



*ADOPTED JANUARY 7, 2019*

2018 Update  
Waleska

# Comprehensive Plan

# Acknowledgements

## *CITY COUNCIL*

Doris Jones, Mayor  
Jon Costales, Post 1  
Vacant, Post 2  
Paul Ice, Post 3  
Kristi Bosch, Post 4  
Mary Helen Lamb, Post 5  
Lee Lamb, Post 6

## *COUNTY-WIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE*

Bob Kovacs, District 3 Commissioner  
Ashley Holcomb, Cherokee Office of Economic Development  
Bob Whitaker, Planning Commission Chairman  
Dr. Rick Whiteside, Planning Commission Vice Chairman  
Tom Ware, Planning Commissioner  
Thais Escondo, Planning Commissioner  
Marla Doss, Planning Commissioner  
Richard Weatherby, Planning Commission  
Steve Miller, Holly Springs Mayor  
Eric Wilmarth, Ball Ground City Manager  
Richard Voight, Citizen Representative  
Bryan Kovacs, Citizen Representative  
Deborah Wallace, Citizen Representative  
Adam Dreyer, Citizen Representative  
Lisa Tressler, Zoning Board of Appeals

## *PLANNING AND LAND USE STAFF*

Jeff Watkins, Director of Planning and Land Use  
Margaret Stallings, Principal Planner - Project Manager  
Michael Chapman, Zoning Manager  
David Greenberg, Planner

## *CONSULTANT TEAM—JACOBS*

Jim Summerbell, Team Leader  
Jonathan Bartlett

*THANK YOU TO THE MANY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS WHO GENEROUSLY GAVE OF THEIR TIME TO BE ENGAGED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PLAN.*

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# Executive Summary

# Checking In

## We Have Changed

In the last 10 years, Waleska has changed significantly. The city has seen expansions of Reinhardt University, new businesses and improvements at all of the parks. With these changes, it is critical to check in with the whole community and update our Comprehensive Plan to ensure the City remains a great place to live, learn, do business and enjoy amazing recreation opportunities.

## Importance of the Comprehensive Plan

Think of the Comprehensive Plan as a roadmap for the community's future, with the community in the driver's seat. To ensure we reach our desired destination, it is important to 'check the map' periodically. Generally, a comprehensive plan is a document to guide investment, development and the allocation of services within a jurisdiction. But cities, towns and counties are complicated places, and they make decisions about the future every day in response to new opportunities or unexpected problems. A Comprehensive Plan, like this one, is one tool that can help guide these decisions by:

- Looking ahead 5, 10 or 20 years - *Taking the long view.*
- Looking across many different elements of what the City does - *Planning is comprehensive.*
- Looking to residents and business owners to understand the needs and desires of the City - *Everything is thought through and intentional.*



## Why Now?

Cherokee County and the cities of Ball Ground and Waleska last updated their Comprehensive Plan in 2008. This document is an update to Waleska's Plan that affirms the big picture vision, describes the core issues including a detailed study of Waleska, lays out a roadmap for future development and provides a list of tasks for city leaders, staff and citizens to complete in order to implement the vision.

In Georgia, cities, towns and counties, are required to update their Comprehensive Plans every five years as required by the new Minimum Standards of Local Comprehensive Planning. The development of a Comprehensive Plan helps a community to:

- Develop a vision for what it wants
- Establish priorities
- Encourage dialogue and actions
- Guide decision making
- Determine how to best allocate limited resources

## Our Plan In a Nutshell

### THE PROCESS

Beginning in early 2017, the development of this plan consisted of four phases; Data Collection, Public Engagement, Plan Development and Plan Approval. Each phase built upon the previous to ensure the final document had significant community input and is thorough in order to support plan implementation.

In the Data Collection phase, we brought together data and projections concerning growth while taking the pulse of the county and Ball Ground and Waleska through surveys and forums. Public Engagement intensified



with the Target Area Workshops with parallel online involvement. Then we moved into the Plan Development phase, which brought in-depth reviews and discussions of the parts of the plan with a 15-person Advisory Committee appointed from the business community, residents, Planning Commission members and elected officials. Finally, the state and regional planners review the plan during the Plan Approval phase.

### THE PLAN

Organized into four interrelated sections, this plan focuses on the critical tools to guide the growth of Waleska with targeted policies to enhance our assets and address challenges. The sections are as follows:

- Community Introduction
- Our Vision
- Plan for the Future
- Vision into Action

In the Community Introduction, the stage is set to discuss the demographic trends facing the City in terms of population, housing and employment. Waleska has grown from a population of 605 in 2010 to an estimated population of 622 in 2015 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This represents a 2.8% growth rate for the city. If growth continues even close to this rate, the population of the City will be around 640 full-time residents by 2020. It is important to note that the population figures for Waleska do not include the students enrolled at Reinhardt University, currently around 1,500.

Meanwhile, the percentage of 65+ age residents in Waleska will increase in the next decade. There will be some demand for new homes, with buyers interested in a wider range of house types. Jobs may grow within the city limits as the University grows.

## Waleska's Vision:

*An historic small town nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Waleska has the charm, scenic beauty, cultural assets, and strong community bonds that make it one of Georgia's best kept secrets. A mix of housing, small businesses, and community gathering spaces, anchored by the city's cherished relationship with Reinhardt University, will continue to grow the college town energy in the walkable center of the crossroads community.*

The needs and opportunities for the City are reviewed in the six Core Issues, which are as follows:

- Promoting Sustainable Growth and Infrastructure
- Preserve and Enhance Sense of Place and Historic Character
- Aging in Place
- Housing Choice and Spirit of Inclusiveness
- Designing With the Environment
- Balanced Tax Base and Diverse Economic Opportunities

Each Core Issue contains implementation steps that inform the tasks listed in the Short Term Work Plan. This section concludes with a brief summary of the results of the Waleska Target Area Workshop. The city was identified as a Target Area because the potential for change merited a closer look, especially with lots of community input.

The Plan for the Future section contains the Future Development Map with the character area descriptions that we often associate with a Comprehensive Plan. In this update process, each of the character area descriptions has been refined and enhanced with pictures that illustrate examples of these areas around the City and the County.

Finally, Vision Into Action describes how this plan will be implemented. It will have an immediate impact on zoning and land use applications that come before the City Council. They will use this updated Plan to evaluate and make zoning decisions.

To provide continuity, the Recent Accomplishments lists the status of implementation tasks from the 2008 plan and subsequent updates. The Short Term Work Plan (STWP) is a comprehensive list of work items (2018 to 2022) to implement the vision of this Plan. This list includes rough cost estimates, if available, as well as those organizations that should be responsible for each item. While Waleska government has a key role to play through the use of regulations, capital spending and programs / staffing, a wide range of partners, including ordinary residents, will be involved in making this vision a reality.



# Community Introduction



# Community Introduction

## Brief History

Incorporated in 1889, Waleska is named after Warluskee, the daughter of a Native American chief who lived in the area. Historically, the town was home to diverse industries, including grist mills, timber businesses, tobacco manufacturing and mineral development. In addition, Waleska was always a college town with the founding of Reinhardt University in 1882.

In the early 1900's, Waleska grew slowly but steadily with the expansions of the university and growth at nearby manufacturing businesses. In the 1950's and 1960's, poultry raising and processing became a major industry in Cherokee County. The rise of the poultry industry created much needed job opportunities for residents in related businesses such as hatcheries, feed stores, rendering plants, processing plants and equipment manufacturers. Some of these businesses were nearby in Canton.

Began in the 1970's, the nearby Lake Arrowhead development has had an impact on the City. These Waleska neighbors have access to all of the cultural opportunities at the University, especially the programs at the Fallany Performing Arts Center. In the last 20 years, Reinhardt College has grown into a university with a diverse range of degree programs, sports teams and on-campus housing options. Today, Waleska is growing with the University while retaining the small town charm that has earned it the reputation of being one of the "best kept secrets" in Cherokee County.



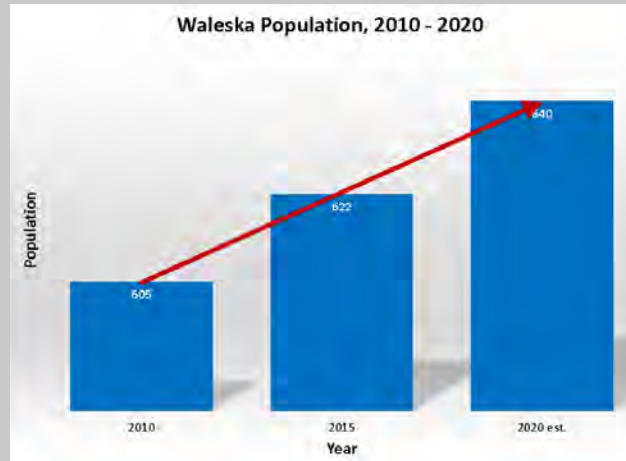
# Demographic Snapshot — People

## 2ND FASTEST GROWTH IN METRO ATLANTA

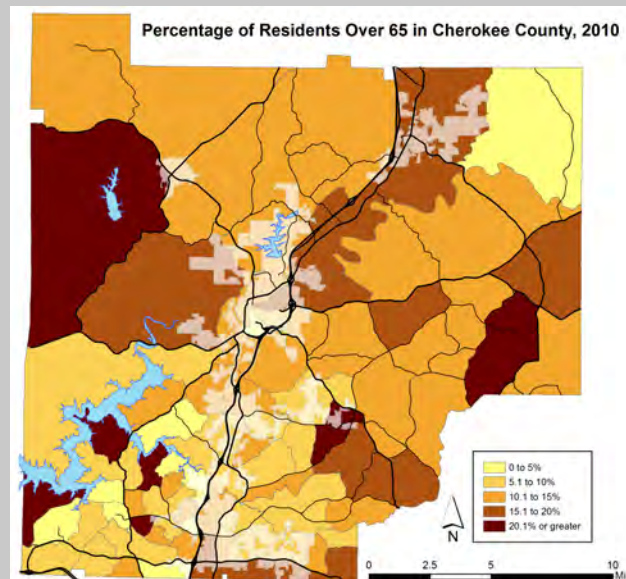
Since 2000, the population of Cherokee County has grown by over 60% from 141,919 people in 2000 to 233,321 people in 2015. This is the 2nd highest growth rate in the 10-county Atlanta metro area. The population of Waleska has grown from 604 people in 2010 to 622 in 2015. Over these 5 years, the City population has grown a modest amount. The City is projected to grow at a steady pace over the next 10 years, ranging from 0.5% to 1% per year with roughly 640 residents in 2020. It is important to note that 1,500 or so Reinhardt students are not counted toward the city population, including the ones that live on-campus.

## POPULATION TRENDS

Jurisdiction	2010	2015 est.	2020 proj.
County Total	214,346	233,321	267,877
Ball Ground	1,434	1,729	2,308
Canton	22,958	24,980	27,340
Holly Springs	9,189	10,127	10,902
<b>Waleska</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>640</b>
Woodstock	23,911	26,681	28,987
Unincorporated County	156,232	163,945	176,026



*Waleska's modest growth has helped the community retain the charm that makes the city so attractive.*



## INCREASING DIVERSITY

Diversity in the county and its cities has increased since 2000. The proportion of the white population has dipped from 92.3% in 2000 to 84.9% in 2015. Meanwhile, the Black, Asian and multiple race populations have steadily risen and are expected to continue this trend through 2020.

## AGING IN PLACE

While Cherokee County has a substantial population of 15-34 year olds, the population is aging. The map to the left shows the distribution of over 65 residents in 2010 with the County. Residents of 65 and over comprised 9.2% of the county in 2010, which is projected to increase to 13% by 2020. Most of the cities are projected to see increases in 65+ residents by 2020, especially Ball Ground (15.8%) and Waleska (16.7%).

## ATTRACTIVE TO FAMILIES

Cherokee County continues to be attractive to families. Families comprised 74.8% of the households in 2015, down from 79.2% in 2000, but still the fourth highest percentage of families in the 10-county Atlanta metro area. Ball Ground had the highest percentage of family households with 83.2% in 2015, while Waleska had the lowest (59.1%), primarily due to college students living near Reinhardt University.

### Data Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau (2000-2016 statistics)  
2017 Atlanta Regional Commission (2015-2040 statistics)

# Demographic Snapshot — Homes & Households

## INCREASING HOME VALUES AND INCOME

Median home value County-wide has increased over 14.9% between 2010 and 2015 to \$223,200. The 2015 Median Home Value in Ball Ground and Waleska were lower than the County at \$177,000 and \$155,300 respectively. Home Values are projected to continue increasing with an additional gain of 12.4% county-wide by 2020. At the same time, median household incomes have risen 10.1% between 2010 and 2015, to \$73,035. The 2015 Median Household Income for Ball Ground and Waleska are \$65,125 and \$39,250 respectively. In the next 5 years, the median household income county-wide is projected to grow at nearly 12.8% to \$82,370 by 2020.

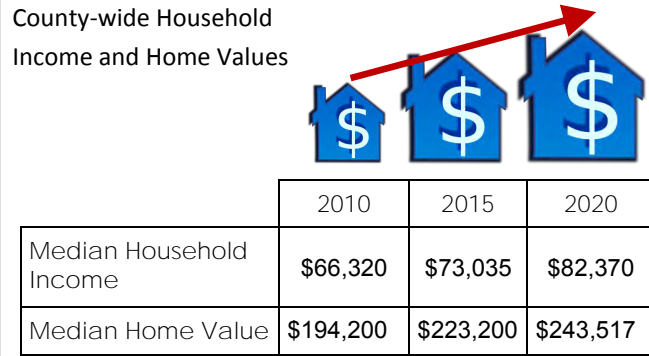
## MORE FOR THE MONEY

Many new residents, especially families, come to Cherokee County for the lower cost of housing compared with other metro Atlanta communities. For example, the residents only pay an average of 29.1% of their income on rent. Meanwhile, the median owner costs are roughly 21.7% of household income. By both measures, Cherokee County is one of the more affordable counties in the Metro Atlanta Region. The lower cost of housing contributes to Cherokee County having one of the lowest poverty rates in Metro Atlanta.

