint meetings have been broken down into four areas based upon the National Main Street Program 4-point Approach: Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Vitality. This blueprint is simply a starting point for community and economic development and is meant to be developed further as accomplishments are made and new opportunities are recognized.



COMMUNITY VISION

Community Profiles

Towns County is in the northeastern corner of Georgia, nestled among the southern reaches of the Appalachian Mountains proper and home to Brasstown Bald, the highest point in the state. The scale and configuration of the mountains and valleys renders the county and its two cities, Hiwassee and Young Harris, relatively isolated. Though Towns County is approximately just 2 2.5 hours from the metropolitan areas of Atlanta (GA), Asheville (NC), Greenville (SC) and Chattanooga (TN), it remains a remote and rural destination that is not easily accessed nor along a major transportation corridor.

That same topography has contributed to the evolution of the community, attracting residents seeking a rural, Appalachian setting in which to enjoy the outdoors and the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Towns County is known for this mountainous terrain, the scenic vistas like that from atop the summit of Bell Mountain or along the Lake Chatuge reservoir that encircles Hiwassee. As a result, it has grown into a burgeoning tourist community and as an idyllic rural area for retirees. Currently, attractions like the Brasstown Valley Resort and the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds help anchor the seasonal tourist appeal, and the local economy is oriented around this lifestyle since the death of textile engineering in the region.

The prevailing terrain divides the county into two major valleys, and within each sits one of the county's two municipalities: Hiwassee and Young Harris. The cities serve as nodes for residential and commercial development on either side of one ridgeline. Hiwassee is the county seat, and features elements of a historic main street intermixed with modern commercial and office development cultivated from a long-time role as a minor-regional center for medical care and professional services. Young Harris is a bustling mountain village and hosts the college of the same name and is just 2 miles from popular Brasstown Valley Resort. The city has also become an alternative, rural residential center for people working in Hiwassee, Blairsville or across the state line in North Carolina.

COMMUNITY	2010	2015	2019	Δ 2010 - 2019	
				#	%
Hiwassee	865	883	911	46	5.3%
Young Harris	909	1,368	1,661	752	82.7%
Balance of Towns County	<u>8,761</u>	<u>8,961</u>	<u>9,465</u>	<u>704</u>	<u>8.0%</u>
Towns County	10,535	11,212	12,037	1,502	14.3%
Union County	21,370	22,007	24,511	3,141	14.7%
Rabun County	16,277	16,223	17,137	860	5.3%
White County	27,203	28,387	30,798	3,595	13.2%

SWOT Analysis

The effectiveness of any planning process requires identifying the needs that must be addressed in order to achieve a community's goals, clarifying the targets for the local government. To do this the planning process asks communities to assess the information outlined in an effort to identify their respective **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. In doing this SWOT analysis the communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions to as to better achieve the desired vision.



This part of the planning process also reviewed various forms of data and information about each community. Information such as Census data and Department of Labor data was reviewed for insight into local conditions, plus each local government was asked to provide summaries of their immediate operational and capital improvement needs to give an indication of their priorities ahead of discussions about public objectives. When evaluating this data and information the planning process focused on whether it verified needs or opportunities identified previously, whether it uncovered new needs or opportunities not previously identified, and whether it indicates significant local trends that need to be considered in the planning process.

The SWOT analysis for Towns County, Hiawasee, and Young Harris involved discussions among City officials, the Advisory Committee, and the public hearing event held at Hiawasee City Hall on August 12, 2021. It was also cross referenced with information gleaned from the online surveys where respondents outlined key assets and liabilities about their community.

The suggestions for these elements reflect a lot of conditions influenced by the communities' location, specifically how the natural setting of the lake and the mountains is a cherished asset but also greatly impairs a lot of options for economic development. Stakeholders for the area wish to protect the scenic beauty and access to rural, outdoor settings while simultaneously recognizing these conditions limit what Towns County can do in attracting or directing business growth and development.

The various comments also reflect the prevalent tug-of-war among residents as the community tries to preserve its best elements while seeking some needed or inescapable change. The costs of living are sensitive to the make up of a local economy, and Towns County's economy is highly sensitive to tourism and the market for seasonal residents. These factors, as well as development forces acting on the region as a whole, have increased the costs for housing beyond what most hourly-pay jobs can sustain, which strains poorer households. However, the community has few options in which types of industries can prosper in such a remote location,

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

meaning goods production businesses are less likely to investigate Towns County. So as the population grows this will put pressure on the County to find additional job options for full-time residents in an effort to diversify the economy and provide more career wage scales that enable residents to work within their hometown.

STRENGTHS/ KEY ASSETS	WEAKNESSES/ LIABILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural environment: lake, mountain • Local Leadership: staff, elected officials • Removal of dilapidated buildings • Police performance • EMC / Helicopter / Specialty Drs. • Parks, public lands • Demographics: majority full time • Covid / Remote work / high speed internet, very little lost due to covid, restaurants stayed full, only 38 died due to covid • Designated GICH community • PlanFirst designation (Hiawassee) • Rural Zone designation (Hiawassee) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Losing students, leaving community • Business competition / some consumers go to Murphy (cheaper) • Soil erosion / 9ft wake damage to docks • Traffic / Hazardous roadways (inability to change speed limit through GDOT) • Limited options for housing • Limited broadband connectivity in the mountains
OPPORTUNITIES/ UNIQUE POSSIBILITIES	THREATS/ OUTSIDE RISKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid / Remote work / High speed internet, very little lost due to covid, restaurants stayed full • \$27 an hour highest paid employee in Hiawassee City Pos. • Industrial Park by jail 14.7 acres = 50-75 employees hired • Folger gas location coming and location in YH • More full-time families and hopefully families • Full-time apartments needed to bring families whereas school districts in Union & are growing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wake from inappropriate boats • Social animosity / FB Forums • Lack of civic involvement / Individual understanding of effects to improve and “make it better” • Different outlooks between locals and new residents (moving in) • Locals want “Controlled Change”

What the survey results tell us

- Survey respondents are predominantly older and own their properties
- Most are established, long-time residents
- Most are active in the community, do most of their activities in Towns County

The people participating in the survey are very familiar with the communities and have a vested interest in their well-being. Combined with the response rates, it suggests the respondents paint a fair picture of the local populace.

- Local services are rated highly; Only Roads and Waste Mgmt. are concerns
- Strong demand to preserve the environment and natural/ rural setting
- Priorities are Safety, Cleanliness, Nature
- Friendliness, Charm, and Welcoming Character are important
- “Let’s make a better version of who we already are.”

On the whole people are satisfied with Towns County and the cities and feel each is on a positive trajectory. There are things that can be improved but on the whole people want to keep the general character of the communities intact. Don’t change for change’s sake, but instead focus on improvements that will enhance the cherished aspects of Towns County, especially measures seen as investments that keep the area peaceful, welcoming, and people oriented.

- Quality of Life > Economic Expansion
- Chief economic concern is upgrading labor force and expanding commercial options (for both local and tourism)

Economic development is desired, particularly in diversifying the economy and enhancing local commercial options, but this should only be pursued in a manner in keeping with local character. The emphasis should be on smaller industries that complement the rural setting and lifestyle, and that can prove sustainable with the abilities of the local labor force.

- Affordable housing for the workforce considered critical, as is addressing dilapidated housing

Any growth in the area will require improving the variety of local housing options, especially in providing quality, affordable workforce housing. The communities are too reliant on older existing units that are economically distressed and costly to maintain, and the market for affordable family-friendly units is extremely tiny. There are opportunities for infill within the cities and many local businesses would favor a deeper, year-round local customer base, so each community needs to find a way to attract and sustain some new residential development, especially in affordable models.

Community Vision Statements

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

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

*“Good fortune is what happens
when opportunity meets
planning.”*

- Thomas Edison



The visions presented here were first established as part of the 2011 planning process. They've been updated over the years to reflect a shift by residents to be more proactive in guiding the future of their communities. Older visions emphasized the low cost of living, whereas area residents and stakeholders desire more focus on the quality of investment in public facilities and services. This is rooted in the recognition that some change and growth in the areas is likely, regardless of actions taken by the County or Cities. Now the visions, and especially select objectives and priorities, are about maintaining the character of the communities in a way that can adapt to change and show resilience in uncertain economic times.

Towns County

“The vision of Towns County is to be the best community to visit, live, work and raise a family...”

- ***By promoting strategic and sustainable economic development that respects our community values;***
- ***By providing affordable quality services and safety to all citizens;***
- ***By protecting our natural resources, Lake Chatuge, our rural mountain heritage and historical sites;***
- ***By educating our citizenry to meet the challenges of our future; and***
- ***By building on our tradition of hospitality and fostering a climate of mutual respect for residents and visitors.”***

The vision for Towns County remains as in previous plans, with an emphasis on being a family-oriented hometown that seeks to preserve its rural character and invest in its people. These values are rooted in the county’s historic nature as a rustic mountain community that is both self-reliant and friendly. Many of these residents have been here for many years and/or have a family connection to the area, and those that are newer moved into the area for the appeal of the small-town charm. They cherish the mountains, the streams, the reservoir, and the lack of suburban hustle. Those things, those sensations, should be preserved as best as possible.

To the extent that change is coming, the notion is that much of that should be absorbed within the cities, particularly where brownfields and greyfields invite opportunities for infill development. There is a desire for employment growth to provide a more diverse and resilient economy for younger residents, but only if that occurs in a fashion that blends well with the rural context and as best as possible builds on the skills of the labor force. Education and workforce development remain critical areas for further investment, but those investments should be practical and tailored to Towns County resources.



Hiwassee

“The City of Hiwassee will be:

- ***A safe and inviting hometown where all residents can have a high quality of life to work and play;***
- ***A vibrant destination for visitors that reflects the spirit of the North Georgia Mountains;***
- ***A community that is known for valuing its history, protects its natural resources, and works for its people; and***
- ***A city with a walkable, dynamic downtown that is attractive and prosperous...”***

The foremost objective of Hiwassee is to provide outstanding quality of life for all while serving as the civic and social heart of Towns County. Hiwassee will provide the optimal setting for the various urban amenities needed to sustain the local economy and serve area citizens, doing so in a manner that retains the best of the city’s small-town character and Appalachian heritage.



Hiwassee also wants to maintain its appeal to raising families and fostering opportunities for employment and recreation for every household while also attracting tourists by serving as a premier and diverse mountain resort community accepting of all cultures, lifestyles, and customs.



By working to preserve cultural resources and adopt responsible best practices, Hiwassee will blend progress with context and respect for the city’s past. Hiwassee will pursue a revitalization of the historic town center, foster a more pedestrian friendly and economically vibrant urban core, and provide the utilities and services necessary to ensure the city is a safe and quality place to live, work, and play.



Young Harris

“Young Harris is an attractive and sustainable mountain village that respects and protects its natural and cultural heritage and celebrates the outdoor spirit, a family-oriented hometown and a diverse community that values friendliness, education, and the arts.”

The City of Young Harris continues to build on recent efforts in reinventing the community, striving to evolve from a rural crossroads into a true mountain village. The vision statement recalls this sentiment with its emphasis on strengthening connections with the mountain setting, capitalizing on the resources available through the college, and fostering a more defined sense of hometown among a growing number of full-time residents.

Young Harris recognizes that this evolution will require further investment in community facilities and infrastructure, as well as recruiting more private commercial businesses, but the ambitions target a more vibrant and culturally refined hometown. There is potential within the valley for more development, and between the College, the nearby resort, and the local EMC offices, there is the foundation for further business growth in the area. In this sense, Young Harris is positioned to forge a more prominent, independent identity between Hiwassee and Blairsville. The desire is to make that identity one with more parks and trails that encourages residents to engage with nature, with quality neighborhoods around a more active main street, and a collection of arts and cultural options for residents and visitors alike.



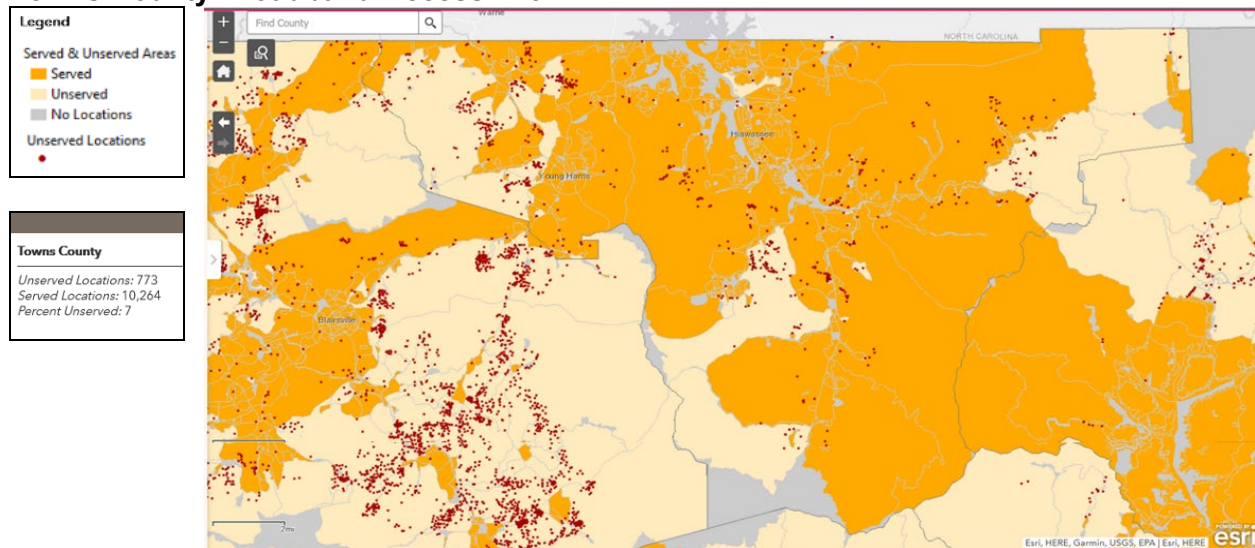
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Broadband Assessment

The growing importance of access to reliable and high-speed, high-capacity internet connections cannot be overestimated. Unserved and underserved areas of Georgia will not remain economically competitive without sufficient internet infrastructure, as this technology becomes the default utility for all manners of communication. To address this issue the Georgia General Assembly amended the provisions of local planning in Georgia by passing the "Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act" to facilitate the enhancement and extension of internet access in communities. The ACE Act requires all local governments to incorporate the "promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services" into their local plan. Once these are in place the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Economic Development will identify and promote facilities and developments that offer broadband services at a rate of not less than 1 gigabit per second in the downstream to end users that can be accessed for business, education, health care, government.

One of the first products to come out of the Georgia Broadband Initiative was an inventory of general conditions across the State regarding access to high speed/ high-capacity broadband technology. Utilizing demographic data from the US Census Bureau and cross-referencing that information with knowledge of broadband infrastructure, the Department of Community Affairs produced a series of maps depicting the state of broadband accessibility in rural areas. (See *map below*) On this basis Towns County and its cities have at least has access to high-grade broadband, so any gaps in their local network remain small and likely effects mostly residential users.

Towns County Broadband Access - 2021

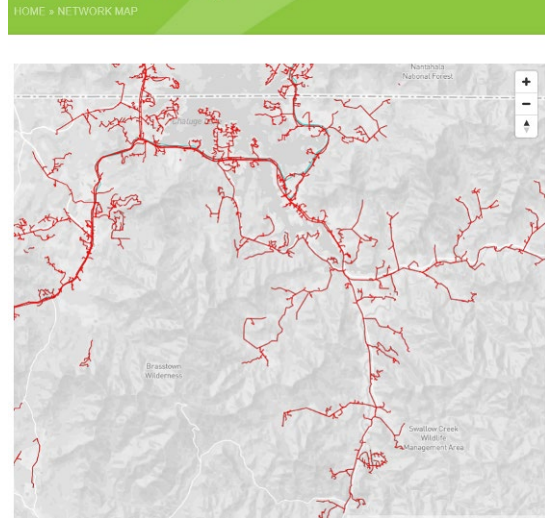


The map portrays broadband statistics for the State of Georgia. Statistics are available by census block, county and legislative boundary. Statistics are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, and where the broadband service is available to more than 80% of locations in a census block. Census blocks that did not meet this definition are delineated as 'Unserved'. The map depicts access to broadband, not subscription status.

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

Towns County and its cities rate well in that they do have access to the North Georgia Network (NGN), an incorporated cooperative providing a regional fiber optic system with over 1,600 linear miles of infrastructure. The NGN was conceived as part of visions for a more prosperous rural Georgia, with the knowledge that a fiber optic network that is fast, reliable, and affordable is vital to modern economic development. The NGN provides infrastructure that loops through the northeast Georgia mountains with 100 gigabit core line and connects to almost all the schools and colleges in the region as well as reaching many government structures and prominent business parks. A main line of this network runs through the county along US 76 and SR 75, putting it within reach of most residents. Finalizing connections from the main roads, however, has been difficult for many households.

Network Map



This issue, known as “last mile” connectivity, has been the biggest obstacle for the County. For residents to utilize the internet to telecommute for work or school, or to perform business from home, requires connections to modern broadband, but a minimum of 770 residential properties are lacking that final connection. That number is likely much higher, with even more having a connection but one of insufficient capacity. This impacts the communities’ ability to lure wealthier households assuming the availability of broadband at every residence, particularly those households looking to perform business operations from home.

Priorities for Future Network Enhancements

- Ability to increase “last-mile” connections in residential areas
- Develop a report evaluating future demands for downtown WiFi systems



As an additional reference, Towns County and its cities were included in the 2014 Georgia Mountains Digital Economy Plan (DEP), one of several such plans developed for each region across Georgia in accordance with standards defined by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA). The DEP was designed to identify and coordinate the resources and efforts related to improving the region’s infrastructure in support of hi-tech industries and economies. As each regional plan is completed, the State and its partners can begin directing their energy and resources with clearer focus and understanding of needs from every part of Georgia. While specific investment actions have not been identified as part of this initial process, the DEP provides a work scope that addresses key focus areas and recommendations that will help the GMRC, its member governments and regional stakeholders move forward with an understanding of the regional and state context for building network connectivity, improving educational resources and fostering technology hubs. With continued coordination and monitoring of progress, it is hoped these efforts will make the region a more effective and efficient place enabling all manners of business to realize their potential in accessing and utilizing electronic data.

SWOC Assessment – GMRC Digital Economy Plan

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Workforce/ Education	Higher Educational Institutions – University of North Georgia, Brenau, North Georgia Technical School, Lanier Technical School,	Limited existing hi-tech labor force	Economic and demographic growth of metro Atlanta	Attraction/ Retention of top technology talent
	Faster Business Start-up Time	Low family income	Job fairs held within the region by GMRC Workforce Development	Competition from other metro areas
	Dawson GigCenter – Business start-ups			
	GMRC Workforce Development			
Strong Dev. Authorities and Chamber offices to assist start-up businesses and industries				
Infrastructure	Cooperative EMC's that deliver good products	System Redundancy. Residents and Businesses need more choices for internet service.	Tourism/outdoor recreation related industry	Topographically the GMRC Region is difficult to traverse for aerial line installation
	North Georgia Network	Cost prohibitive		
	Access to metro Atlanta	Geographic isolation		
	Ga 400 – Technology Corridor			
Residents ability to telecommute				
Local Government	GMRC fostering cooperation	Limited funding resources	Educating local government on importance of broadband access	Finding Grant funds for broadband projects
	Quality Development Authorities and Joint Development Authorities	State needs to put more emphasis on education		Need to better communicate to State Legislators the Region's needs regarding broadband initiatives & projects
<p>Goal: <i>Ensure new telecommunication networks for needed accessibility and reliability to support the growth of the regional economy.</i></p> <p>Strategy: <i>Prepare to meet industry and business telecommunication needs by assisting with fiber optic network development.</i> The purpose of this strategy is to support, develop, and provide educational opportunities regarding telecommunication systems in the region.</p> <p>Strategy: <i>Promote and support the use of health information technology (IT).</i> The purpose of this strategy is to encourage local partnerships between health providers and local leaders in using telecommunications and other information technology to improve care to patients and lower health costs.</p>				

It should be noted that the City of Hiawassee has achieved Broadband Ready designation and is already eligible to participate in special State programming for broadband utility support.

Environmental Assessment

A region's natural resources are the native conditions and elements that contribute to the local character and livelihood. As the rivers and lakes supplying public water, mineral deposits that support local industry, or a scenic park serving locals and tourists alike, these resources can, properly managed, greatly serve a community's health, culture, and economy. Because these sites and conditions are highly susceptible to disturbance from human activity, they are regarded environmentally sensitive and need to be preserved for public benefit. The following is provided as a simplified assessment of critical environmental conditions in effect throughout Towns County and the Cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris.

Clean Water Act Compliance

<p>Y Any "not supporting" 303(d) listed waterbodies? <i>(See Below)</i> <i>If yes, these waterbodies have been found contaminated to the extent that they are not considered supporting their designated use. As such the local community should seek to manage land uses within the watershed so as to yield healthier water quality.</i></p>				
<p>Y Any 305(b) listed waterbodies? <i>(See Below)</i></p>				
<p>N <i>If yes, do the Implementation Plans/Watershed Management Plans require any outstanding actions from the local government? If so, please include these actions within the Implementation Program.</i></p>				
STREAM NAME	LOCATION	SIZE (MILES)	CAUSE	SOURCE
Charlies Creek	Headwaters to Tallulah River	4	Pending	TBD
Bearmeat Creek	Tributary to Hiawassee River	2	Bio F	Non-Point
Mill Creek	Pheasant Branch to Hiawassee River	2	FC	Non-Point
Fodder Creek	Tributary to Lake Chatuge	3	Bio F	Non-Point
Hiawassee River	Upstream Lake Chatuge	10	E Coli, FC	Non-Point
Swallow Creek	Headwaters to Hightower Creek	4	Bio F	Non-Point
Hightower Creek	Little Hightower Creek to Scataway Creek (formerly Shoal Branch to Swallow Creek)	2	Bio F	Non-Point
Corn Creek	Tributary to Brasstown Creek, Young Harris	2	FC	Non-Point
Yewell Branch	Darr Cove to Brasstown Creek	2	FC	Non-Point
Brasstown Creek	Yewell Branch to State Line	7	FC	Non-Point

Source: Georgia EPD, 2020

There are several stream segments within Towns County that remain on one of the State EPD lists of impaired waterbodies, including 3 that empty into Lake Chatuge. The predominant forms of contaminants include Fecal Coliform/ E-Coli, as well as nutrient concerns for stream with biologic impairments (typically low oxygen concerns). To ensure the water levels for these streams and the reservoir do not reach dangerous levels, the County, Cities, and other stakeholders need to explore recommendations outlined within the respective Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) assessments for each basin to identify mitigative measures.

Environmental Planning Criteria

CHARACTERISTIC	Towns County	Hiawassee	Young Harris
<i>Floodplains</i>	Y		Y
<i>Forest Lands</i>	Y		
<i>Ground Water Recharge Areas</i>	Y		
<i>Plant & Animal Habitat</i>	Y		
<i>Prime Agricultural Lands</i>	Y		
<i>Protected Mountains</i>	Y		
Steep Slopes	Y	Y	Y
<i>Water Supply Watersheds</i>	Y	Y	
<i>Wetlands</i>	Y		Y
<i>Protected Rivers</i>	Y		

Known for the abundance of scenic vistas and outdoor recreational opportunities, the mountains and Lake Chatuge are the defining assets for the community, so the integrity of local streams and mountain views is paramount to the community. The County has policies regarding mountain side development and all the governments have become more attuned to erosion and sedimentation control needs in the past decade. Such measures will be more critical going forward as new development comes to the area.



Lake Chatuge

The County and Cities will need to monitor growth trends as they emerge from the post-pandemic era. A resurgence in residential development in the Georgia mountains will pressure smaller communities like Hiawassee to accommodate significant increases in development, and the whole county will have to balance supporting growth without impairing local resources and amenities. Given the limited amount of “buildable area within Towns County, the communities are encouraged to go through a build-out scenario in an attempt to define thresholds for development capacity, and then adjust policies as needed.

This is to certify that as part of this planning process appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed the *Coosa-North Georgia Water Plan*, the *Georgie Mountains Regional Plan*, and the *Georgia State Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria* (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating this local plan. No conflicts were identified between this document and the other documents

Land Use Assessment

Land use management policies and programs represent guidelines for shaping development patterns that provide for efficient growth while also protecting sensitive social and environmental areas. This section presents an inventory of existing land use patterns and development trends for the community, allowing the local government to produce the most effective policies needed to manage the demands from projected development.

Development patterns saw little change since the previous plan update. Most of the development remains concentrated in and around the two municipalities, which is both desired and most efficient. Commercial activity is centered along Hwy 76, which is not only the only arterial corridor capable of handling heavier traffic for retail and other destinations but is also the critical link to adjoining communities (and their resources) in Blairsville, Helen, and Clayton.

Since the 2017 plan, both cities made some strides in advancing their own visions for in-town development, though the physical results remain minimal at the moment due to the limited resources available and the stagnation experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Young Harris completed studies to affirm their ambitions for evolving as a more vibrant village center, with aims for new parks, enhanced pedestrian infrastructure, increased quality workforce housing options, and economic development strategies in hopes of attracting retail and dining options within the downtown area. Hiwassee updated ordinances and is pursuing property redevelopment as they bid to continue strengthening their downtown, while also opening the new waterfront Mayor's Park in the southern part of the city and improved and upgraded Lloyds Landing into an attractive community recreational resource.

Beyond the cities, two other parts of the County are attracting the most attention, but at a pace within expectations for a remote mountain community. The ridges and lake shore between the cities is a popular corridor along Hwy 76. This area contains key commercial outlets, several prominent residential developments, and the County's popular recreation center. If they can develop the utility capacity around Young Harris, the Gumlog and Brasstown Valley areas represent strong potential for future growth due to larger swaths of less-severe topography and existing proximity to the College and the Brasstown Valley resort.



The Towns County Recreation Center, above, and Brasstown Valley, below.



