

City of Talmo Comprehensive Plan

2019 Update



Acknowledgements

Steering Committee

Jill Elliott, Mayor
David Jackson
Kirk Jackson
Chip McEver
Wayne Miller, Business Owner

Identified Stakeholders

Dr. Mark Spence, Talmo Baptist Church
Mishea Dean, North Jackson Elementary School
Jenna Davis, Talmo Library (Piedmont Library System)
Anthony Woods, Woods Farm
Ronald Ward, Ward Livestock
Chip McEver, McEver Livestock
Goldmine Used Cars
Joe Elrod, Elrod Trucking
Rick Elliott, Elliott Enterprise

Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

Burke Walker, Executive Director
Eva Kennedy, Planning & Government Services Director
John Devine, AICP, Principal Planner (project lead)
Mark Beatty, Planner
Stephen Jaques, Project Specialist

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Chapter 1

Introduction & Overview

Purpose

This comprehensive plan serves as a decision-making guide for local government officials and community leaders. Based on input from the public, stakeholders, and a steering committee, the plan identifies needs and opportunities, goals and policies, land use practices, and an implementation framework for key elements.

Process

The comprehensive plan process follows the rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective 10/1/2018.

Public Involvement

Public Input & Steering Committee

The planning process began with a public hearing and was followed by a series of community input sessions during which the public and a local steering committee were invited to discuss local trends and aspirations. An online questionnaire provided additional feedback opportunities, as did the availability of steering committee members to take questions and comments throughout the process (as presented at the first public hearing). A final public hearing was held before transmittal of the plan to the DCA for review.



NEGRC's Role

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's (NEGRC) Planning & Government Services Division oversaw the development of this plan, including facilitating input meetings.

Chapter 2

Needs & Opportunities

The following list of needs and opportunities results from a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted at the first input meeting, with both the steering committee and public in attendance, as well as professional analysis of relevant data and results of the online questionnaire.

**Italicized entries indicate high priorities (with STWP project number in parentheses)*



Population

Talmo's population stands at 297 and is projected to be 333 by 2023, with a median age of 39 years (rising to 40 by 2023). Age distribution is fairly even, with 27% of the population exceeding 55 years of age and 25% of the population 18 or younger (ESRI BAO); unlike many small towns in Georgia, this is projected to remain relatively stable.

Local officials estimate the population at around 180 people, including a much larger proportion of seniors than the data indicate. *Given the aging population, Talmo should develop a plan for senior service delivery. (1)*

Median income in Talmo is \$51,000 and the poverty rate is estimated at 14% (ESRI BAO). These figures are in line with state averages. An estimated 27.5% of people aged 25 or older do not have a high school diploma; nonetheless, 23.5% have a college degree and another 23.5% took college courses but did not graduate. White-collar jobs account for 59% of Talmo's employment base; blue-collar (31%) and services (9%) employment account for the balance (ESRI BAO).

Stakeholders list Talmo's small-town, family-friendly atmosphere as a strength, emphasizing that the city is a "great place to raise a family." However, input meeting attendees and online questionnaire respondents also reference a drug problem. *The city should work with local law enforcement and nonprofits to address drug-related issues. (2)*

Planning, Land Use, and Housing

Talmo is overwhelmingly rural and residential, and detached single-family homes and mobile homes are the only housing options. Most of the housing stock has been constructed since 1980 and home values are expected to rise slightly from the current median of \$200,000 (ESRI BAO). An estimated 65% of units are owner-occupied, while 21% are rented and 14% are vacant.

Although the housing stock may not currently be at risk due to age, vacant units may need to be inspected, inventoried, and targeted for code enforcement. Stakeholders reference the condition of several properties and a lack of code enforcement as weaknesses. *An arrangement with Jackson County to provide code enforcement services should be pursued. (3)*

Transportation

Unsurprisingly, given its rural setting, trips within and originating from Talmo are made almost exclusively by car. Commuting long distances to work is the norm, with an estimated 75% of workers driving in excess of 20 minutes; roughly 15% drive 45-60 minutes (American Community Survey). Establishing local businesses and improving bicycling and walking infrastructure could help reduce the need to travel by car and give youth and seniors the opportunity to travel to local destinations like the park, library, and post office. *Stakeholders indicate the need for a basic plan for and development of walking and bicycling facilities, including trails. (4)*