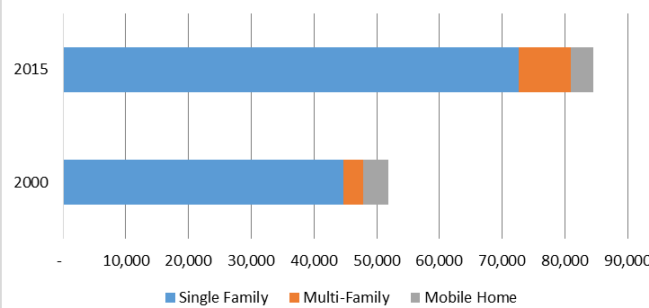
## PERMITS INCREASING

Building Permits for new homes in all of the jurisdictions dropped off severely after the 2008 economic downturn. By 2013, there were significant signs of recovery but not all jurisdictions have not gone back to the peak numbers seen between 2002-2006.

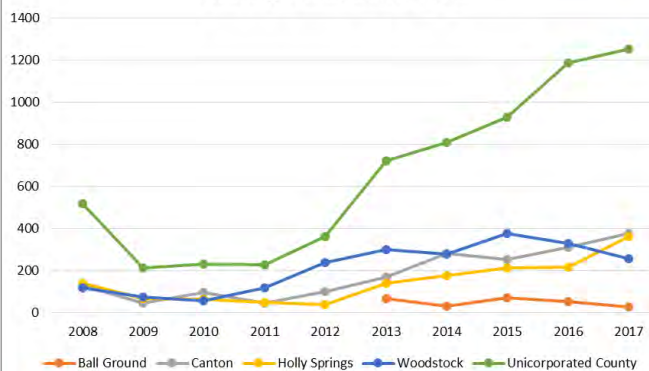
County-wide Household Income and Home Values



County Housing Options



Building Permits, 2008 - 2017



## CHANGING HOUSING OPTIONS

Housing in Cherokee County is overwhelmingly single-family homes (86% in 2000 and 85.8% in 2015), with pockets of mobile homes, and multi-family developments. Canton and Woodstock have seen a steady increase in multi-family development since 2000, with the cities adding 3,600 units combined. In the same time period, the percentage of single family housing units in Canton has dropped to 65.1% in 2015. Woodstock has increased all types of housing so the percentages have held generally steady at 78% for single family and 21% multi-family.

Most of the growth in Holly Springs has been in attached/detached single family housing between 2000 and 2015 with an increase of 2,152 new homes in 15 years. Ball Ground and Waleska have maintained the highest percent of single family housing and mobile homes of the 5 cities. Ball Ground has added over 450 new single family homes in that time. Waleska has had no significant growth in housing units but this figure does not count the hundreds of units of student housing added to the campus of Reinhart University since 2000.

In unincorporated Cherokee County, the percentage of housing units that are mobile homes (8.8% in 2000 and 5.8% in 2015) has declined while single family and multi-family units have increased.

### Data Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau (2000-2017 statistics, 2020)  
2017 Atlanta Regional Commission (2020 projections)

# Demographic Snapshot — Education & Jobs

## LOW UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, the January 2018 unemployment rate in Cherokee County was 3.4%. This is almost a whole percentage point lower than the rate for the whole Atlanta metro of 4.3%. Cherokee County has led the Atlanta area with the lowest unemployment rate.

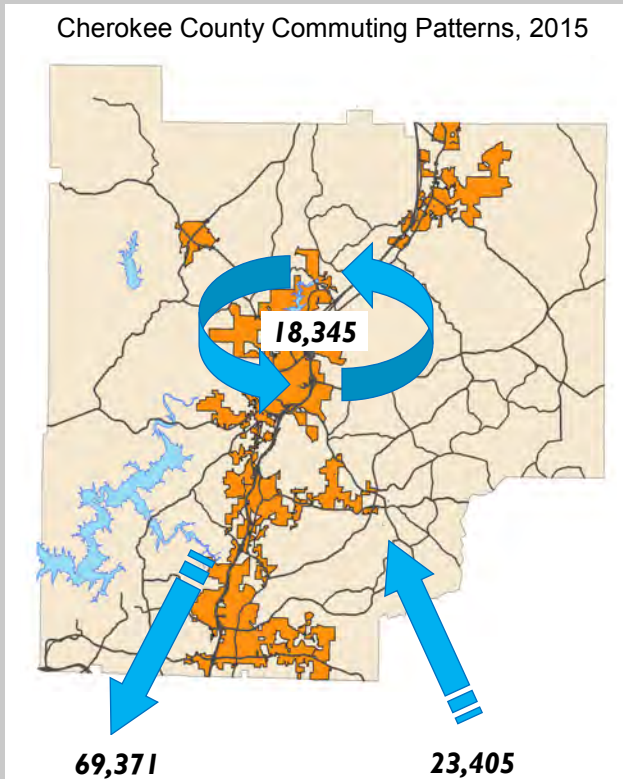
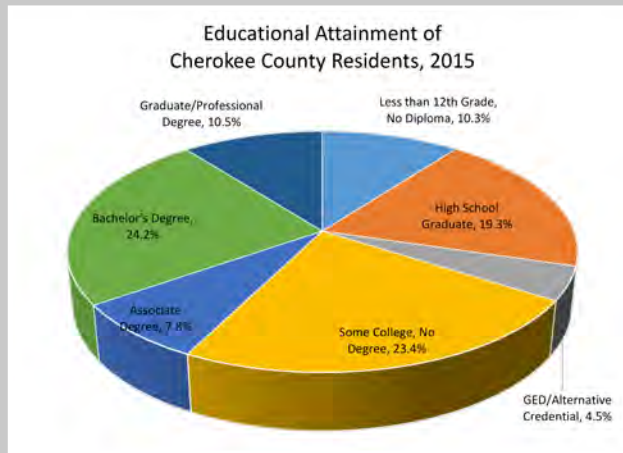
## STRONG IN EDUCATION

The Cherokee County School District is one of the top public K-12 school systems in Georgia. These public schools are complemented by a wide range of K-12 private schools.

There are also good options for post-secondary education. Cherokee County is home to Reinhardt University and 2 campuses of Chattahoochee Technical College. This focus on education shows in the percentage of residents with at least “some college” has increased from 57.1% in 2000 to 65.9% in 2015. This puts Cherokee county 5th among metro Atlanta counties according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

## COMMUTING PATTERNS

Cherokee County remains a bedroom community within Metro Atlanta with roughly 79% of employed residents working outside of the county according to 2015 U.S. Census Estimates. These residents are primarily traveling out of the county for “white collar” employment in the major job centers around Metro Atlanta. Meanwhile, the county has 7.8% of employed residents who work from home, which ranks second behind Fulton County for home-based businesses.



This flow of residents has significant transportation impacts with 80.1% of work commutes being done in a single-occupancy car, truck or van. Nearly 9% of commutes involve carpooling. Only 1.5% of commutes in Cherokee County are done by walking or public transportation.

## GROWING INDUSTRIES

The top five Cherokee County industries in 2015 were Professional / Scientific / Technical Services, Retail Trade, Healthcare / Social Sciences, Administrative Support and Other Services. The Cherokee County Office of Economic Development is leading efforts to expand the following target industries within Cherokee County:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- Corporate Operations
- Film and Media

Since 2013, Cherokee County has added 1.2 million square feet of new manufacturing and warehouse space to accommodate growth in existing and new companies. With a number of significant projects in the pipeline, the growth in local jobs is expected to continue for the next few years.

### Top 5 Private Employers in Cherokee County:

- Pilgrim's Pride: 800 employees
- Chart Industries, Inc: 552 employees
- Inalfa Roof Systems: 345 employees
- Universal Alloy Corp: 260 employees
- Piolax Corp: 250 employees

Source: Cherokee County Office of Economic Development

# Putting Together the Plan

## *ROLE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN*

Just as the previous Plan set the tone for Cherokee County, this update ensures that we remain focused on all of the county's priorities. We crafted guiding principles and character areas based on development patterns, trends, demographic projections, and community concerns. In the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, we introduced the Future Development Map based on Character Areas, which was designed to guide development as well as help with the preservation of rural areas. This update enables us to track the county's progress thus far and will ultimately shape land use decisions. Whether you're a resident, business or property owner, or any combination, these land use decisions affect all of us.

## *YOUR VOICE*

Public engagement has played a significant role in this effort. We sought perspectives from every corner of the county. We consulted with the general public, community leaders, business owners, and elected officials, all of whom make key decisions about the future of the county. To provide feedback at various stages of the update process, we also utilized an Advisory Committee, with elected officials comprised of Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission members, mayors, and several involved citizens. Over the past year and a half, the county held many meetings with the Advisory Committee, the public, business owners, and other interested parties.

## *GENERAL PUBLIC MEETINGS*

### Critical Issues Forums

**Tuesday, June 27, 2017**, 5:30pm-7:30pm  
Cherokee County Rec. Center, Woodstock, GA

**Thursday, June 29, 2017**, 6:00pm-8:00pm  
Northside Cherokee Conf. Center, Canton, GA

### Target Area Workshops

**August 16, 2017**, 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Ball Ground City Hall, Ball Ground, GA

**August 23, 2017**, 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Freehome Fire Station, Canton, GA

**August 24, 2017**, 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Hickory Flat Fire Station, Canton, GA

**August 29, 2017**, 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Airport Fire Station, Ball Ground, GA

**August 31, 2017**, 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Oak Grove Fire Station, Acworth, GA

**September 21, 2017**, 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Waleska Fire Station, Waleska, GA

### Draft Review Forums

**July 17, 2018**, 6:00pm-8:00pm  
Northside Cherokee Conf. Center, Canton, GA

**July 19, 2018**, 5:30pm-7:30pm  
Cherokee County Rec. Center, Woodstock, GA

## *ONLINE PORTAL*

In Summer 2017, we launched our first-ever public engagement portal called Engage Cherokee. Through Engage Cherokee, residents could post their views on everything from how to improve traffic patterns to what they love most about Cherokee County. Engage Cherokee also included a survey with questions pertaining to each core issue addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The survey allowed us to obtain a more thorough collection of opinions, and enabled the community to conveniently share their views, particularly if they were unable to attend a meeting.

Considering the pace which Cherokee County has grown over the past ten years, many residents are concerned about increased congestion, over-development, and the potential loss of historic and natural resources that make the County serene and attractive to live in. Growth is important for Cherokee's future, but maintaining our community character as we evolve is why a comprehensive plan is essential. Through our community meetings, online portal, and other means, we have heard your concerns and they have been incorporated into the final document of this plan.

# Incorporating Related Plans

To maximize impact of the Comprehensive Plan, it is important that we are in sync with other major initiatives/plans in Cherokee County. These related plans, covering areas such as transportation, parks and greenspace, and economic development, play a crucial role in the shaping of our county. Each plan branches off the goals of the comprehensive plan to provide specific strategies/action items to reach those goals.

## *COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN*

The 2016 Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) addresses multi-modal transportation issues through 2040. The final prioritized list of projects was developed from the ground up with input from citizens, business owners, elected officials, then evaluated for effectiveness. The seven groups of projects include Roadways, Safety, Bridges, Bicycle-Pedestrian-Trails, Transit, Freight and Aviation. The County has already begun to complete these projects as money has become available from federal, state and local sources. Besides the managed lane project on I-575, the two most important projects are the widening of State Route 20 (Cumming Hwy) east to Cumming and the widening / bridge on Bells Ferry. Both projects are slated to begin construction in the next 5 years.

Alternative modes of transportation besides roads are a major focus of the CTP. Sidewalks and multi-use trails were identified by county residents as important as transportation infrastructure. They want other options for making trips in their community. Appendix G - Trails Element identified trails and bike-ped routes that the county should pursue as road improvements are made and funds are available

While the CTP includes construction projects, there are improvements to our ordinances and development regulations that can help to preserve capacity, improve connectivity and support alternative modes of transportation. Likewise, there are changes that can be made to how we build roads to allow them to enhance the character of an area rather than erode it. Working with the County Engineer, we have incorporated these types of projects into the Comprehensive Plan to achieve our goals for Cherokee County

## **Key Initiatives**

- Develop Access Management Standards for major corridors to enhance road safety and preserve capacity
- Create a range of street types to match rural, suburban and urban character areas
- Develop “Complete Streets”, multi-modal facilities that allow for motorists, transit riders, pedestrians, and cyclists to enjoy the road
- Update the county’s Functional Classification Map, which determines street classifications

## *OPPORTUNITY CHEROKEE 2015*

The Cherokee Office of Economic Development (COED) drafted the county’s economic development plan, Opportunity Cherokee in 2015. This plan, which included interviews, surveys, and group discussions with 2,400 participants, highlighted the county’s assets that make it an ideal employment center, along with strategies for creating jobs attracting people to live and work in Cherokee. COED identified five target markets for the county to focus on expanding-: Advanced Manufacturing, Commercial Development, Information Technology, Corporate Operations, and Film & Media. Essentially, Opportunity Cherokee expands on the comprehensive plan to provide a more specific overview of the existing industries and strategies that will grow jobs in the target market, and ultimately keep Cherokee County residents from having to commute outside the county. The plan also emphasizes the importance of education and job training programs to promote a strong workforce, as well as entrepreneurial programs that will cater to potential and current business owners. These elements, along with promoting a sense of place for workers, will help the county’s workplace and regional centers to thrive as planned.

## **Key Initiatives**

- Enhance COED’s organizational capacity
- Advance marketing and communication endeavors
- Continue to expand business retention and recruitment activities
- Create a culture for entrepreneurs
- Establish dynamic quality of place

### **CONSOLIDATED PLAN**

As part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Cherokee County is required to submit a 5-year Consolidated Plan for 2014-2018, along with an Annual Action Plan. The Consolidated Plan consists of a needs assessment, market analysis, and identification of needs to determine how well the county serves low to moderate income households (households making 50-80 percent of the Area Median Income or “AMI”). This analysis is compiled in part thanks to consultations with community members and local organizations that provide services to low and moderate income households, and helps provide the justification for CDBG grants.