Areas Requiring Special Attention

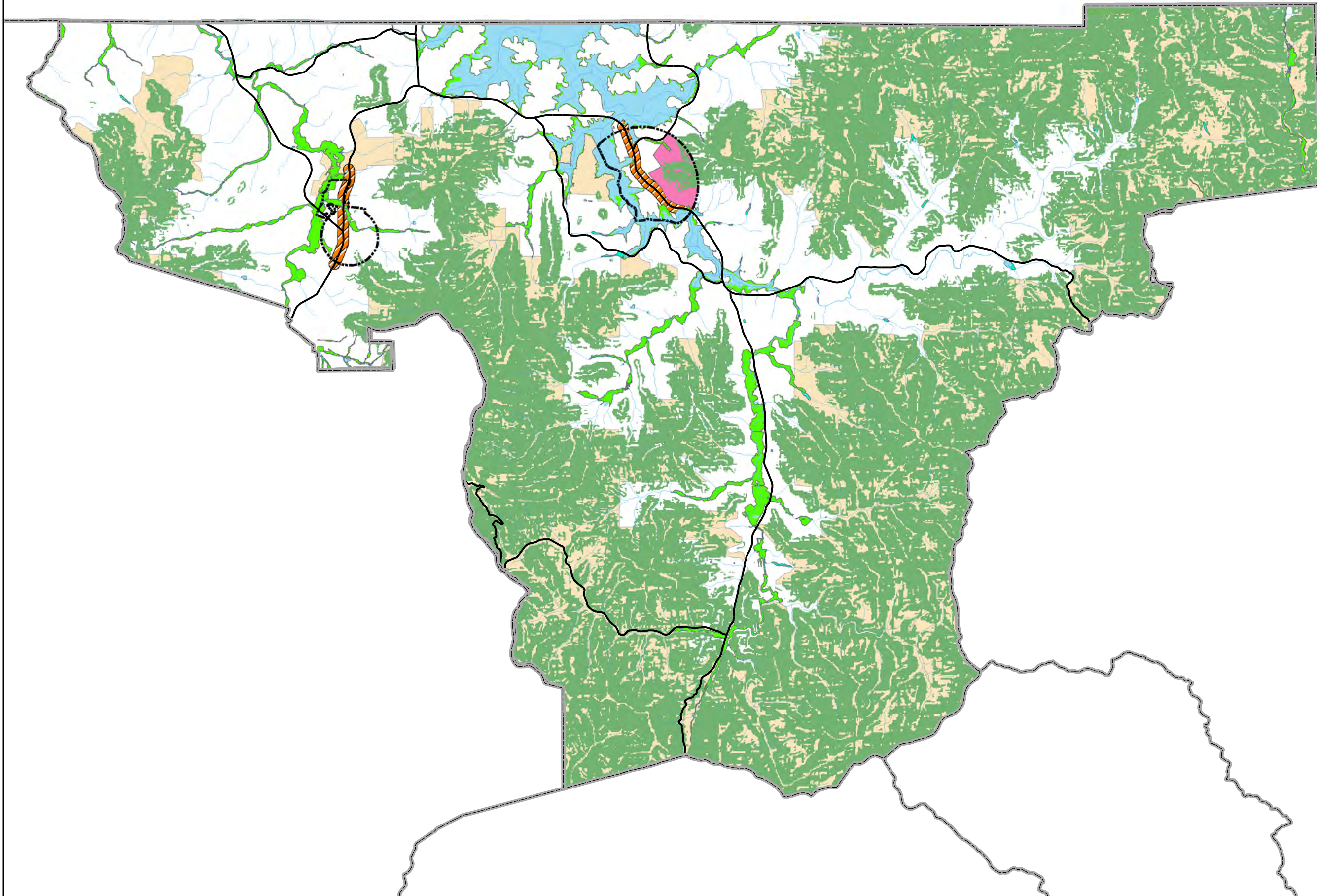
Analysis of the prevailing trends will assist in the identification of preferred patterns of growth for the future. More specifically such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention regarding management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development. As part of this process, stakeholders and local governments are encouraged to evaluate the presence of subsets of their communities subject to special circumstances such as:

- ✓ *Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur*
- ✓ *Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation*
- ✓ *Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors)*
- ✓ *Large, abandoned structures or sites, including possible environmental contamination.*
- ✓ *Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites).*
- ✓ *Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole*

Upon consideration of development trends and land use issues in Towns County and the cities, the following priorities stand out for the planning period:

- Based on the growing demands for both increased development and improved pedestrian safety, the respective **Main Street Corridors** in both Hiawassee and Young Harris are under heightened scrutiny as each community pursues their visions for downtown while wrestling with the reality of strong traffic flows through the area. In Hiawassee, the desire to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity along all of Main Street remains a long-term goal. For Young Harris, the plans for an eventual bypass will relieve the worst of the speeding and truck traffic issues, but the City must still work with the College and GDOT in fostering a comprehensive pedestrian-friendly streetscape as they pursue more commercial development.
- Comments throughout the public involvement process cited the desire to see **Northern Hiawassee** improved. This area just north of Main Street consists of a variety of residential and commercial uses on the lower slopes of the mountain and represents the bulk of the city that isn't on Main Street or along the lake shore. This area could harbor quality infill workforce housing, and additional new development. However, it also has a number of dilapidated and underdeveloped properties and presents some challenges regarding utilities and infrastructure given the costs to install and maintain facilities and services on the sloping landscape.
- The whole of **Lake Chatuge** is an ongoing priority for all communities. Not only is the reservoir the main water source for the area but it is THE primary income generator for the region, therefore its health is of prime importance to everyone in Towns County. Development can continue around the lake shore but should be wisely managed in accordance with sustainable environmental standards. Presently, an infiltration study is needed as part of the improvements for the existing water and sewer infrastructure.

Towns County Areas Requiring Special Attention



Legend

- Major Roads
- Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- - - Municipal Boundaries
- Protected Rivers
- Protected Mountains
- Flood Plains
- Wetlands
- North Hiwassee
- Main Street Corridor
- Conservation Lands



Recommended Character Areas



Character area planning incorporates the concept of community function and feel to identify neighborhoods or communities of similar interaction, process, and character. Defining character areas is useful for identifying unique characteristics that provide a sense of community and to discern localized functions within the larger city or county context. Once character areas are established, community leaders can develop and implement strategies to promote the unique qualities of each character area.



Character areas are often identified based on environmental and/or physical characteristics of an area and it is not uncommon for communities to define their physical spaces based on a combination of both. The prevailing character and context of a community influence development forms and scale. Such elements are often identified as sub-areas within the community, such as neighborhoods, defined by architectural scale and style, functions and roles, traffic flow, and other factors that differentiate one area from the next. These can include the areas requiring special attention identified above and/or existing community sub-areas for which plans have already been prepared.



Towns County	Hiawassee	Young Harris
Lake Chatuge	City Square	College Overlay "A" District
Brasstown Scenic Byway	Southside Corridor District	College Overlay "B" District
National Forest Service	Lakefront Residential	Industrial
Gumlog	Lakefront Commercial	Residential
Brasstown Valley	Low Density Residential	General Business District
Commercial Corridor	North Commercial Corridor	Special institutional District
Rural Valley District		Special Business District
Northern Lakefront		Government Owned Properties
Hog Creek Rural District		
Macedonia		
North Ridge Communities		
Tate City		

Lake Chatuge

This is the existing reservoir and shoreline managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The lake is considered an overwhelming benefit to the community and there is a consensus to see it protected. Shoreline management is a critical issue going forward, as more and more homes and other development seek to capitalize on the asset. Most of the shoreline features conventional homes, either for seasonal visitors or for full time residents. There are several points of public access, including beaches, boat launches, the fairgrounds and some commercial docking. Along the Hwy 76 corridor north of Hiwassee, there have been some higher density developments on/near the shoreline, including some condominiums, which have led to speculation about structures with more than 3 stories. Such densities would be difficult for the County to manage at present, and existing residents have hinted at fears of overcrowding. There is recognition that the lake must be protected as an environmental resource as well as for economic development, and these uses must be balanced accordingly with other objectives for the community.

Future development will be permitted in scale compatible with environmental protection and in keeping intensity levels and demands for public services low. The county will also actively work with TVA to coordinate water protection efforts and maintain the recreational viability of the lake.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Recreation
- Commercial (Neighborhood scale)

Implementation Measures

- Coordinate with TVA regarding mgmt. of lake
- Review and amend (as needed) land use mgmt. measures
- Restrict scale of utilities and development along lake by keeping future development to a scale compatible with environmental protection regulations and demands for public services low



Brasstown Scenic Byway (Overlay)

This is the existing Scenic Byway that runs by the entrance to Brasstown Bald and into Union County. Vistas are limited by the surrounding mountains but the drive does run through some cherished forests and typifies the rustic setting loved by Towns County residents. The Byway has a management plan that will need updating in order to protect the rural character from any adverse development, particularly signs or increased presence of structures.

The intention is to preserve this district in conjunction with the State Dept. of Natural Resources and the US Forest Service.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Agricultural
- Passive Park

Implementation Measures

- Restrictions on utilities to prevent adverse development
- Maintain Scenic Byway Mgmt. Plan
- Restrictions on signage to protect the rural character through existing management plan
- Continue enforcement of current litter and nuisance regulations



National Forest Service

The bulk of Towns County, this is the volume of mostly undeveloped land along the county's southern and eastern boundaries, and most of this is the actual mountain range and higher elevations. This land is managed and conserved by the US Forest Service in cooperation with the State. Access is permitted but limited, though several key spots like Brasstown Bald and various hiking trails also comprise some of the county's most important recreation amenities. There is no desire to change the boundaries or conditions of this district at this time, but there have been calls to improve upon the restriction of development along ridgelines throughout the area, including within the USFS lands.

Development Encouraged

- Passive use parks
- Hunting
- Outdoor recreation
- Forestry (As permitted by USFS)

Implementation Measures

- Cooperation with USFS and GA DNR on development restrictions
- Work with USFS to improve public access



Brasstown Valley

Brasstown Valley is predominantly rural, with a defining scenic view of the entire valley as you drive west/south along 76. There are several residential areas, including many houses along the mountainsides taking advantage of the views. As Hwy 76 has been widened and the resort grows in popularity, some businesses have cropped up along the roadway, including a day spa. To date these are mostly rural in style, mimicking barn/farm architecture and avoiding the conventional frontage parking lot. The rest of the valley around Young Harris is sparsely developed and includes a significant amount of agricultural activity.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Agricultural
- Parks
- Neighborhood Commercial (along arterial roads)

Implementation Measures

- Minimize expansion of utilities to prevent adverse effects to the rural landscape
- Encourage concentrations of non-residential activity
- Review and amend land use mgmt. measures as needed



Gumlog

Gumlog is the agricultural and rural residential district that comprises the bulk of the Brasstown Valley. It features a variety of housing types and scales, though mostly larger lot residential for full-time residents. There is a healthy amount of farming and some livestock, both for personal use and light commercial purposes. The through roads are active enough to sustain 2 produce stands, and the connectivity suggests a potential for more residential development. There are a couple churches in the area and growing attachment with Young Harris, such that residents within Gumlong could drive additional commercial and service-related growth within the city.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Agricultural

Implementation Measures

- Minimize expansion of utilities to prevent adverse effects to the rural landscape
- Encourage concentrations of non-residential activity
- Review and amend land use mgmt. measures as needed



Commercial Corridor (Overlay)

This is the run of Hwy 76 that goes through Hiawassee and runs west all the way through the county, as well as the stretch of SR 17 as it turns northward into North Carolina. This corridor has seen the most aggressive development for commercial activity and auto-oriented designs within the county, including shopping centers, the fairgrounds, a movie theatre and several larger scale residential developments.

The portion of Hwy 76 outside of Hiawassee is two lanes for either direction, with limited capacity for pedestrian crossing but potential for managing higher traffic volumes. This corridor also features some of the community's highest levels of utility capacity, with further improvements already planned. There will be a need to minimize the potential volume of new development along this corridor, however, both for maintaining traffic flow and to retain the sense of rural character within the community.

Within Young Harris and Hiawassee the development standards will defer to local ordinances, which strive to create more traditional village and main street corridors, respectively.

Development Encouraged

- Commercial
- Office

Implementation Measures

- Maintain utility improvement schedule for the corridor
- Work with Economic Dev. partners to encourage small to mid-sized growth in this area to preserve the rural character of the area and limit excessive traffic.
- Need to work with GDOT in developing traffic calming measures



Northern Lakefront

This is the area surrounding the larger body of Lake Chatuge, north of Hiawasse. It includes the fairgrounds and some public beach access, several larger, private residential developments along the shoreline, and a variety of residential uses. Most of the residential units in this district are at the higher economical end, with a scattering of older and lower-end units throughout. There are some major utility lines that serve this area and the bisecting commercial corridor.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Parks
- Neighborhood Commercial

Implementation Measures

- Minimize expansion of utilities by limiting development that could be an adverse effect to the lakefront and open space.
- Encourage concentrations of non-residential activity
- Review and amend land use mgmt. measures as needed



Rural Valleys District

A merger of three previous Character Areas (Fodder Creek, Hightower, and Hiwassee River), this district comprises of the myriad of shallower creek and river valleys on the northern slopes of the mountains framing Towns County from the south. These areas are predominantly residential, with a range of homes from luxurious mountain retreats and smaller vacation lodges to the rustic and older homes for full-time residents that seek an escape from the busier lake scene. Scattered throughout are small agricultural activities, some churches, and the occasional commercial use.

The aim for these areas is to preserve their rural character and the integrity of the landscape and ecology. These areas are part of the broader rustic mountain scene that people cherish about Towns County and wish to sustain.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Agricultural
- Parks
- Neighborhood Commercial

Implementation Measures

- Minimize expansion of utilities to prevent adverse effects to the rural landscape
- Review and amend land use mgmt. measures as needed



Hog Creek Rural District

The Hog Creek district is essentially the other side of Lake Chatuge from Hiawassee. It features a variety of smaller residential units along the roads and mostly larger seasonal and year-round homes right on the lake front. There are a couple developments that have group access for their residents, plus a public access park and point along the western portion of this district.

The area has received increased development pressures because of the lake, and future projects will need to incorporate more modern standards for construction, septic systems and access. Other portions of the district feature some of the most exclusive homes along the lakefront. Pending utility capacities in the future this district will likely compliment the residential demand for commercial and service activity within Hiawassee.

There is some need to make better use of existing park space in the district.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Agricultural
- Parks

Implementation Measures

- Minimize expansion of utilities to prevent adverse effects to the rural landscape
- Encourage concentrations of non-residential activity
- Review and amend land use mgmt. measures as needed



Macedonia

This district just east of Hiawassee is defined by the intersection of Hwy 76 and SR 75. The traffic volume is substantial, and while there is an abundance of housing within the area it is also home to some commercial activity, churches and the county schools, and it has the potential for higher levels of development. The County has established a fire station and EMS facilities in the community. Most of the housing in Macedonia is in the upper tiers of price ranges, including lakefront lots and some larger agricultural/recreational properties.

There is some expectation the district will see increased demand for commercial use and possibly some civic and/or office use.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Commercial
- Office
- Institutional
- Recreational

Implementation Measures

- Develop infrastructure to support continuing residential and commercial growth along arterial roadways, lakefront and agricultural properties



North Ridge Communities

This district encompasses the areas surrounding the northern parts of Lake Chatuge but are not along the shore and lowest elevations. It includes the pocket of residential development that is north of Hiawassee, and the eastern ridge of the Brasstown Mountain near the confluence of Hwy 76 and SR 515. These areas are primarily residential in use, but traditionally smaller lots and units than many other parts of the county, with fewer seasonal homes and minimal amounts of agricultural activity. It is essentially a modest residential enclave of Hiawassee, with no major utility but include some scenic views of the lake. This area is expected to see little change going forward, though possibly some additional residential development.

Expansion of the residential use is expected in this district, as well as some possible ancillary commercial related to the lake. Ultimately this will evolve from an elevated rural community to one more closely defined by suburban scale development related to Hiawassee.

Development Encouraged

- Residential
- Parks
- Agricultural

Implementation Measures

- Minimize expansion of utilities to prevent adverse effects to the rural landscape
- Review and amend land use mgmt. measures as needed



Tate City

This district is defined by its remoteness and limited access to Hiwassee and its primary access corridor connecting the northern part of the community lying in Clay County, NC to Rabun County and Hwy 76. In ways similar to the Hightower district, it has a blend of residential activity including a church and community center and developed camping and recreational use along the Tallulah River.

Several of the intersecting roads lead to subdivisions or collections of homes. This corridor is heavily travelled during the warmer months by campers and recreational users accessing the Tallulah River and National Forest. Due to its remoteness, Tate City has several public safety and access issues. In 1900, the Tate City community was the 'hub of industry' for Towns County and had a larger population than other communities due to corundum mining and manufacturing, now abandoned and those lands under National Forest ownership.

Development Encouraged

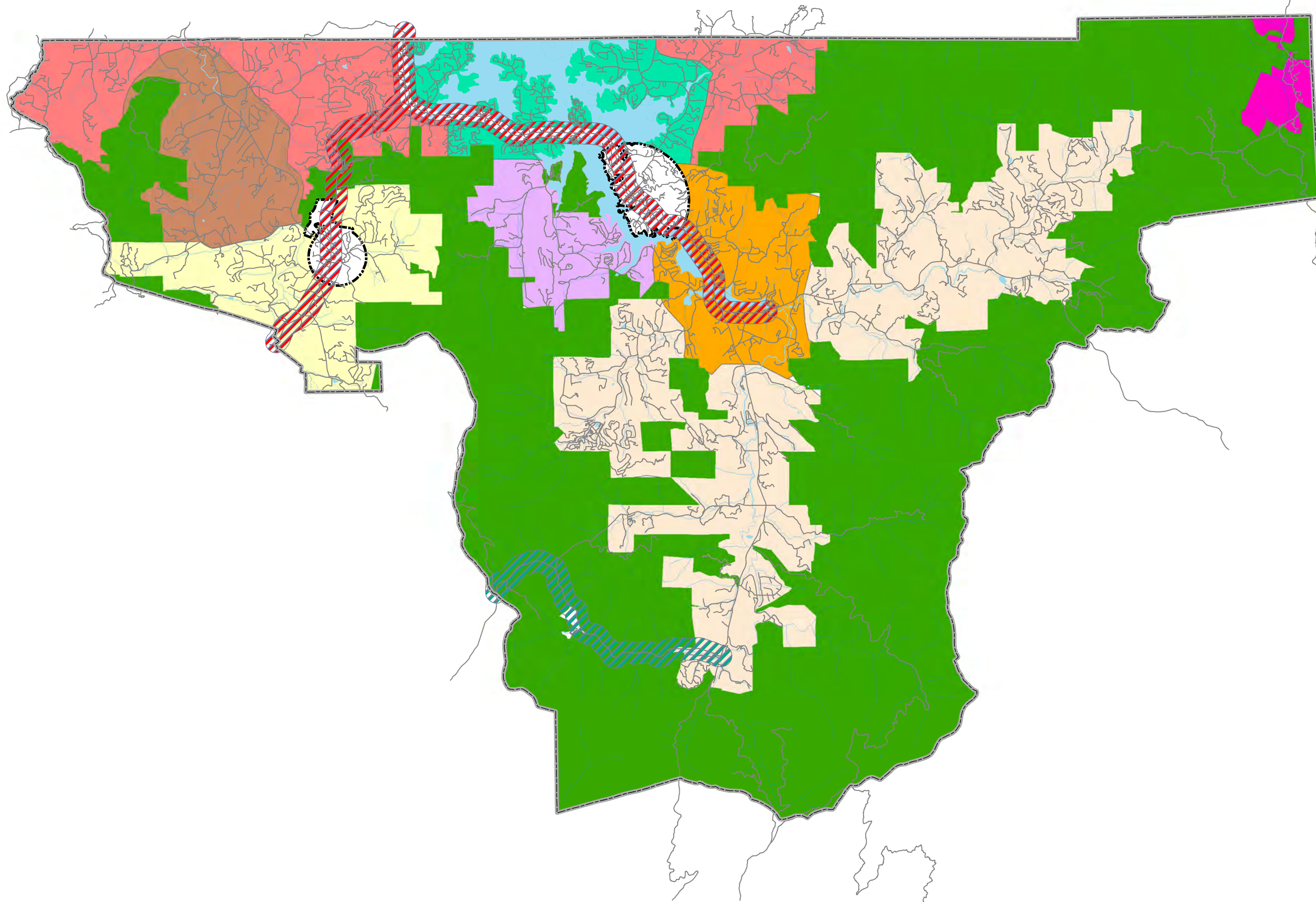
- Residential
- Agricultural

Implementation Measures

- Improve access and utilities as necessary
- Maintain access corridor cooperatively with National Forest, Clay and Rabun Counties



Towns County Character Areas



Legend

- County Boundary
- Roads
- Municipal Boundaries
- Lakes and Ponds
- Rivers and Streams
- National Forest
- Overlay Corridors
 - Brasstown Scenic Byway
 - Commercial Corridor
- Character Areas
 - Brasstown Valley
 - Gumlog
 - Hog Creek Rural
 - Macedonia Community
 - North Ridge
 - Northern Lake Front
 - Rural Valley
 - Tate City



City Square	
<p>This is the formal, original downtown area of Hiawassee that includes the town square, the surrounding few blocks of shop-front buildings and other commercial structures, the courthouse, library and other assorted offices and service buildings. It also includes the peninsula formed by Bell and River Streets reaching out to the lake. The square itself has suffered as a destination, due to contours, marginal surrounding commercial use and the impact of Hwy 76 as a linear corridor. Thus, while the district has some elements to be a traditional downtown it lacks the critical mass of activity and attractions to be its own destination.</p> <p>This is the portion of Hiawassee that does feature some classic public architectural forms, including zero-lot line structures and shop-front buildings. There is also some on street parking and sidewalks to enable pedestrian accessibility, though crossings of the highway are ill managed and there is little in the sense of coordinated signage or elements to reinforce the image of the district. Some residential use rings the periphery to the north, but otherwise this is primarily the government district with some commercial activity added in.</p> <p>The City of Hiawassee has developed a comprehensive strategic plan for the city. The goal is to properly recognize the character of this district and draft proposals that will give the community direction and progression.</p>	<p><u>Development Encouraged</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mixed use” of retail, small/medium sized business, government office, residential use, and a public park square. <p><u>Implementation Measures</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued maintenance for the square and surrounding areas to encourage activity and daily use and expand walkability. • Improve sidewalks, street lighting (low level), and performance and activities areas to improve city streetscapes and public areas. • Improve parking and pedestrian access. • Apply for ARC, DOT T-Grant/Tollway Authority and other state and federal grants for downtown improvement and utilize SPLOST for local renovations and projects. • Seek State and Federal Grants for listed improvements. • Expand “Heart of the County” Concept. • Adopt construction recommendations. • Create uniform city signage guidelines for local business. • Implement a City Banner (Electrical Pole) Program. • Seek assistance through the Georgia Downtown Association and the Georgia Cities Foundation of the Georgia Municipal Association. • Work with Georgia DOT to reduce speed limit on Main Street from 45MPH to 35MPH.

City Square



Southside Corridor

This area encompasses the area East of City Square to the city limit boundary running along Main Street (Hwy 76). Prominent uses include the Bank of Hiawassee, McConnell Church, and the hospital complex. Additionally, there is limited mixed use with limited residential development. These are the tallest structures within the urbanized portion of Hiawassee, though the sunken topography mitigates their impact against the overall scale of the community.

Maintain existing businesses and seek additional professional. Rehabilitation and medical offices. Concentrate on businesses that provide services focused on its all of residents and travel tourism. Continue with limited residential development. Improve streets, street lighting and traffic flows and reduce traffic problems.



Development Encouraged

- Retail
- Office
- Civic
- Park
- Residential
- Mixed Use

Implementation Measures

- Improve sidewalks, bike paths and street lighting (low level).
- Include area in a Master Plan including Preservation Ordinances.
- Rehabilitate sewer located in this area to reduce inflow and add expansion as development warrants it.
- Adopt construction recommendations.
- Create uniform city signage guidelines for local business.
- Apply for state and federal grants for sidewalk and streetscape improvement and utilize SPLOST for local renovations and projects.
- Seek assistance through the Georgia Downtown Association and the Georgia Cities Foundation of the Georgia Municipal Association.
- Apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for bike trails and urban park development



Lakefront Residential

This represents the sections of Lake Chatuge frontage given over to exclusively residential and passive uses, including an established residential subdivision, and should be limited to single-family structures only. Conventional in layout and featuring a very urbanized scale of small lots and harmonized architecture, this subdivision is considered a healthy part of modern Hiawassee and offers both lake access and easy proximity to the City.

Continue with residential development. Improve streets, street lighting and traffic flows and reduce traffic problems. Obtain the private easement and convert into a city street. Improve fire protection and Wastewater Treatment Capacity.

Development Encouraged

- Residential

Implementation Measures

- Work with DOT to obtain a traffic light for the entrance into the city hall complex.
- Improve sidewalks.
- Improve street lighting (low level).
- Include area in a Master Plan.
- Adopt construction recommendations.



Lakefront Commercial

This area borders the lake with potential boating access to restaurants, shopping, and entertainment. In some cases there are existing commercial properties present, regardless of how they address the lake, because the location also coincides with surrounding commercial activity and heavier roadway corridors.

The aim for this district is to retain certain spaces along the lake for public, commercial purposes that enhance the community's relationship with the reservoir. It recognizes that select operations that support recreation and give access to the water enhance Hiwassee's character.

Development Encouraged

- Commercial – restaurants, shopping
- Mixed Use

Implementation Measures

- Improve sidewalks and bike paths.
- Include area in a Master Plan.
- Create a public dock near the fire station
- Adopt construction recommendations.
- Apply for state and federal grants for sidewalk and streetscape improvements, downtown improvement and utilize SPLOST for local renovations and projects.



Low Density Residential

This is a sparsely populated residential area to the north of Whiskey Mountain. Lots sizes are larger and allow for more open space with tree or vegetation buffers between properties. This area should continue to be limited to single-family residential development only and will require improvements to the roadway and infrastructure if more development is pursued.

Continue with residential development. Improve streets, street lighting and traffic flows and reduce traffic problems. Improve fire protection.

Development Encouraged

- Residential

Implementation Measures

- Increase the number of fire hydrants in area.
- Add four way stops to improve public safety.
- Work with DOT to obtain MEAG funds for street resurfacing.
- Improve street lighting (low level).
- Include area in a Master Plan.
- Adopt construction recommendations.
- Apply for state and federal grants for sidewalk and streetscape improvements, downtown improvement and utilize SPLOST for local renovations and projects



Northside Corridor

This area encompasses the area from the city square West to the city limit boundary. This runs along Main Street (Hwy 76) with a mix of uses and differing building designs and materials. There is little in the way of a common theme and usage runs from commercial, business, food produce, hardware, many restaurants, banking to fast foods. There is a need for improved sidewalks, bike trails and pedestrian traffic, public parking, and improved signage and lighting. This district will also be included in the new Master Plan for revitalizing Hiawassee.

Maintain existing businesses and seek additional business. This area is suited for commercial and business expansion. There is a need to reduce traffic problems. There is a need to expand sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, and too reduce speed limit to 35 miles.

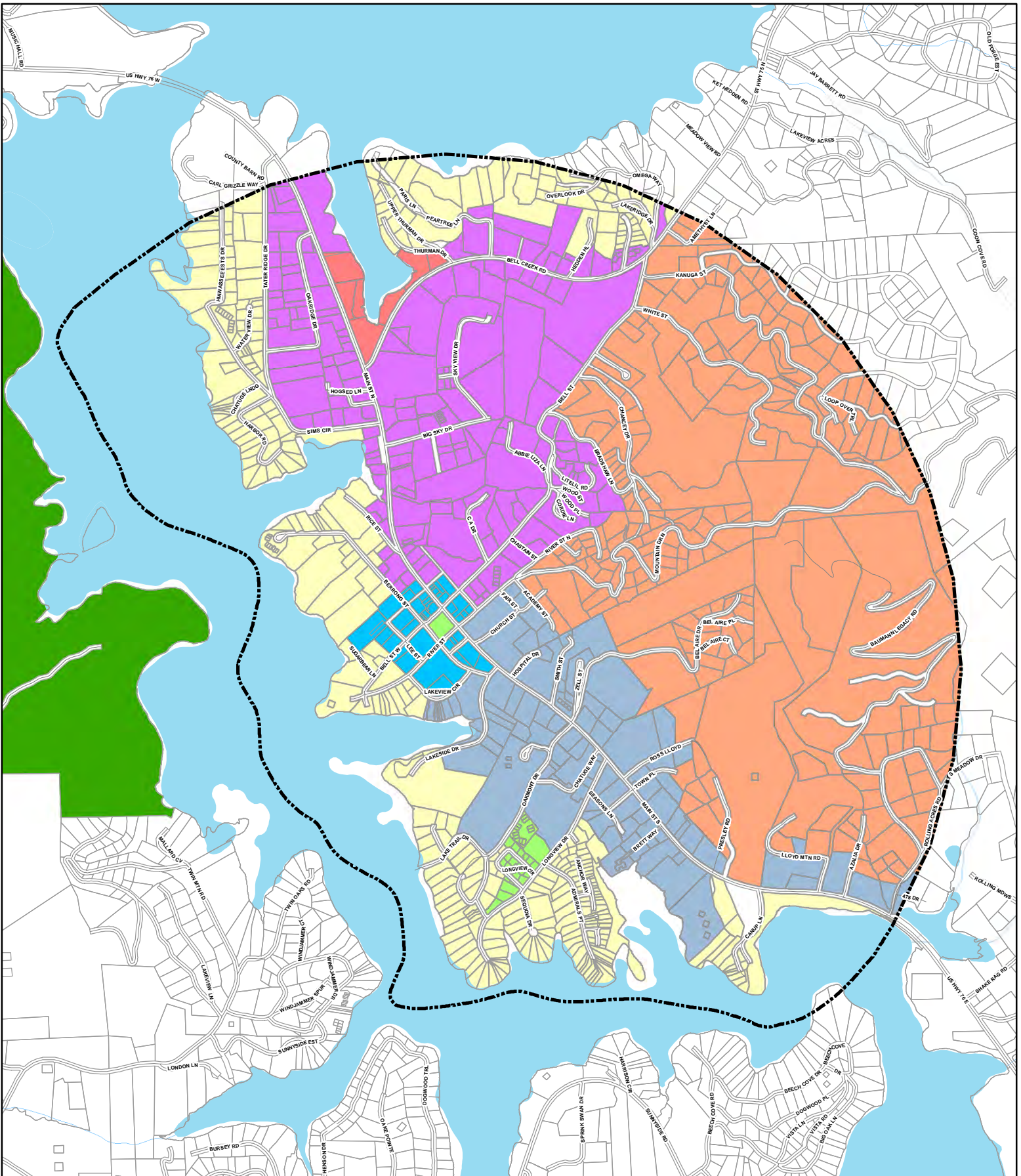
Development Encouraged

- Retail
- Office
- Mixed Use
- Park

Implementation Measures

- Increase the number of fire hydrants in area.
- Work with DOT to install sidewalks and a pedestrian crossing and a left hand turn light.
- Improve street lighting (low level).
- Include area in a Master Plan.
- Adopt construction recommendations.
- Apply for state and federal grants for sidewalk and streetscape improvements, downtown improvement and utilize SPLOST for local renovations and projects.