Community Facilities and Services

Meeting attendees cite the City's operation of a local park, fire department, train depot, and historic library/City Hall as strengths. *A very basic audit of the condition and maintenance needs of these facilities and a plan to improve the park should be developed. (5)*

Data from the Federal Communications Commission indicate that virtually all of Talmo has access to 300 Mbps (download) cable internet service from Comcast Corporation. Windstream Holdings, Inc. and, in some areas, AT&T Inc., offer 50-100 Mbps ADSL service, and an array of other ADSL and satellite providers offer lower-speed connectivity within the city. *Local officials should develop a basic broadband plan to ensure that Talmo's internet service stays competitive. (6)*

Intergovernmental Coordination

Stakeholders note that law enforcement and animal control are weaknesses, with little coverage provided by Jackson County. *The City and County should update service provision agreements in these areas. (7)*

Economic Development

Economic development in a community the size of Talmo, particularly with its limited availability of commercial space, may be difficult. Stakeholders worry about the threats posed by a lack of resources to generate revenue. *The City should convene an informal committee on local economic development and revenue generation; case studies from other small towns in Northeast Georgia could provide useful as examples of successful small-scale economic achievements. (8)*

Chapter 3

Vision

Talmo is a small town with strong community spirit that takes pride in its history. Downtown Talmo will be the social and cultural heart of the community, featuring cultural and historic resources, restaurants, quaint shops, and recreational opportunities to serve residents and visitors. Buildings old and new will honor the heritage of the community by avoiding “anywhere USA” franchise-style development. Neighborhoods will exude a small-town charm where people feel safe and secure, away from the stresses of big-city life.



Goals & Policies

1. Develop a network of safe, complete streets and trails for all ages and abilities
2. Encourage development that respects and complements our rural and agricultural character
3. Target opportunities for community development through smart use of public funds to generate private investment
4. Work to eliminate substandard and dilapidated housing in our community
5. Show off the best of Talmo through beautiful public spaces, clean and attractive neighborhoods, wayfinding signage, and friendly residents
6. Actively seek opportunities to expand open space and recreational opportunities
7. Diversify our economy by supporting programs that retain, expand, and create businesses appropriate for our community
8. Strengthen our broadband internet access

Chapter 4

Land Use

Pursuant to the rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the following Future Development Map and Defining Narrative provide the physical planning component of the comprehensive plan.

The DCA defines a character area as a specific district or section of the community that:

- Has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced (such as a downtown, a historic district, [an] arts district, a neighborhood, or a transportation corridor);
- Has potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance of future development through adequate planning and implementation (such as a strip commercial corridor that could be revitalized into a more attractive village development pattern); or
- Requires special attention due to unique development issues (rapid change of development patterns, economic decline, etc.)

Character areas typically provide greater flexibility than traditional land use maps in which each parcel is assigned a single category such as Residential or Commercial.



Character Areas Compatibility Index

Character Area	Description	Zoning Compatibility*	Appropriate Land Uses
Historic Downtown	Focal point of community with commercial activity	TC, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, PCD, C-1, C-2, and O-I	Residential, Public, Commercial, Office, Mixed-use, Recreation
Highway Corridor	Corridor for commercial, residential, and community facilities	AG, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, PCD, C-1, C-2	Residential, Office, Commercial, Public, Recreation
Rural Residential	Rural, undeveloped places and some residential	PCFD, AG, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, and PCD	Residential, Agriculture, Public, Recreation
Agriculture Area	Agricultural production	PCFD, AG, AG-R, RR-3, and PCD	Agriculture, Public, Recreation
Community Access Point	Important entrance to town	PCFD, AG, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, and PCD	Commercial, Office, Residential, Public, Recreation

**Note that not all zoning classifications will necessarily be appropriate in every location within a character area; for example, while Historic Downtown welcomes commercial-zoned property, some locations within that district may be ill-suited to that type of use.*

Historic Downtown

The Historic Downtown consists of the traditional rural village on Main Street. It is currently anchored by the post office, City Hall, Talmo Baptist Church, the Talmo Fire Station, and several historic structures including the train depot. The Historic Downtown will remain the focal point of the community and will feature attractive, pedestrian-friendly places where people gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

The rural atmosphere will be maintained while accommodating retail and commercial uses within the Historic Downtown. New projects and re-development will have small-town, historic character and the downtown will have a clear boundary. Compatible architectural styles that maintain the rural character should be encouraged. Wherever possible, the Historic Downtown will connect to local greenspace. Historic buildings will be protected from demolition and rehabilitation encouraged with appropriate incentives. Historic properties should be maintained, rehabilitated, and restored. New development in the area should be of a scale and architectural design to fit well into the historic fabric of this area.