#### **Key Initiatives**

- Increase the capacity of public facilities and infrastructure
- Increase the capacity of public services and economic opportunities
- Preserve and expand affordable housing

### **PARKS, RECREATION AND GREENSPACE PLAN**

Cherokee County residents love their parks, and they are vocal about this in community meetings. That’s where the Parks, Recreation, and Greenspace Plan comes into play. Drafted in 2018, the plan prioritizes action items that help improve the location connectivity in the county while developing and improving existing parks. This includes developing a system of linear parks and greenways that connect residents to amenities and services throughout the county, as well as constructing new facilities at existing parks that allow for a wider variety of activities. The plan also seeks to take advantage of the county’s natural resources by advocating for canoe/kayak launch points along the Etowah and Little Rivers. Finally, the plan includes a ‘gap analysis’ which analyzes areas of Cherokee County that lack parks and greenspace. In this capacity, the plan calls for additional parks to be developed north of Highway 20 and in southeastern Cherokee. The county believes that every family have convenient access to a park!

#### **Key Initiatives**

- Develop a system of linear parks and greenways
- Develop a multi-generational recreation center at Veterans Park
- Add facilities that allow for a wider range of contemporary activities (pickleball, tennis, skate park, etc.)

### **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Cherokee County Solid Waste Management Plan was developed in 2010 and provides an overview and goals for the county’s waste disposal policies, along with that of Ball Ground, Canton, Holly Springs, Waleska, and Woodstock. Specifically, the plan addresses waste reduction, collection, disposal, land limitation, and education and public involvement. Cherokee County’s population rapid growth warrants efficient waste disposal procedures that keep the County clean, but also highlights the need for waste reduction in the form of reuse, recycling, and waste preventative measures. This plan established the county’s goal of reducing waste by 10 percent from 2007 to 2018.

Waste collectors in Cherokee County are either privately-owned or contracted by a city--depending on the jurisdiction--and transport the waste to one of the county’s landfills. To ensure the protection of the surrounding environment, the Utilities / Services character area, to be mentioned later, provides guidelines for landfills and other facilities that require significant buffers from other development. Going forward, primary goals highlighted in the Solid Waste Management Plan include promoting waste reduction methods in schools, expanding recycling options, and reducing waste by 10 percent over ten years.



# Our Vision



# Our Vision

## Overall Vision

The future of Waleska depends on having a clear statement of the community's vision for the City. As the Atlanta metropolitan region continues to expand, being the most accessible, the most attractive or even the most affordable does not guarantee a community's success. The Vision for Waleska is based on choices and opportunities. Today, the City is poised to remain a quiet village adjacent to Reinhardt University or become a destination in its own right. This represents the choice to encourage new growth patterns that embrace a variety of land uses and housing choices to build on Waleska's existing strengths.

This strong vision fits into the overall vision for Cherokee County. The County and its Cities are envisioned as a thriving community, where its rural heritage is preserved. Retail services and employment are concentrated in walkable villages that have occupants in every storefront. People ride bicycles or walk in their neighborhoods and stop to chat. Accessibility and transportation choices are provided to all levels of citizens no matter what their economic status or age. Children have the choice to walk to school, and seniors can continue to be active. Shopping and services are neighborhood based. Employment opportunities allow people to make their living within their community. The Vision seeks a healthy community that nurtures a community member's health and spiritual well-being. In addition to wise land use choices, services and institutions are abundant. The mind is challenged and souls are nurtured with schools, theaters, museums and galleries; places to kick back and rest or engage in recreation. Above all the Community Vision is about the desires and values of the people who live there.

## City Vision Statement

*An historic small town nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Waleska has the charm, scenic beauty, cultural assets, and strong community bonds that make it one of Georgia's best kept secrets. A mix of housing, small businesses, and community gathering spaces, anchored by the city's cherished relationship with Reinhardt University, will continue to grow the college town energy in the walkable center of the crossroads community.*



## Guiding Principals

- Growth should be guided to preserve and enhance the unique character of our communities.
- New development should not cause undue burden on public services, infrastructure and community facilities.
- The continued economic development of our area depends on a variety of new commercial and industrial development in appropriate locations.
- An array of housing choices is important to address the diverse needs of the population within our communities.
- The county includes natural areas, critical water resources, and animal habitats that should be preserved while respecting the rights of private property owners.



## Core Issues

### **PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Thanks to its rich history, cultural and natural resources, and its location in the Atlanta metro area, Cherokee County, Ball Ground and Waleska continue to attract many new residents and businesses. All of this translates to increased growth pressure. The population of these areas has increased dramatically over the last 20 years and development has boomed along with it, making a rural county more suburban and in some areas even urban. Land development can be a burden on the existing infrastructure, such as roads, parks, public safety, etc. Care must be taken to make sure sufficient capacity exists to support proposed developments.

The road network and planned improvements are not enough to ensure future connectivity and mobility within the community. This problem needs to be addressed from several different angles, through roadway improvements, the development of alternative transportation facilities, and integrated community planning. At the level of a comprehensive plan, community planning strategies focus on the organization of neighborhoods, commercial areas and open spaces and their connectivity to the overall transportation network in order to increase overall capacity and mobility within our community.

### Policies

- Encourage growth in areas where it will be the most beneficial to the County and its cities. New development should be consistent with the Future Development Plan Map and the long range planning goals and policies.
- Look at new development proposals comprehensively by considering the benefit to the community overall, the character of the surrounding area, nearby land uses, and the availability and capacity of infrastructure.
- Focus denser levels of growth within existing City boundaries and targeted growth areas within the County where there is adequate infrastructure.
- Public facilities and infrastructure should be designed to support new development and redevelopment efforts, particularly in the areas of circulation, access and linkages.

- Ensure that natural resources are protected and that greenspace is abundant throughout the county.
- Promote the clustering of uses and compact site development in appropriate areas that are pedestrian-oriented, community-centered and minimize vehicular trips with increased internal connectivity.
- Developments should connect with the existing transportation network and adjacent properties.
- All roadways should be designed to match the character of the area and integrated with adjacent land use.

### **Growth Pressure Areas**

Growth pressure typically occurs in areas that are undergoing rapid change. In Cherokee County, this situation happens in the following areas:

- Where new road improvements are built or traffic volumes have increased significantly along major corridors.
- Rural areas of the county where sewer is available, especially around the edges of the cities.
- Areas where property owners want to realize the development value of family farms or large tracts of land.
- Land near new parks and schools.

It is critical to consider new developments as opportunities to plan the best possible new sustainable neighborhoods and communities. At the planning stages, it is important to involve the whole community in order to ensure development that fits the character of the area, addresses potential impacts to infrastructure and community facilities, and maximizes the benefits to the public. By talking about these issues in the early stages, there is an opportunity to consider creative solutions such as public-private partnerships, added road connectivity and dedicated greenspace.

### **Large Potential Projects**

A number of large mixed-use projects were proposed in the last decade. It is reasonable to expect these properties and projects to be revisited in the next 10 years.

The 4,000 acre “Willoughby and Sewell” property on the west side of Cherokee County holds significant potential for creating an example of sustainable growth. In 2006, the “Willoughby and Sewell” property owners

worked closely with a developer to propose rezoning the land for a master-planned community. The team completed an extensive study of the land and sought community input through a series of community meetings. At these meetings, citizens expressed their serious concerns about traffic, school capacity, need for greenspace and compatibility issues with the surrounding development. The key for this project will be planning/phasing the project and addressing the lack of infrastructure in the immediate area.

The Canton West project that extended from the City of Canton west toward Fincher Road (SR 108) from 2007 similarly struggled with infrastructure and compatibility issues. The original proposal was split between Canton and Cherokee County. The developer proposed 3,507 homes on 2,300 acres with a mixed use center. In the future, Canton and Cherokee County need to have a shared vision for this project in order for it to be successful.

During this update process, the possible redevelopment of Dixie Speedway has also been discussed. This racetrack, near Woodstock along Highway 92, was once surrounded by farms and forests. The current owners are looking for a way to redevelop the property into a mixed-use community that honors the legacy of the racetrack and their love of Cherokee County. The location of this property, along a major 4-lane road adjacent to residential and industrial development, offers lots of possibilities that should be explored in order to develop a plan that benefits the whole community.

### **Improving City/County Coordination**

There are potential compatibility issues between the unincorporated sections of the County and the larger southern and central cities. These areas, primarily involving established single-family communities, adjacent to the city boundaries are areas of concern. As the cities grow through annexation and densification, these areas may be exposed to development pressure to be rezoned for more intensive land use, or may require cooperative efforts between the cities and the County to maintain their integrity. Work has been done during this update to align the character area designations with city designations through in-person meetings with each city. There are a few areas that are relatively complex and would merit further study between the County and the Cities.

The first one is the I-575 and Sixes Road interchange, which is located within 3 different jurisdictions—Holly Springs, Woodstock and Cherokee County. This area needs a unified vision to unlock the potential and ensure the best development for the community. This joint planning effort should include land use, transportation and recreation.

## **Infrastructure and Service Capacity**

Cherokee County has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years. This growth will continue to have an impact on our infrastructure and community facilities. In a well-balanced community, infrastructure and services are available to support expected growth. Well planned, well-maintained and efficiently operated infrastructure systems contribute to a beneficial environment for both businesses and residents. As part of the zoning and development process, the County looks closely at infrastructure availability. Proposed developments should be evaluated for their impact on infrastructure in terms of traffic generation, water/sewer capacity and school/parks capacity.

- Traffic Impact Studies

Designed to evaluate the impact of a proposed developed on the adjacent road system, this study may be completed by county staff or by an outside consultant depending on the size of the project. From this information, County and staff can use an overall road network model to evaluate the cumulative effects of multiple development projects on the overall road network.

- Utilities Capacity Analysis

Typically, this analysis covers water and sewer capacity and is completed by the provider, such as CCWSA. The review may consider peak demand, fire flow, 10yr projections, industrial surcharge and pretreatment needs.

- Schools and Parks Capacity

Evaluating the impact of a proposed development on the K-12 public schools and nearby parks is important to ensure sufficient capacity. Schools are currently evaluated during by CCSD staff during the application process. Parks should be added to this evaluation for residential projects.

## **Capital Improvements Plan and Budget**

As part of the Capital Improvements Plan and Budget process, it is very important to identify future sites or at least general locations for community facilities such as parks as early as possible. Early acquisition of sites minimizes ultimate land costs and ensures higher quality sites for community facilities. Capital facilities programming should be in conjunction with outlined land use patterns on the Future Development Map and

policies within this Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan and Budget should include detailed project descriptions, location of desirable sites, cost estimates and any other available information.

## **Building a Pedestrian-Friendly Environment**

Internal and external pedestrian connectivity and linkages should be an integral part of every new project to provide safe and equitable choices for alternative transportation, such as walking or bicycling. New suburban and urban communities developed within the County should be built with sidewalks on all public rights-of-way. Internal pedestrian and bikeway trail systems that connect residents to amenities within the community and to the larger world outside their community are encouraged in large developments. By putting these other modes of transportation on equal footing with automobiles, the community can reap significant transportation, environmental and health benefits.

Not only should the County develop pedestrian infrastructure and require pedestrian connectivity within and between developments, but also this environment should be safe and pedestrian friendly. Elements such as pedestrian entrances, large windows and pedestrian scaled facades adjacent to pedestrian ways will increase the comfort and usability of sidewalks and path systems. Adequate separation of pedestrian infrastructure from on going traffic with such elements as landscaping and on-street parking will greatly increase the safety for pedestrians.

## **Connections to the Community**

Transportation efficiency is enhanced when there are consistent and adequate street connections that allow many routes of travel through the community. Gated communities, private road systems and the introduction of disconnected cul-de-sac systems create barriers and diminish the connectivity of the whole system. Proper street connectivity reduces miles traveled, increases non-motorized trips, and supports transit use.

All properties, except for individual residential dwellings, should be required to provide interconnectivity to the adjacent properties. Streets and sidewalks/paths should be extended to the boundary lines of the tract, unless prevented by topography or other physical conditions. Standards should be set for each Character Area with respect to number and spacing of these connections. These requirements will allow greater flexibility within developments, reduce the need for curb cuts, and create less interference with pedestrian systems.

## Implementation Steps

- Revise zoning ordinance and development regulations to ensure consistency with plan Vision, Guiding Principles, policies and Character Areas in order to maximize Comprehensive Plan implementation.
- Review the Future Development Map, rezonings and other plan data yearly based on changes to actual population, growth and potential adjustments.
- Develop master plans for growth pressure areas such as the Sixes Road Interchange and Hickory Flat to better coordinate land use with infrastructure.
- Continue to maintain and update a 5-Year Capital Improvements Plan.
- Coordinate implementation efforts for the other County-wide plans, such as the Transportation Plan, the Parks, Recreation and Greenspace Plan, and the Economic Strategic Plan.
- Review and develop a comprehensive infrastructure-financing plan. Ensure that new development pays its fair share of infrastructure costs.
- Review Service Delivery strategies and level of services, and develop a plan to provide services to accommodate projected new growth.
- Continue to investigate alternative transportation - Ongoing transit study, airport expansion, sidewalk needs, and bicycle suitability and connectivity to lessen congestion within the County.
- Adopt requirements that developments connect to any identified pedestrian linkage within the County as part of the development approval. Pedestrian linkages include greenways and existing sidewalks.
- Revise development ordinances to encourage shared parking and parking maximums in mixed-use areas to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Adopt requirements to establish a limit to the number of entrances for arterial roadways. For example, each development should provide inter-parcel vehicle access points between all contiguous commercial, office, or industrial tracts, if feasible.
- Continue to identify, fund and implement LCI projects.

- Increase pedestrian safety by developing specific roadway types and pedestrian related facilities by character area. Guidelines should include minimum widths, connectivity, and accessories.



## **PRESERVE AND ENHANCE SENSE OF PLACE AND HISTORIC CHARACTER**

Communities that craft a vision and set standards for development and construction will encourage the development of exceptional places with a variety of housing choices and modes of transportation. The environment created from such standards will strengthen and reinforce the sense of community among residents and businesses. The preservation of historic, rural and cultural resources is critical to enhancing the places that are unique to Cherokee County, Ball Ground and Waleska.

### **Policies**

- Protect and preserve unique historical resources within the County and its cities, specifically buildings, structures, neighborhoods, or areas of historical, architectural, or cultural significance.
- The historic downtowns, Regional Centers, Bells Ferry Corridor and Development Corridors need to be developed as lively, interactive mixed-use environments to provide viable live, work, shopping and entertainment choices.
- New development and redevelopment should be of the highest quality and incorporate design and site elements that address the community's Vision and Character Area intent.
- Focus new growth into appropriate character areas, thereby lifting development pressure from farming and rural communities and strengthening the more developed areas of the County.
- Public Services, Infrastructure and Community Facilities should be developed to promote the character of the community in the building form, site design and materials.