City of Hiwassee Character Areas

- Legend**
- Roads
 - Hiwassee City Limits
 - Lakes and Ponds
 - Rivers and Streams
 - National Forest
 - City Square
 - Lake Front Commercial
 - Lake Front Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Northside Corridor
 - Southside Corridor
 - Park/Recreation



College Overlay “B”

This is the largely undeveloped mountainside that sits just south of the college campus. Apart from the handful of existing structures within this district, this is the rising backdrop to the community and part of its scenic mountain heritage. The intention is to preserve the area as a sparsely used natural landscape that helps to define the character of the city as it grows alongside.

Development Encouraged

- Public Parks,
- Private Recreation (College Owned Land), Green Space,
- Institutional
- Low Density Residential

Implementation Measures

- Review Land Use Ordinances, update where necessary
- Develop report assessing options for greenspace ordinances
- Review possible Historic Preservation Ordinances
- Develop and enable unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)
- Work with USFS to connect trails



College Overlay “A”

This is the campus proper for Young Harris College, and includes their academic, athletic and all other ancillary facilities. The college is in the early stages of a planned growth into a more formal and diverse 4-year institution. This will include plans for more dormitories, classroom space as well as facilities for the arts and administration. Much of this is planned for the existing campus footprint but preliminary plans show ambition for expansion.

The general character of the college is defined more by the scale than the architecture, with the exception of the original church near the main entrance. This structure and setting are the symbol of the campus and should be preserved. Beyond that the college intends to develop several structures ranging from 1-3 stories and will use the new master plan to define their architectural style.

The campus is known for having greenspace for passive use and both the college and the City wish to see this aspect preserved if not expanded in the future.



Development Encouraged

- Conservation Subdivision
- PUB
- Private Recreation
- Public Parks
- Detached Residential
- Attached Residential
- Office
- Retail
- Light Industry
- Institutional

Implementation Measures

- Implement Land Use Ordinance, and update where appropriate
- Unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)

Special Institutional

This is a disjointed district mostly just behind the college, with mostly modest sized homes of various design types. The scale and setting typifies rural homesteads nestled into the hillside, with most lots on the larger side and fairly wooded. Traffic is minimal and access to the open space within the campus. This area is considered stable and the community would like to keep it intact, with some possible improvements; An additional road access point that does not send traffic through the campus is preferred, as is an extension of sidewalks in the area.



Development Encouraged

- Private Recreation
- Institutional
- Detached Residential (workforce housing)

Implementation Measures

- Land Use Ordinance
- College Overlay District
- Unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)



Special Business

This district includes the small stretch of Hwy 76 considered as Young Harris' main street, and the block formed by Maple and College Streets that veer eastward from Hwy 76. This includes the vast majority of the city's commercial structures, including a hotel, shops and restaurants. Most structures are 1-2 stories with a range of 60's-80's architectural styling. There is no prevailing style for architecture or signage.

Most buildings along the highway are within 50' of the roadway, reminiscent of true urban districts. There is a desire to create a vibrant, viable village within the mountain valley. Components of this village would include improved pedestrian viability, commercial and mixed-use redevelopment and infill development, pocket parks, walkability, wayfinding signage and public art, functional and non-functional. The struggle is to maintain the small-town character while implementing these measures and to not give way to the conventional auto-oriented designs.

Development Encouraged

- PUD
- Public Parks
- Detached and Attached Residential
- Retail
- Office
- Mixed Use

Implementation Measures

- Land Use Ordinance
- Create, Adopt and Implement Design Standards
- Unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)
- Implement BluePrint for Community and Economic Development & Placemaking Collaborative
- Implement Economic Development Strategy
- Implement Recreation and Trail Plan
- Implement GICH strategies



Government Owned Properties

This refers to each of Young Harris' facilities and properties in the area, including City Hall and Cupid Falls Park. This also includes the existing water treatment facility, which includes pump houses, filtration and tanks and holding ponds. At the moment the facility is sufficient for local needs and is considered compatible with the rural setting.

Development Encouraged

- Public Facilities; Utility

Implementation Measures

- Maintain existing facility and grounds



Industrial

This is the few blocks at the southern edge of downtown which could harbor commercial uses but might also handle larger forms of institutional or light institutional use.

This district allows the scale and space for activities that might prove too large for a village concept, specifically those that require a more auto-oriented form. It also accounts for where the future GDOT bypass will route freight and thru-traffic away from downtown Young Harris.

Development Encouraged

- Mixed Use
- Institutional
- Office
- Retail/ Dining
- Entertainment
- Light Industry

Implementation Measures

- Create, Adopt and Implement Design Standards
- Add Urban Mix to Land Use Ordinance
- Seek economic development ideas and funding to aid in development
- Unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)



Residential

This is a set of three areas around the City center that compliments the existing and proposed urban environment for Young Harris but also exhibit a more residential scale and base. The goal is to ensure the provision of quality workforce housing.

To the north is the established residential district comprised of Meadow, Miller and Dean Streets north of the downtown area. These roads connect with the highway do feature some non-residential activity along that corridor, but away from Hwy 76 this area provides a more traditional neighborhood setting in terms of lot size and residential structures, including some smaller lots, common yard sizes and structural locations. There are some opportunities for infill development that could strengthen the district's residential role, and an expansion of this district might be called upon depending on plans for other parts of the community.

To the east is a two-block stretch alongside Maple Street between downtown and the college that includes City Hall and the adjoining park and several houses. Portions of the corridor may evolve into commercial use or other public activity centers, but it will be more reserved than a conventional commercial road due to the adjoining uses.

To the south is the existing neighborhood on and behind Sycamore Street, including portions of Walker and School Streets. This area features several homes with urban scale yards and lots in a pattern that could be easily extended and complimented with sidewalks. The residents consider the area stable and desire to preserve the existing characteristics and residential nature.

Development Encouraged

- Detached Residential
- Attached Residential
- Mixed Use
- Public Parks
- Private Recreation
- Retail

Implementation Measures

- Create Design Standards
- Develop Historic Preservation Ordinance to preserve older homes and structures
- Unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)



General Business

This refers to the largely undeveloped area just north of downtown Young Harris, where the four-lane of Hwy 76 comes down into the valley and creates the best opportunity for conventional development forms. It includes some existing commercial and office uses, as well as a multi-family complex. The setting is prime for commercial uses but with quality landscaping and rural-grades of signage to match the context of established businesses.

This area would serve as the gateway into Young Harris from the north, and define the character of the broader Brasstown valley. It has sufficient road capacity and utility services to handle substantial scales of development for this area.

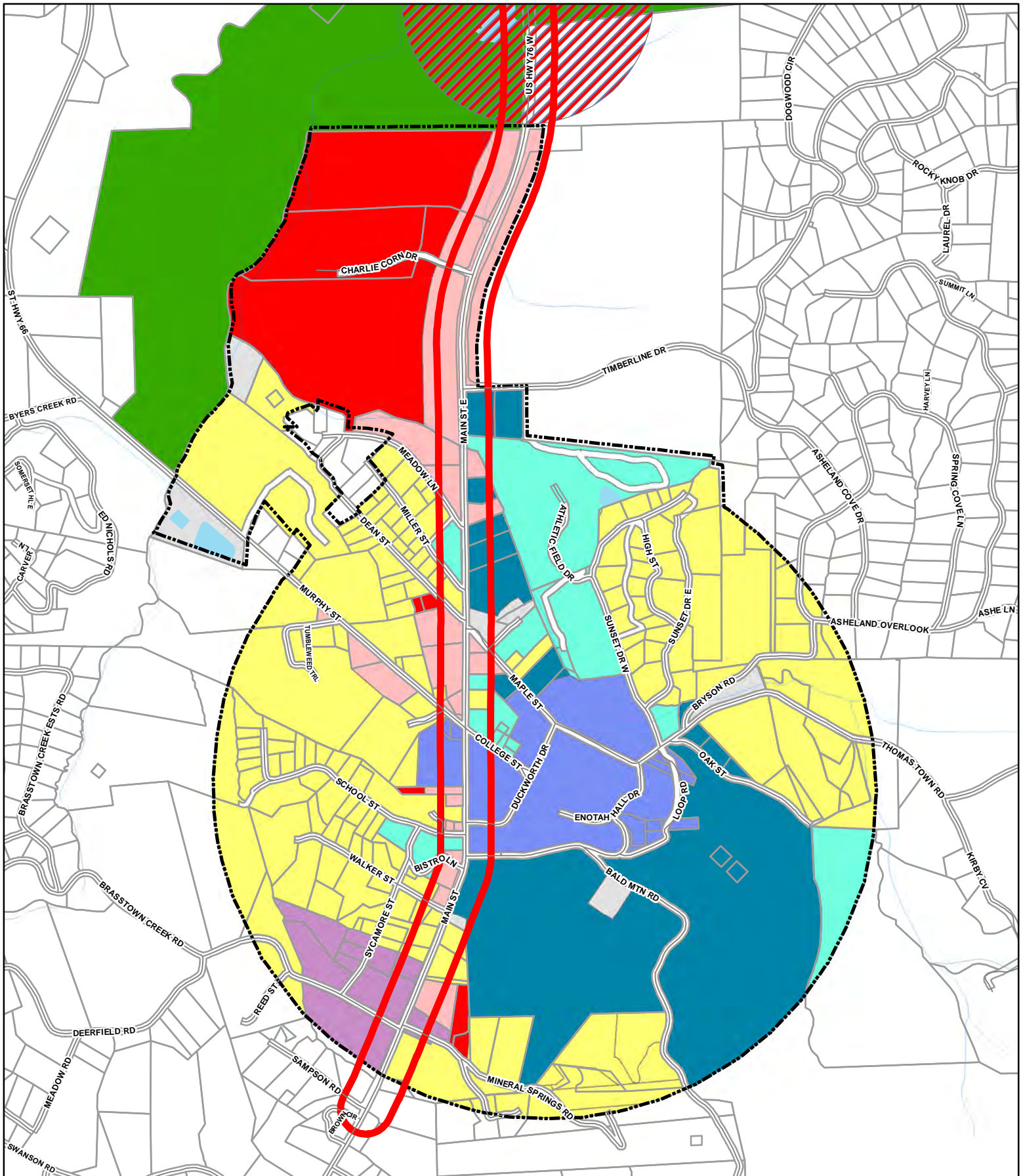
Development Encouraged

- PUD
- Public Parks
- Detached and Attached Residential
- Retail
- Office

Implementation Measures

- Land Use Ordinance
- Create, Adopt and Implement Design Standards
- Unique Signage to differentiate between different character areas (and for all city streets, areas)
- Implement BluePrint for Community and Economic Development & Placemaking Collaborative
- Implement Economic Development Strategy
- Implement Recreation and Trail Plan
- Implement GICH strategies





City of Young Harris Character Areas

Legend

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Roads | Residential |
| Special Business Corridor - 200' from Centerline | General Business |
| Municipal Boundary | Special Business |
| Lakes and Ponds | Special Institutional |
| Rivers and Streams | Zone A - College Overlay District |
| National Forest | Zone B - College Overlay District |
| Commercial Corridor | Government Owned |
| | Industrial |



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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

“There are dreamers and there are planners; The Planners make their dreams come true.”

- Edwin Louis Cole



The Implementation Program features four main components. For each community there are the following elements:

Community Needs and Opportunities

These reflect an assessment of the conditions and factors influencing the area and people, stakeholder knowledge of the community and comments received throughout the planning process. In order to effectively realize their vision for the future a community must develop a well-defined implementation plan. By identifying the core issues and priorities of the community, the government and its partners can develop specific strategies that must be accomplished to fulfill the desired goals and objectives of the vision. It is critical that these issues and opportunities be clearly defined and understood by the stakeholders because they form the basis for the development of the community's long and short-term action plans.

Reports of Accomplishments

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

Community Work Program

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

Note: Some items listed will explore assistance through the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) via their discretionary contract elements with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). These items will include “DCA” under the list of potential funding sources.

Policies and Long-Term Objectives

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

Towns County Needs and Opportunities

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Need for a long-term Road Improvement Strategy that addresses traffic management, roadway maintenance, paving, and accommodating freight movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update inventory of road conditions • Catalog needed road improvements • Develop system for prioritizing road projects
Need coordinated strategy for eventual broadband enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement broadband technology committee • Develop report outlining opportunities for broadband investment
Demand for workforce housing options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & Implement GICH strategy
Need to address dilapidated properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review local ordinances; Amend as needed • Develop & Implement GICH strategy
Need a strategy to sustain quality of local services and facilities amidst growth and limited resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop long-term improvement schedule and budget for each department • Create special projects budget for all proposed capital improvements
Growing demand to ensure protection of the local environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop annual environmental report incorporating information from TVA, GA EPD, and others.
Desire to mitigate light pollution in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a “Night Sky” ordinance (2022)

Towns County - Report of Accomplishments

Action	Status	Comment
Implement BOE Capital Improvement Projects	In Progress	2022
With DOT on widening and/or straightening the road between Young Harris and Blairsville; on installing a traffic light at 288 and 76E.	In Progress	2023
New generator for repeater on Bell Mountain	In Progress	2023
Emergency Operation Center generator	Complete	
Update Next Generation CAD Program	Complete	
New GIS/GPS mapping equipment/new computers and software	Complete	
Cardboard baler at county transfer station	Complete	
New clam bucket 4-wheel drive backhoe	Complete	
Tub grinder for county transfer station	In Progress	2023
Mountain Christmas lights display enhancement at Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds	Complete	
Continue to maintain and improve the 18 acres on the summit of Bell Mountain as the Bell Mountain Park and Towns County Historical Site.	Complete	
Inventory all county signs and comply with all new regulations concerning GIS services	Complete	
Contract for traffic management plan to include the need for road signs and traffic lights	In Progress	2022
Maintain opposition to unsubstantiated development that spoils the county's natural and historic resources.	Complete	Policy
Improve promotion and education about national forests, parks, and environmental resources. Develop more natural resources and/or restricted areas.	In Progress	2024
Continue preservation of Lake Chatuge and enforcement of sediment/erosion programs. Use festivals/tours for education.	Complete	Policy
Promote and maintain the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) and other hiking trails and "leave no trace policy."	Complete	Policy
Promote and publicize the Brasstown Bald Center; work with federal, state and locals to educate	Complete	Policy
Promote and publicize scenic mountain and lakeside drives and paths. Work with fed, state and locals to highlight preservation.	Complete	Policy
Preserve Cultural Heritage—Museums & National Register.	Complete	Policy
Publicize and maintain the Hamilton Gardens	Complete	Policy
Preserve Cultural Heritage—MEMORABILIA artifacts and digital records.	Complete	Policy

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

Towns County Work Program

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Jail upgrade	X	X				County Commissioner	\$200,000	General Fund
Wayfinding Signage	X					County Commissioner	\$80,000	General Fund
Implement broadband technology committee	X					County Commissioner	NA	NA
Develop & Implement GICH strategy	X					County Commissioner	TBD	TBD
Implement BOE Capital Improvement Projects	X					County/Board of Education	TBD	ESPLOST
Contract for traffic management plan to include the need for road signs and traffic lights	X					County Gov't	TBD	County Budget
Build pickle ball pavilion & restroom		X				County Commissioner	\$60,000	Gen. Fund & Pickle Ball Donations
Day care facility update		X				County Commissioner	\$120,000	General Fund
Update inventory of road conditions		X				Public Works/ GDOT	NA	NA
Develop report outlining opportunities for broadband investment		X				Technology Committee	NA	NA
Review local ordinances; Amend as needed		X				County Commissioner	NA	NA
Develop annual environmental report		X				County Commissioner	NA	NA
W/ GDOT - widening and/or straighten road between Young Harris and Blairsville; on installing a traffic light at 288 and 76E.		X				County/GDOT	TBD	TBD
New generator for repeater on Bell Mountain		X				County, Community Emergency Services/911	\$10,000	SPLOST and/or County budget
Tub grinder for county transfer station		X				County/Solid Waste	\$300,000	County budget
Upgrade Transfer Station & separate household from commercial			X			County Commissioner	\$110,000	General Fund
Fire Station East update			X			County Commissioner	\$115,000	General Fund/ Grant
Catalog needed road improvements			X			Public Works	NA	NA
Develop system for prioritizing road projects			X			County Commissioner	NA	NA
Develop long-term improvement schedule and budget for each department			X			County Commissioner	NA	NA

Towns County Work Program (Cont'd)

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Improve promotion and education about national forests, parks, and environmental resources. Develop more natural resources and/or restricted areas.			X			Historical Committee, Chamber of Commerce, civic groups	\$500	County budget, donations, grants, festivals, etc.
Towns County Courthouse addition and renovation				X		County Commissioner	\$9,400,000	SPLOST Tax
Create special projects budget for all proposed capital improvements				X		County Commissioner	NA	NA
Tax Commissioner's office upgrade				X		County Commissioner	\$200,000	General Fund
Update Economic Dev. Strategy					X	County Commissioner	\$100,000	Grant/ EDA
Develop multi-purpose agricultural center					X	County Commissioner	TBD	General Fund
Develop "Night Sky" ordinance	X					County Commissioner	\$1,000	General Fund
Ensure erosion and sedimentation policies match Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan	X	X				City	\$5,000	General Fund/ DNR

Towns County Policies and Long-Term Objectives

- Work with Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) for future economic and downtown development, and also identify potential grants and other economic development resources and workforce development.
- Regularly schedule meetings to collaborate between municipal and county elected officials, stakeholders, and other selected groups.
- Continue to enforce minimum size for residential lots,
- Continue to enforce Mountain Protection Act
- Balance individual private property rights with common-sense restrictions
- Utilize local community leaders to pursue industries that would find Towns County attractive
- Towns County Development Authority and Towns County Historical Society work to ensure local heritage is preserved as the area grows
- Promote the beauty of the mountains and lake using the natural resources of waterfalls, hiking & boating.
- Promote events bringing people to the community for overnight lodging, dining & shopping.
- Continue to cultivate community support for assistance in running the Towns Co. Visitor Ctr.
- Continue to provide community support to local organization for special projects.
- The Tourism Board and Staff should continue to serve on many committees and demonstrate strong leadership and involvement.
- Regularly schedule meetings to collaborate between municipal and county elected officials, stakeholders, and other selected groups.
- Continue to do ongoing road repairs annually
- Do not accept excessive road grades
- Work with USFS to better promote recreation opportunities and access
- Continue to enforce sediment/erosion control program through building inspector and planning commission
- Continue working with Georgia Regional District Commission on behalf of Lake Chatuge
- Continue working to acquire funds in support of Action Plan implementation on behalf of Lake Chatuge
- Work with state and federal agencies to promote enforcement of safety regulations on Lake Chatuge
- The Health Department and their Environmental staff to continue to oversee septic tank inspections as needed or requested
- Evaluate county properties for potential BMPs to retain/treat storm water
- Continue to enforce the local sediment/erosion control program.
- Provide residents and visitors with improved awareness with Natural Forest Benefits and opportunities plus future plans, projects and changes.
- Replace older law enforcement vehicles as needed.
- Upgrade Fire Dept. facilities and purchase new fire equipment as needed.
- Seek State and Federal funding for Lake Chatuge management measures outlined in this plan, and to acquire funds in support of Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition
- Work with Mayors and City Council of Young Harris and Hiwassee and Towns County Water and Sewerage Authority to coordinate the water service with the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Towns County
- Maintain bldg. height restrictions to 35 feet
- Replace/ rebuild one bridge
- Continue to maintain and upgrade exercise and cardiac equipment & allow Towns County citizens to use without charge
- Replace commercial washer/dryer at detention center

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

- Replace older law enforcement vehicles as needed
- Replace obsolete computers and software at sheriff/jail offices
- Upgrade fire dept facilities and purchase new fire equipment as needed
- Continue sponsoring annual events i.e., Moonshine Cruiz-In and add new events i.e., the Collegiate Bass Tournament
- Help to promote Shriners Convention which has been pledged to be held in Towns County beginning 2013
- Improve infrastructure for the Industrial Park and acquire additional property suitable for manufacturing or other large industrial industries
- To promote the area through as a hiker friendly town with the goal of increasing our area's business base and encourage businesses to support hiker-friendly activities such as spec rates and/or merchandise for hikers
- To promote language for the protection of the Appalachian Trail in future land-use plans, planning tools, ordinances, or guidelines where appropriate
- Coordinate efforts with Georgia Mountain Fair Authority to promote their events
- Recap, improve, and pave at least 5 miles of county road annually
- Work with state DOT on widening and /or straightening the state road between Young Harris and Blairsville; Work with State DOT on installing a traffic light at 288 and 76E
- Continue to maintain and upgrade beach facilities and allow our citizens to use without charge
- Maintain opposition to unsubstantiated development that spoils the county's natural and historic resources.
- Continue preservation of Lake Chatuge and enforcement of sediment/erosion programs. Use festivals/tours for education.
- Promote and maintain the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) and other hiking trails and "leave no trace policy."
- Promote and publicize the Brasstown Bald Center; work with federal, state and locals to educate
- Promote and publicize scenic mountain and lakeside drives and paths. Work with fed, state and locals to highlight preservation.
- Preserve Cultural Heritage—Museums & National Register.
- Publicize and maintain the Hamilton Gardens
- Preserve Cultural Heritage—MEMORABILIA artifacts and digital records.
- Implement the Towns County Joint Economic Strategy

Hiwassee Needs and Opportunities

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Demand for quality workforce housing options; Opportunities for infill housing within the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review local ordinances; Amend as needed (2022) • Develop & Implement GICH strategy (2022)
Demand for stronger and safer pedestrian accessibility across downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop pedestrian master plan (2023)
Opportunity to serve as a stronger hub for area hikers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop marketing program targeted for hikers (2023) • Develop connections/access to regional trails (2024) • Explore potential for Trail Fest activities (2024)
Need long-term strategy for managing through-traffic in Hiwassee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop committee to work with GDOT and local stakeholders to develop traffic management plan (2023)
Demand for continued economic development within downtown Hiwassee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain support for Economic Development Director and Joint Development Authority (Policy) • Develop a list of targeted businesses based on Economic Strategy (2022)
Need to complete wastewater system improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace galvanized & asbestos wastewater pipes on Main Street (2022)

Hiawassee - Report of Accomplishments

Action	Status	Comment
Implement Hiawassee Sidewalk Improvement Project	In-Progress	Awaiting GDOT performed a study that is addressing the major concerns with Hwy 76. 2023
Pedestrian Cross Walk & Turn Lane	Complete	Cross Walk at Hospital, turn lane at McDonalds
Seek to reduce Citywide speed limits to 35 mph.	Cancelled	GDOT will not allow that change
Report identifying other forms of revenue for City.	Complete	Initiated Franchise Fee. Passed resolution for alcohol sales which has been our biggest revenue generator..
Hiawassee Mayor's Park	Complete	
Replace Pumps at Hiawassee Water Plant (Variable speed)	In-Progress	New project starting in October of 2021 for this and a 3rd filter
Report identifying potential needs and opportunities for expanding medical services.	Complete	Working with Chatuge Medical, Secured a 200K donation through RURAL HEART
Develop Hiawassee Traffic Management Plan.	In-Progress	Part of the GDOT Study 2023
Develop Hiawassee Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.	In Progress	2023
Consider legislation calling for a City Referendum on Liquor by the Drink.	Complete	Passed
Adopt ordinances ensuring any sale of Adult Beverages must be accompanied by food sales.	Complete	Passed
Adopt a Historic Buildings Ordinance.	Complete	
Provide Public Restrooms on the Hiawassee City Square.	Postponed	Land not available for purchase, Need partners
Double Hiawassee Water Treatment Plant's withdrawal Permit.	Complete	
Improvements at Hiawassee Water Treatment Plant: Third filter & related building & equipment.	In-Progress	New project starting in October of 2021 for this and a 3rd filter
Rehab Digester at the Hiawassee Wastewater Plant	Complete	
Sewage Infiltration & Inflow Project.	In-Progress	Securing bids for work in 2021-2022
Replace 2,200 Water Meters.	Complete	
Rehab Sewer Lift Stations. [Study in 2016]	Complete	
Establish a City Fund to assist private business with exterior or façade improvements based on city theme and standards.	Complete	Established guidelines for DDA to manage this project

Hiawassee - Report of Accomplishments (Cont'd)

Action	Status	Comment
Upgrade/Renovate Tanks at the Hiawassee Wastewater Plant	Complete	
Pedestrian PO Cross Walk, Intersection & Turn Lanes.	Complete	
Downtown Development: Hiawassee City Square Renovation	Complete	
Replace Pumps at Hiawassee Water Plant (Variable Speed).	In-Progress	Awaiting GDOT performed a study that is addressing the major concerns with Hwy 76.
Increase Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Permit from 300,000 to 500,000 gpd.	In-Progress	New project starting in October of 2021 for this and a 3rd filter
Comprehensive Sidewalk Replacement	In Progress	2023
Increase Water Storage by adding Additional 150,000 Gallon Water Tank in Bell Creek Area.	In Progress	2023
Install Sewer Plant Influent Screen [Study in 2016]	Complete	

Hiwassee Work Program

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Implement Hiwassee Sidewalk Improvement Project	X	X				Administration	\$250,000	GDOT T-Grant/Budget
Improvements at Hiwassee Water Treatment Plant: Third filter & related building & equipment.	X					Administration	\$1.3 million	SPLOST/GEFA/Reserves/ Water Rates
Sewage Infiltration & Inflow Project.	X					Administration	\$300,000	USDA/SPLOST/GEFA/ Water Rates
Replace Pumps at Hiwassee Water Plant (Variable speed)	X	X				Administration	\$100,000	SPLOST/ Reserves/Budget/GEFA
Continue public art expos	X	X	X	X		Administration	\$10,000	Grant/ DDA/ DCA
Review local ordinances; Amend as needed	X					Administration	NA	NA
Develop & Implement GICH strategy	X					GICH Committee	TBD	Grants/ General Fund
Develop a list of targeted businesses based on Economic Strategy	X					Economic Development	NA	NA
Replace galvanized & asbestos wastewater pipes on Main Street	X	X				Water & Wastewater	\$2mm	Grants/ Loans/ General Fund
Sewage Infiltration & Inflow Project.	X					Hiwassee	\$300,000	USDA/SPLOST/GEFA/ Water Rates
Increase Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Permit from 300,000 to 500,000 gpd.	X					Hiwassee	\$1,000,000	USDA/SPLOST/GEFA/ Water Rates
Property acquisition downtown/ historical		X	X	X	X	Administration	\$500,000	SPLOST/ DDA/ General Fund
Establish public boat dock		X	X			Administration	\$150,000	Grant/ TVA
Establish downtown redevelopment grants		X				Administration	\$50,000	Grant/ DDA/ General Fund
Develop committee to work with GDOT and local stakeholders to develop traffic management plan		X				Administration	NA	NA
Develop marketing program targeted for hikers		X				Economic Development	\$10,000	General Fund
Comprehensive Sidewalk Replacement		X				Hiwassee	\$400,000	Ga.Toll Way Authority Grant Loan/General Budget
Develop Hiwassee Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.		X				Hiwassee	\$10,000	City/GDOT/Other

Hiwassee Work Program (Cont'd)

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Increase Water Storage by adding Additional 150,000 Gallon Water Tank in Bell Creek Area.		X				Hiwassee	\$300,000	SPLOST/GEFA/Budget
Implement Hiwassee Sidewalk Improvement Project		X				Hiwassee	250,000	DOT T-Grant/Budget
Develop Hiwassee Traffic Management Plan.		X				Hiwassee	\$5,000	City/GDOT/Other
Replace Pumps at Hiwassee Water Plant (Variable speed.)		X				Hiwassee	\$100,000	SPLOST/ Reserves/Budget/GEFA
Develop connections/access to regional trails			X			Administration	TBD	Grants/ DNR/ GDOT
Explore potential for Trail Fest activities			X			Economic Development	NA	NA
Boardwalk at Lloyds Landing/ Mayor's Park			X			Administration	\$500,000	Grants
Replace Pumps at Hiwassee Water Plant (Variable speed)			X			Administration	\$80,000	Budget
Provide Public Restrooms on the Hiwassee City Square.				X		Hiwassee	TBD	TBD
Develop Hiwassee Traffic Management Plan.				X		Administration	\$5,000	City/GDOT/Other
Ensure erosion and sedimentation policies match Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan	X	X				City	\$5,000	General Fund/ DNR