The City has already taken an active role in preserving and protecting the character of this area through tree protection, sign, mixed use, and other ordinances.

Zoning Compatibility	Appropriate Land Uses
TC, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, PCD, C-1, C-2, and O-I	Residential, Public, Commercial, Office, Mixed-use, Recreation

Implementation Measures

- Access Control Measures
- Design Guidelines
- Flexible Parking Standards
- Flexible Street Design Standards
- Historic Preservation Standards
- Landscaping and Buffers
- Historic Preservation Committee or Commission
- Adaptive Use
- Landscaping and Buffer Requirements
- Mixed Use Zoning



Highway Corridor

The Highway Corridor is the currently undeveloped and underdeveloped area along US 129, south of the Talmo Trail intersection. Little current development pressure exists in this area. The long-term vision for this corridor includes a combination of well-designed commercial, residential, and community facilities.

The Hwy 129 Corridor Overlay District in the zoning ordinance covers this character area. The ordinance includes access control and buffers to protect aesthetics. New developments must be required to strictly adhere to existing design guidelines, such as vegetated buffers, setbacks, access roads, shared driveways, etc. Billboards should be excluded. The most important implementation measure for this Character Area is the Overlay District; it should be strictly enforced and routinely reviewed and adjusted as necessary.

Zoning Compatibility	Appropriate Land Uses
AG, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, PCD, C-1, C-2	Residential, Office, Commercial, Public, Recreation

Implementation Measures

- Scenic Corridor Overlay Districts
- Sign Controls for Rural Corridors
- Access Control Measures
- Design Guidelines
- Flexible Parking Standards
- Flexible Street Design Standards
- Landscaping and Buffers
- Complete Streets
- Signage Regulations



Rural Residential

Rural Residential areas are largely undeveloped places that may face development pressure for low-density residential development. The goal of this character area is to maintain the rural atmosphere while accommodating new residential development. General development strategies that address this goal are as follows:

- Require rural cluster or conservation subdivision design that incorporates significant amounts of open space
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the rural character and discourage “franchise” or “corporate” architecture

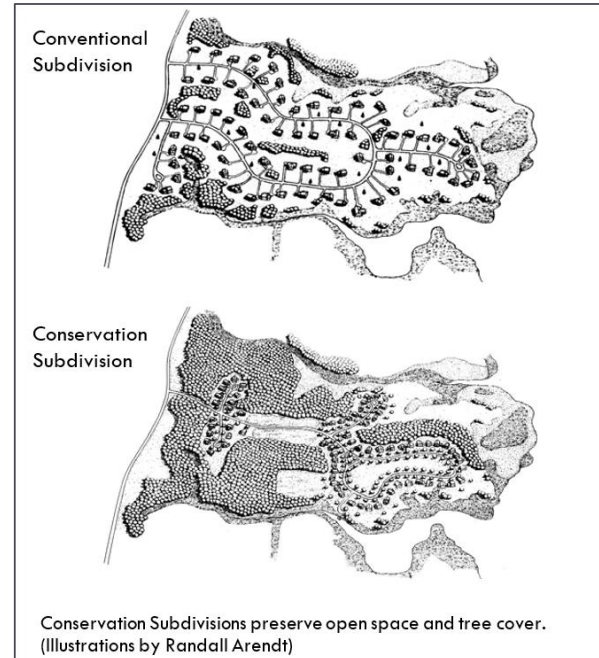
Rural character can be maintained through design that reinforces the landscape and utilizes the clustering of buildings within the center, maximizing open space.

The City has already taken an active role in preserving and protecting the character of this area through its zoning and tree protection ordinances. The zoning ordinance includes many measures that are included in the State Planning Recommendations, such as accessory units and conservation subdivisions.

Zoning Compatibility	Appropriate Land Uses
PCFD, AG, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, and PCD	Residential, Agriculture, Public, Recreation

Implementation Measures

- Signage Regulations
- Cluster Development
- Large Lot Zoning
- Open Space Requirements
- Conservation Easements



Agricultural Area

The Agricultural Areas are large parcels of land that are currently zoned Planned Commercial Farm District or Agricultural. The community intends for these areas to remain in agricultural production throughout the 20-year planning horizon.