### **Historic Preservation**

The protection of historic resources is accomplished on the local level with its inclusion in historic preservation planning, growth strategies, and comprehensive planning. Historic preservation helps to maintain the quality of life within a community while instilling a sense of pride and the familiarity of place. Recognition of significant historic structures encourages their continued use and upkeep. Federal and state programs also provide incentives for renovation and rehabilitation of local historic properties.

Currently historic, archaeological and rural resources in Cherokee County have very little protection. There are National Historic Districts in Ball Ground and Canton that encompass some of their historic downtown areas. Aside from the Historical Society, there is no centralized public or quasi-public organization to support or encourage preservation on a larger scale. Other individuals throughout the county have worked independently to nominate properties to the National Register or to restore individual properties.

Preservation of significant historic resources should become an integral part of land use planning. As such, historic resources should be recorded, mapped, and evaluated in existing land use inventories, and their desirability for preservation should be determined. The Cherokee County Historical Society is very active in collecting information on historic properties throughout the County. The Historical Society periodically updates their historic structures survey for the county. This work shows the potential for enlarging the historic district in Canton and possibly nominating a district in Woodstock and Waleska. Emphasis has been placed on both rural resources and the historic core of the cities, including the conversion of historic buildings for adaptive reuse.

### **Character Area Specific Roadway Design**

Roadways have taken on a much greater role than just transportation corridors; they can greatly affect the overall image of a community, the economic vitality, the recreational potential, the safety and security and our personal outlook on our community. If roadways through a community look bad and function poorly, it affects everything around it. At the same time, if our roadways are attractive and function well, our communities tend increase in monetary and spiritual value.

Roadways are endowed with two attributes: capacity and character. "Capacity" is the number of vehicles that can move safely through a segment of the roadway within a given time period. It is physically manifested by the number of lanes, their width, by the centerline radius, and the super elevation of the pavement. "Character" is the suitability of a thoroughfare as a setting for pedestrian activities and as a location for a variety of building types. The character of a roadway is shaped by the combination of the surrounding context, traffic speed and design elements beyond the capacity dimensions such as the type of drainage, the presence of sidewalks / paths or traffic calming devices.

Character Area specific design solutions for roadways incorporate the appropriate capacity and character elements for the specific situation. As project decisions and design choices focus more on the surrounding context and how the roadway “fits” within a community, we can better explore new shared-use opportunities for recreation and public transportation, as well as the basic safety factor of kids safely walking to school or people safely crossing busy streets.

Roads in Cherokee County include a broad range of roadway types, from rural lanes where two cars can barely pass to four-lane divided boulevards in suburban areas to urban streets lined with multi-story buildings along broad sidewalks. It is critical that the roadways for new developments be appropriate to the character of the surrounding community.

- **Rural Roadways** -

These types of roads are usually two lanes with a wide range of posted speeds depending on the functional classification of the road; local, collector or arterial, and the design of the road. Rural roadways usually have asphalt pavement with wide shoulders with grassy swales to manage stormwater runoff.

- **Neighborhood Streets** -

These are local, slow movement thoroughfares that are suitable for neighborhoods and lower intensity nonresidential. A neighborhood street is suburban in character typically with concrete curbs and sidewalks in denser developments.

- **Mixed-Use / Urban Streets** -

These streets connect Character Areas and neighborhoods and cater to both intensive pedestrian activity and vehicle movement. These urban streets provide frontage for higher-density, mixed-use buildings such as residential, shops and offices. Where possible a landscaped median or parking bump-out should be incorporated into the overall design. All road improvements shall include a provision for the bicyclist and the pedestrian. A mixed-use/urban street typically includes on-street parking and traffic calming measures.

### **Implementation Steps**

- Coordinate redevelopment of potential National or State historic register properties through the Historic Society prior to the issuance of building permits to facilitate preservation or rehabilitation where possible.

- Offer information and assistance to property owners who may be interested in having their potentially eligible property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and to the development community regarding redevelopment and adaptive reuse.
- Update the historic resource map and create a database of properties contained in the 2005 Historic Resources Survey inventory, as well as the cemetery location map.
- Investigate preservation incentives and preservation tools such as easements, transfer of development rights, and overlay zoning.
- Design and incorporate appropriate new street and sidewalk design concepts into the development regulations for each character area. All street designs should include provisions for alternative modes of transportation.
- Identify and implement traffic calming measures within all new development and appropriate existing neighborhoods that are experiencing cut-through traffic.
- Develop programs, such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), conservation easements, the use of land trusts and wider use of conservation subdivisions, to promote a balance between preserving "rural" character and the rights of property owners.



## **AGING IN PLACE**

Over the next 20 years, a significant number of the people who already live in the County, Ball Ground and Waleska will begin their retirement. At the same time, the County and the cities will continue to attract people nearing retirement because of our high quality of life. The demand for specialized senior housing, such as lower maintenance housing options and more walkable and mixed-use environments, will greatly increase as these seniors rely less on the automobile as they age within the community.

### **Policies**

- Support innovative public, private and non-profit efforts in the development of housing for seniors with limited incomes.
- Encourage senior housing in areas that have good access to services, medical facilities, nonresidential development, and are walkable
- Promote mixed housing within developments in order to encourage a multi-aged community.
- Encourage senior preferred housing such as cottages, ranch-style, small lot single-family, and attached ranch-style within new developments in existing and future activity centers.
- Rental housing designed specifically for seniors to meet their mobility and accessibility needs should be strongly considered as a residential use within mixed-use developments especially within the cities and in the Bells Ferry Corridor.

### **Discussion**

The 55+ population county-wide is projected to increase from 12.3% of the population in 2015 to 20.1% in 2040. This projected increase indicates a growing need for housing products that will accommodate active adults and seniors in appropriate locations. New residential development, which has primarily consisted of single-family detached housing, will need to adapt to this growing market segment. New housing products could include varied single-family and multi-family units within planned communities, active adult communities featuring small lot single-family and attached homes with amenities at attractive costs. These homes need to be near retail and services to create a senior lifestyle that is convenient and desirable.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to address the broad range of housing options needed by the growing number of senior residents.
- Consider revising ordinances to encourage appropriate senior housing in existing and future development nodes, where goods and services are easily accessible.
- Encourage non-profit sponsors to make applications for all types of federal and state funding for the construction of rental housing for seniors and the disabled, and take such actions necessary to expedite processing and approval of such projects.
- Take an active role in encouraging a greater medical presence, especially in areas that are "senior" friendly such as development nodes.
- Consider changing ordinances to promote the development of new homes built to the Easy Living Standards, which would make those homes easier to live in with physical disabilities.





## ***HOUSING CHOICE AND SPIRIT OF INCLUSIVENESS***

Our Community Vision describes the development of strong neighborhoods providing a range of housing options that give people the opportunity to choose housing that best suits them, while maintaining and enhancing the value of existing neighborhoods. A greater mix of uses and housing choices in neighborhoods focused around human scale, and mixed-use centers that are accessible by multiple transportation modes, provides an atmosphere of inclusiveness of lifestyle, lifecycle and economic realities.

### **Policies**

- As employment opportunities diversify in our communities, ensure adequate amounts, types and densities of housing needed to support desired commercial and industrial growth.
- Encourage a variety of housing stock to serve a range of incomes, age groups and lifestyles to provide choices and opportunities.
- Promote the development of housing for people with modest incomes by supporting such development with information on funding sources, appropriate locations and the zoning and development process.

### **Discussion**

Although there has been a slow increase in the number of attached and multi-family homes, single-family detached homes continue to be the predominate housing type within Cherokee County, Ball Ground and Waleska. The demographic characteristics of those who already live here are changing as they have children, age in place, etc. The living environments that this variety of households will need, such as lower maintenance housing for aging baby boomers, more housing options for the workforce population, increasing single and small households, will help to shape future development.

### **Smaller Households**

The number of persons-per-household has been decreasing slowly over the past years, and is anticipated to continue to decrease moderately. The decreasing household size may be attributed to the attraction of first time homebuyers with no children (either as families or single), empty nesters, and single persons entering the local job market, and is relative to the national trend of smaller household sizes/fewer children. With a trend toward smaller households indicated, the availability of new residential

opportunities at relatively affordable prices as compared to the overall metro Atlanta area will remain the primary draw for new residents. However, as a variety of market pressures increase the price of starter single-family housing, a small but growing share of new housing product is expected to be townhomes or similar attached product.

### **Workforce Housing Challenges**

Within the County and its cities, there is a shortage of workforce housing. This is housing that is intended to meet the needs of “essential workers” in the community, including police officers, firefighters, teachers, medical personal, manufacturing and other service workers. In the single-family market, fewer new, lower priced detached homes are being built in Cherokee County. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in executive and move-up housing opportunities, particularly conservation subdivision developments, and neighborhoods with community amenities. The proportion of manufactured homes in the community, typically a valuable resource for lower-cost housing options, is decreasing, primarily due to aging and/or replacement of these types of housing, especially in the course of redevelopment.

Cherokee County housing costs are slightly lower in comparison to the 10-county Atlanta region. However, there exists a population of households experiencing housing problems, including substandard housing, overcrowding, and lack of affordability. Proportionally, the majority of households experiencing housing problems are renters with incomes below 50 percent of the County median. As well, statistics indicate that senior homeowners are also experiencing overpayment issues. Housing resources within the incorporated areas must also be considered when addressing the needs of households experiencing housing problems. Although housing programs will continue to be instrumental in improving the living conditions in the County, the units associated with these resources are very limited. All of these trends together are making lower cost housing options scarce.

### **Executive Housing**

Within the metropolitan area, Cherokee County maintains a relatively high level of household income, the proportion of which is expected to grow, although representation in the highest income groups is lower than in adjacent counties. Comparatively the proportion of those below the poverty line is also lower than in other surrounding metropolitan counties, suggesting a financially solid, yet not extremely affluent community. The availability of executive and move-up housing is linked to the creation and

attraction of new businesses to an area and the overall economic development of a community. Keeping this in mind, the County and Cities should ensure an adequate supply of high-end housing options to meet this demand.

### **Overall Housing Outlook**

Various housing types will be required to meet the lifestyle characteristics of the area. The majority of residential development in the County has been single-family residential units at a variety of prices and sizes. This housing mix is attracting younger family households with children and first time homebuyers, and opportunities for move-up and executive housing in a suburban setting. There is also a greater range of housing opportunities at the lower end of the price spectrum than in other metro Atlanta communities, particularly comprised of the older housing stock located in the vicinity of the incorporated areas.

Higher density, multi-family or mixed-use type development fills an economic need for quality housing choices, as well as addressing the needs of special residential population groups such as seniors, or single person households. However, the majority of workforce housing and higher density products are found in the incorporated areas, particularly Woodstock and Canton. This trend is anticipated to continue, as these areas are more likely to be served with sewer and water adequate to accommodate higher intensity development. Such housing is easily integrated into the more dense character envisioned for the County's primary activity centers and contributes toward the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, accessible, and mixed-use environment that is desired.

### **Housing Programs**

Although state and local governments, as well as private industry, have important roles in the provision of workforce housing, federal funding of existing and/or new housing programs is essential for the creation of quality housing choices. Without that resource, the ability of local government to address the needs of all groups is greatly reduced. In the past decade, federal and state policies have shifted costs to local governments on the theory that local governments can raise or create fees to pay for public services. This has added to the costs of housing and diminished resources to assist people with housing challenges.

Since 2008, Cherokee County has become an Entitlement Community with a dedicated annual allocation of HUD Community Development Block Grant

(CDBG) funds. These are currently spread across a variety of community programs with a portion dedicated to the Cherokee County Single Family Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program, which offers assistance for housing rehabilitation that is specifically targeted toward lower income elderly households.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- Review development regulations to remove constraints to the development of second units (i.e., accessory or granny flats) in appropriate areas in order to provide additional affordable housing opportunities in areas where infrastructure already exists.
- Continue the use of creative planning techniques such as mixed-use development, traditional neighborhood development, small area plans, Downtown Master Plans, Overlay Zones, and Character Areas as a means of enhancing housing diversity and choice.
- Continue to target the use of available CDBG funds for the Single Family Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation program.
- Identify areas with adequate infrastructure for medium density housing developments, designed to meet the needs of singles and young families, such as townhouses, lofts, and small lot single-family homes. These areas should be adjacent or attached to villages or centers to promote access to jobs, goods and services.
- The County and cities should work together in partnership to promote the development of projects with housing financed through the full range of tax credits, and exempt bonds while investigating other federal and state funding assistance resources.
- Encourage the utilization of available first-time homebuyer financing programs.
- Continue to work with Habitat for Humanity in the completion of a number of units suited for average and larger sized families.
- Consider policies and regulations to support the development of quality housing choices. For example, incentives could be added to the zoning ordinance for developments which reserve a proportion of units available for purchase or rent for households at or below 50 percent of the County median income.

## **DESIGNING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT**

The natural resources enjoyed by the residents of Cherokee County, Ball Ground and Waleska are presently abundant and varied but finite. The number of uses and demands on these resources is large, and growing as development pressures increase. The water quality of the Etowah River and its tributaries has been steadily declining. Lands previously available for wildlife management are being developed. The amount of land used for general agriculture and timber is declining. As development continues to spread across the county, the need to preserve our environment has become more pressing.

### **Policies**

- Proactively preserve our rural resources and character by protecting prime agricultural and forestlands with incentives, land use regulation and other means of preservation.
- Adopt policies and practices that create environmentally responsible and sensitive design, development and construction.
- Protect and conserve natural areas, which have important recreational, ecological and aesthetic values, including hydrologically sensitive areas, floodplains, steep slopes, protected mountains, wetlands, stream corridors and watersheds.
- Support wildlife management efforts and the protection of animals and plant species listed as of statewide importance, threatened and endangered.
- Sustainable communities should contain civic spaces to encourage healthy exercise habits and social interaction. Civic spaces include open space/conservation areas; greenways, parks, greens, squares and plazas; as well as special sites reserved for civic buildings.
- Specific conservation areas and greenways should be identified in a county-wide plan so that preserved land in existing and new developments will interconnect to form a network of protected lands.