Hiwassee – Policies and Long-Term Objectives

- Work with Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) for future economic and downtown development, and also identify potential grants and other economic development resources and workforce development.
- Regularly schedule meetings to collaborate between municipal and county elected officials, stakeholders and other selected groups.
- Review of planning, land use and development trends to determine best uses of property such as form-based codes or zoning options.
- Continue to actively review, expand and enforce local ordinances and codes.
- Digitize council resolutions and minutes.
- Utilize Municode for digitization of city ordinances.
- Become a City of Ethics through the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA).
- Enforce codes and ordinances through code enforcement to ensure the health and safety of the community.
- Seek to attract targeted industries and businesses by utilizing local and regional economic development resources while also anticipating the requirements needed for their success such as parking or other improvements that may be necessary.
- Ensure local heritage and history is preserved and maintained through historical society programs, history and heritage events and codes such as an historic preservation ordinance.
- Promote the beauty of the mountains and lake through environmental hiking and outdoor activities, events, stewardship and policies.
- Promote events bringing people to the community for overnight lodging, dining and shopping that highlights Hiwassee.
- Continue to cultivate community support for community events and special projects.
- Investigate, research and expand transportation options, road repairs and resurfacing options for the transportation budget to include pedestrian and bicycle safety options such more sidewalks, crosswalks, bike and golf cart paths and other solutions to incorporate more walkability in the city.
- Work with State and Federal Agencies to better promote accessibility to Lake Chatuge through waterfront parks, boat ramps, boardwalks, fishing piers, local businesses and recreation opportunities such as bass fishing tournaments.
- Seek funding for expansion of wastewater plant.
- Seek funding for expansion of water treatment plant.
- Expand and renovate the Hiwassee City Square.
- Expand downtown development.
- Obtain a park and performance venue to create opportunities for community and visitors.
- Seek to improve ways to get people traveling through the city to stop.
- Expand public parking and lake access.
- Explore potential for improving sustainability of utilities and civic structures, including solar power resources, remote meter reading equipment, wireless broadband internet service, etc
- Implement the Towns County Joint Economic Development Strategy
- Implement the Downtown Strategic Plan
- Support and implement the plans for the GICH Committee

Young Harris Needs and Opportunities

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Develop Miller Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue grants / SPLOST for Miller Park (2022) • Develop conceptual master plan for Miller Park (2023)
Extend sewer lines to Old College Farm Econ Dev & Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue funding for sewer to Old College Farm (2023) • Extend sewer lines to Old College Farm (2024)
Develop Gateway Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop design scheme for gateway signs (2022) • Purchase gateway signs (2023) • Develop gateway landscape plan (2022) • Implement gateway landscape plan (2023)
Demand for quality affordable housing options; Opportunities for infill housing within the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review local ordinances; Amend as needed (2022) • Develop & Implement GICH strategy (2022) • Hold stakeholder forum to explore housing development options (2023)
Demand for stronger and safer pedestrian accessibility across downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop pedestrian plan for city (2023) • Implement improvements in pedestrian plan (2024)
Demand for continued economic development within Young Harris; Opportunity to evolve into a true village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain support for Economic Development Director and Joint Development Authority (Policy) • Develop a list of targeted businesses based on Economic Strategy (2022)
Opportunities for enhanced partnerships with Young Harris for local arts and craft scenes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular forums with University to review progress on arts and crafts plans (Policy)

Young Harris - Report of Accomplishments

Action	Status	Comment
Host outside experts and resources to assess downtown development potential	Complete	
Consider specialized transit/ van service	In Progress	Discussing w/ County 2022
Identify funding options for current infrastructure improvements	Complete	Funding options, identified; Work in progress - Extend sewer to Union Co. line 2022
Forum with partners to review options for sidewalks and pedestrian safety/crosswalks within downtown	Completed	Will revisit as needed.
Review the possibility of a historic preservation ordinance or other similar protection measures.	Complete	
Survey to determine valued scenic vistas into and from the City	In Progress	2022
Solicit and implement a Downtown Development Plan	In Progress	2022
Research programs to help with home restoration & reducing vacancies	Complete	
Develop and implement a trail and sidewalk master plan	Complete	Will revisit as needed
Review development regulations for green space requirements; Amend as needed	Complete	
Explore applications for grants for trails, sidewalks and park space	Complete	Annual Policy
Review enforcement and communication of existing codes with owners and citizens	Complete	Had outside review of ordinances in 2021
Review possible design standards for residential units	In Progress	2022
Develop targeted business and branding strategy	In Progress	2022
Explore potential multi-use trail connecting YH with Brasstown Valley Resort	Complete	Connected to trails plan.
Speak w/County and College about collaboration on public/civic space	In Progress	2022
Meeting with GDOT to confirm options for pedestrian safety within downtown such as additional crosswalks and other improvements	Completed	Will revisit as needed
Report on options for traffic calming and aesthetics on Hwy 76	In Progress	Working on this in conjunction w/ 515/YH Bypass expansion 2022
Develop "Green Young Harris" promotion program	In Progress	2022
Establish sustainability committee	In Progress	2022
Establish sustainability goals for City operations	In Progress	2022
Develop report assessing options for development design standards	In Progress	2022

Young Harris - Report of Accomplishments (Cont'd)

Action	Status	Comment
Conduct collaborative long-term growth study between City and College	Complete	
Conduct annexation feasibility study of neighborhoods and subdivisions to continue enabling the city to be pedestrian and bicycle friendly, a diverse and vibrant place to live, work and visit.	In Progress	2022
Sewer Gravity Dewatering Equipment	Complete	
Extend Street Lighting	In Progress	2022
Implement streetscape/sidewalk plan focusing on streets w/sidewalks, curbing, crosswalks and other pedestrian improvements.	In Progress	2022
Purchase 4-Wheel Drive Service Truck	Complete	
Have a land use forum for economic development representatives; Use for future Comp Plan updates	Complete	
Develop coordinated Economic Development Strategy	Complete	
Nominate the Berry and Miller Houses to National Register of Historic Places	Postponed	Will review with owners 2025
Perform revitalization study for Walker Street/old BREMC building area	In Progress	Enterprise zone approved 2023
Host a housing and development workshop for local officials to review market trends and identifies the needs of all citizens and demographics.	In Progress	Beginning GICH program in 2022
Develop a Corridor Management Strategy for the County's arterials	In Progress	2023
Report on ways to bring in more retail and entertainment within the city limits	Complete	Economic Development Strategy
Survey businesses to identify options and needs to foster commercial activity	In Progress	2022
Survey local residents and students to identify business needs and demands	Complete	Economic Development Strategy
Public safety assessment w/ County and College	In Progress	2023
Consider options for nature themed civic events	In Progress	2022
Review programs that provide homeowners and business with tools to improve sustainability	In Progress	2022

Young Harris Work Program

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Host outside experts and resources to assess downtown development potential	X					City	\$1,000	City; Chamber; DCA; GMRC
Review the possibility of a historic preservation ordinance or other similar protection measures.	X					City; Grants; DNR	\$1,000	City; GMRC
Survey to determine valued scenic vistas into and from the City	X					City; Grants; DNR	\$500	City; GMRC
Solicit and implement a Downtown Development Plan	X					City; Grants; DCA	\$10,000	City
Research programs to help with home restoration & reducing vacancies	X					TBD	TBD	City
Review development regulations for green space requirements; Amend as needed	X					City; Grants; DNR	\$3,000	City
Review enforcement and communication of existing codes with owners and citizens	X					NA	NA	City
Review possible design standards for residential units	X					City; Grants; DCA	\$3,000	City
Develop targeted business and branding strategy	X					City; Grants; DCA	\$3,000	City
Develop "Green Young Harris" promotion program	X					City; Grants; DNR	TBD	City
Establish sustainability committee	X					NA	NA	City
Establish sustainability goals for City operations	X					City; Grants; DNR	TBD	City
Develop report assessing options for development design standards	X					City; Grants; DNR	\$5,000	City
Extend Street Lighting	X					City; Grants; TE	TBD	City, Community
Have a land use forum for economic development representatives; Use for future Comp Plan updates	X					City, County, Tourism	TBD	City, County, Tourism
Perform revitalization study for Walker Street/old BREMC building area	X					City, SPLOST, Grants	TBD	City, County, Economic Development
Host a housing and development workshop for local officials to review market trends and identifies the needs of all citizens and demographics.	X					City, SPLOST, Grants	TBD	City, County, Economic Development
Develop a Corridor Management Strategy for the County's arterials	X					City, SPLOST, Grants	TBD	City, County, Economic Development
Public safety assessment w/ County and College	X					City	\$1,000	City; Chamber; DCA; GMRC

Young Harris Work Program (Cont'd)

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Speak w/County and College about collaboration on public/civic space	X					City	NA	NA
Report on options for traffic calming and aesthetics on Hwy 76	X					City	\$3,000	City; Grants; GDOT
Conduct annexation feasibility study of neighborhoods and subdivisions re: being a pedestrian and bicycle friendly, a diverse and vibrant place to live, work and visit.	X					City; Chamber; DCA; GMRC	TBD	City; Grants; DCA
Implement streetscape/sidewalk plan focusing on streets w/sidewalks, curbing, crosswalks and other pedestrian improvements.	X					City, Community	\$250,000	City, Grants, TE
Consider options for nature themed civic events	X					City	NA	NA
Survey businesses to identify options and needs to foster commercial activity	X					City	\$1,000	City; Grants; DED
Report on ways to bring in more retail and entertainment within the city limits	X					City	TBD	City; Grants; DED
Develop gateway landscape plan	X					City	\$5,000	General Fund
Review local ordinances; Amend as needed	X					City	NA	NA
Develop a list of targeted businesses based on Economic Strategy	X					Economic Development	NA	NA
Develop & Implement GICH strategy	X					GICH Committee	TBD	Grants/ General Fund
Pursue grants / SPLOST for Miller Park	X					City	NA	NA
Develop design scheme for gateway signs	X					City	\$1,000	General Fund
Consider specialized transit/ van service	X					City	TBD	City; Grants; GDOT
Identify funding options for current infrastructure improvements		X				City	NA	NA
Survey local residents and students to identify business needs and demands		X				City	\$1,000	City; Grants; DED

Young Harris Work Program (Cont'd)

ACTION DESCRIPTION	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Conduct collaborative long-term growth study between City and College		X				City	\$5,000	City; Grants; DCA
Develop conceptual master plan for Miller Park		X				City	\$5,000	City; Grants
Pursue funding for sewer to Old College Farm		X				City	NA	NA
Purchase gateway signs		X				City	TBD	Grants/ General Fund
Implement gateway landscape plan		X				City	TBD	General Fund
Hold stakeholder forum to explore housing development options		X				City/ GMRC	NA	NA
Develop pedestrian plan for city		X				City/ GMRC/ GDOT	\$10,000	GDOT
Review programs that provide homeowners and business with tools to improve sustainability		X				City	\$1,000	City; Grants; DNR
Implement improvements in pedestrian plan			X			City	TBD	Grants/ GDOT/ SPLOST
Extend sewer lines to Old College Farm			X			City	TBD	Grants/ General Fund/ Loans
Nominate the Berry and Miller Houses to National Register of Historic Places					X	City, County	TBD	City, County
Miller Park Improvements	X	X	X	X	X	Public Works	\$700,000	Grants, SPLOST, In-Kind
Dog Park	X	X				Place Making	\$50,000	Community/In-Kind
Cupid Falls - ADA Ramp	X	X				Public Works	\$190,000	Grant, SPLOST
Cupid Falls - Trail/Boardwalk	X	X				Public Works	\$100,000	Grant, SPLOST, In-Kind
Sidewalk - Meadow Lane	X	X				Public Works	\$50,000	Grant, SPLOST, In-Kind
Sewer line extension	X	X				Public Works	\$3.1 Mil	Grant, SPLOST, In-Kind
Booster Pumps	X	X	X	X	X	Public Works	\$1 Mil	Grant, SPLOST, In-Kind
State & Fed Activities	X	X	X			Economic Development	\$50,000.00	General Fund, SPLOST
Main Street Improvements	X	X	X			Economic Development	\$50,000.00	General Fund, SPLOST
Gateway Signage Program		X	X			City		General Fund, SPLOST, In-Kind
Wayfinding Signage	X	X	X			City		General Fund, SPLOST, In-Kind
Implement Branding Program	X	X	X			City		General Fund, SPLOST, In-Kind
Downtown – Update Master Plan	X	X	X			City/ Economic Development	\$70,000.00	Grant
Ensure erosion and sedimentation policies match Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan	X	X				City	\$5,000	General Fund/ DNR

Young Harris – Policies and Long-Term Objectives

- Work with Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Department of Community Affairs, Appalachian Regional Commission and other stakeholders to explore future development opportunities for jobs, workspace, etc. that fits in with the character of the city.
- Regularly schedule meetings to collaborate between municipal and county elected officials, stakeholders and other selected groups.
- Annual review of land use and development trends to ensure compatibility of new development with comp plan and with existing neighborhoods
- Seek “village” appropriate markets and shops
- Promote development and tourism in cooperation w/County & Civic organizations
- Annual meeting with Economic Development organizations
- Quarterly mtg. with County and Hiwassee
- Ensure sharing of meeting agendas and minutes; Review of same reported to elected officials
- Designate an Economic Development representative/ professional among staff or officials.
- Utilize the college and natural environment in the Brasstown Bald/Brasstown Valley to help guide appropriate growth in the city.
- Seek funding for expansion of water and wastewater lines.
- Explore ways to increase partnerships between YH college, city and community
- Explore ways to utilize downtown and park to create more opportunities for community to come together
- Seek to improve ways to get people traveling through the city to stop and use the city.
- Study/ Consider ways to incorporate more shared public space between College and private citizens
- Explore potential for improving sustainability of utilities and civic structures, including solar power resources, remote meter reading equipment, etc.
- Annexation of additional areas as feasible.
- Create a long-term marketing plan.
- Identification of potential businesses suitable for relocation throughout the city.
- Completion of a long term master plan for the city.
- Identify land & model policies for neighborhood parks.
- Explore codes that require property management for absentee owners (Vacancy provisions).
- Form Downtown Development Authority.
- Speak with Hospital about potential for local clinic.
- Review existing historic preservation ordinances; Amend as needed.
- Research programs to help with home restoration & reducing vacancies
- Implement the Towns County Joint Economic Development Strategy
- Implement the BluePrints Plan for Young Harris
- Support and implement the plans for the GICH Committee

IV. APPENDICES

- **Quality Community Objective Analysis**
- **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Area Labor Profile**
- **Towns County Area Labor Profile**
- **Towns County, Hiwassee and Young Harris Census Data**
- **Meeting Notes and Survey Response Summary**
- **Samples of Meeting Notices and Sign-in Sheets**

Quality Community Objective Analysis

Since 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs has identified various Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as value statements of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve her unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to her fullest potential.

These ten objectives are adapted from generally accepted community development principles to fit the unique qualities of Georgia's cities and counties. Although these objectives are only recommendations, we are convinced that implementing these principles will result in greater efficiency and cost savings for local governments and a higher quality of life for their citizens.

1. Economic Prosperity

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

While committed to retaining a rural atmosphere, the County and Cities, together with their partners, are equally committed to securing the economic viability of the region going forward. Economic prosperity enables citizens and communities to be stronger and provide better for each other. The governments support the local Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Development Authority as part of ongoing efforts to foster economic development for the community. The governments also maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the State for pursuit of assistance and outside funding opportunities in support of economic development opportunities.

2. Resource Management

Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

The County and the Cities recognize the value of their location as part of the Appalachians and what that means for tourism, recreation, and available resources. The governments maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the area. The governments also employ policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.

3. Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

Through this planning process, ongoing efforts to update area mapping, and regular communication with each other, the County and Cities work to ensure local development policies support sustainable development that enables economic growth while managing local resources, utilities, and infrastructure.

4. Local Preparedness

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

Through this planning process and ongoing coordination among emergency responders, and through regular communication with other stakeholders (such as the regional hospital), the Cities and Towns County work together to ensure the community is properly poised to prevent, manage and respond to growth pressures and natural and man-made hazards.

5. Sense of Place

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

The County and the Cities recognize the value of their location as part of the Appalachians and what that means for tourism, recreation, and available resources. The governments maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the area. The governments also employ policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. The Cities of Hiwassee and Young Harris will also be diligent in their efforts to foster more unique and appropriate neighborhood and downtown settings at the heart of their communities.

6. Regional Cooperation

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

The County and Cities actively coordinate with each other in maintaining their local Service Delivery Strategy and SPLOST program and participate with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and other appropriate regional organizations. The governments also maintain regular contact with various State Departments to ensure knowledge of, and access to, their programs and resources. The Cities and County are considered active partners in regional activities and do not feel threatened or adversely impacted by any regional partners.

7. Housing Options

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

Towns County policies encourage higher density housing to locate in accordance with utility capacity, but not necessarily within or adjacent to the cities. However, the County and the Cities all understand the need to improve future housing stock, both to ensure the quality of life for area residents but also to ensure the communities' sustainable appeal to businesses for economic growth. All local governments will hone their policies to monitor the health of the existing supply, foster restoration/renovation where needed and possible, and encourage viable workforce housing among newer development.

8. Transportation Options

Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.

Towns County does support a senior-oriented public transit service. There is minimal service through State sponsored rural transit vans and shuttle programs. This will be reevaluated in the future once the Georgia Mountains Regional Transit Plan is completed and provides additional information about possible multi-jurisdictional programs.

9. Educational Opportunities

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

The County and Cities work with the local School Board to ensure access for quality primary and secondary educational facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to ensure access to viable post-secondary resources such as Young Harris College and other area educational institutions.

10. Community Health

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better

Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2021

health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.

The governments work with Chatuge Regional Hospital and the Towns County Health Department to ensure access for quality health care facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to monitor residents' needs and requests in providing access to these services as the area grows.



Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Area Labor Profile



Towns County Area Labor Profile



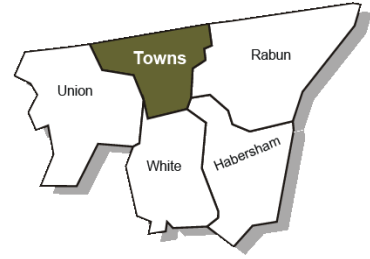


Georgia

Area Labor Profile

Towns

County



Updated: Aug 2021

Labor Force Activity - 2020

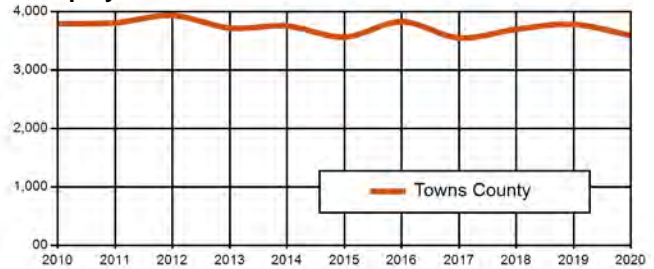
2020 ANNUAL AVERAGES

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Towns	3,841	3,585	256	6.7%
Habersham	18,691	17,675	1,016	5.4%
Rabun	7,215	6,831	384	5.3%
Union	10,464	10,006	458	4.4%
White	16,197	15,491	706	4.4%
Towns Area	56,408	53,588	2,820	5.0%
Georgia	5,072,155	4,741,191	330,964	6.5%
United States	160,742,000	147,795,000	12,947,000	8.1%
Clay, NC	4,079	3,778	301	7.4%

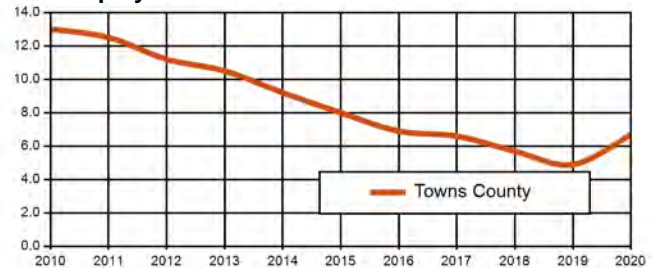
Note: This series reflects the latest information available. Labor Force includes residents of the county who are employed or actively seeking employment.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

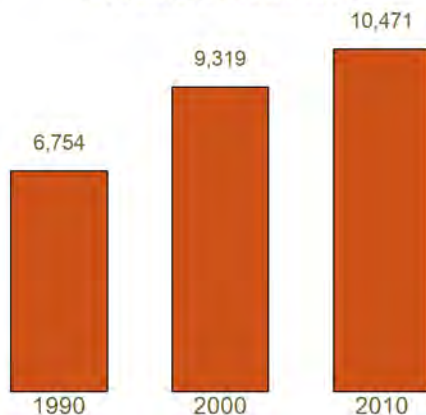
Employment Trends



Unemployment Rate Trends



Population Estimates



Population

	2010 Census	2020 Rank	2020 Estimate	% Change 2010-2020	2025 Projected*	% Change 2010-2025
Towns	10,471	117	12,247	17.0	14,589	39.3
City of Hiawassee	880					
Towns Area	128,614		143,524	11.6	150,056	16.7
Georgia	9,687,653		10,710,017	10.6	11,335,283	17.0
United States	308,745,538		329,484,123	6.7	349,439,199	13.2
Clay, NC	10,326		11,505	11.4	12,947	25.4

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, *Governor's Office of Planning and Budget.

MARK BUTLER - COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary Aids and Services Available upon Request to Individuals with Disabilities

Workforce Statistics & Economic Research; E-mail: Workforce_Info@gdol.ga.gov Phone: (404) 232-3875

Industry Mix - 1st Quarter of 2021

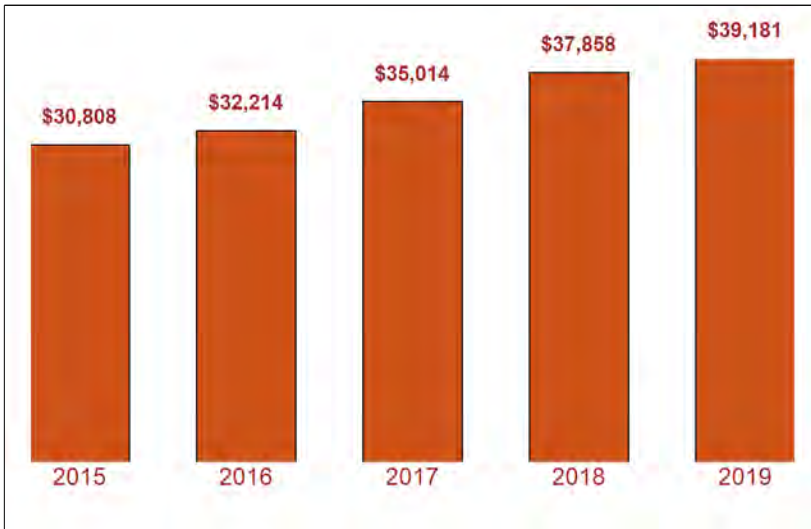
INDUSTRY	Towns				Towns Area			
	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT		WEEKLY WAGE	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT		WEEKLY WAGE
		NUMBER	PERCENT			NUMBER	PERCENT	
Goods-Producing	51	333	10.2	855	600	7,178	19.3	904
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0	0.0	0	45	679	1.8	820
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3	5	0.2	995	8	65	0.2	1,063
Construction	36	161	4.9	949	387	1,975	5.3	824
Manufacturing	12	167	5.1	760	160	4,460	12.0	951
Beverage and Tobacco Product	2	*	*	*	11	111	0.3	527
Printing and Related Support Activities	1	*	*	*	13	38	0.1	440
Chemical	2	*	*	*	8	*	*	*
Nonmetallic Mineral Product	2	*	*	*	10	73	0.2	713
Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component	1	*	*	*	2	*	*	*
Furniture and Related Product	1	*	*	*	13	51	0.1	631
Miscellaneous	3	15	0.5	843	19	794	2.1	1,562
Leather and Allied Product	0	0	0.0	0	1	*	*	*
Petroleum and Coal Products	0	0	0.0	0	1	*	*	*
Textile Product Mills	0	0	0.0	0	3	28	0.1	619
Apparel	0	0	0.0	0	3	61	0.2	528
Plastics and Rubber Products	0	0	0.0	0	4	184	0.5	710
Textile Mills	0	0	0.0	0	4	331	0.9	626
Computer and Electronic Product	0	0	0.0	0	5	11	0.0	807
Transportation Equipment	0	0	0.0	0	6	*	*	*
Machinery	0	0	0.0	0	6	110	0.3	1,034
Wood Product	0	0	0.0	0	12	102	0.3	881
Food	0	0	0.0	0	18	*	*	*
Fabricated Metal Product	0	0	0.0	0	21	468	1.3	841
Service-Providing	223	2,415	73.9	635	2,520	22,968	61.6	635
Utilities	2	*	*	*	16	427	1.1	1,537
Wholesale Trade	6	15	0.5	885	107	828	2.2	923
Retail Trade	55	384	11.8	403	526	5,790	15.5	520
Transportation and Warehousing	5	25	0.8	448	54	596	1.6	885
Information	6	17	0.5	826	37	505	1.4	888
Finance and Insurance	17	58	1.8	860	147	658	1.8	1,226
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	16	100	3.1	626	126	374	1.0	722
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	22	154	4.7	1,379	237	889	2.4	949
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0	0.0	0	10	*	*	*
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	8	23	0.7	472	154	761	2.0	577
Educational Services	2	*	*	*	21	2,257	6.1	554
Health Care and Social Assistance	28	454	13.9	702	302	3,047	8.2	778
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2	*	*	*	45	*	*	*
Accommodation and Food Services	45	708	21.7	348	362	5,143	13.8	351
Other Services (except Public Administration)	9	20	0.6	517	182	711	1.9	542
Unclassified - industry not assigned	20	16	0.5	758	194	160	0.4	763
Total - Private Sector	294	2,764	84.6	662	3,120	30,146	80.9	699
Total - Government	17	503	15.4	649	170	7,115	19.1	758
Federal Government	3	27	0.8	1,015	35	281	0.8	1,077
State Government	8	55	1.7	710	66	1,096	2.9	773
Local Government	6	421	12.9	617	69	5,738	15.4	740
ALL INDUSTRIES	311	3,267	100.0	660	3,290	37,261	100.0	711
ALL INDUSTRIES - Georgia					329,450	4,374,238		1,198

Note: *Denotes confidential data relating to individual employers and cannot be released. These data use the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categories. Average weekly wage is derived by dividing gross payroll dollars paid to all employees - both hourly and salaried - by the average number of employees who had earnings; average earnings are then divided by the number of weeks in a reporting period to obtain weekly figures. Figures in other columns may not sum accurately due to rounding. All figures are 1st Quarter of 2021.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

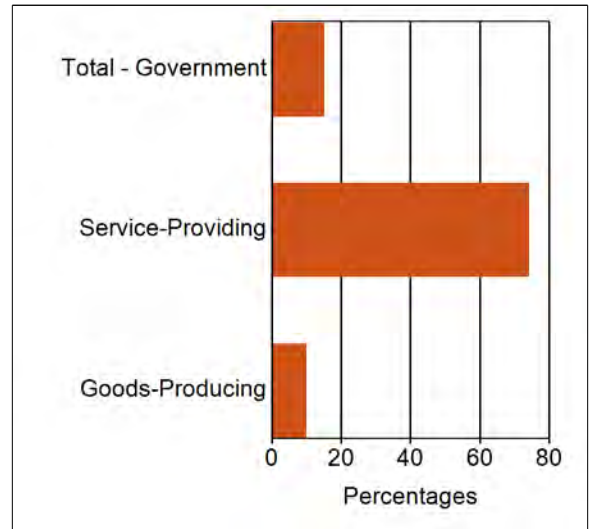
Towns Per Capita Income

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



Towns Industry Mix 2021

Source: See Industry Mix data on Page 2.



Top Ten Largest Employers - 2021*

Towns

Advanced Digital Cable, Inc.
 Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation
 Brown Haven Homes, LLC
 Chatuge Regional Hospital, Inc.
 Fortune Business Solutions
 Informa Support Services, Inc.
 Ingles Markets, Inc.
 Sodexo USA, Inc.
 The Ridges Resort
 Young Harris College

*Note: Represents employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Data shown for the First Quarter of 2021. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Towns Area

Ethicon, Inc.
 Fieldale Farms Corporation
 Freudenberg-NOK General Partnership
 Ingles Markets, Inc.
 Mountain Education Center, Inc.
 Piedmont College
 Truett-McConnell College
 United Community Bank
 Walmart
 Walmart

COUNTY

Habersham
 Habersham
 White
 Habersham
 White
 Habersham
 White
 Union
 White
 Habersham

Education of the Labor Force

Towns Area

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE

	PERCENT					
	OF TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	7.2%	3.0%	8.0%	6.0%	5.1%	12.5%
Some High School	12.6%	17.9%	15.0%	9.9%	11.1%	12.8%
High School Grad/GED	33.3%	36.1%	32.2%	34.3%	33.5%	31.6%
Some College	22.3%	37.7%	23.3%	20.1%	20.3%	18.9%
College Grad 2 Yr	6.2%	3.1%	7.4%	8.9%	7.0%	4.0%
College Grad 4 Yr	11.2%	2.0%	8.9%	13.0%	13.9%	11.4%
Post Graduate Studies	7.3%	0.2%	5.3%	7.8%	9.1%	8.8%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. Some College category represents workers with some college with no degree less than two years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 Decennial Census.