Talmo’s Agriculture Areas are adequately protected through the existing zoning ordinance. The most important thing the City can do to maintain the Agriculture Areas is to enforce the zoning ordinance and not allow incompatible development.

Implementation Measures

- Strictly limit new development
- Promote use of conservation easements by land owners
- Residential subdivisions should be severely limited, but if minor exceptions are made, they should be required to follow a rural cluster zoning or conservation subdivision design; any new development should be required to use compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character
- Widen roadways only when absolutely necessary
- Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations

Zoning Compatibility	Appropriate Land Uses
PCFD, AG, AG-R, RR-3, and PCD	Agriculture, Public, Recreation



Community Access Point

Community Access Points are the important entrances to Talmo on Main Street and US 129. Talmo is a very small town: access points are more appropriate than extended access corridors.

Talmo has appropriate signage and landscaping at several of its Community Access Points. Directional/way-finding signage featuring community amenities and developments is already installed. The City should continue to maintain its gateway and way-finding signage.

Implementation Measures

- Creation of Scenic Corridor Overlay Districts
- Sign Controls for Rural Corridors

Zoning Compatibility	Appropriate Land Uses
PCFD, AG, AG-R, RR-2, RR-3, and PCD	Commercial, Office, Residential, Public, Recreation

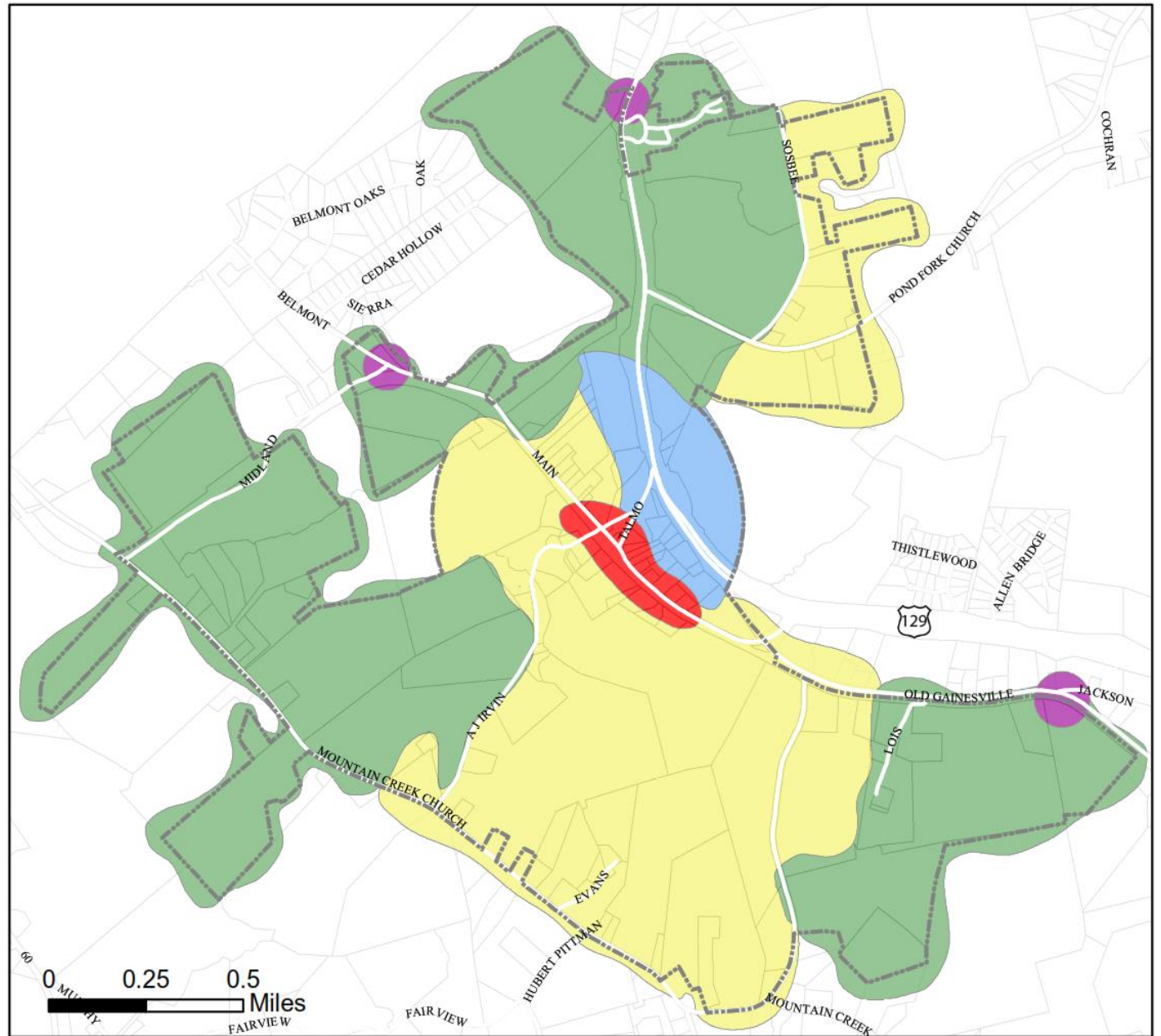


Future Development Map

- Agricultural Area
- Community Access Points
- Highway Corridor
- Historic Downtown
- Rural Residential



July 18, 2019
 Prepared by: NEGRRC, PGS Division



Chapter 5

Community Work Program

The Short-Term Work Program (2019-2023), updated every five years, provides a list of specific activities that the community plans to address as immediate priorities. A Report of Plan Accomplishments, which provides status commentary on the previous work program (2014-2018), follows.



Short-Term Work Program, 2019-2023

(*entries with an asterisk represent carryover items from the previous STWP)

#	Activity	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
1	Develop a needs assessment and plan for serving senior citizens	2022	Mayor & Council	None	NA
2	Form work group and define plan to address drug-related issues	2019	Mayor & Council	None	NA
3	Establish formal code enforcement arrangement with Jackson County	2019	Mayor & Council	None	NA