### **Discussion**

Growth needs to be balanced with the need to retain and protect significant ecological and natural resources, i.e., streams, wooded areas, wildlife habitats and open spaces throughout the county. It is also important to identify and protect historic sites, areas of steep slope, watersheds and

water supplies. Development should be steered away from these valuable resources, including implementing additional measures to assess and protect the natural and historic resources of the County, particularly in the pre-development assessment phase. The local governments should identify targeted areas for conservation proactively, and not just react when faced with a development request.

The County and its cities have begun to initiate pro-active measures to protect natural resources. The use of the Watershed Protection Ordinance, Floodplain Regulation Ordinance, the Stream Buffer Protection Ordinance, the County's Tree Preservation and Replanting Ordinance, the Soil Sedimentation and Control Ordinance, and adoption of the minimum DNR standards will ensure the protection of these important features within the County. The Future Development Map utilizes a designation for Nature Preserve. This designation includes active and passive parkland, dedicated greenspace, forests, lakes, the Little River and the Etowah River. The Rural Places Character Area represents pastures, farming and livestock areas, as well as land used for timber production or pulpwood harvesting. On a parallel course, Ball Ground and Waleska have adopted regulations that mirror the County's ordinances for environmental protection.

To implement this plan, we need to further revise our Codes and Regulations to guide development away from sensitive areas. The creation of greenway connections between passive parks, as well as open space areas in conservation subdivisions, should be sought to ensure habitat for wildlife as well as humans. Sites where species of special concern are located should receive priority for protection and acquisition. Increased education of the general public and developers on environmental issues will bring about increased awareness of the importance of maintaining a proper balance between people and their natural and built environment.

### **Civic Spaces**

All development should provide appropriate private and public civic space. Parks, plazas, squares, recreational areas, trails or greens are all types of Civic Spaces. Formal outdoor spaces will be provided and should serve as a focal point for public interactions. They should not be just unbuildable or left over space after buildings have been sited. Larger developments should include more spaces than smaller developments and should break them up into several smaller spaces, as per the requirements in each character area. Existing trees and vegetation should be preserved wherever possible.

### Open Space and Conservation Areas

Open space is essential for protection of wildlife, habitat and water quality, and other critical resources. Open space should accomplish the following;

- Provide for passive recreational opportunities;
- Provide for direct health and safety benefits, such as flood control, protection for water supply and groundwater recharge areas, and improve air quality;
- Provide for the protection of important critical areas and natural systems and wildlife habitats; and
- The utilization of natural features and open space to define the character of an area;

### Greenway Trails

Greenway trails are paved or natural (mulch, gravel, etc.) with a minimum of twelve feet and greenspace on either side for use by pedestrians, horses and non-motorized vehicles. These trails provide a variety of recreation opportunities and should be connected to provide a network that is easily accessible. Boardwalks, bridges and pervious paving are permitted within floodplain and stream buffers.

### Parks

A park is a large open area available for recreation and gathering. Its landscape comprises paved paths and trails, open lawn, trees, and open shelters, all naturalistically disposed and requiring limited maintenance. At least fifty percent of a park's perimeter should be accessible by streets, paths or other pedestrian ways. A park should have no more than twenty percent of its area covered with impervious surfaces. Tree plantings within parks should be predominately large deciduous trees.

### Greens

A medium sized civic open space available for unstructured recreation, its landscape predominantly consisting of grassy areas and trees, naturalistically disposed, and requiring only limited maintenance. Tree plantings within greens should be predominately large, deciduous shade trees. A focal point should be provided within the Green.

### Plazas and Squares

These small areas provide an urban oasis for passive activities as well as civic purposes and impromptu commercial and entrainment activities. They often have a focal point, such as a fountain, waterfalls or public art. Shade trees, lush landscaping and pedestrian amenities are features within a square. Plazas are primarily paved with concrete, stone, brick or unit pavers. Plaza and Squares should be at least ¼ acre in size.

### **Implementation Steps**

- Coordinate with cities, adjoining counties, and regional agencies on water supply, wastewater, and stormwater issues to provide efficient services and comprehensive plans for management and expansion.
- Continue to promote conservation subdivisions as a method for preserving private open space and pursue relationships with land trusts to preserve this open space.
- Adopt regulations to require open space to be set-aside and connections to any identified path system with every new development.
- Publicize information to owners of undeveloped property, the farming community, and timber industry on conservation tax program.
- Comprehensively document & map sensitive environmental areas, acquired and planned greenspace and other significant resources. Compile the findings to be consulted during the zoning and development process, especially for the enforcement of the environmental protection requirements.
- Investigate funding sources to provide adequate funding for a new green infrastructure plan. Create a dedicated fund source for yearly greenspace/path acquisition.
- Continue to actively educate the public, local elected officials, developers, economic agencies, etc. about resource conservation and protection through a partnership with Cherokee County Water & Sewerage Authority and environmental non-profit groups.

## **BALANCED TAX BASE AND DIVERSE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

A balanced tax base is one of the keys to a successful community. As residential development continues, Cherokee County, Ball Ground and Waleska must balance that residential growth with commercial and industrial growth. Economic development goals include encouragement of existing business expansion and new business creation, continued diversification of the types of employment within the whole County, expansion of broadband services for residents and businesses and ensuring the job skills of residents match employers' needs. These economic development strategies are key to creating an economically competitive community.

### **Policies**

- Work towards creating regional job centers with a mix of commercial and industrial uses that leverage the market demand for regional retail, local-serving office and light manufacturing/warehouse space.
- Promote the growth of small-medium size businesses through a coordinated series of programs and support networks for existing and new business owners.
- Work to spur redevelopment along major transportation corridors, such as Bells Ferry, Hwy 5, and Hwy 92, to utilize existing infrastructure.
- Ensure that training and educational needs of employers are being met through a range of programs and partnerships between industry and educators.
- Strive to attract higher paying and professional jobs through the encouragement of executive housing, quality education and area-wide amenities, such as greenspace and the arts.
- Encourage the expansion of agribusiness and tourism opportunities throughout the County.
- Encourage the development of housing for the working population, such as rental opportunities and workforce housing in areas where infrastructure is adequate and available.

### **Employment Patterns and Growth**

Jobs in the County have historically been in manufacturing, with this industry accounting for more than 25 percent of the employment in the

1980's. Over the past two decades, there have been major shifts in the national and regional economy towards a "knowledge"/service economy including professional and administrative services, technology, education, and health and social services. It is important for our economic development policies and strategies to reflect this change.

We recognize the need for economic development to ensure sustained growth. This will most certainly be important to the future of the whole community in creating a broad and diverse economic base for a robust local economy that can withstand the fluctuations in the larger markets. Issues to be addressed include:

- An high percentage of residents commute outside of the county for employment, which is typical for bedroom communities;
- Many of the jobs within the county are in retail or services,
- Ever growing need for access to broadband to support local businesses, education and quality of life,
- There is a need for more professional level jobs and career opportunities, and
- Residents' potential sales tax income is being spent outside of the county's borders--We need a broader range of retail to capture more of this spending.

Although the County continues to grow economically, it continues to remain primarily a bedroom community for the Atlanta Metro area, based on analysis of commuting patterns. Cherokee County faces the challenge of not having a sufficient supply of jobs that complement the skills of current county residents. Current employers are small to medium in size and generally produce parts and components for products from larger national companies or offer services to the Northern Metro Atlanta market.

Presently, residents are commuting out of the County to the professional jobs, while others are commuting into the County for the existing industrial and service-oriented jobs. This pattern may be changing as interest in Cherokee County by firms with professional jobs has increased significantly in the last few years. Efforts to "raise the profile" of the community seems to be paying off but this new interest needs to be translated into new offices being opened and operations started. It is critical that local government actions be strongly supportive of this type of economic expansion in order for it to be successful.

Typically, employment growth is lower in places where the housing supply is more constrained. If Cherokee County is to continue on the path toward becoming an employment center, leaders need to be mindful of the wider range of housing required in order to reach this goal. In general, the whole community will need more workforce and executive housing in order to support these economic goals.

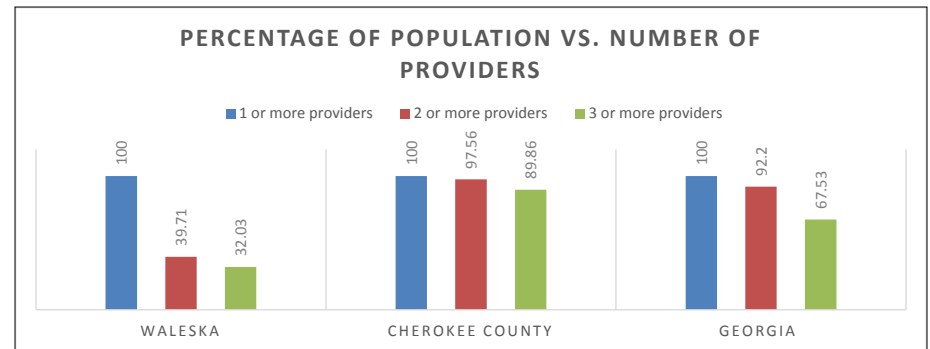
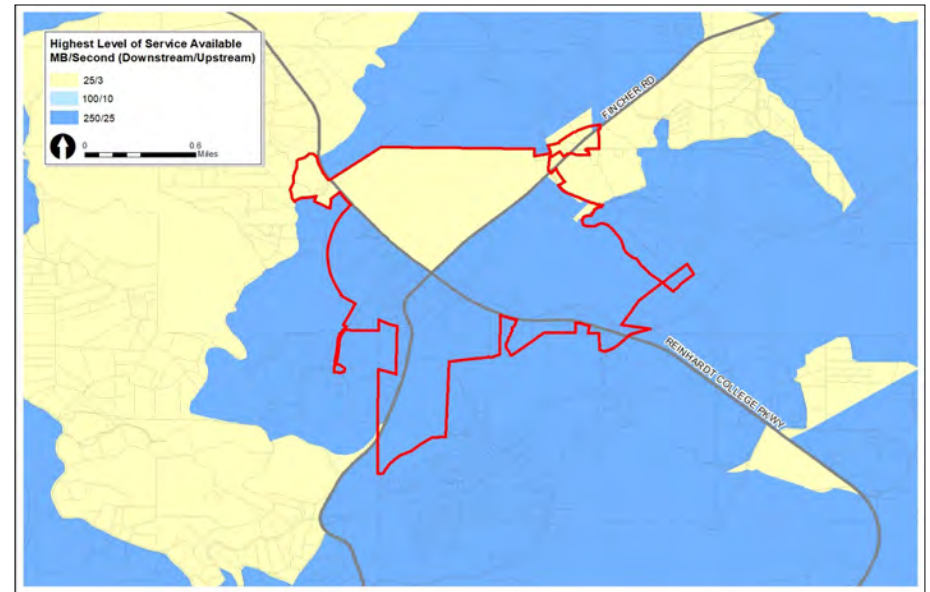
Opportunity Cherokee 2015 proposes strategies to accomplish the ultimate goal of diversifying the economy, including: expansion of identified target business sectors; expansion of tourism opportunities; promotion and support of local entrepreneurs and small business and minority business owners; and tying local incentives to the creation of quality jobs. Successful economic development strategies confront challenges to the business climate, including workforce and education, infrastructure, business costs and environment, housing and quality of life.

### Broadband Services

In 2018, the Georgia legislature passed the ACE Act—Achieving Connectivity Everywhere, which requires local communities to evaluate their access to broadband service. Depending on their findings, communities must develop a plan to improve access to reliable and affordable broadband service for residents and businesses. “Broadband service” means the provision of access to the Internet or computer processing, information storage, or protocol conversion. In general, this refers to a service that can transmit data at a rate of not less than 25 megabits per second in the downstream direction and at least three megabits per second in the upstream direction to users (25Mbps/3Mbps).

For the future of Waleska residents and businesses, it is important to have high broadband speeds and multiple broadband providers to help ensure competitive pricing for service. The following map shows the highest broadband service speeds in Waleska according to 2017 FCC data:

It is important to note that the Northwest quadrant of the city, which contains most of Reinhardt University, appears to have the lowest broadband service speed (25Mbps/3Mbps) available. This lack of broadband speed potentially hinders Reinhardt University students and faculty, making broadband service improvements a major priority. The remainder of the city enjoys considerably higher speeds of 250Mbps/25Mbps .



As shown in the above table, Waleska residents and businesses also have few Broadband choices with roughly sixty (60) percent of Waleska having only one provider option. This is very different from Cherokee County as a whole and Georgia statistics for the number of Broadband providers. Choices for providers help to foster competition and ensure affordable prices for this critical service.

In Waleska, a more detailed study is needed of available Broadband speeds and providers to confirm the critical issues for this community. In addition, the local barriers to Broadband service should be reviewed and possible local government actions considered to address issues in Waleska.

## Implementation Strategies

- Enhance Cherokee County Airport as an economic development asset by adopting an overlay district that meets FAA requirements and protects the Airport from incompatible land uses.
- Maintain an adequate supply of quality prepared business and manufacturing sites.
- Continue the focused marketing campaign targeting industries identified in Opportunity Cherokee.
- Enhance the entrepreneurship and small business support programs with a comprehensive range of financial assistance, training, networking, professional advice and educational opportunities.
- Continue the Development Authority's Business Expansion & Retention Program including its Existing Industry Incentive Program, Existing Industry Roundtable, Operation Thank You, and advocacy of existing industry.
- Support the newly formed Cherokee Workforce Collaborative as education and industry partners work to develop new pathways to employment for Cherokee residents.
- Coordinate and streamline permitting processes and development regulations across all communities in Cherokee County.
- Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized shopping centers along major transportation corridors to broaden the retail and personal service offerings within Cherokee County.
- Review and consider options to address local barriers to the provision of broadband services.