High School Graduates - 2020



	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS*	TOTAL
Habersham	432	--	432
Rabun	141	--	141
Towns	58	--	58
Union	197	--	197
White	244	--	244
Towns Area	1,072	--	1,072

Note: Public schools include city as well as county schools systems.

* Private schools data is not available for 2020 from Georgia Independent School Association.

Source: The Governor's Office of Student Achievement of Georgia.

Colleges and Universities

Towns Area

Habersham

North Georgia Technical College	www.northgatech.edu
Piedmont College	www.piedmont.edu

Union

Blairsville Campus (Satellite campus of North Georgia Technical College)	www.northgatech.edu
--	--

White

Truett McConnell University	www.truett.edu
-----------------------------	--

Towns

Young Harris College	www.yhc.edu
----------------------	--

Note: The colleges and universities listed include public and private institutions. This list is updated periodically as information becomes available.

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Technical College Graduates - 2020*

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2018	2019	2020	2018-2019	2019-2020
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping°	30	50	42	66.7	-16.0
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	39	26	32	-33.3	23.1
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services, Other°	7	6	6	-14.3	0.0
Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician°	17	31	19	82.4	-38.7
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician°	41	23	69	-43.9	200.0
Child Care Provider/Assistant°	7	108	31	1442.9	-71.3
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	3	9	15	200.0	66.7
Commercial Photography°	22	33	13	50.0	-60.6
Computer Installation and Repair Technology/Technician°	4	30	23	650.0	-23.3
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General°	68	90	81	32.4	-10.0
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	27	26	28	-3.7	7.7
Culinary Arts/Chef Training	18	18	9	0.0	-50.0
Electrician°	39	51	56	30.8	9.8
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)°	46	84	28	82.6	-66.7
Environmental Control Technologies/Technicians, Other	6	9	11	50.0	22.2
Food Preparation/Professional Cooking/Kitchen Assistant°	12	26	11	116.7	-57.7
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/°	46	75	66	63.0	-12.0
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology°	15	1	14	-93.3	1300.0
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	28	34	32	21.4	-5.9
Lineworker°	59	62	61	5.1	-1.6
Machine Shop Technology/Assistant°	15	30	19	100.0	-36.7
Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians, Other	7	4	5	-42.9	25.0
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder°	11	1	15	-90.9	1400.0
Medical Office Assistant/Specialist°	7	10	9	42.9	-10.0
Medical/Clinical Assistant	39	14	33	-64.1	135.7
Network and System Administration/Administrator°	13	25	25	92.3	0.0
Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	8	7	8	-12.5	14.3
Professional, Technical, Business, and Scientific Writing°	6	2	4	-66.7	100.0
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor°	21	22	32	4.8	45.5
Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design	6	1	4	-83.3	300.0
Welding Technology/Welder°	142	172	57	21.1	-66.9

Definition: All graduates except those listed as technical certificates(°) are diploma and degree graduates. Diploma and degree programs are one to two years in length. Technical certificates are less than a year in length. Duplication may occur due to graduates with multiple awards.

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

*Data shown represents Annual 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

Towns County, Hiawassee and Young Harris Census Data





Community Profile

Towns County, GA
 Towns County, GA (13281)
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

	Towns County,...
Population Summary	
2000 Total Population	9,319
2010 Total Population	10,471
2021 Total Population	12,406
2021 Group Quarters	1,166
2026 Total Population	13,043
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.01%
2021 Total Daytime Population	12,388
Workers	4,169
Residents	8,219
Household Summary	
2000 Households	3,998
2000 Average Household Size	2.20
2010 Households	4,510
2010 Average Household Size	2.17
2021 Households	5,227
2021 Average Household Size	2.15
2026 Households	5,535
2026 Average Household Size	2.15
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.15%
2010 Families	2,981
2010 Average Family Size	2.65
2021 Families	3,383
2021 Average Family Size	2.66
2026 Families	3,558
2026 Average Family Size	2.67
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.01%
Housing Unit Summary	
2000 Housing Units	6,282
Owner Occupied Housing Units	54.2%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	9.4%
Vacant Housing Units	36.4%
2010 Housing Units	7,731
Owner Occupied Housing Units	46.7%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	11.6%
Vacant Housing Units	41.7%
2021 Housing Units	9,317
Owner Occupied Housing Units	42.9%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	13.2%
Vacant Housing Units	43.9%
2026 Housing Units	9,884
Owner Occupied Housing Units	43.2%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	12.8%
Vacant Housing Units	44.0%
Median Household Income	
2021	\$50,345
2026	\$52,121
Median Home Value	
2021	\$254,786
2026	\$290,604
Per Capita Income	
2021	\$27,441
2026	\$29,886
Median Age	
2010	51.2
2021	52.5
2026	53.5

Data Note: Household population includes persons not residing in group quarters. Average Household Size is the household population divided by total households. Persons in families include the householder and persons related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Per Capita Income represents the income received by all persons aged 15 years and over divided by the total population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Towns County, GA
 Towns County, GA (13281)
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Towns County,...

2021 Households by Income

Household Income Base	5,227
<\$15,000	13.0%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	8.8%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	11.2%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	16.6%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	22.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	11.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10.1%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	4.0%
\$200,000+	2.5%
Average Household Income	\$64,757

2026 Households by Income

Household Income Base	5,535
<\$15,000	11.7%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	8.3%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	10.5%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	16.5%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	22.5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10.9%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	4.6%
\$200,000+	2.7%
Average Household Income	\$70,073

2021 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value

Total	3,994
<\$50,000	3.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	7.5%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	8.8%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	14.9%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	14.9%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	9.9%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	15.8%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	13.0%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	5.9%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	3.4%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	1.9%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0.9%
\$2,000,000 +	0.1%
Average Home Value	\$326,590

2026 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value

Total	4,271
<\$50,000	1.9%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	5.3%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	7.0%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	13.1%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	14.3%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	10.3%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	17.6%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	15.7%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	7.6%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	4.2%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	1.9%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0.9%
\$2,000,000 +	0.1%
Average Home Value	\$355,912

Data Note: Income represents the preceding year, expressed in current dollars. Household income includes wage and salary earnings, interest dividends, net rents, pensions, SSI and welfare payments, child support, and alimony.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Towns County, GA
Towns County, GA (13281)
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Towns County,...

2010 Population by Age	
Total	10,471
0 - 4	3.7%
5 - 9	4.3%
10 - 14	4.9%
15 - 24	13.1%
25 - 34	7.0%
35 - 44	9.9%
45 - 54	12.0%
55 - 64	16.0%
65 - 74	16.4%
75 - 84	9.6%
85 +	3.2%
18 +	84.3%
2021 Population by Age	
Total	12,406
0 - 4	3.2%
5 - 9	3.6%
10 - 14	3.9%
15 - 24	14.6%
25 - 34	8.1%
35 - 44	8.7%
45 - 54	10.5%
55 - 64	15.5%
65 - 74	17.3%
75 - 84	10.8%
85 +	3.7%
18 +	86.8%
2026 Population by Age	
Total	13,043
0 - 4	3.1%
5 - 9	3.6%
10 - 14	4.1%
15 - 24	13.8%
25 - 34	7.4%
35 - 44	9.5%
45 - 54	10.1%
55 - 64	14.7%
65 - 74	17.4%
75 - 84	12.2%
85 +	4.1%
18 +	86.7%
2010 Population by Sex	
Males	4,996
Females	5,475
2021 Population by Sex	
Males	6,075
Females	6,331
2026 Population by Sex	
Males	6,460
Females	6,583

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.



Community Profile

Towns County, GA
 Towns County, GA (13281)
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Towns County,...

2010 Population by Race/Ethnicity	
Total	10,471
White Alone	97.7%
Black Alone	0.4%
American Indian Alone	0.3%
Asian Alone	0.4%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	0.6%
Two or More Races	0.6%
Hispanic Origin	2.0%
Diversity Index	8.2
2021 Population by Race/Ethnicity	
Total	12,406
White Alone	96.8%
Black Alone	0.3%
American Indian Alone	0.4%
Asian Alone	1.0%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.1%
Two or More Races	0.4%
Hispanic Origin	3.4%
Diversity Index	12.5
2026 Population by Race/Ethnicity	
Total	13,043
White Alone	96.4%
Black Alone	0.3%
American Indian Alone	0.5%
Asian Alone	1.2%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.2%
Two or More Races	0.4%
Hispanic Origin	3.9%
Diversity Index	14.2
2010 Population by Relationship and Household Type	
Total	10,471
In Households	93.3%
In Family Households	76.8%
Householder	28.5%
Spouse	24.1%
Child	20.6%
Other relative	2.4%
Nonrelative	1.2%
In Nonfamily Households	16.5%
In Group Quarters	6.7%
Institutionalized Population	1.4%
Noninstitutionalized Population	5.2%

Data Note: Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race. The Diversity Index measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Towns County, GA
 Towns County, GA (13281)
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Towns County,...

2021 Population 25+ by Educational Attainment	
Total	9,255
Less than 9th Grade	3.9%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	5.3%
High School Graduate	24.5%
GED/Alternative Credential	4.5%
Some College, No Degree	20.8%
Associate Degree	8.9%
Bachelor's Degree	19.0%
Graduate/Professional Degree	13.1%
2021 Population 15+ by Marital Status	
Total	11,068
Never Married	25.4%
Married	54.7%
Widowed	9.4%
Divorced	10.5%
2021 Civilian Population 16+ in Labor Force	
Civilian Population 16+	4,360
Population 16+ Employed	96.0%
Population 16+ Unemployment rate	4.0%
Population 16-24 Employed	18.3%
Population 16-24 Unemployment rate	2.6%
Population 25-54 Employed	56.7%
Population 25-54 Unemployment rate	2.5%
Population 55-64 Employed	17.2%
Population 55-64 Unemployment rate	10.7%
Population 65+ Employed	7.8%
Population 65+ Unemployment rate	3.0%
2021 Employed Population 16+ by Industry	
Total	4,184
Agriculture/Mining	1.6%
Construction	7.4%
Manufacturing	5.4%
Wholesale Trade	2.9%
Retail Trade	10.8%
Transportation/Utilities	5.0%
Information	1.8%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	6.6%
Services	55.0%
Public Administration	3.6%
2021 Employed Population 16+ by Occupation	
Total	4,184
White Collar	57.2%
Management/Business/Financial	16.3%
Professional	17.7%
Sales	9.1%
Administrative Support	14.1%
Services	22.8%
Blue Collar	19.9%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing	0.3%
Construction/Extraction	5.4%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	3.1%
Production	4.7%
Transportation/Material Moving	6.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Towns County, GA
 Towns County, GA (13281)
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

	Towns County,...
2010 Households by Type	
Total	4,510
Households with 1 Person	30.1%
Households with 2+ People	69.9%
Family Households	66.1%
Husband-wife Families	56.0%
With Related Children	14.1%
Other Family (No Spouse Present)	10.1%
Other Family with Male Householder	2.6%
With Related Children	1.5%
Other Family with Female Householder	7.6%
With Related Children	4.3%
Nonfamily Households	3.8%
All Households with Children	20.2%
Multigenerational Households	2.0%
Unmarried Partner Households	4.0%
Male-female	3.4%
Same-sex	0.6%
2010 Households by Size	
Total	4,510
1 Person Household	30.1%
2 Person Household	44.9%
3 Person Household	11.8%
4 Person Household	7.9%
5 Person Household	3.4%
6 Person Household	1.1%
7 + Person Household	0.8%
2010 Households by Tenure and Mortgage Status	
Total	4,510
Owner Occupied	80.1%
Owned with a Mortgage/Loan	39.7%
Owned Free and Clear	40.4%
Renter Occupied	19.9%
2021 Affordability, Mortgage and Wealth	
Housing Affordability Index	120
Percent of Income for Mortgage	21.3%
Wealth Index	70
2010 Housing Units By Urban/ Rural Status	
Total Housing Units	7,731
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Area	0.0%
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Cluster	0.0%
Rural Housing Units	100.0%
2010 Population By Urban/ Rural Status	
Total Population	10,471
Population Inside Urbanized Area	0.0%
Population Inside Urbanized Cluster	0.0%
Rural Population	100.0%

Data Note: Households with children include any households with people under age 18, related or not. Multigenerational households are families with 3 or more parent-child relationships. Unmarried partner households are usually classified as nonfamily households unless there is another member of the household related to the householder. Multigenerational and unmarried partner households are reported only to the tract level. Esri estimated block group data, which is used to estimate polygons or non-standard geography.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Towns County, GA
 Towns County, GA (13281)
 Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Towns County,...

Top 3 Tapestry Segments

1.	Rural Resort Dwellers (6E)
2.	Senior Escapes (9D)
3.	Rooted Rural (10B)

2021 Consumer Spending

Apparel & Services: Total \$	\$7,327,607
Average Spent	\$1,401.88
Spending Potential Index	66
Education: Total \$	\$4,817,584
Average Spent	\$921.67
Spending Potential Index	53
Entertainment/Recreation: Total \$	\$13,362,210
Average Spent	\$2,556.38
Spending Potential Index	79
Food at Home: Total \$	\$22,410,560
Average Spent	\$4,287.46
Spending Potential Index	79
Food Away from Home: Total \$	\$13,515,674
Average Spent	\$2,585.74
Spending Potential Index	68
Health Care: Total \$	\$28,274,314
Average Spent	\$5,409.28
Spending Potential Index	87
HH Furnishings & Equipment: Total \$	\$8,402,468
Average Spent	\$1,607.51
Spending Potential Index	71
Personal Care Products & Services: Total \$	\$3,176,223
Average Spent	\$607.66
Spending Potential Index	68
Shelter: Total \$	\$68,389,068
Average Spent	\$13,083.81
Spending Potential Index	65
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind: Total \$	\$12,116,799
Average Spent	\$2,318.12
Spending Potential Index	97
Travel: Total \$	\$9,073,706
Average Spent	\$1,735.93
Spending Potential Index	69
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs: Total \$	\$4,892,118
Average Spent	\$935.93
Spending Potential Index	84

Data Note: Consumer spending shows the amount spent on a variety of goods and services by households that reside in the area. Expenditures are shown by broad budget categories that are not mutually exclusive. Consumer spending does not equal business revenue. Total and Average Amount Spent Per Household represent annual figures. The Spending Potential Index represents the amount spent in the area relative to a national average of 100.

Source: Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Esri.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiawassee City, GA
Hiawassee City, GA (1338124)
Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Hiawassee cit...

Population Summary	
2000 Total Population	847
2010 Total Population	865
2021 Total Population	1,080
2021 Group Quarters	94
2026 Total Population	1,139
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.07%
2021 Total Daytime Population	1,902
Workers	1,156
Residents	746
Household Summary	
2000 Households	398
2000 Average Household Size	1.95
2010 Households	448
2010 Average Household Size	1.68
2021 Households	527
2021 Average Household Size	1.87
2026 Households	561
2026 Average Household Size	1.86
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.26%
2010 Families	199
2010 Average Family Size	2.41
2021 Families	287
2021 Average Family Size	2.51
2026 Families	303
2026 Average Family Size	2.51
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.09%
Housing Unit Summary	
2000 Housing Units	589
Owner Occupied Housing Units	51.4%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	16.1%
Vacant Housing Units	32.4%
2010 Housing Units	732
Owner Occupied Housing Units	31.8%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	29.4%
Vacant Housing Units	38.8%
2021 Housing Units	895
Owner Occupied Housing Units	36.5%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	22.3%
Vacant Housing Units	41.1%
2026 Housing Units	954
Owner Occupied Housing Units	37.1%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	21.7%
Vacant Housing Units	41.2%
Median Household Income	
2021	\$44,238
2026	\$44,760
Median Home Value	
2021	\$261,364
2026	\$297,973
Per Capita Income	
2021	\$30,344
2026	\$32,796
Median Age	
2010	68.6
2021	59.5
2026	60.7

Data Note: Household population includes persons not residing in group quarters. Average Household Size is the household population divided by total households. Persons in families include the householder and persons related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Per Capita Income represents the income received by all persons aged 15 years and over divided by the total population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiwassee City, GA
 Hiwassee City, GA (1338124)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Hiwassee cit...

2021 Households by Income

Household Income Base	Percentage
<\$15,000	13.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	11.0%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	12.9%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	17.6%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	17.5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	8.5%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	4.4%
\$200,000+	3.4%
Average Household Income	\$63,887

2026 Households by Income

Household Income Base	Percentage
<\$15,000	12.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	10.7%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	12.7%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	18.9%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	17.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	8.6%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	4.8%
\$200,000+	3.8%
Average Household Income	\$68,603

2021 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value

Total	Percentage
<\$50,000	4.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	4.6%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10.1%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	14.4%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	14.7%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	10.1%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	19.9%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	8.3%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	7.6%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	5.8%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	0.0%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0.0%
\$2,000,000 +	0.6%
Average Home Value	\$322,095

2026 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value

Total	Percentage
<\$50,000	2.3%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	3.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	7.9%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	12.7%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	13.9%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	10.5%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	22.4%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	9.9%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	9.3%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	7.4%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	0.0%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0.0%
\$2,000,000 +	0.6%
Average Home Value	\$353,754

Data Note: Income represents the preceding year, expressed in current dollars. Household income includes wage and salary earnings, interest dividends, net rents, pensions, SSI and welfare payments, child support, and alimony.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiwassee City, GA
Hiwassee City, GA (1338124)
Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Hiwassee cit...

2010 Population by Age		Hiwassee cit...
Total		865
0 - 4		1.3%
5 - 9		2.1%
10 - 14		4.0%
15 - 24		4.9%
25 - 34		4.7%
35 - 44		6.4%
45 - 54		7.4%
55 - 64		12.4%
65 - 74		19.9%
75 - 84		21.2%
85 +		15.8%
18 +		90.6%
2021 Population by Age		Hiwassee cit...
Total		1,081
0 - 4		2.3%
5 - 9		2.6%
10 - 14		2.8%
15 - 24		7.5%
25 - 34		9.0%
35 - 44		8.0%
45 - 54		10.7%
55 - 64		15.8%
65 - 74		19.2%
75 - 84		14.5%
85 +		7.6%
18 +		90.4%
2026 Population by Age		Hiwassee cit...
Total		1,141
0 - 4		2.4%
5 - 9		2.5%
10 - 14		3.0%
15 - 24		5.8%
25 - 34		9.6%
35 - 44		8.6%
45 - 54		9.5%
55 - 64		16.6%
65 - 74		18.8%
75 - 84		16.0%
85 +		7.3%
18 +		90.1%
2010 Population by Sex		Hiwassee cit...
Males		343
Females		522
2021 Population by Sex		Hiwassee cit...
Males		521
Females		560
2026 Population by Sex		Hiwassee cit...
Males		562
Females		579

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiawassee City, GA
Hiawassee City, GA (1338124)
Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Hiawassee cit...

2010 Population by Race/Ethnicity

Total	865
White Alone	96.8%
Black Alone	0.3%
American Indian Alone	0.1%
Asian Alone	1.3%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	0.9%
Two or More Races	0.6%
Hispanic Origin	2.8%
Diversity Index	11.4

2021 Population by Race/Ethnicity

Total	1,081
White Alone	96.6%
Black Alone	0.2%
American Indian Alone	0.4%
Asian Alone	1.6%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.0%
Two or More Races	0.3%
Hispanic Origin	2.9%
Diversity Index	11.7

2026 Population by Race/Ethnicity

Total	1,138
White Alone	96.1%
Black Alone	0.2%
American Indian Alone	0.4%
Asian Alone	1.8%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.1%
Two or More Races	0.4%
Hispanic Origin	3.3%
Diversity Index	13.7

2010 Population by Relationship and Household Type

Total	865
In Households	86.9%
In Family Households	55.8%
Householder	23.0%
Spouse	18.2%
Child	12.0%
Other relative	2.2%
Nonrelative	0.5%
In Nonfamily Households	31.1%
In Group Quarters	13.1%
Institutionalized Population	13.1%
Noninstitutionalized Population	0.0%

Data Note: Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race. The Diversity Index measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiwassee City, GA
 Hiwassee City, GA (1338124)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

	Hiwassee cit...
2021 Population 25+ by Educational Attainment	
Total	918
Less than 9th Grade	4.0%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	2.6%
High School Graduate	25.4%
GED/Alternative Credential	6.1%
Some College, No Degree	18.8%
Associate Degree	7.3%
Bachelor's Degree	22.4%
Graduate/Professional Degree	13.3%
2021 Population 15+ by Marital Status	
Total	997
Never Married	15.3%
Married	52.4%
Widowed	15.9%
Divorced	16.3%
2021 Civilian Population 16+ in Labor Force	
Civilian Population 16+	343
Population 16+ Employed	95.6%
Population 16+ Unemployment rate	4.4%
Population 16-24 Employed	10.4%
Population 16-24 Unemployment rate	10.5%
Population 25-54 Employed	63.4%
Population 25-54 Unemployment rate	2.3%
Population 55-64 Employed	18.3%
Population 55-64 Unemployment rate	9.1%
Population 65+ Employed	8.2%
Population 65+ Unemployment rate	0.0%
2021 Employed Population 16+ by Industry	
Total	328
Agriculture/Mining	0.0%
Construction	11.0%
Manufacturing	6.7%
Wholesale Trade	4.3%
Retail Trade	17.4%
Transportation/Utilities	11.0%
Information	0.0%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	6.7%
Services	40.7%
Public Administration	2.1%
2021 Employed Population 16+ by Occupation	
Total	328
White Collar	52.4%
Management/Business/Financial	15.5%
Professional	9.5%
Sales	12.8%
Administrative Support	14.6%
Services	24.4%
Blue Collar	23.2%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing	0.0%
Construction/Extraction	7.3%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	0.0%
Production	7.6%
Transportation/Material Moving	8.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiwassee City, GA
 Hiwassee City, GA (1338124)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

	Hiwassee cit...
2010 Households by Type	
Total	448
Households with 1 Person	52.9%
Households with 2+ People	47.1%
Family Households	44.4%
Husband-wife Families	35.0%
With Related Children	6.5%
Other Family (No Spouse Present)	9.4%
Other Family with Male Householder	1.1%
With Related Children	0.7%
Other Family with Female Householder	8.3%
With Related Children	4.5%
Nonfamily Households	2.7%
All Households with Children	11.6%
Multigenerational Households	2.2%
Unmarried Partner Households	4.2%
Male-female	3.3%
Same-sex	0.9%
2010 Households by Size	
Total	448
1 Person Household	52.9%
2 Person Household	36.2%
3 Person Household	5.6%
4 Person Household	2.9%
5 Person Household	1.3%
6 Person Household	0.7%
7 + Person Household	0.4%
2010 Households by Tenure and Mortgage Status	
Total	448
Owner Occupied	52.0%
Owned with a Mortgage/Loan	22.3%
Owned Free and Clear	29.7%
Renter Occupied	48.0%
2021 Affordability, Mortgage and Wealth	
Housing Affordability Index	109
Percent of Income for Mortgage	24.8%
Wealth Index	67
2010 Housing Units By Urban/ Rural Status	
Total Housing Units	732
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Area	0.0%
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Cluster	0.0%
Rural Housing Units	100.0%
2010 Population By Urban/ Rural Status	
Total Population	865
Population Inside Urbanized Area	0.0%
Population Inside Urbanized Cluster	0.0%
Rural Population	100.0%

Data Note: Households with children include any households with people under age 18, related or not. Multigenerational households are families with 3 or more parent-child relationships. Unmarried partner households are usually classified as nonfamily households unless there is another member of the household related to the householder. Multigenerational and unmarried partner households are reported only to the tract level. Esri estimated block group data, which is used to estimate polygons or non-standard geography.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Hiwassee City, GA
 Hiwassee City, GA (1338124)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Hiwassee cit...

Top 3 Tapestry Segments

1. Senior Escapes (9D)
2. Rural Resort Dwellers (6E)
- 3.

2021 Consumer Spending

Apparel & Services: Total \$	\$743,513
Average Spent	\$1,410.84
Spending Potential Index	67
Education: Total \$	\$504,009
Average Spent	\$956.37
Spending Potential Index	55
Entertainment/Recreation: Total \$	\$1,252,891
Average Spent	\$2,377.40
Spending Potential Index	74
Food at Home: Total \$	\$2,157,668
Average Spent	\$4,094.25
Spending Potential Index	75
Food Away from Home: Total \$	\$1,375,471
Average Spent	\$2,610.00
Spending Potential Index	69
Health Care: Total \$	\$2,649,719
Average Spent	\$5,027.93
Spending Potential Index	81
HH Furnishings & Equipment: Total \$	\$845,583
Average Spent	\$1,604.52
Spending Potential Index	71
Personal Care Products & Services: Total \$	\$337,005
Average Spent	\$639.48
Spending Potential Index	71
Shelter: Total \$	\$7,162,204
Average Spent	\$13,590.52
Spending Potential Index	67
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind: Total \$	\$1,152,597
Average Spent	\$2,187.09
Spending Potential Index	91
Travel: Total \$	\$949,774
Average Spent	\$1,802.23
Spending Potential Index	71
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs: Total \$	\$457,913
Average Spent	\$868.90
Spending Potential Index	78

Data Note: Consumer spending shows the amount spent on a variety of goods and services by households that reside in the area. Expenditures are shown by broad budget categories that are not mutually exclusive. Consumer spending does not equal business revenue. Total and Average Amount Spent Per Household represent annual figures. The Spending Potential Index represents the amount spent in the area relative to a national average of 100.

Source: Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Esri.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
 Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Young Harris ...

Population Summary	
2000 Total Population	671
2010 Total Population	893
2021 Total Population	1,366
2021 Group Quarters	671
2026 Total Population	1,412
2021-2026 Annual Rate	0.66%
2021 Total Daytime Population	1,347
Workers	481
Residents	866
Household Summary	
2000 Households	122
2000 Average Household Size	3.55
2010 Households	147
2010 Average Household Size	2.35
2021 Households	174
2021 Average Household Size	3.99
2026 Households	185
2026 Average Household Size	4.01
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.23%
2010 Families	94
2010 Average Family Size	3.00
2021 Families	110
2021 Average Family Size	5.02
2026 Families	116
2026 Average Family Size	5.06
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.07%
Housing Unit Summary	
2000 Housing Units	149
Owner Occupied Housing Units	63.8%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	18.1%
Vacant Housing Units	18.1%
2010 Housing Units	197
Owner Occupied Housing Units	33.5%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	41.1%
Vacant Housing Units	25.4%
2021 Housing Units	242
Owner Occupied Housing Units	43.8%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	28.1%
Vacant Housing Units	28.1%
2026 Housing Units	258
Owner Occupied Housing Units	44.6%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	27.1%
Vacant Housing Units	28.3%
Median Household Income	
2021	\$41,402
2026	\$39,557
Median Home Value	
2021	\$245,000
2026	\$275,000
Per Capita Income	
2021	\$12,813
2026	\$13,307
Median Age	
2010	19.7
2021	21.4
2026	21.6

Data Note: Household population includes persons not residing in group quarters. Average Household Size is the household population divided by total households. Persons in families include the householder and persons related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Per Capita Income represents the income received by all persons aged 15 years and over divided by the total population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
 Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Young Harris ...

2021 Households by Income

Household Income Base	172
<\$15,000	16.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	13.4%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	10.5%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	18.0%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18.6%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	14.5%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	4.7%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	2.3%
\$200,000+	1.2%
Average Household Income	\$53,786

2026 Households by Income

Household Income Base	185
<\$15,000	16.2%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	14.1%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	11.9%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	20.0%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	16.8%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	13.0%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	4.3%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	2.7%
\$200,000+	1.1%
Average Household Income	\$53,931

2021 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value

Total	105
<\$50,000	0.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	13.3%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	15.2%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	17.1%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	4.8%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	15.2%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	12.4%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	5.7%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	9.5%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	6.7%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	0.0%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0.0%
\$2,000,000 +	0.0%
Average Home Value	\$298,571

2026 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value

Total	114
<\$50,000	0.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	10.5%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	12.3%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	14.9%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	4.4%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	15.8%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	14.0%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	7.0%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	12.3%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	8.8%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	0.0%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0.0%
\$2,000,000 +	0.0%
Average Home Value	\$336,842

Data Note: Income represents the preceding year, expressed in current dollars. Household income includes wage and salary earnings, interest dividends, net rents, pensions, SSI and welfare payments, child support, and alimony.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
 Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

		Young Harris ...
2010 Population by Age		
Total		893
0 - 4		3.2%
5 - 9		3.9%
10 - 14		2.6%
15 - 24		66.0%
25 - 34		5.3%
35 - 44		4.5%
45 - 54		3.7%
55 - 64		4.9%
65 - 74		3.2%
75 - 84		2.1%
85 +		0.6%
18 +		88.6%
2021 Population by Age		
Total		1,363
0 - 4		3.0%
5 - 9		3.0%
10 - 14		3.0%
15 - 24		54.4%
25 - 34		5.8%
35 - 44		5.3%
45 - 54		5.6%
55 - 64		5.6%
65 - 74		7.0%
75 - 84		5.6%
85 +		1.7%
18 +		88.6%
2026 Population by Age		
Total		1,412
0 - 4		2.9%
5 - 9		3.3%
10 - 14		3.3%
15 - 24		52.9%
25 - 34		4.8%
35 - 44		6.3%
45 - 54		5.7%
55 - 64		6.3%
65 - 74		6.2%
75 - 84		5.9%
85 +		2.3%
18 +		88.2%
2010 Population by Sex		
Males		414
Females		479
2021 Population by Sex		
Males		643
Females		720
2026 Population by Sex		
Males		669
Females		743

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
 Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Young Harris ...