4	Develop and adopt complete streets and trails plan	2020	Mayor & Council	\$500	General Fund, GDOT
5	Conduct basic facilities audit to establish maintenance and operating needs; define plan to improve town park, begin implementation if possible	2020	Mayor & Council, Clerk	\$500	General Fund, DCA, SPLOST, grants
6	Develop a basic broadband plan to ensure that Talmo’s internet service stays competitive	2020-2021	Mayor & Council, Clerk	\$500 for plan	General Fund, DCA, grants
7	Update service provision agreements for law enforcement and animal control with Jackson County	2020	Mayor & Council	None	NA
8	Convene informal committee to identify ways to strengthen Talmo’s economy and grow and diversify revenue generation	2020	Mayor & Council	None	NA
9*	Conduct citywide housing inventory to assess conditions	2020	Mayor & Council, Clerk	\$500	General Fund, DCA
10*	Begin implementation of complete streets/trails plan (including multi-use trail near city park)	2020-2023	Mayor & Council	Varies by project	General Fund, SPLOST, grants
11*	Work in partnership with Jackson County to redevelop former Agri-Cycle property for passive recreation use	2021	Mayor & Council, Clerk	\$13M	EPD
12*	Develop incentive package to recruit and retain businesses in downtown	2020-2021	Mayor & Council	TBD	General Fund, grants
13	Purchase commercial washing machine for fire department	2022	Mayor & Council	\$5,000	General Fund, SPLOST, grants
14	Purchase new turnout gear for fire department	2020	Mayor & Council	TBD	General Fund, SPLOST, grants

#	Activity	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
15	Renovate upper floor of City Hall	2020-2023	Mayor & Council	TBD	General Fund, SPLOST, grants

Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2014-2018

#	Activity	Status	Notes
1	Conduct housing inventory throughout city to assess conditions	Underway	2020 completion, carry over to STWP
2	Apply for grant and other funding to remedy dilapidated or deteriorated homes	Abandoned	No longer relevant
3	Develop a multi-use trail near city park	Postponed	2021 completion, funding was not available, carry over to STWP
4	Work in partnership with Jackson County to redevelop former Agri-Cycle property for passive recreation use	Underway	2021 completion, carry over to STWP
5	Develop incentive package to recruit and retain appropriate business in downtown	Postponed	2020 completion, no location was available, carry over to STWP
6	Develop necessary infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer, in downtown to support economic growth	Abandoned	No longer a priority, unrealistic