# Target Area

## WALESKA

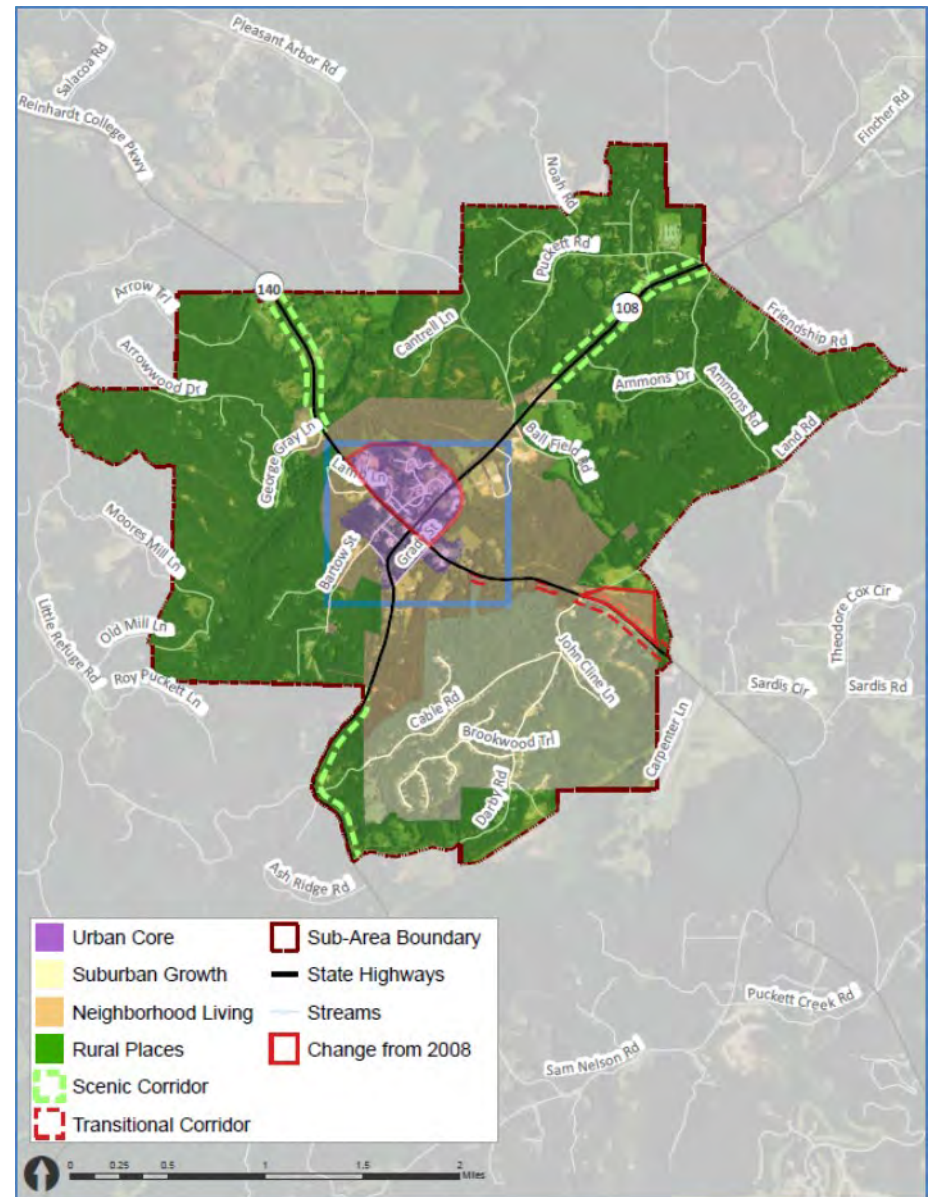
Incorporated in 1889, Waleska is home to Reinhardt University as well as a variety of small businesses. Historically, its industry was comprised of grist mills, timber businesses, tobacco manufacturing, and mineral development. Growth in the city has been modest but steady over the last 20 years. Despite being the smallest incorporated city in Cherokee County, the charm of this historic town and its surrounding area has sparked an growing interest in tourism.

To realize the vision for the future, there are several issues that need to be addressed. They include a lack of commercial and retail amenities, zoning regulations that hinder walkable village-like development, poor connectivity and access, and lack of sewer infrastructure. For the future, Waleska has many strengths including a compact walkable downtown, scenic beauty, a close-knit community of residents, and Reinhardt University as a cultural and employment center. Its location away from major interstates make it a valuable retreat from the busy metro area.

Key implementation policies include:

- Proactively collaborate with Reinhardt University
- Encourage the development of a village center
- Support improvements to Highway 140 and Highway 108 that are compatible with the community vision
- Ensure the connectivity of roads, sidewalks and trails to link new development into the City
- Encourage a broader diversity of housing options
- Strengthen connections with the Lake Arrowhead community
- Preserve the rural and natural character of the surrounding area

A few tweaks to the Waleska Future Development Map came out of the Target Area Workshop that are shown to the right.





Building on the policies, we have identified six projects that will help achieve the vision for the city. These Draft Work Plan items were incorporated into the final Waleska Short Term Work Plan for 2019 to 2023. They are as follows:

- 1 Establish a community liaison role with Reinhardt University
- 2 Restart hosting weddings at City Hall
- 3 Add a gazebo to City Hall property to support outdoor special events
- 4 Expand recycling program to include shredding twice a year
- 5 Develop plans to build a walking trail adjacent to City Hall
- 6 Update zoning code to allow more compact, village-like development

Plan for the Future

# Plan for the Future



## The Power of Character Areas

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan introduced Character Areas to Cherokee County, Ball Ground and Waleska. These areas are used to identify places and areas that show a common form of development and land use pattern, lifestyle and “feel,” intensity of use, design elements or other factors that collectively define the character of a place or areas, whether existing or intended in the future. The use of Character Areas provides a much more comprehensive picture of the community vision for a place instead of individual land use categories.

The Character Area designations indicate the primary and secondary types of land uses and the infrastructure necessary for that type of development. These descriptions serve as a guide in the determination of the future development approvals. The design of these distinct Character Areas is based on the classification of development patterns, their distinct differences and their relationship to one another as we grow over the next 20 plus years.

### Character Areas:

- Encourage a “holistic” approach to long-range planning by integrating the community’s vision and desires with actual land use patterns;
- Directly link the Comprehensive Plan to regulations and implementation strategies, such as impact fees and development codes;
- Provide solutions “outside the box” by integrating new and exciting concepts in land use planning and community design; and
- Allow the maximum amount of flexibility in land use planning.



## Future Development Map

The Future Development Map was developed through the analysis of current and future conditions and land use patterns on the Existing Land Use Plan Map, the Current Zoning Maps, approved developments, an economic market study, topographic characteristics, natural resource sensitivity, the availability of infrastructure, infrastructure programming and needs demonstrated by residential and employment forecasts. These analyses provided an essential base of information for Character Area development. This base was used to provide background data to the public for the development of the Vision and Guiding Principles. Utilizing the communities' Vision and Guiding Principles, distinct areas were outlined and developed into character areas. The Future Development Map:

- Applies the overall Vision, guiding principals and policies to land use patterns of the Comprehensive Plan to the unincorporated areas of the County, the City of Waleska and the City of Ball Ground;
- Visualizes projections within the Market Study for residential, retail, commercial, office and industrial needs to the year 2040;
- Was developed in conjunction with infrastructure planning and availability, land use compatibility and existing zoning;
- Acknowledges projected growth and provides for capacity for this growth in appropriate areas of the county and cities;
- Acknowledges and accommodates corridors currently or proposed to go through residential/commercial transition;
- Identifies specific corridors and areas that are appropriate for redevelopment activities and further study;
- Provides strong emphasis on integrated design, beneficial mixing of uses and connectivity; and
- Utilizes character areas to provide a richer description of how an area should function, look and feel.
- The use of Character Areas instead of standard land use categories strengthens the concepts of attraction, containment, mixed-use communities and compatibility between uses.

## Why Use Character Areas?

- Provides a strong link between the a community's Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals and the Future Development Map;
- Provides additional protection, enhancement and clarification for zoning and land development; and
- Provides additional guidance to developers regarding the qualitative issues the County and Cities will consider during the rezoning process.

## Benefits of Character Areas

- Provides for strong land use compatibility and transitional standards;
- Looks at an overall area for both internal and external connectedness, with an emphasis on the mixing and integration of appropriate and complimentary uses;
- Identifies intensity levels, compatibility considerations and infrastructure considerations;
- Spells out the overall "feel" of an area in quantitative terms, thereby giving decision makers additional guidance during the rezoning and development review process; and
- Coordinates economic development, natural resource and capital facility policies within land use planning.

## How it Works

- Character Area guidelines are intended to establish a general direction and a base level of development quality and compatibility with surrounding areas;
- Character Areas provide an area wide view of how a specific use on a specific property will interact with a larger area;
- Character Areas allow additional qualitative controls while small area and corridor studies are completed.
- A use must still fit the intent of the Character Area and any associated criteria. A potential type of non-residential development may be "allowed," but it may still not be appropriate.

## Zoning Decision Process with Character Areas

Step 1: Identify the Character Area, and Node or Corridor where applicable, where the property is located on the Future Development Map.

Step 2: Refer to the Character Area Summary Table for a brief summary.

Step 3: Review the Guiding Principles and the policies under each related Core Issue, for applicability.

Step 4: If located within a Character Area, review the detailed description for the Character Area.

Step 5: If located within a Node or Corridor, review the detailed description for the Node or Corridor and the underlying Character Area.

Step 6: Determine whether the zoning or development proposal is consistent with all elements of this Comprehensive Plan, including:

- A) the Future Development Map,
- B) the applicable policies and design considerations, and
- C) the detailed description of the applicable Character Area, and Node or Corridor where applicable.

Step 7: Evaluate the immediate area (roughly a ¼ mile radius) surrounding the property for evidence of the elements of the Character Area and Node or Corridor, if applicable. If the majority of existing development around the property is more intensely developed or used, then a more intense—but complementary—proposed use may be appropriate. On the other hand, a limited number of dispersed parcels should not be considered as representative of the predominant development intensity of the area. Care should be taken to consider appropriate transitions between areas of different levels of intensity.

Step 8: Present findings concerning Comprehensive Plan consistency as one of the factors in the rezoning or development decision process. Different jurisdictions have varied standards but some generally accepted factors are as follows:

- Suitability of the use for the proposed site
- Adverse affects on adjacent and nearby properties
- Use of property as currently zoned

- Impact of proposed use on existing streets, schools, sewers, water resources, police and fire protection, or other utilities
- Conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Plan
- Other conditions affecting the use and development of the property

## Interpretation

This plan is developed based on the idea that the Future Development Map and the text are to be used as an integrated whole, with the map being a graphic representation of the text.

Interpretation of the Future Development Map is a process, which rests on the guiding principals, goals and policies expressed in the text. The Character Area designations on the map, both in terms of overall definition and intensity of land use types, require that policies and intent statements regulating the development and the location of each land use type, be evaluated and applied in the process of plan implementation.

Plan implementation is carried out through the application of regulations such as the Zoning Ordinance and through projects and programs outlined in the Short Term Work Program. The Board of Commissioners and City Councils administer the Map within their respective jurisdictions, with input from the Planning Commission and planning staff.

The initial contact for plan interpretation begins with the Staff. It is at this point that the proposal is evaluated for its conformity and compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and other functional plans. In the event a use or development proposal is inconsistent with the Future Development Map or Comprehensive Plan policies, that fact is addressed as one of the Standards for Zoning Review already adopted by each jurisdiction in their Zoning Ordinance.

**Definition of Terms:**

- Connectivity Index - Number of street segments divided by the number of intersections adjusted by a factor for the level of connectivity of each type of intersection. The values range from 0 to 12, with 12 being the most connected.

*Grid Pattern Example*

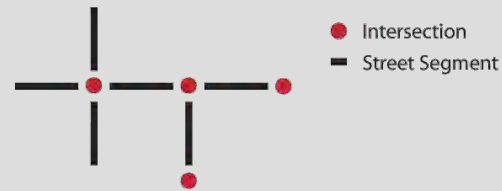
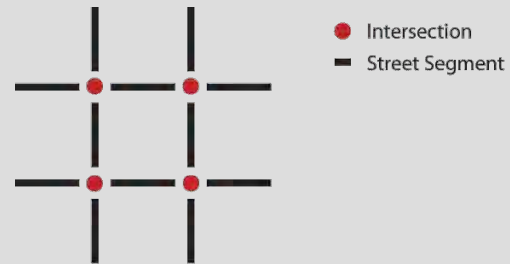
4 4-way intersections with 12 street segments - the Connectivity Index would be calculated as follows:

$$12 \text{ segments} / (4 \text{ intersection} \times 0.25) = 12$$

*Cul-de-sac Pattern Example*

1 4-way, 1 3-ways, 2 cul-de-sacs with 6 street segments - the Connectivity Index would be calculated as follows:




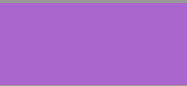


$$\frac{6 \text{ segments}}{(1 \text{ int.} \times 0.25) + (1 \text{ int.} \times 0.33) + (2 \text{ int.} \times 1)} = 2.32$$