2010 Population by Race/Ethnicity	
Total	893
White Alone	92.4%
Black Alone	2.8%
American Indian Alone	0.4%
Asian Alone	1.3%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	1.8%
Two or More Races	1.1%
Hispanic Origin	3.8%
Diversity Index	20.8
2021 Population by Race/Ethnicity	
Total	1,366
White Alone	92.3%
Black Alone	1.5%
American Indian Alone	0.4%
Asian Alone	1.9%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	3.1%
Two or More Races	0.7%
Hispanic Origin	6.0%
Diversity Index	24.3
2026 Population by Race/Ethnicity	
Total	1,412
White Alone	91.4%
Black Alone	1.4%
American Indian Alone	0.5%
Asian Alone	2.3%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	3.6%
Two or More Races	0.7%
Hispanic Origin	6.9%
Diversity Index	27.0
2010 Population by Relationship and Household Type	
Total	893
In Households	38.7%
In Family Households	32.1%
Householder	10.5%
Spouse	7.3%
Child	13.1%
Other relative	0.7%
Nonrelative	0.6%
In Nonfamily Households	6.6%
In Group Quarters	61.3%
Institutionalized Population	0.0%
Noninstitutionalized Population	61.3%

Data Note: Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race. The Diversity Index measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Young Harris ...

2021 Population 25+ by Educational Attainment	
Total	503
Less than 9th Grade	1.4%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	3.0%
High School Graduate	18.3%
GED/Alternative Credential	6.4%
Some College, No Degree	19.1%
Associate Degree	20.5%
Bachelor's Degree	11.1%
Graduate/Professional Degree	20.3%
2021 Population 15+ by Marital Status	
Total	1,241
Never Married	61.9%
Married	28.6%
Widowed	5.1%
Divorced	4.4%
2021 Civilian Population 16+ in Labor Force	
Civilian Population 16+	496
Population 16+ Employed	96.6%
Population 16+ Unemployment rate	3.4%
Population 16-24 Employed	61.8%
Population 16-24 Unemployment rate	1.3%
Population 25-54 Employed	31.9%
Population 25-54 Unemployment rate	2.5%
Population 55-64 Employed	3.5%
Population 55-64 Unemployment rate	29.2%
Population 65+ Employed	2.9%
Population 65+ Unemployment rate	6.7%
2021 Employed Population 16+ by Industry	
Total	479
Agriculture/Mining	2.3%
Construction	3.1%
Manufacturing	5.2%
Wholesale Trade	1.0%
Retail Trade	12.1%
Transportation/Utilities	1.0%
Information	0.8%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	2.1%
Services	71.6%
Public Administration	0.6%
2021 Employed Population 16+ by Occupation	
Total	480
White Collar	57.3%
Management/Business/Financial	9.2%
Professional	21.5%
Sales	12.9%
Administrative Support	13.8%
Services	33.1%
Blue Collar	9.6%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing	0.2%
Construction/Extraction	6.2%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	1.0%
Production	0.4%
Transportation/Material Moving	1.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Young Harris ...

2010 Households by Type	
Total	147
Households with 1 Person	32.7%
Households with 2+ People	67.3%
Family Households	63.9%
Husband-wife Families	44.2%
With Related Children	20.4%
Other Family (No Spouse Present)	19.7%
Other Family with Male Householder	4.8%
With Related Children	4.8%
Other Family with Female Householder	15.0%
With Related Children	12.9%
Nonfamily Households	3.4%
All Households with Children	38.1%
Multigenerational Households	2.0%
Unmarried Partner Households	2.7%
Male-female	2.7%
Same-sex	0.0%
2010 Households by Size	
Total	147
1 Person Household	32.7%
2 Person Household	29.9%
3 Person Household	19.0%
4 Person Household	12.2%
5 Person Household	3.4%
6 Person Household	1.4%
7 + Person Household	1.4%
2010 Households by Tenure and Mortgage Status	
Total	147
Owner Occupied	44.9%
Owned with a Mortgage/Loan	25.2%
Owned Free and Clear	19.7%
Renter Occupied	55.1%
2021 Affordability, Mortgage and Wealth	
Housing Affordability Index	110
Percent of Income for Mortgage	24.9%
Wealth Index	50
2010 Housing Units By Urban/ Rural Status	
Total Housing Units	197
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Area	0.0%
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Cluster	0.0%
Rural Housing Units	100.0%
2010 Population By Urban/ Rural Status	
Total Population	893
Population Inside Urbanized Area	0.0%
Population Inside Urbanized Cluster	0.0%
Rural Population	100.0%

Data Note: Households with children include any households with people under age 18, related or not. Multigenerational households are families with 3 or more parent-child relationships. Unmarried partner households are usually classified as nonfamily households unless there is another member of the household related to the householder. Multigenerational and unmarried partner households are reported only to the tract level. Esri estimated block group data, which is used to estimate polygons or non-standard geography.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

October 13, 2021



Community Profile

Young Harris City, GA
 Young Harris City, GA (1384960)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Young Harris ...

Top 3 Tapestry Segments

1.	Midlife Constants (5E)
2.	
3.	

2021 Consumer Spending

Apparel & Services: Total \$	\$212,856
Average Spent	\$1,223.31
Spending Potential Index	58
Education: Total \$	\$156,488
Average Spent	\$899.36
Spending Potential Index	52
Entertainment/Recreation: Total \$	\$340,397
Average Spent	\$1,956.30
Spending Potential Index	61
Food at Home: Total \$	\$564,109
Average Spent	\$3,242.00
Spending Potential Index	60
Food Away from Home: Total \$	\$376,016
Average Spent	\$2,161.01
Spending Potential Index	57
Health Care: Total \$	\$698,323
Average Spent	\$4,013.35
Spending Potential Index	64
HH Furnishings & Equipment: Total \$	\$233,585
Average Spent	\$1,342.44
Spending Potential Index	60
Personal Care Products & Services: Total \$	\$92,446
Average Spent	\$531.30
Spending Potential Index	59
Shelter: Total \$	\$1,960,614
Average Spent	\$11,267.90
Spending Potential Index	56
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind: Total \$	\$256,748
Average Spent	\$1,475.57
Spending Potential Index	62
Travel: Total \$	\$255,438
Average Spent	\$1,468.04
Spending Potential Index	58
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs: Total \$	\$117,087
Average Spent	\$672.92
Spending Potential Index	61

Data Note: Consumer spending shows the amount spent on a variety of goods and services by households that reside in the area. Expenditures are shown by broad budget categories that are not mutually exclusive. Consumer spending does not equal business revenue. Total and Average Amount Spent Per Household represent annual figures. The Spending Potential Index represents the amount spent in the area relative to a national average of 100.

Source: Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Esri.

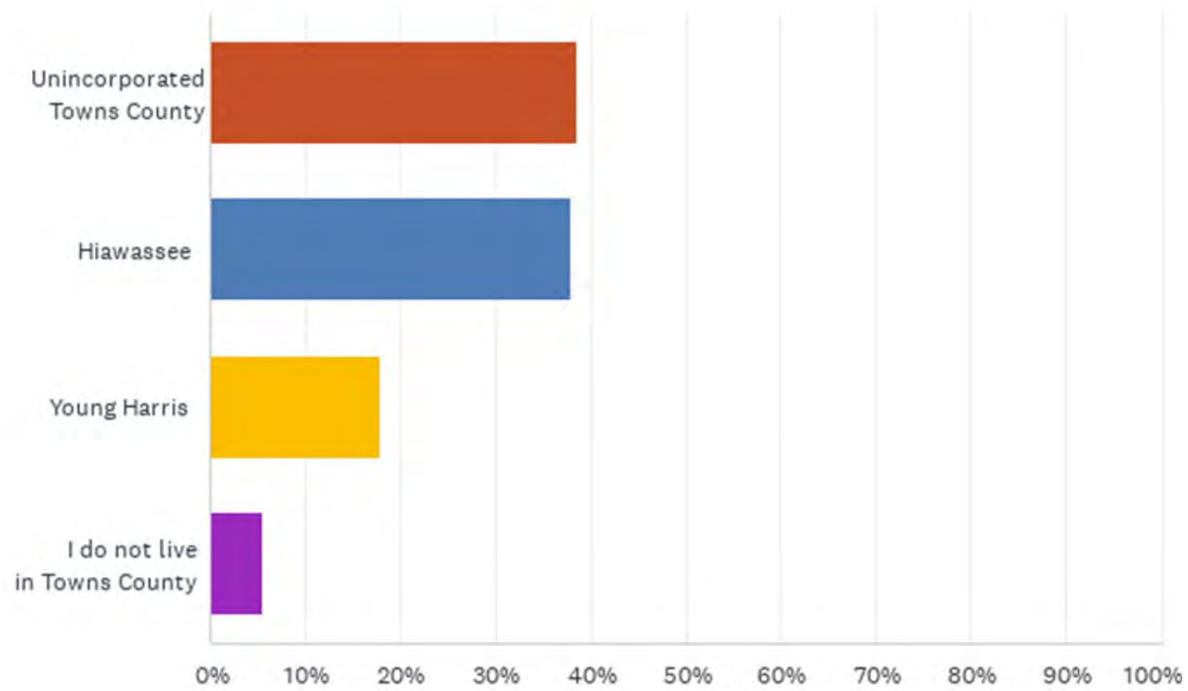
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Meeting Notes and Survey Response Summary



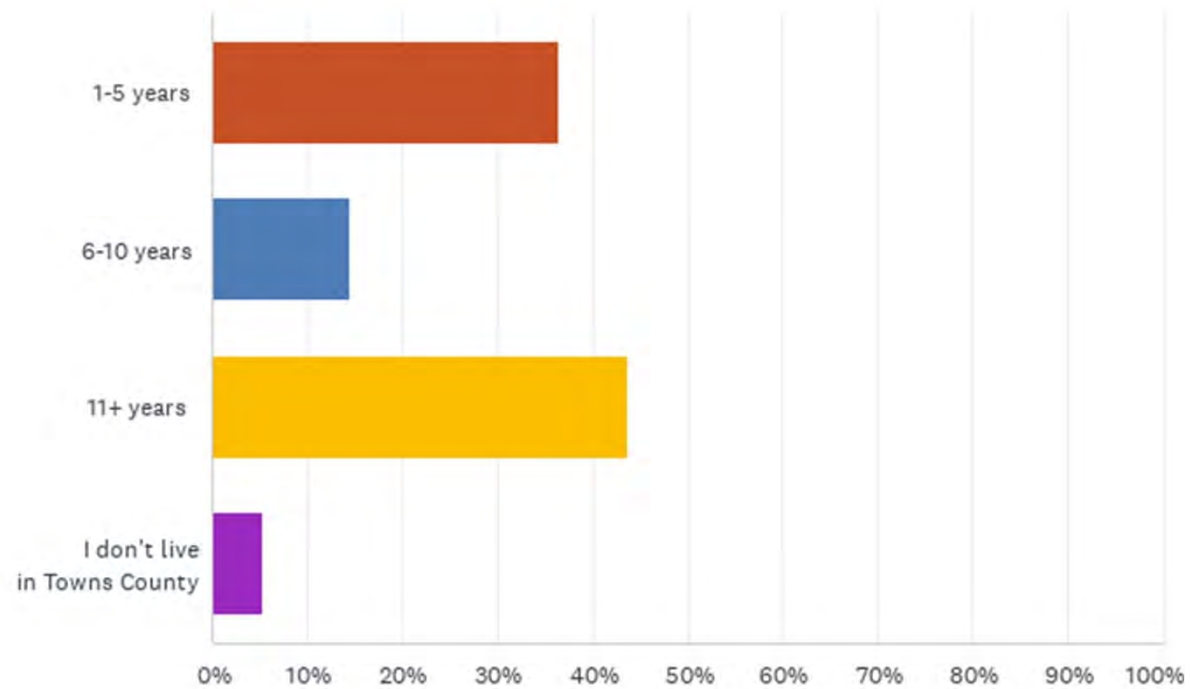
Q1: I am a resident in:

Answered: 639 Skipped: 6



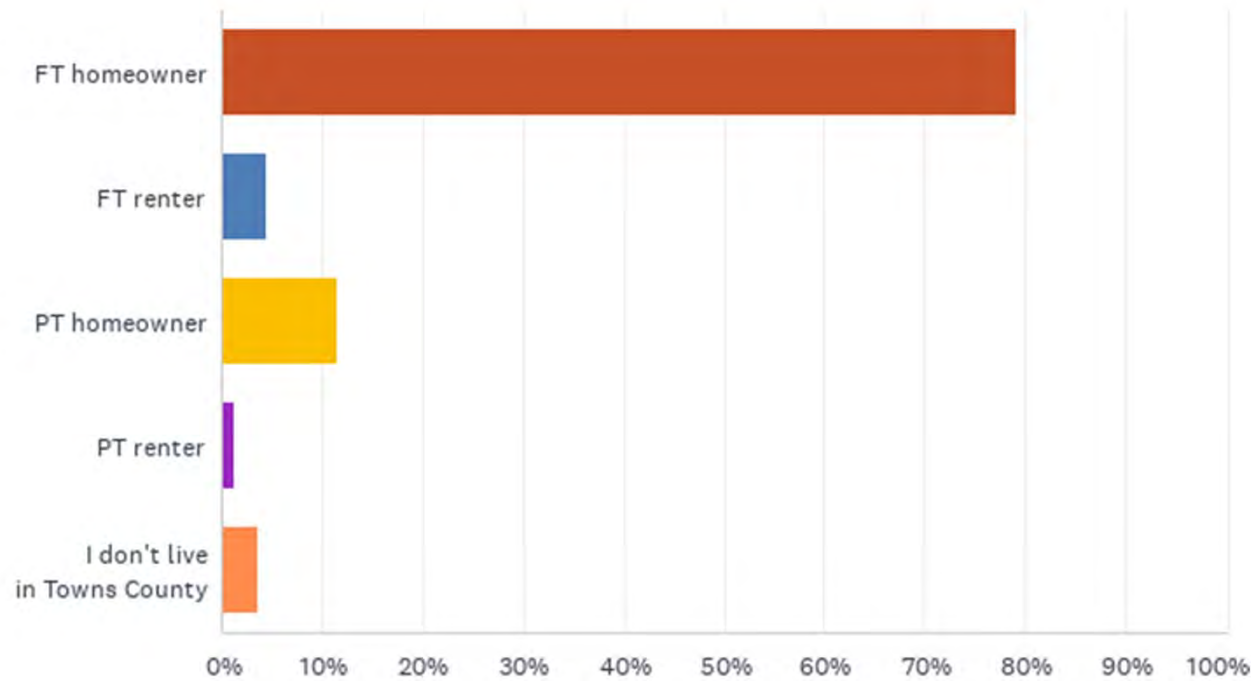
Q2: How long have you lived within Towns County?

Answered: 636 Skipped: 9



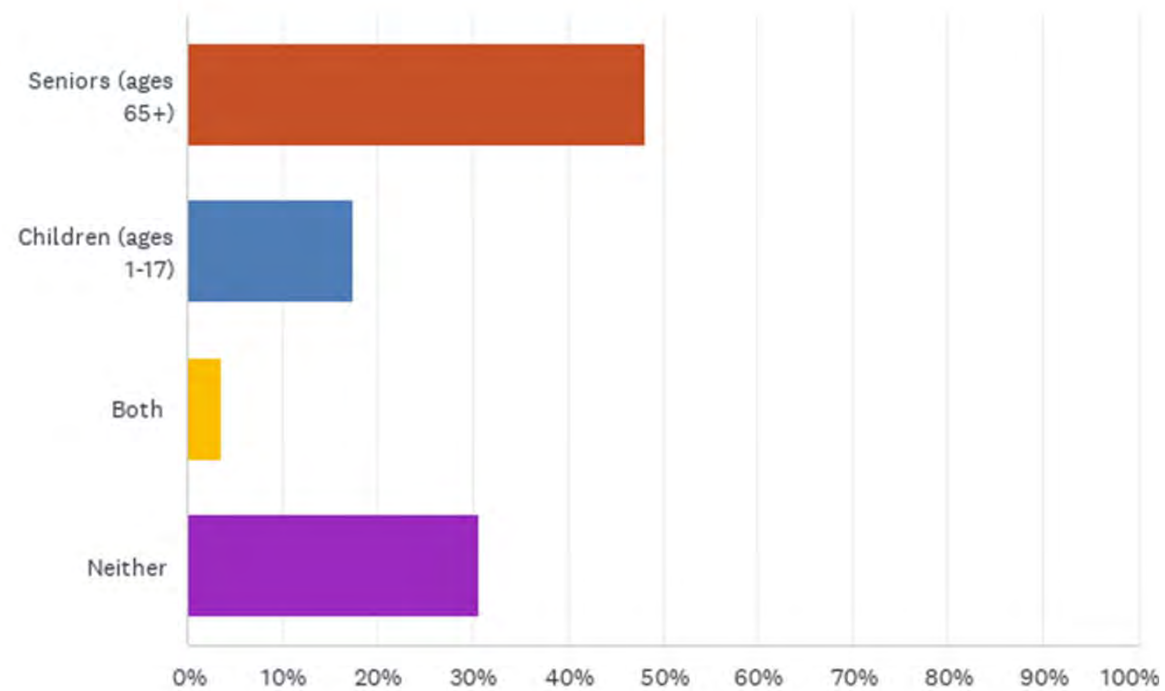
Q3: What is your housing status? (FT = Full time resident. PT = Part time resident)

Answered: 638 Skipped: 7



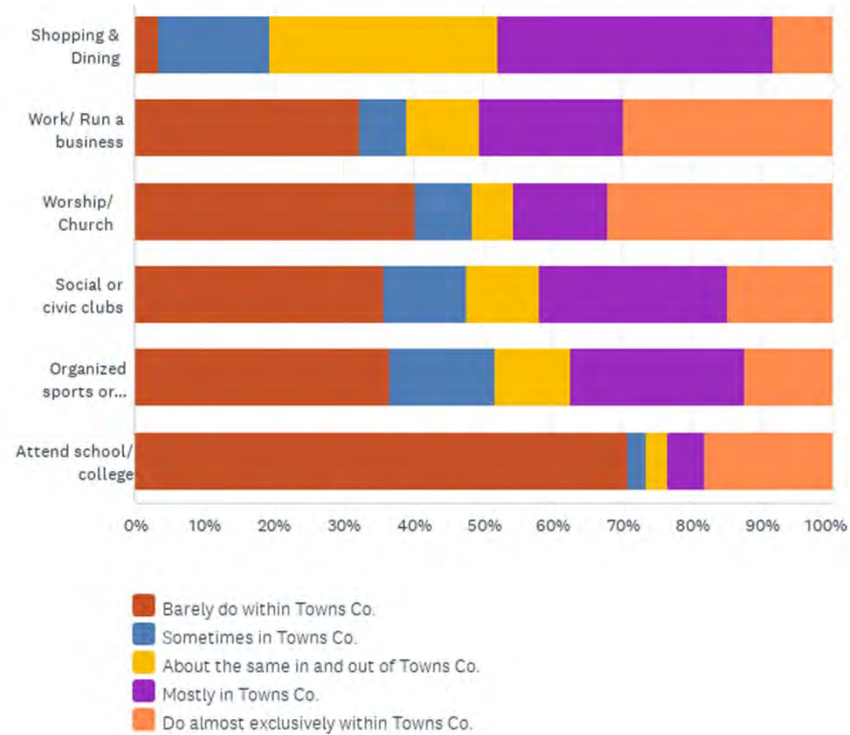
Q4: Do you have any seniors or children in your household?

Answered: 637 Skipped: 8



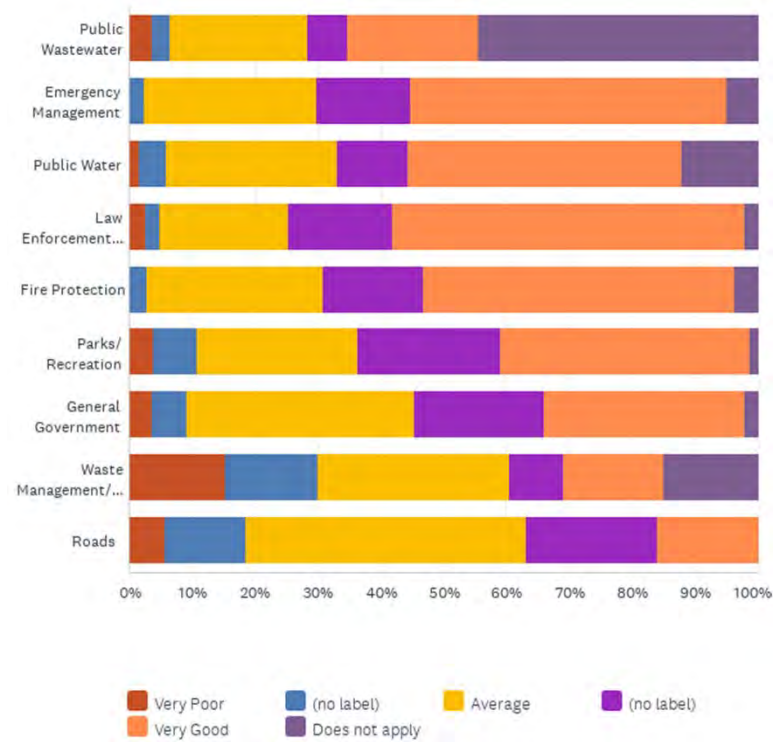
Q5: How frequently do you do these activities within Towns County?

Answered: 636 Skipped: 9



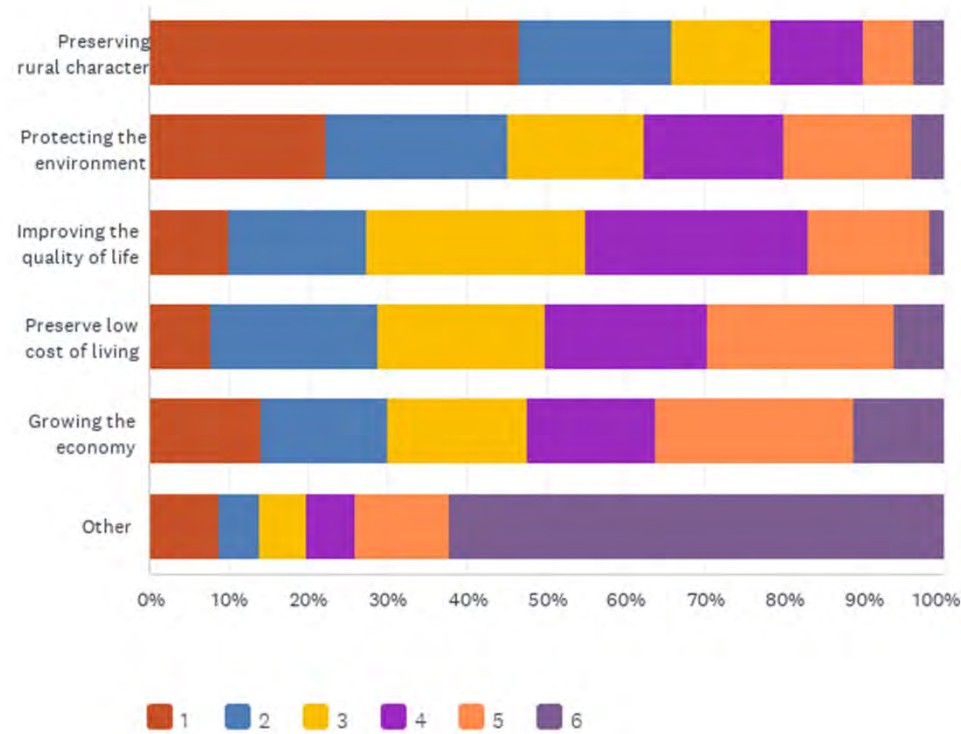
Q6: On a scale of 1 (Very poor) to 5 (Very good), please rate your satisfaction with the following services:

Answered: 514 Skipped: 131



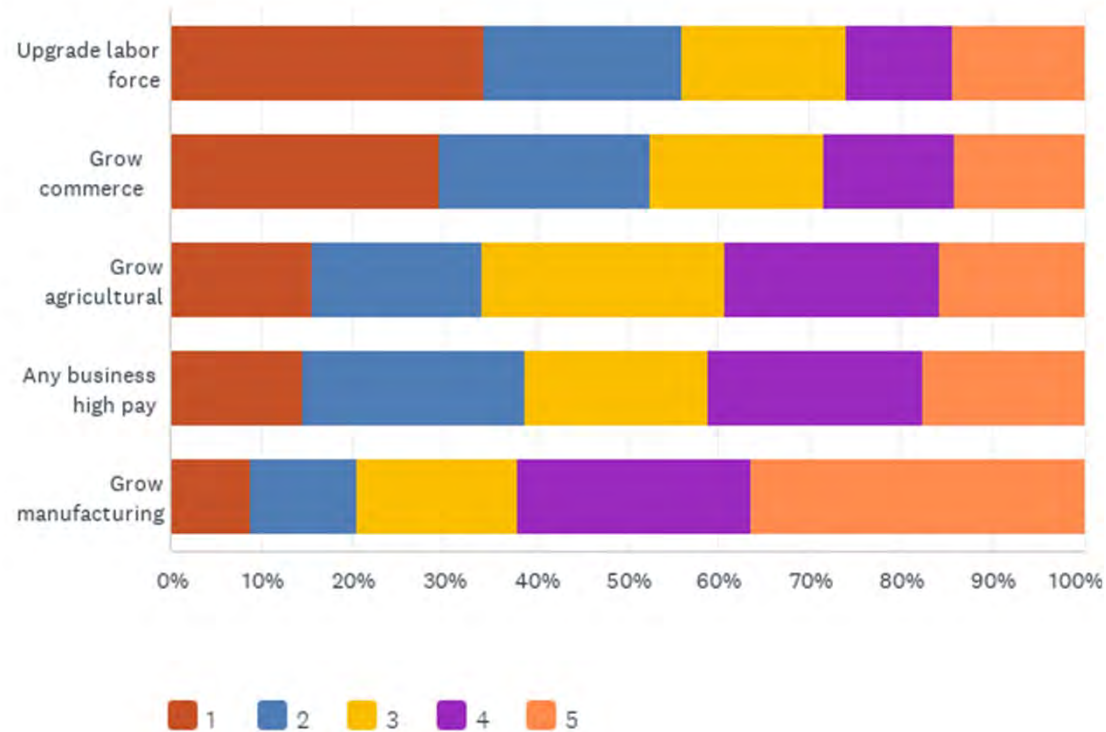
Q14: Please rank the following issues in terms of priority, with #1 being the most important:

Answered: 398 Skipped: 247



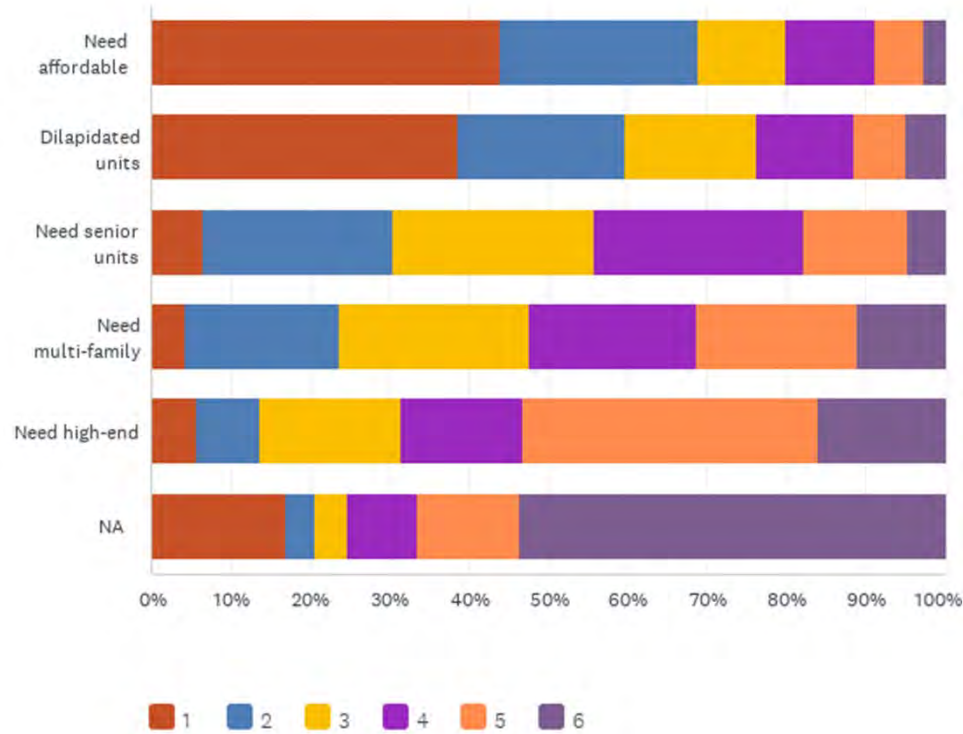
the following economic development priorities for Towns County, with #1 being the most important.