Appendix

Appendix: Participation Records

Public Hearings: 3/5/19 & 8/6/19

NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION		Talmo Comprehensive Plan Update Public Hearing #1: March 5, 2019 Talmo City Hall	
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Jill Elliott	Mayor	PO Box 53, Talmo, GA	jillmceliotte@aol.com
Chip McEver	Chairman Jefferson Planning	Box 126, Talmo, GA	cmcever@windstream.net
Myra McEver	Council	PO Box 126, Talmo, GA	mmcever@windstream.net
Jill B Miller	Council	P.O. Box 68, Talmo	talmoranch@aol.com
Mirk Jackson	council	571 Mt. Creek Ch. Rd, Pendergrass, GA	kirknoval@gmail.com
David Jackson		569 Mt. Creek Ch Rd, Pendergrass, GA	
Wayne Miller		PO Box 68, Talmo, GA	

NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION		Talmo Comprehensive Plan Update Public Hearing #2: August 6, 2019 Talmo City Hall	
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Ashley Watkins	City Clerk	Talmo, GA	ashleywatkins@talmo.org
Jill Elliott	Mayor	Talmo, GA	jillmceliotte@aol.com
Mirk Jackson	council	Pendergrass, GA	kirknoval@gmail.com
James Buffington	Council	Talmo	jbuffington63@aol.com
Jill B Miller	Council	Talmo	talmoranch@aol.com
Myra McEver	Council	Talmo, GA	mmcever@windstream.net
Margaret Dea	citizen	Talmo	
David Jackson	Citizen	Talmo	

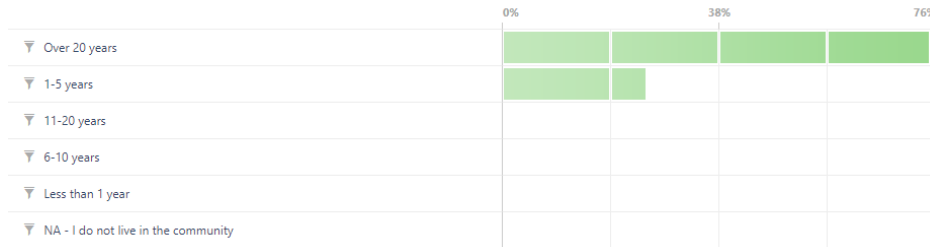
Input Meetings: 3/5/19 & 6/4/19

NEGRC		Talmo Comprehensive Plan Update Input Meeting #1: March 5, 2019 Talmo City Hall	
NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION			
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Wayne Miller	Steering Comm	P.O. Box 33, Talmo, GA	talmoranch@aol.com
Myra McEver	Council	P.O. Box 126, Talmo, GA	mmcever@windstream.net
Gil D Miller	Council	P.O. Box 126, Talmo, GA	talmoranch@aol.com
Mark Jackson	Council	571 Mt. Creek Ch. Rd. Pendergrass, GA	kirknov21@gmail.com
David Jackson	Steering Committee	369 Mt. Creek Ch. Rd. Pendergrass, GA	
Skip McEver	Person Talmo Planning	Box 126, Talmo, GA	mmcever@windstream.net
Jill Elliott	Mayor	P.O. Box 53, Talmo, GA	jillmcelliot@aol.com

NEGRC		Talmo Comprehensive Plan Update Input Meeting #2: June 4, 2019 5:30 p.m. Talmo City Hall	
NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION			
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Jill Elliott	Mayor	P.O. Box 53, Talmo, GA 30575	jillmcelliot@aol.com
Mark Jackson	council	571 Mt. Creek Ch. Rd. Pendergrass, GA 30567	kirknov21@gmail.com
Wayne Miller	" "	1150 Silver Rd	
David Jackson		369 Mt. Creek Ch. Rd. Pendergrass, GA 30567	
Skip McEver		Box 126, Talmo, GA	mmcever@windstream.net
Wendy Watkins	City Clerk	553 Railroad Wilson Commerce	talmo@cityoftalmo.comcastbiz.net

Selected Questionnaire Results

Question 03 How long have you lived in the community? (Mandatory)



Question 05 What are three defining characteristics of the community that you would like to see preserved?

- History, Small town charm and citizens watching out for each other
- park, library and depot
- Small town atmosphere
- Cleanliness
- People

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Talmo, Georgia, was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures; and

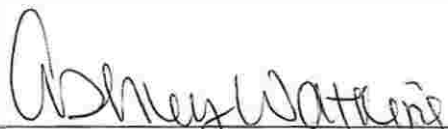
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Talmo, that the Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Talmo, Georgia dated 2019, as approved by the Georgia Department Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 10 day of September, 2019.

City of Talmo



Jill Elliott, Mayor



Ashley Watkins, Clerk