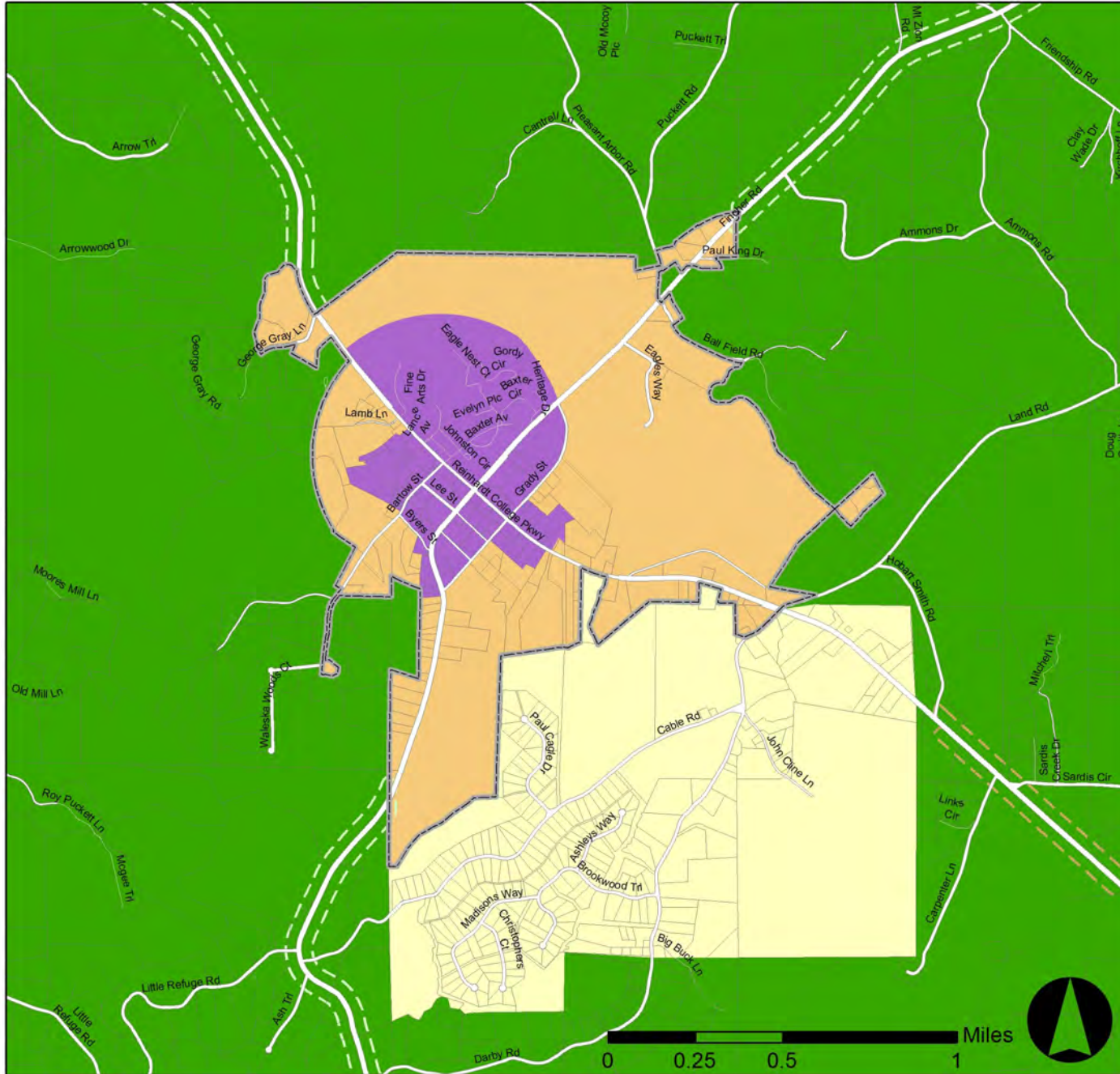
Note: The segments that do not end in a cul-de-sac either make a connection to existing public road or are connection point for future development

- Density - Ratio of number of residential units to the total acreage within a neighborhood. This value is used to describe the intensity of the residential use of a development.
- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) - Ratio of total floor area of a building to the total lot area. This value is used to describe the intensity of the non-residential use on a property.
- Intersection Density - Ratio reflecting the number of intersections divided by the land area. Shown in intersections per square mile.

# Character Area Summary Table — Waleska

Future Development Map Symbol	Character Area	Description of Character and Primary Land Uses	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Suggested Residential Density	Suggested Floor Area Ratio
	Rural Places	Outlying rural areas with active farming and scattered single-family housing on large lots. Preservation of sensitive natural resources is important.	Low level of services and community facilities. Potentially with public water but sewer is not planned.	0.5 dua max.	
	Suburban Growth	Areas located outside identified centers that are experiencing a high volume of residential growth, primarily single-family houses.	Water but not sewer; local public facilities	0.5 – 1.0 dua	
	Neighborhood Living	Urbanized and growth oriented areas, adjacent to identified activity centers with higher densities. Various types of residential dwellings, and mixed-use developments.	Water, sewer planned; regional public facilities.	1.0— 2.0 dua	0.1 – 2.0 FAR
	Urban Core	Traditional downtown area of Waleska including Reinhardt University campus	Water, limited sewer; regional public facilities.	2 – 16 dua	0.5 – 3.0 FAR
<b><i>Development Nodes and Corridors</i></b>					
	Scenic Corridor	Scenic corridors have low intensity development parallel to a viewshed.	Very low level of services and community facilities	0.5 dua max.	
	Transitional Corridor	This corridor is designed to allow more intensive compatible residential uses and limited compatible nonresidential uses along major roadways. Limits are parcel-specific, but should allow a smooth transition to surrounding area.	Linear transitional areas along major transportation corridors.	Underlying Character Area plus 1.0 dua	0.1 – 0.5 FAR

# Waleska Future Development Map



## Waleska Draft Future Development Map

### Legend

- Waleska City Limits
- Parcels
- Lakes
- Character Areas**
- Scenic Corridor
- Transitional Corridor
- Rural Places
- Suburban Growth
- Neighborhood Living
- Urban Core



Date: October 8, 2018

Prepared by:  
Cherokee County Planning & Land Use

This map has been compiled from the most up to date and reliable resources available. Cherokee County is not responsible for errors and omissions contained in this map. No warranties or representations are expressed or implied in fact or in law.



# Rural Places

## Description

Rural Places are characterized by a balance between the natural environment and human uses with low density residential, farms, forests, outdoor recreation and other open space activities. In a sense, Rural Places remains the heart of Cherokee County with its farmland and agricultural industries. Land in Rural Places is typically cultivated as pasture, farmland, or woodlands under forestry management, or sparsely settled homes on individual tracts.

## Intent

The Rural Places Character Area is an agricultural-residential community, which benefits from its scenic rural landscape while accommodating limited residential growth. Large-scale suburban development is not compatible within this Character Area due to conflicts such as agricultural smells or other forms of pollution resulting from raising animals and crop production. Focused efforts should be made to encourage and support agricultural businesses, promote flexible site design to fit the land and allow open space / the natural landscape to dominate this character area.

## Strategies

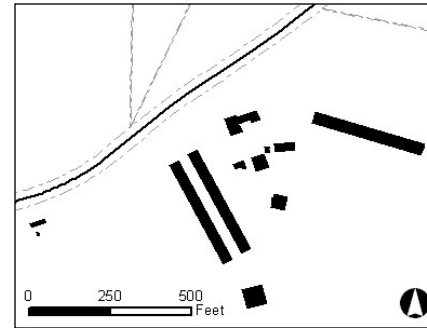
- Discourage the conversion of undeveloped land into residential developments
- Utilize appropriate transitions between existing and newer developments to prevent incompatible uses
- Provide services at a level appropriate to the development pattern to help maintain the area's rural character

## Core Issues Links

 Designing with the Environment Page 27

 Sense of Place & Historic Character Page 22

 Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure Page 18



Intensity	Residential Density — 0.5 units per acre maximum Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Intersection Density— 4.06 - 13.37 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.22 - 2.44 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Active farming, timbering and conservation uses Homesteads on individual lots Large lot estate-style single-family residential development <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Outdoor recreation Semi-public and institutional uses
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easement and private driveway access</li> <li>• Roads have grassy swales and narrow lanes</li> <li>• Public water may be available</li> <li>• Sewer is generally not available or planned</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Significant greenspace often on private property

# Suburban Growth

## Description

The Suburban Growth character area generally consists of single family detached homes situated on lots ranging in size with shallower setbacks than in rural areas. Suburban Growth areas have limited existing development but occur where growth pressure is the greatest due to adjacency with current or proposed community infrastructure (such as sewer and water, and transportation). This is an area in transition from rural types of development to suburban ones, often characterized by pockets of development interspersed among a rural landscape.

## Intent


The primary purpose of this area is to channel growth pressures to areas that are suitable in terms of land use patterns and infrastructure investment to create more sustainable communities. The intent of this Character Area is to preserve the primarily residential nature of these areas while promoting new residential communities that foster a sense of community and provide mobility, recreation and open space. It is critical in Suburban Growth areas to ensure new development is compatible and located where existing infrastructure (i.e. roads, schools, water/sewer, etc.) is available.

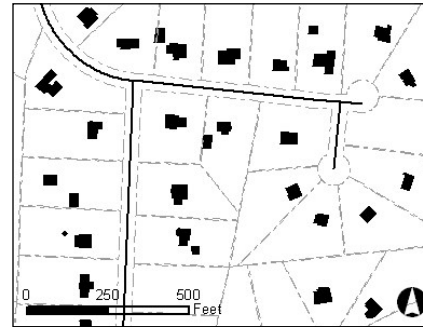
## Strategies

- Create neighborhood focal points by locating schools, community centers, libraries, and health facilities at suitable locations near homes
- Provide connections to adjacent land uses and future developments
- Encourage innovative development that integrates greenspace within its design such as conservation subdivisions, master planned and traditional communities in appropriate locations

## Core Issues Links

 Designing with the Environment Page 27

 Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure Page 18



Intensity	Residential Density — 0.5 - 1.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Typical Intersection Density — 23.9 per square mile Connectivity Index — 1.94 - 2.23 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Single-family detached housing Conservation Subdivisions <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Semi-public and institutional uses
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads have a combination of swales and curb / gutter</li> <li>• Public water is available</li> <li>• Sewer not generally available</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Open space and conservation areas in neighborhoods Public parks and greenspaces

# Neighborhood Living

## Description

Neighborhood Living areas are mostly residential in nature but may include small commercial areas. This character area includes townhouses and duplexes, along with single-family homes intended for empty nesters, seniors, singles, small families, and workers employed in the county. The Neighborhood Living Character Area is more dense than suburban areas because it is generally located in and around cities in Cherokee County where there are full urban services and infrastructure.


## Intent

The intent of this Character Area is to create new moderate-density neighborhoods to accommodate a range of housing types to suit a variety of lifestyles, price points and stages of life while being respectful of existing neighborhoods. Community facilities and commercial uses are common in these areas to provide for close and convenient services with pedestrian and trail connections to encourage the use of walking and bicycling.

## Strategies

- Integrate commercial establishments such as corner markets and mixed-use buildings as part of new developments
- Locate parks, squares, and other greenspace close to all new homes
- Locate parking to the sides or rear of residential and non-residential buildings, and screen all parking from the public pedestrian view


## Core Issues Links

 Designing with the Environment Page 27

 **Housing Choices & Spirit of Inclusiveness** Page 25

 Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure Page 18

 Diverse Economic Opportunities Page 29

 Aging in Place Page 24



Intensity	Residential Density — 1.0 - 2.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.1- 2.0 Floor Area Ratio Typical Intersection Density — 32.79 per square mile Connectivity Index — 4.72 - 4.97 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Small lot single-family homes Attached single-family duplexes & townhouses <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Public and Institutional Uses Mixed-use buildings
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban streets with sidewalks on both sides</li> <li>• Water available</li> <li>• Sewer planned</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Smaller civic spaces (i.e. pocket parks, playgrounds, etc.) within the residential areas

# Urban Core

## Description

The Urban Core Character Area of Waleska is the heart of the city including the “Main Street” area along Reinhardt College Parkway and Fincher Road, some of the residential areas along Bartow and Grady Streets plus the Reinhardt University Campus. Interspersed within the area are a variety of institutions and community facilities, such as the post office, old elementary school, city hall, fire station, and several churches. This area includes a mixture of commercial, higher education, religious institutions and housing.







## Intent

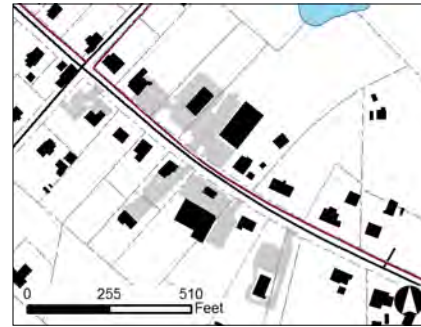
As the center of Waleska, city residents and leaders work diligently to ensure changes to buildings and uses are suitable for the Urban Core. Working with the University leadership, the City wants to make this a vibrant area with the right mix of retail, services and housing that fits this small college town. All development within the Urban Core should bring to life the City by enhancing the existing historic buildings, connecting new neighborhoods to downtown and creating a safe, walkable heart to the city.

## Strategies

- Encourage the adaptive use of older buildings into newer uses
- Ensure that new developments connect to existing infrastructure to promote walkability and maintain the urban feel of the area
- Market the historic core to attract additional businesses and ultimately grow the downtown area

## Core Issues Links

	Designing with the Environment	Page 27		<b>Housing Choices &amp; Spirit of Inclusiveness</b>	Page 25
	Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure	Page 18		Diverse Economic Opportunities	Page 29
	Aging in Place	Page 24		Sense of Place & Historic Character	Page 22



Intensity	Residential Density — 2.0 - 16.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.5 - 3.0 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density — 56.53 - 94.03 per square mile Connectivity Index — 4.97— 5.22 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Single-family detached & duplexes Mixed-use buildings <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Public and Institutional Uses Single-use commercial
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban streets with sidewalks on both sides</li> <li>• Water available, limited sewer</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Smaller civic spaces (i.e. pocket parks, playgrounds, etc.) within the residential areas Patios and Courtyards for commercial areas

# Scenic Corridor

## Description

Scenic Corridors parallel major transportation routes, and consist of rural lands that have significant natural, historic or cultural features, and scenic or pastoral views. A variety of scenic elements such as a canopy of trees extending over a roadway, a rural landscape or a mountain viewshed help to establish the character of the corridor. A location along the corridor may possess a single element, however along the length of the roadway, several such elements collectively establish the scenic character of the corridor. Because Scenic Corridors may convey several iconic natural features, this character area emphasizes sensitive development, with commercial amenities clustered into small areas and retaining the natural features of the character area within the development site.

## Intent

It is the intent of the Scenic Corridor to be conceptual and not be a physical limitation upon any one property within a set distance from a roadway. This corridor recognizes the scenic quality of the roadway. To preserve the scenic quality of a corridor, plans for development within the corridor should be sensitive to and integrate its most distinguishing elements. Commercial development should be encouraged to be clustered within designated Nodes rather than strip development occurring along an entire route.