Answered: 392 Skipped: 253



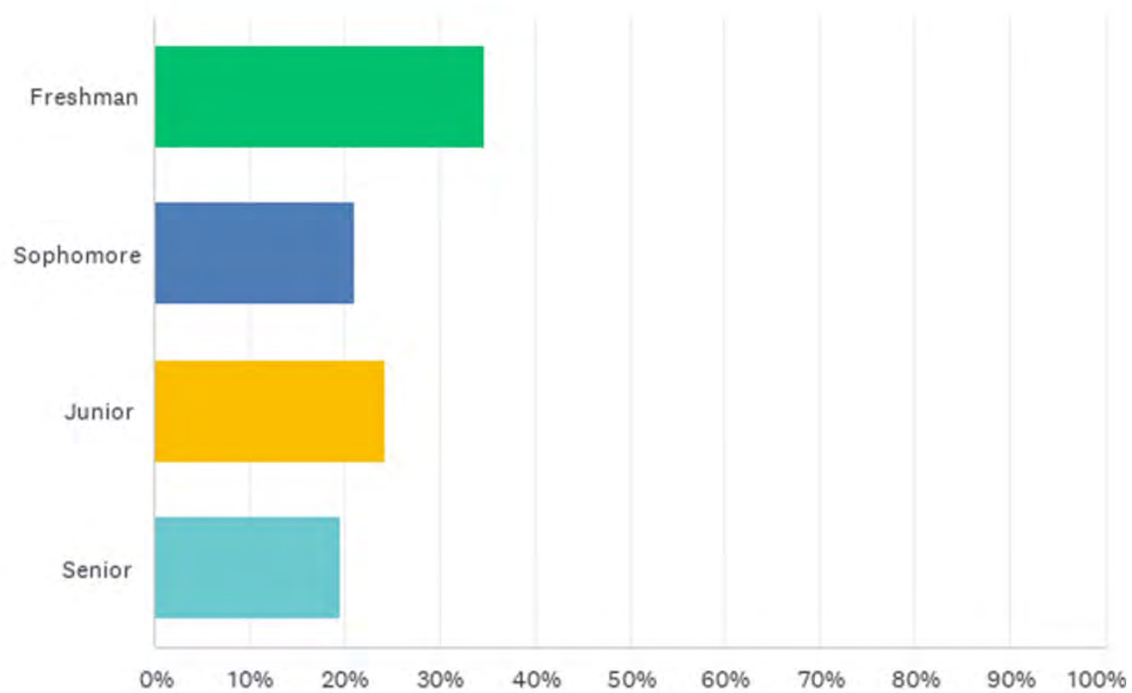
markets. Please rank the following housing priorities for Towns County, with #1 being the most important.

Answered: 393 Skipped: 252



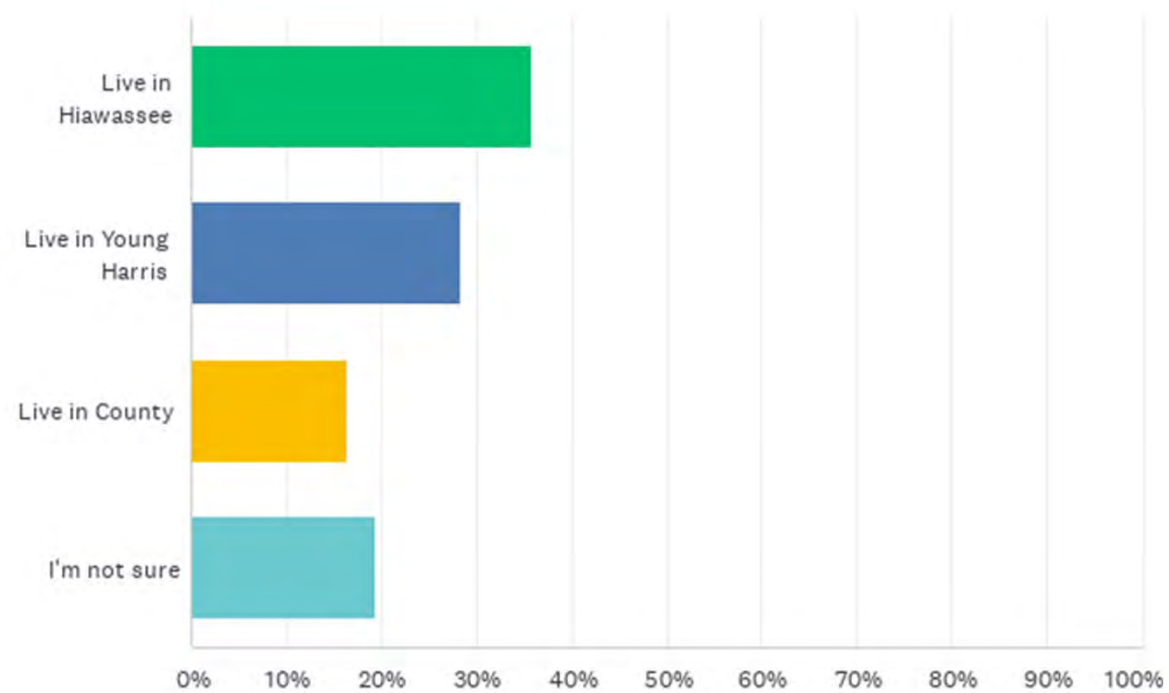
Q1: My current grade level in High School is:

Answered: 66 Skipped: 1



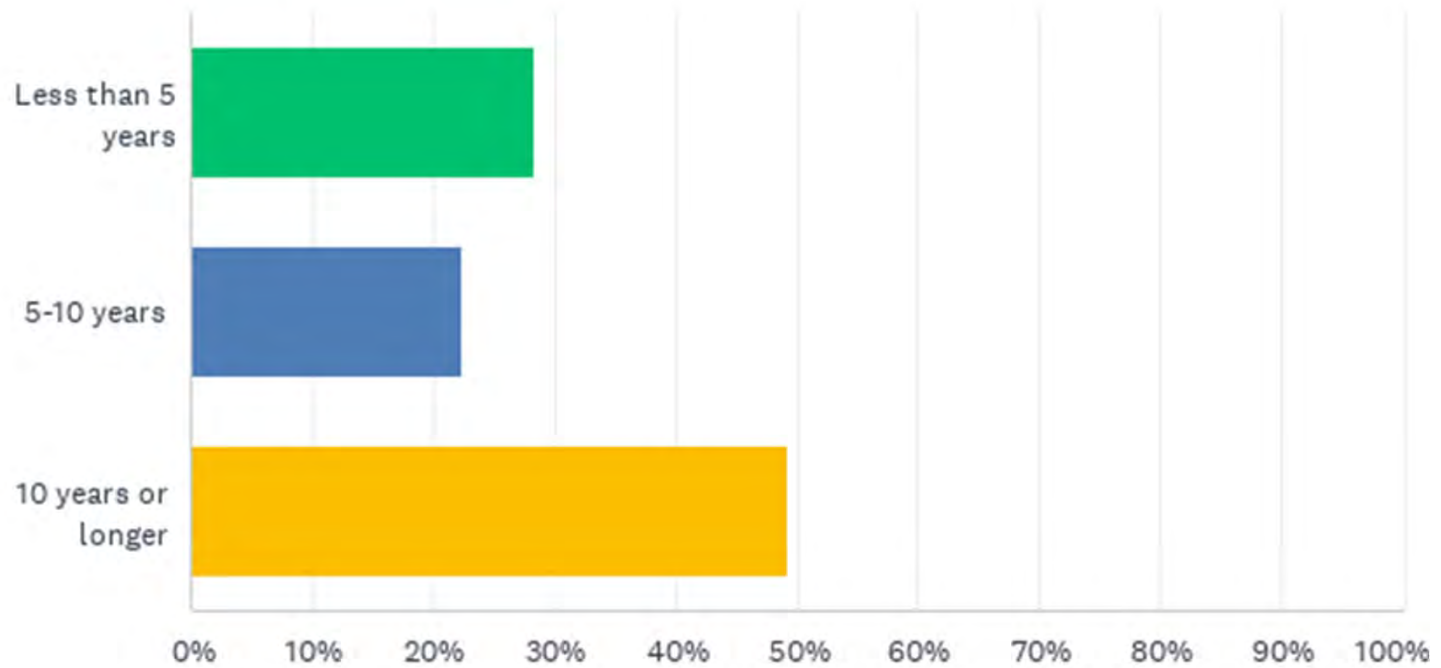
Q2: Do you know if you live in a municipality or the unincorporated county?

Answered: 67 Skipped: 0



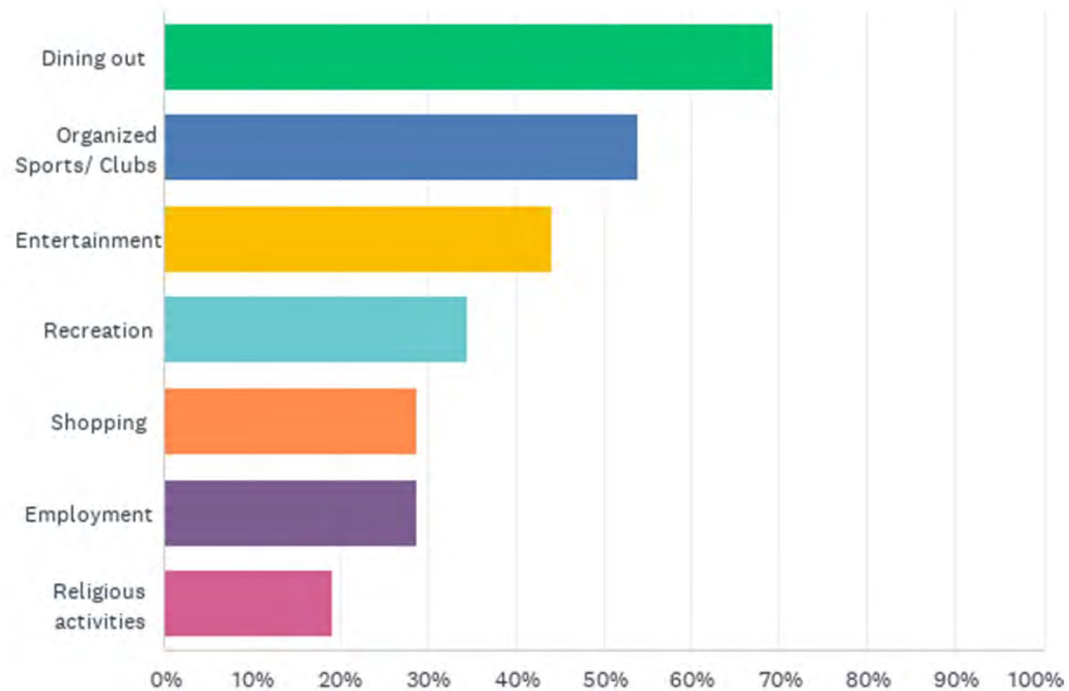
Q3: How long have you lived in Towns County?

Answered: 67 Skipped: 0



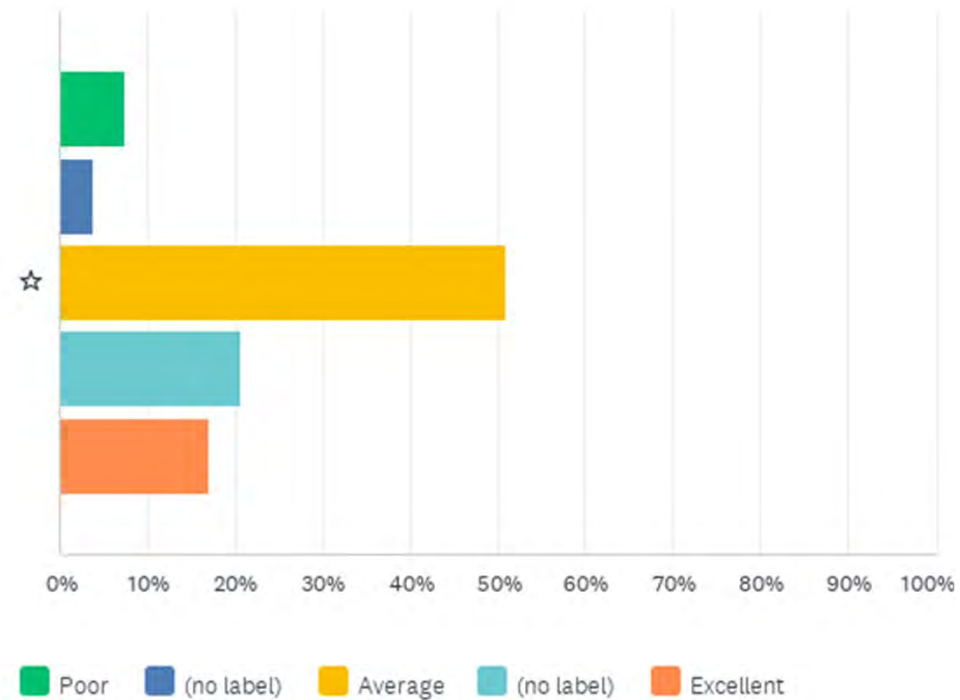
Q4: Please indicate for which of the following activities Towns County is your primary destination. (Select all that apply)

Answered: 52 Skipped: 15



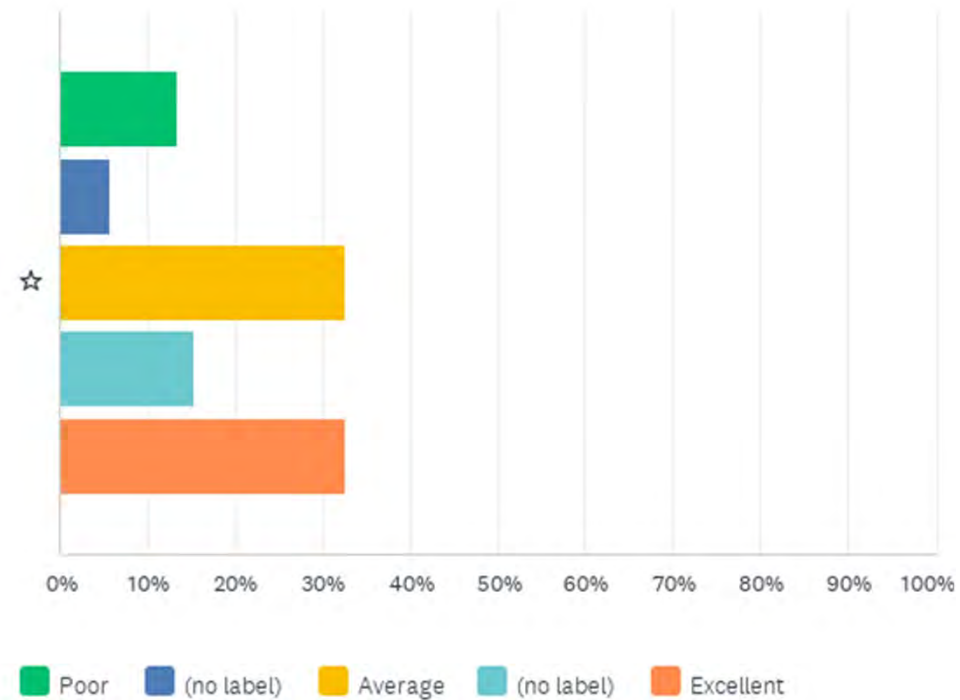
Q5: Please rate your satisfaction with the following public service: Parks and Recreation

Answered: 53 Skipped: 14



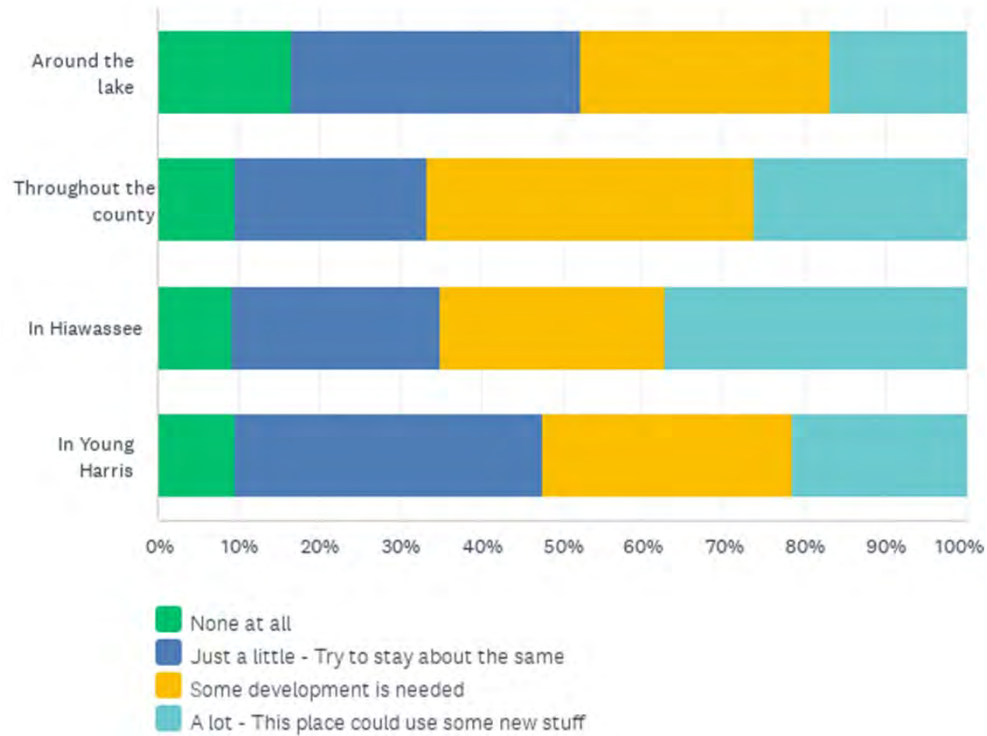
Q7: Please rate your satisfaction with the following public service: Schools

Answered: 52 Skipped: 15



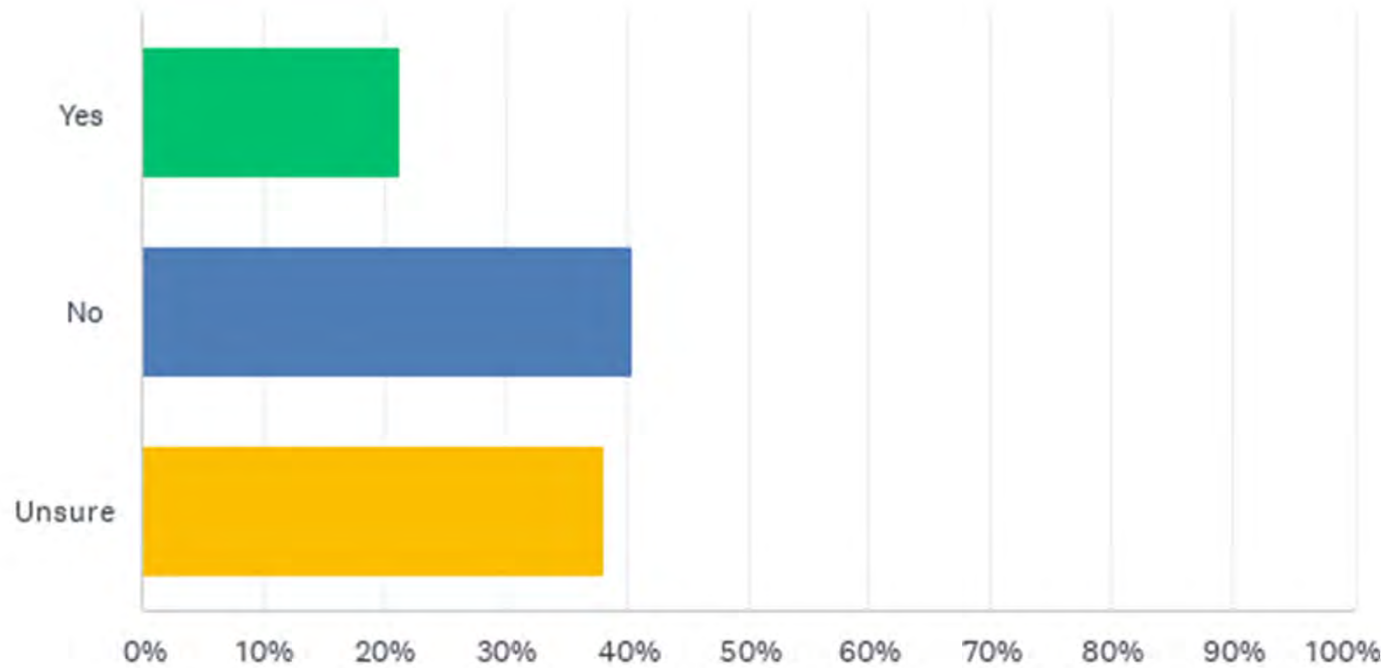
Q11: How much new development would you like to see in any of these parts of the county?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 24



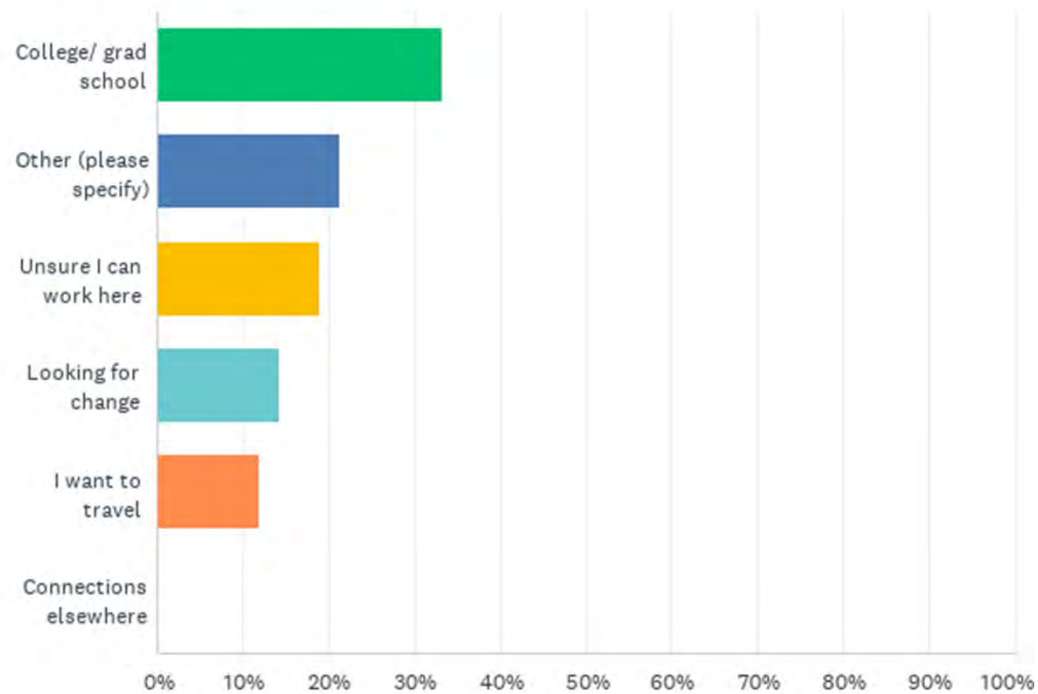
Q15: As of today do you want to live in Towns County after you're done with high school and/or college?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 25



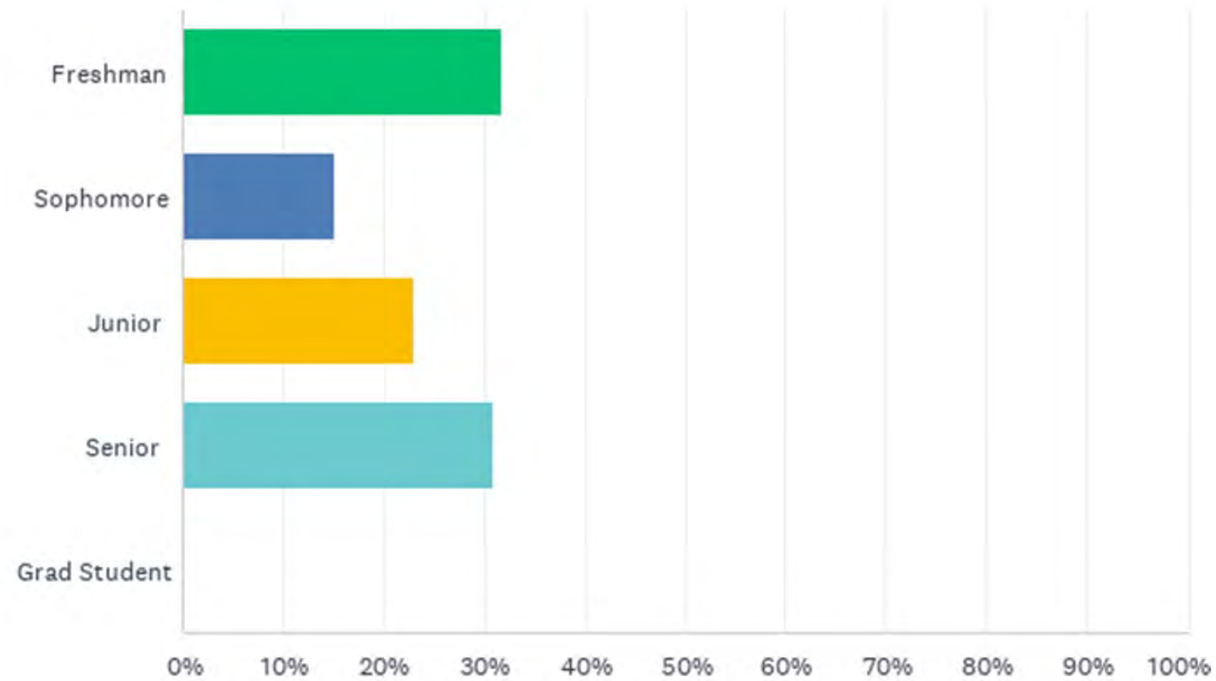
Q16: If you were to leave the area after high school and/or college, what might be the primary reason?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 25



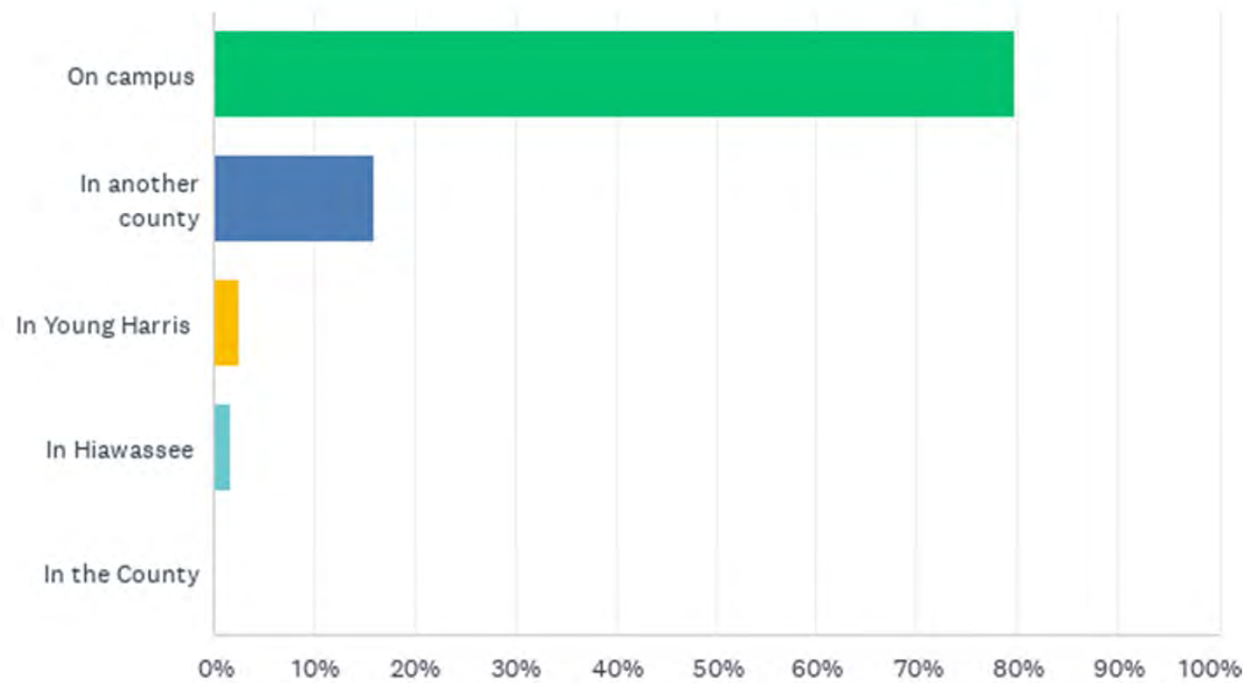
Q1: My current grade level is:

Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



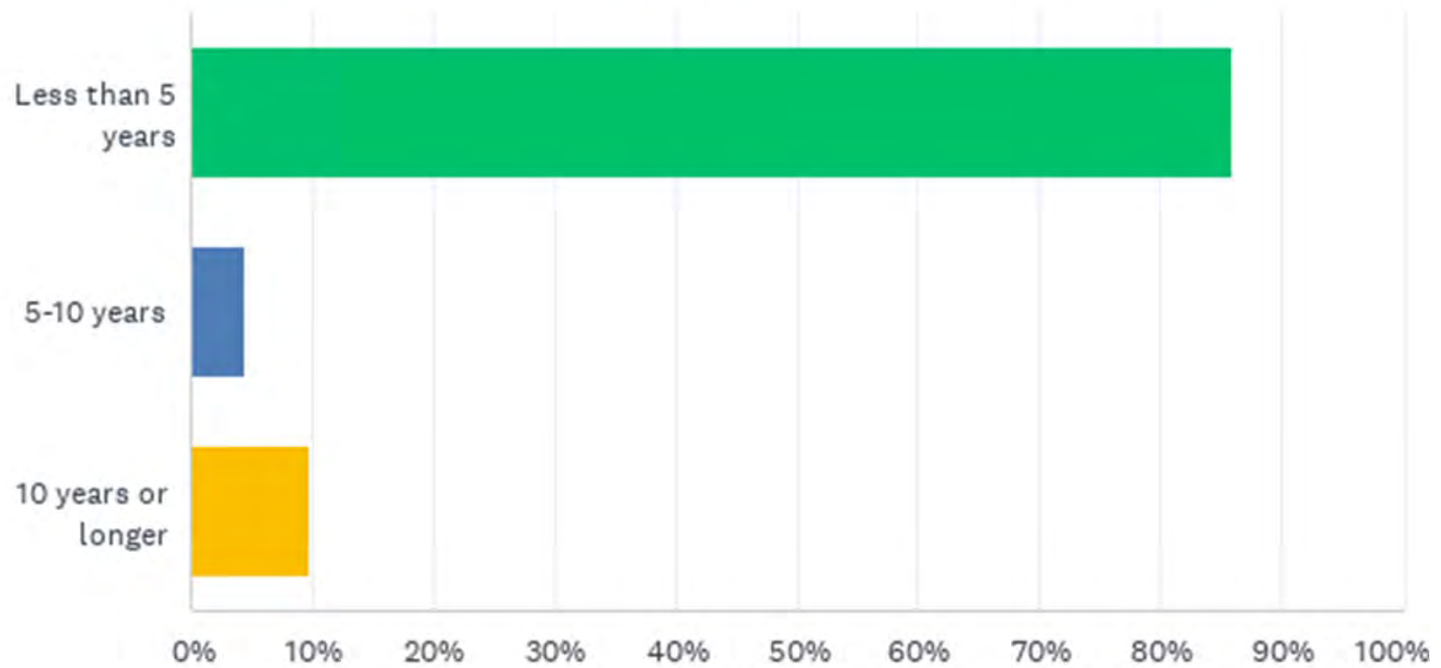
Q2: Please indicate where you currently reside.

Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



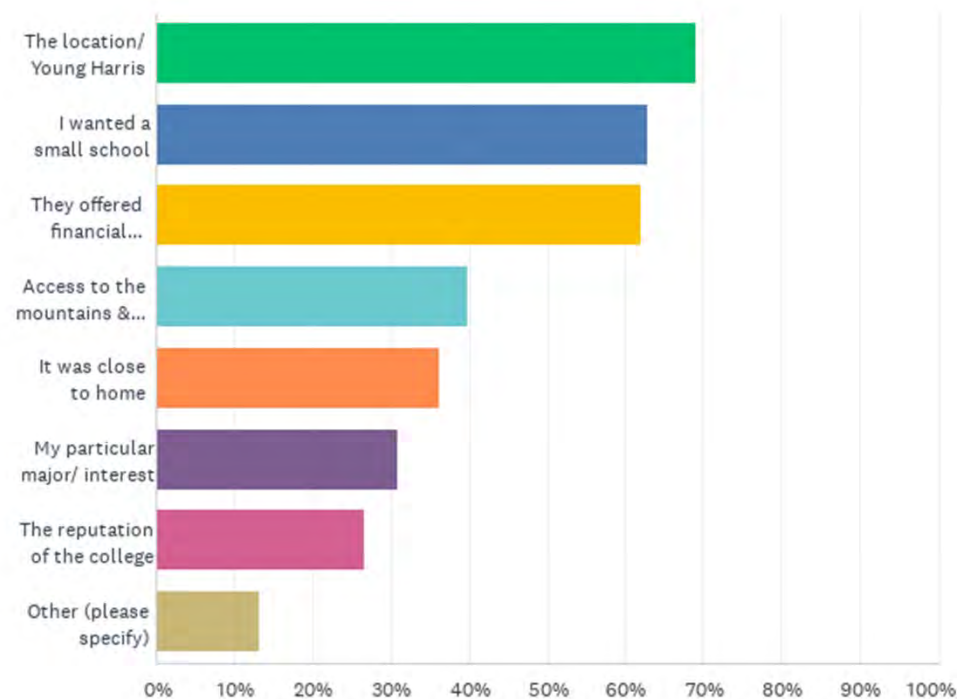
Q3: How long have you lived in your current location?

Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



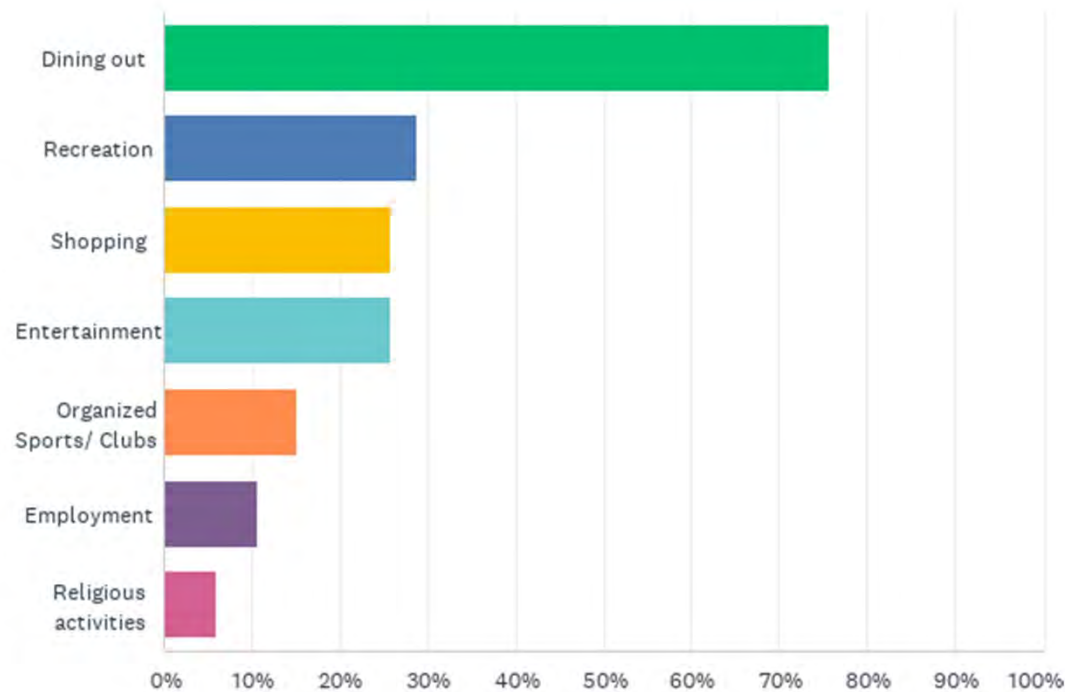
Q4: Which of the following elements factored into your decision to choose Young Harris College?

Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



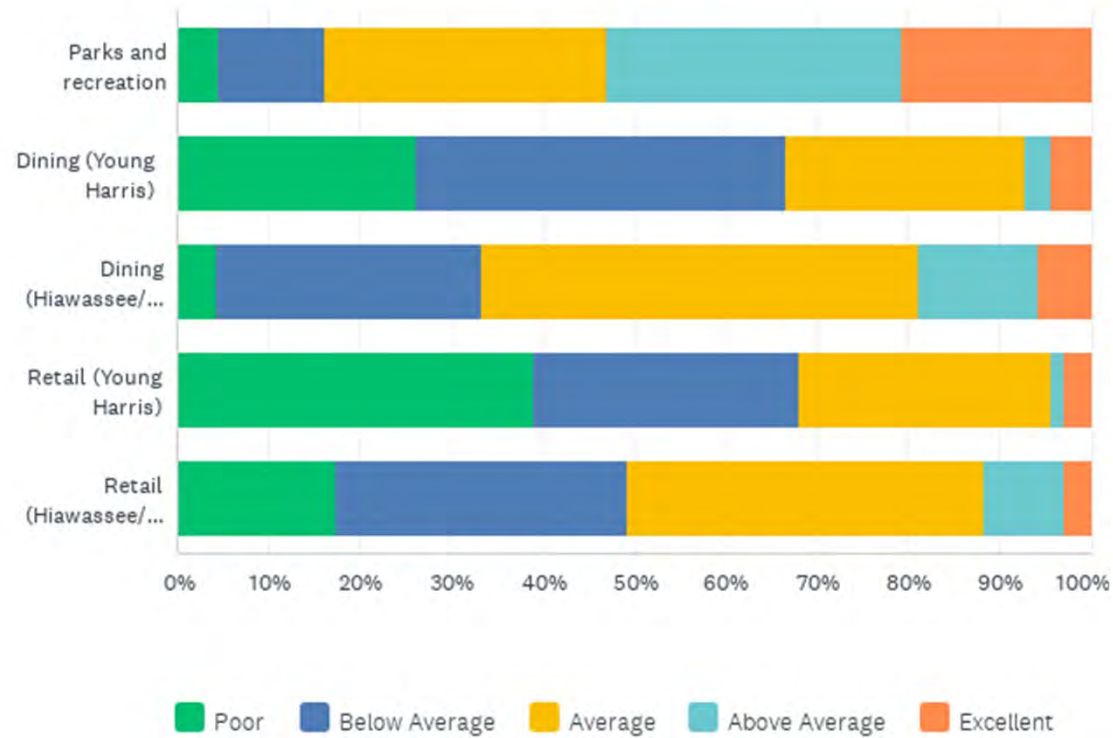
Q5: Please indicate for which of the following activities Towns County is your primary destination. (Select all that apply)

Answered: 66 Skipped: 47



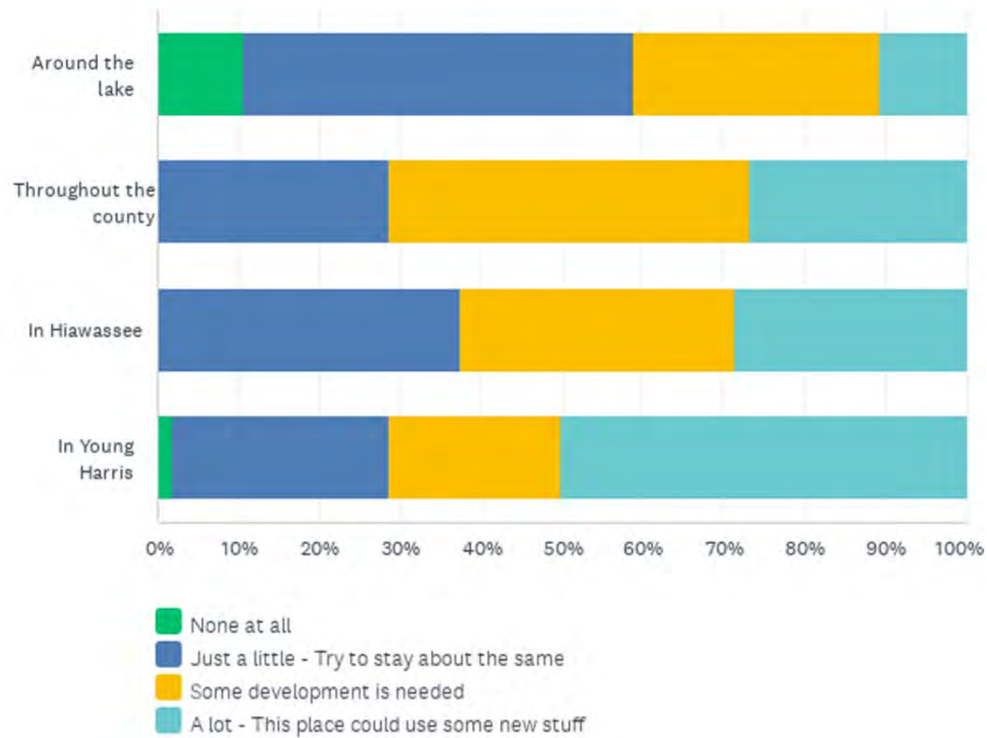
Q6: Please rate your satisfaction with the following local options

Answered: 69 Skipped: 44



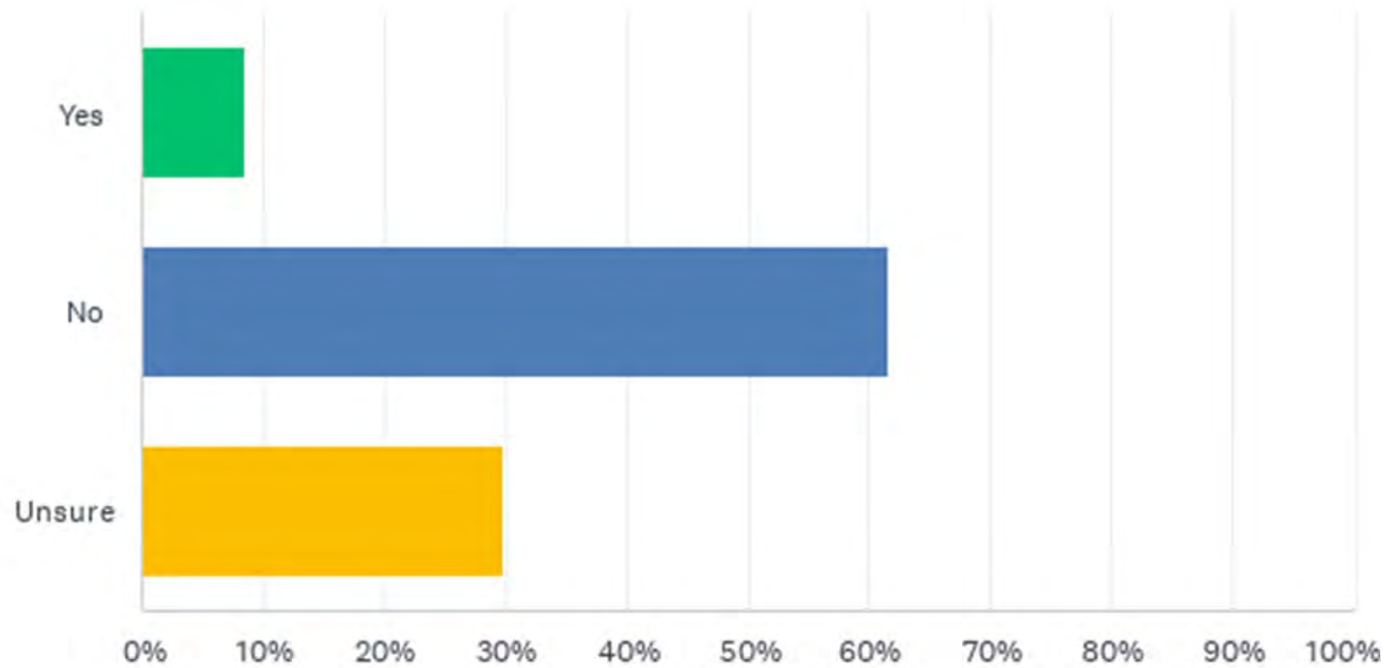
Q10: How much new development would you like to see in any of these parts of the county?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 57



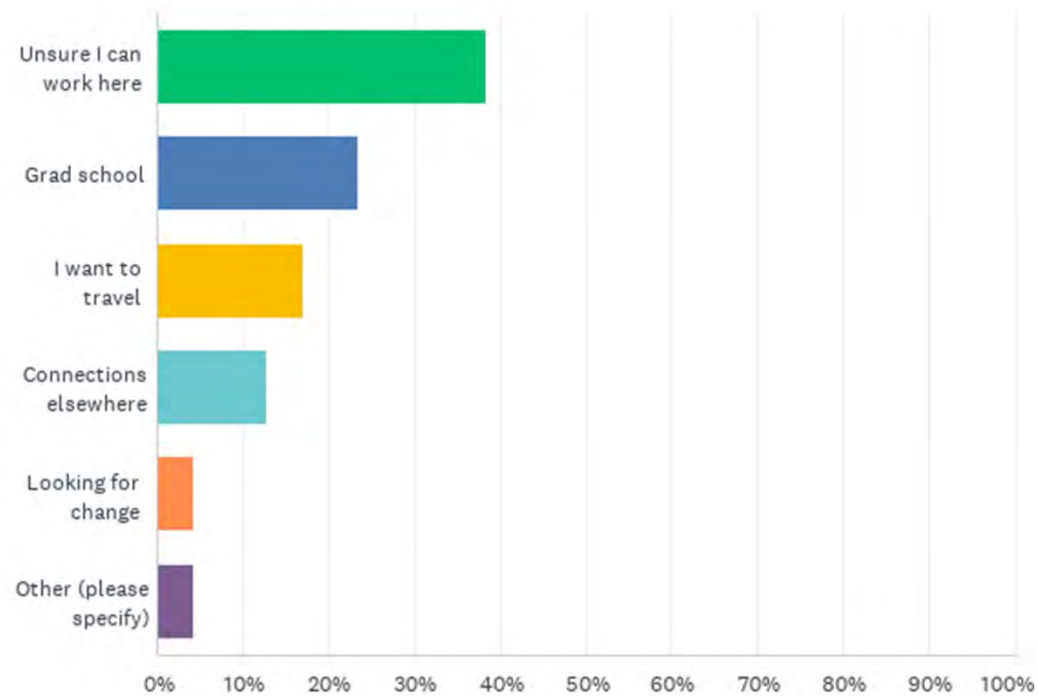
Q16: As of today, do you want to live in Towns County after you're done with college?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 66

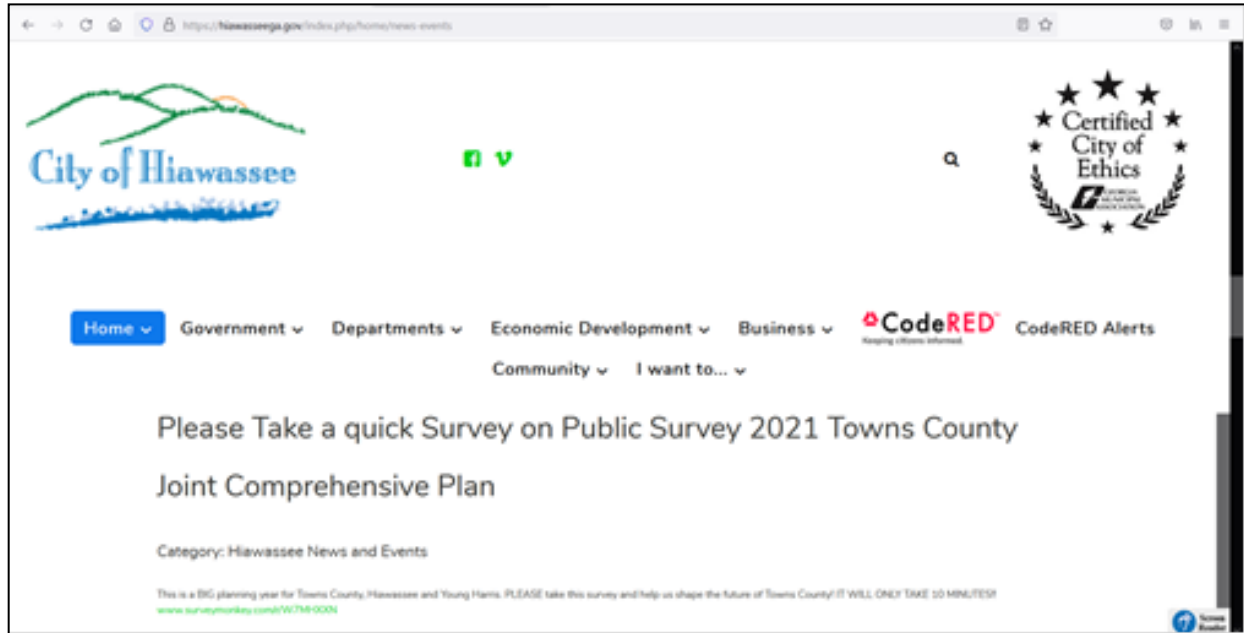


Q17: If you were to leave the area after college, what might be the primary reason?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 66



Samples of Meeting Notices and Sign-in Sheets



TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation Center – Tuesday, June 29, 2021

6:00 PM - Advisory Committee

7:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

Lynn Welchel

Tyler Osborn

Debbie Phillips

Bill Pierson

Liz Ordiales

Rob Soltie

Drew Vautour

Jerry Stoddard

Alexa Richards

Lee Alexander

Denese McKay

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation Center – Tuesday, June 29, 2021

6:00 PM - Advisory Committee

7:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

Joan Chotkowski

Amy Barnett

Josh Alexander

Pat Campbell

Nancy Robert

Ann Mitchell

Chad Stack TCH

Kinsey Wood

Tony Ward - Mountain View

Dene Graff

Richard E. Graff

Chiff Burditt

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation Center – Tuesday, June 29, 2021

6:00 PM - Advisory Committee

7:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

PATRICK MALONE
PEGGY GARDNER
Evelyn Whelchel
Marvin Cooper
Andre [Signature]

[Empty lines for sign-in]

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation Center – Tuesday, July 20, 2021

6:00 PM - Advisory Committee

7:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Jerry Hadden
Carol Stroud
Alesia Richards
Emily Hughes
Liz Ordiales
Lea Alexander
Denise McKay
Bob Sallie
Bill Pensa
Debbie Phillips
Kathryn B. Hughes
Kathryn Hughes & Bobmenne
S.B.F.
Chad Stock TCH
Kinsey Wood
Tamera Cooper
Marvin Cooper
John Matthews
Tony Ward

Name

Jill Seymour
John Seymour
Anne Mitchell
Lynn Barrett
Kathy B. Hughes

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Hiawassee City Hall – Thursday, August 12, 2021

7:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

Tyler Osborn

Daren Osborn

Terry + Tracey Rathmann

Callie Moore, Mountain View

Bill Pierson

Lee Alexander

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Young Harris City Hall – Tuesday, August 24, 2021

5:00 PM - Advisory Committee

6:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

A Drew Watson

A Alisa Richards

A Cliff Bradshaw

A Bill Peisa

A Sean Alexander

A Liz Orvates

A Vicki CONSTANTINOES

P Jacob Welner

Callie Moore, Mountain True

Bonnie Kendrick

Danna Cable

Nessette Wade

Arne Mitchell

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation Center – Thursday, September 9, 2021

5:00 PM - Advisory Committee

6:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

Alisa Richard

Denea McKay

JoEll Thornton

Cecily Hughes

Carl Strad

Bill Pearson

Tyler Osborn

Liz Ordiales

Patricia Malone

Tom Koch

Ronald Robinson

Ann M. Fitch

Tom.Koch1967@Icloud.com

rrobin3133@aol.com

com

Public

TOWNS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation Center – Thursday, September 9, 2021

5:00 PM - Advisory Committee

6:00 PM - General Public

Please Sign In

Name

Name

Joan Crothers joancrothers83@gmail.com

Nea Alexandra

Liz Dardales

Bill Pearson

Carol Stroud

Herb Bruce

HERBENTpbuce@gmail.com

Mary Lengnick

Chad Stack

CStack4245@gmail.com

GMRC, local governments ask public for planning input

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Local government leaders of Towns County, Hiwassee and Young Harris took first steps toward conducting the state-mandated five-year Joint Comprehensive Plan on Tuesday, June 29, at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

The plan is being updated by the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission with input from the county, municipalities and community. The purpose of the plan is to act as a blueprint for the area to help shape what the local governments and community hope to see here in the future.

Stakeholders will meet again on Tuesday, July 20, at 7 p.m. at Foster Park to conduct another public input session, with additional meetings to follow through August and

early September.

"This is the start of a three-month campaign where we're going to be vigorously trying to engage with people and hear back from folks," GMRC Planning Director Adam Hazell said. "This is the start of where you get to take advantage of that time where you've often said, 'Oh, I wish I could tell the commissioner this.'"

In the meeting last week, Hazell explained how the plan works and how the county and local governments can control what the five-year plan update looks like.

People proactively plan for things all the time, Hazell said, from vacations to retirement or even a wedding, and the updated comprehensive plan allows for a similar sense of foresight, just on a communitywide level.

Moving forward, the updated plan will be

presented to each of the local governments, and there will be at least three more public meetings for residents to respond with their questions, comments and concerns, Hazell said.

Going into more detail, Hazell said the comprehensive plan serves as a roadmap for the community's growth and economic development, assisting with strategies for infrastructure, land use and quality of life improvements.

"That's what the document is trying to do, to create a guidebook that gets updated every five years through publicly driven processes that provide them with information so that they're making informed decisions," Hazell said.

Identifying and planning for future needs and opportunities is also vital for seeking grants and other financial aid in furtherance of these goals, ensuring that

elected officials are using the wisest of all resources in planning for infrastructure and capital facilities, Hazell said.

Instead of looking to the next generous donor to help with funding for a park, for example, local governments can utilize the planning document to sort out funding for the project, Hazell said.

When local governments don't rely on a comprehensive plan, they tend to put off funding for projects or improvements, Hazell said, and once those improvements or projects become absolutely necessary, there's no funding available for them.

This document helps to avoid those scenarios by requiring local governments to keep an eye toward the future and preparing for it, as elected officials must practice comprehensive planning "if (they) wish to retain full eligibility for state and federal funding," Hazell said.

Before the state will assist with funding, Hazell said proof is required that governments are following their comprehensive plans, with the state looking to make sure municipalities are planning for what they are asking for and that projects have some sensibility behind them.

"Because the state wants to be responsible with their money as well," he said.

Hazell is encouraging everyone in the community to participate in the planning process by attending upcoming meetings and by taking an online survey letting local leaders know which direction they want to see planning take.

The link to the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/W7MHXXN>, and it will be available on the various local government websites by July 9 alongside a copy of the current Joint Comprehensive Plan.

"When we did this five years ago, we had over 400 responses," Hazell said. "I'd love to break the 500 mark - I'd love to break the 1,000 mark."

The completely anonymous survey consists of 26 questions allowing



GMRC's Adam Hazell spoke with local officials and members of the public in last week's first meeting to start updating the Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan. Photo by Chad Stack

the public to share input on which issues are important to them and where they would like the community to be in 20 or 30 years. The survey asks about specifics like law enforcement, parks, road and more, Hazell said.

"So, when you see the link, take the survey, share it, encourage your friends to take it, shame your coworkers if they haven't taken it by the

end of July," Hazell said. "Do whatever it takes to get people to give us their input, because the more we get, the more information we have to work with in making sure we set priorities that match up with what the people want."

The survey will be available through Aug. 13, after which discussions about take place.