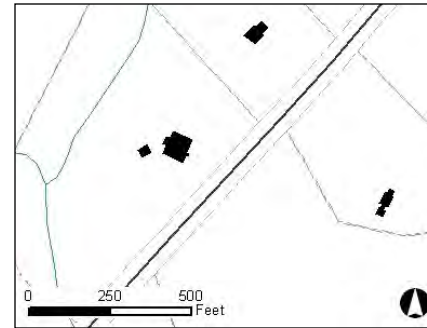
## Strategies

- Organize commercial development within designated Nodes in order to preserve the scenic views and prevent strip development in the corridor.
- Ensure any development plans incorporate existing nature elements, such as retaining a tree canopy that may exist along the road

## Core Issues Links

	Designing with the Environment	Page 27
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	Sense of Place & Historic Character	Page 22
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Intensity	Residential Density — 0.5 unit per acre maximum Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Typically Intersection Density— 4.06 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.44 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Active farming, timbering and conservation uses Homesteads on individual lots <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Outdoor recreation Semi-public and institutional uses
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local along rural local roads</li> <li>• Very low street connectivity</li> <li>• Public water should be available</li> <li>• Sewer is not always available or planned</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Greenways and Greenspace on private property

# Transitional Corridor

## Description

Transitional Corridors lie along major roadways originally developed with very low intensity agricultural and residential uses that have been impacted by nearby development and adjacent road improvements. Generally, these areas are no longer suitable for very low intensity types of uses fronting directly onto the major road. Cumming Highway (SR 20) and Hickory Flat Highway (SR 140) are prime examples of Transitional Corridors between the established nodes at major intersections.

## Intent

It is the intent of the Transitional Corridor to allow more intense development immediately adjacent the roadway while transitioning to lower intensity surrounding areas. The depth of the Corridor is dependent upon the configuration of the property, access to the roadway, size of the property and the ability to assemble smaller tracts to create a larger plan of development. The Transitional Corridor designation upon the Future Development Map represents the areas along various roadways where a use that transitions away from the intensity of the roadway may be appropriate.

## Guidelines

- Ensure that new residential neighborhoods in the corridor are no more dense than the current character area plus 1 unit per acre if existing infrastructure permits.
- Commercial uses should be located near the road and the utilization of existing structures is encouraged to preserve the sense of place

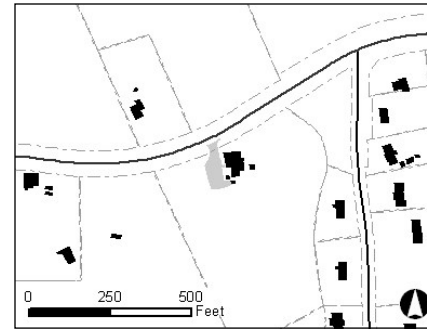
## Core Issues Links

 Designing with the Environment Page 27

 Diverse Economic Opportunities Page 29

 Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure Page 18

 Sense of Place & Historic Character Page 22



Intensity	Residential Density — Character Area plus 1.0 unit/acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.1 - 0.5 FAR Intersection Density— 13.37 - 23.9 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.22 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Single-family detached housing Conservation subdivisions Master-planned communities <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Small-scale shops, & restaurants Personal services—dry cleaners, barbershops Professional services—doctors, lawyer offices Local institutions—churches, schools
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located along arterial or collector roads</li> <li>• Public water is available</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Greenways and conservation areas

Vision Into Action

# Vision Into Action

## Implementation Process

The adoption of this Comprehensive Plan is not the end but the beginning of the implementation process to translate the community vision into reality. The three-step process outlined here is the best way to ensure effective community planning for Ball Ground. These three points appear simple but require many more detailed steps to be successful. This section will discuss a series of ways to use the Comprehensive Plan to guide growth.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY**

Each community should use the policies and character area standards outlined within this Comprehensive Plan while reviewing specific proposals for rezoning and development. The character area standards are intended to establish a general direction and a base level of development quality and compatibility with surrounding areas.

New rezonings and developments should be compared against the Comprehensive Plan—policies and character areas for consistency and intent.

- Guiding principles, policies and development strategies are developed from the Vision; all new development should relate and coordinate with policy;
- Review general design considerations for consistency with Character Area descriptions, and Node or Corridor descriptions if applicable;
- Character Areas suggest qualitative controls until small area and corridor studies are completed for specific areas; and
- Character Areas, Nodes and Corridors are not regulations, and therefore will allow flexibility during project review.

### *Community Planning Three-Step Process:*

- 1. Develop and adopt a Comprehensive Plan.*
- 2. Use the Comprehensive Plan to evaluate proposals for rezoning and other approvals.*
- 3. Establish regulatory measures necessary to protect and enhance the character of our communities.*





As the project proceeds through the rezoning or development process it will be judged on how that specific proposal works on that specific site, utilizing Zoning Ordinance review standards already adopted by the jurisdiction.

### ***DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS***

Development Regulations should reflect the Character Area guidelines and create a one to one relationship between this Plan and the implementing Codes. Typically, a natural outcome of a character area based Comprehensive Plan is a set of design regulations that speak to specific development characteristics such as site planning, massing, scale and density. This can be achieved in several ways: require detailed concept plans during the zoning and development review process to conform to the character area guidelines, a rewrite of the Codes to reflect a more performance based approach, the use of zoning overlay districts that supplement the current zoning provisions and safeguard the designated area from undesirable development patterns. By implementing these types of control measures, a community can work towards achieving their Vision.

The Waleska Zoning Ordinance and Development Regulations need to be transformed so they can be modernized and calibrated to reflect the community's vision while creating a user-friendly format. Regulations that are not clear and easy to understand are likely to be poorly enforced or even worse, ignored all together. The importance of this implementation effort cannot be overstated. These regulations are valuable and necessary tools for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and for the creation of quality developments within the county.

### ***DETAILED PLANNING STUDIES***

Detailed plans, such as the Downtown Master Plans, a Solid Waste Management Plan, Livable Centers Initiatives (LCI) Plans, Parks and Recreation Plan, Capital Facilities Plan, small area studies and design regulations may be adopted as implementing measures of the Comprehensive Plan. The public engagement during the planning process has already identified the need for several small area plans to address areas that need coordination between land use, transportation and other infrastructure.

### ***PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATE***

To be a useful and influential tool in guiding growth and development in the future and in ultimately realizing each community's Vision for the future, the Comprehensive Plan must be kept current. Over time, changes will occur in the Community that may not have been anticipated and over which the Community may have no control—changing lifestyles, national or regional economic shifts, the impact of telecommuting or internet access on working and shopping patterns, etc. Annually monitoring these shifts against progress in plan implementation may lead to the need for amendments to the plan. At a minimum, a substantial Update will have to be undertaken every five years as per State requirements.

#### **Annual Plan Review**

The annual review should be accomplished in coordination with the annual budgeting and the STWP update process. At a minimum, the annual review should include:

- Pace of growth, in terms of housing units built and land absorbed by nonresidential development.
- Land development approvals over the past year as a score card of the Comprehensive Plan's Vision.
- Zoning approvals over the past year in relation to the Future Development Map.
- Future Development Plan Map changes.
- Planned Short Term Work Program activities compared to actual accomplishments. (Current list found in the next section)
- New Related Plans that should be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan.

#### **Short Term Work Program (STWP)**

The STWP may be updated annually, reflecting the results of the Annual Plan Review, but must be updated at least every 5 years. Any updates to the STWP must be forwarded to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for their files. A new STWP for 2019 – 2023 can be found at the end of this document.

# Recent Accomplishments from 2013-2018 STWP

Project Description	Implementation				Status
	Complete	Ongoing	Pending	Dropped	
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>					
Plan mapping for storm water management and wetlands management when required				X	Included in work done by Cherokee County per intergovernmental agreement
Contact Georgia DCA and obtain information on the various community programs they administer				X	Included in work done by Cherokee County per intergovernmental agreement
<b>Economic Development</b>					
Seek Community Development Block Grants for Downtown Revitalization				X	No projects proposed at this time
Draft and implement a business incentives policy to entice businesses and retain current businesses.		X			Continued in 2019-2023 STWP
Retain a business relationship or partnership with the City of Canton and Cherokee County Water and Sewer Authority to insure the availability of adequate water and sewer capacity to support new development.		X			Continued in 2019-2023 STWP
Pursue avenues for obtaining additional water and sewer capacity		X			Continued in 2019-2023 STWP
<b>Housing</b>					
Encourage local banks and lending institutions to provide information regarding State and Federal Housing Assistance				X	No projects proposed at this time
Encourage revitalization of substandard housing		X			Participate in Senior Home Repair Program & other CDBG funded programs.
Strengthen enforcement of City Ordinances. Consider off-duty Enforcement Officer as needed	X				County Marshal provides code enforcement as needed per intergovernmental agreement.
<b>Community Facilities</b>					
<i>PARKS AND RECREATION</i>					
Coordinate with county to add ball fields, picnic pavilion and jogging track	X				Completed in 2014 through County Parks Bond Program.
Secure a Public Library	X				Joint project with Reinhardt University added community library resources to existing school library and opened to public

# Recent Accomplishments from 2013-2018 STWP

Project Description	Implementation				Status
	Complete	Ongoing	Pending	Dropped	
<b>Community Facilities—Continued</b>					
<i>DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT</i>					
"Welcome to Waleska" signage and landscaping	X				Completed in 2013.
Pursue the possibility of grants for streetscape projects		X			Modified to include any type of funding & possible partnership with Reinhardt. Continued in 2019-2023 STWP.
Secure a new plan for the use of old R.M. Moore School and work cooperatively with the Cherokee County Board of Education				X	Old R.M. Moore School sold to private owner in 2015. No current plans for development.
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>					
Extend existing sidewalks		X			Finished Grady Street—still working on Reinhardt College Parkway, Fincher Road and Bartow Street.
Develop a 5 year and 20 year transportation plan for the city to include streets, bike paths, pedestrian walkways, rail and bus	X				Incorporated into the Cherokee County Transportation Plan.
<i>PUBLIC SAFETY</i>					
Add new fire hydrants	X				Developers required to install hydrants for all new developments per adopted ordinances.
Community Storm Warnings (Sirens)	X				Existing sirens updated in 2015.
<i>WATER</i>					
Construct additional water storage facility		X			
Secure additional water supply		X			
Apply for State/Federal funding to upgrade water distribution system				X	Not currently eligible.
Institute an aggressive program of water distribution improvements		X			Recently evaluated expansion along Pleasant Arbor Road.
<b>Land Use</b>					
Encourage environmentally sensitive area buffer regulations	X				Adopted Cherokee County Stream buffer regulations
Develop commercial development that is compatible with Waleska's residential districts				X	Incorporated into zoning code update and master plan
Obtain additional permanent greenspace	X				City purchased 15.59 acre property in 2013
Develop the master plan for downtown Waleska and consider design guidelines for the "college-entertainment" core		X			Modified and continued in 2019-2023 STWP
Coordinate planning efforts with all local governments and other public/private agencies within Cherokee County		X			Continued in 2019-2023 STWP

# Short Term Work Plan

Project Description	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources	Responsible Party
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>								
Encourage development of open space for recreation or buffer protection	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	City/County
Expand recycling program to include shredding twice a year	X	X				On-site service cost	City	Mayor/City Manager
<b>Economic Development</b>								
Participate in county-wide economic development efforts	X	X	X	X	X	\$3,000 per year	City	City/County
Develop and implement a strategy to recruit service establishments	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City/County	City/County
Draft and implement a business incentives policy to entice businesses and retain current ones	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City/County	Mayor/City Council/City Manager
Maintain relationships with the City of Canton and Cherokee County Water and Sewer Authority to ensure the availability of adequate water and sewer capacity	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	Mayor/City Manager
Pursue avenues for obtaining additional water and sewer capacity	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	City	Mayor/City Council/City Manager
Establish a community liaison role with Reinhardt University	X					TBD	City	Mayor/City Council/City Manager
Review city ordinances & policies and consider options to address local barriers to the provision of broadband services.				X	X	Staff time	City & County	Cherokee County Planning & Zoning/ Mayor/City Manager
<b>Housing</b>								
Encourage revitalization of substandard housing through the CDBG Senior Home Repair Program	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	Federal	County
<b>Community Facilities</b>								
<i>PARKS AND RECREATION</i>								
Annex new city greenspace property into the city limits.	X					Staff time	City	Mayor/City Council/City Manager
Develop plans to build a walking trail behind City Hall					X	\$8,000	City	City/Parks & Recreation

# Short Term Work Plan

Project Description	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources	Responsible Party
<b>Community Facilities—continued</b>								
<i>DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT</i>								
Pursue additional funding for streetscape projects	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	City/Joint Partnership with Reinhardt University	Mayor/City Council/City Manager
Restart hosting weddings at City Hall	X	X				Staff Time	City	City Manager
Add a gazebo to City Hall property to support outdoor special events	X	X				\$30,000	City	Mayor/City Manager
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>								
Extend existing sidewalks	X	X	X	X	X	\$85,000	City	Mayor/City Council
<i>WATER</i>								
Construct additional water storage facility					X	\$800,000	City, GEFA	Mayor/City Council
Secure additional water supply	X	X	X	X	X	\$500,000	City	Mayor/City Council
<b>Land Use</b>								
Develop the master plan for downtown Waleska and consider design guidelines	X	X	X			\$5,000	City, Reinhardt University	County Planning & Zoning, City of Waleska, Reinhardt University
Coordinate planning efforts with all local governments and other public/private agencies within Cherokee County	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	City	Mayor/City Manager
Update zoning code to allow more compact, village-like development				X	X	Staff time	City	City/County



CITY of WALESKA  
CITY HALL  
WALESKA WATER AUTHORITY  
2011 Parker Road • 770.476.2902

**RESOLUTION NO. 2019-R- 01**

**Comprehensive Plan Update  
Adoption Resolution**

**2018 WALESKA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

WHEREAS, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 authorizes local governments throughout the State to prepare Comprehensive Plans to be used in guiding their future growth and development;

WHEREAS, **Waleska** has prepared an **Update** to the **Comprehensive Plan** for the years 2019 through 2023 in accordance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

WHEREAS, the **2018 Waleska Comprehensive Plan Update** was transmitted to the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs on October 10, 2018 for review; and

WHEREAS, the **2018 Waleska Comprehensive Plan Update** has been reviewed by Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and deemed to be in compliance with the procedures outlined in the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that **Waleska** hereby adopts the **2018 Waleska Comprehensive Plan Update**.

Adopted this 7<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2019

**Waleska**

BY: Mary Helen Lamb

ATTEST: Rolyn Smith