

UNINCORPORATED WHITFIELD COUNTY

Presenting the Community Vision, Community Issues & Opportunities and the Implementation Plan for Unincorporated Whitfield County

Whitfield County was established on December 30, 1851 by the Georgia General Assembly. The county was named for George Whitefield, a minister in the Church of England who settled in Georgia in 1738. Whitfield County had a 2007 estimated population of 93,379 and is bounded by the Georgia-Tennessee state line to the north, Murray County to the east, Gordon County to the south and Catoosa and Walker counties to the west.

Whitfield County includes the municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. It also consists of numerous smaller communities that are not incorporated cities but are recognized places in the County. These are addressed by geographic area:

Northside

The northern portion of the County (north of Dalton city limits/ Dawnville Road area and east of I-75) includes agricultural and low-density residential uses east of SR 71/Cleveland Highway, suburban neighborhoods and commercial nodes along SR 71, and the ridges of Rocky Face and Cohutta. Northside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Beaverdale, Cedar Valley, Cohutta Ridge, Hopewell, Norton, Plainview, Pleasant Grove, Prater's Mill, Norton, Rocky Face Ridge, Toonerville and Waring.

Southside

The south side of Whitfield County is located south of the City of Dalton. The area includes portions of the Chattahoochee National Forest located west of I-75, interchange areas at Carbondale and Connector 3 as well as historic rural communities located throughout the area. Southside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Carbondale, Five Springs, Nance Springs, Phelps, River Bend and Tilton.



Dug Gap Road winds along the west side of the ridge in unincorporated Whitfield County.



Multi-purpose trails located in Edwards Park in north Whitfield County

Westside

The west side of the County is comprised of the areas west of I-75, including residential areas south of Tunnel Hill, the steep slopes of the Dug Gap Ridge, the Chattahoochee National Forest and the western most portion of the county, and the following communities: Dug Gap Ridge, Gordon Springs, Mill Creek, Mt. Vernon and Trickum.

Eastside

The eastern portion of Whitfield County includes areas east of the City of Dalton, including a segment of the Dalton Bypass, commercial development along SR 76, higher density residential areas just east of Dalton, and the Dalton Municipal Airport. Eastside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Dawnville, Cedar Ridge and Keith's Mill.

COMMUNITY VISION

The Community Vision section paints a picture of what the Whitfield County desires to become and provides complete descriptions of the development patterns envisioned. This section begins with the vision statement for unincorporated Whitfield County. The Community Vision then presents the Future Development Map subsection that includes the Future Development Map with supporting character area descriptions. Finally, the Community Vision outlines its relationship to the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) as set forth by DCA in Appendix A.

VISION STATEMENT

Whitfield County and its cities are a proud and vibrant community that works to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency. We embrace our history while coming together as a community to promote economic growth and development, protect our natural and cultural resources and build a successful future for our children that includes:

- Guiding future development with informed land use plans that take into account the protection of our natural resources
- Providing a variety of walkable neighborhoods with sidewalks, greenway trails and bike lanes
- Creating a variety of opportunities for our children, including recreational facilities, historical and educational-oriented resources
- An inclusive community that offers a variety of public transportation opportunities for its residents, with special attention given to those disadvantaged by age, income, or special needs
- A community that embraces its history with preservation of historic resources and neighborhoods



Club building located in Dawnville community of east Whitfield County

- A clean, comfortable, nice, peaceful, family-friendly community
- A community that actively promotes and pursues innovative businesses, while investing in and retaining a high quality of life for our residents.
- A regional university that has attractive programs and an enriching educational environment
- A community rich with neighborhood parks

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Future Development Map that reflects the vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision, which was developed with the extensive public visioning process described in Chapter 1, is expressed in unique “character areas.”

Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the future. Character areas define areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have potential to evolve into unique areas or require special attention because of unique development issues.

The following pages present the Future Development Maps/character area narratives for unincorporated Whitfield County. Each description includes the following information:

- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

The **development pattern** describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design
- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park areas



Historic rural home located in the Dawnville community of east Whitfield County

- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development

The **primary land use** section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Finally, the **implementation strategies** section identifies the measures the County can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal.

In addition to the three levels of description above, the **Quality Community Objectives (QCO)** analysis for each Character Area can be found in Appendix A. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

The Future Development Map for unincorporated Whitfield County identifies the following character areas:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▪ Preserve | ▪ Transition Corridor |
| ▪ Rural Agricultural Reserve | ▪ Bypass Corridor |
| ▪ Rural Residential | ▪ Community Activity Center |
| ▪ Rural Neighborhood Revitalization | ▪ Regional Activity Center |
| ▪ Rural Crossroads | ▪ Interchange |
| ▪ Ridge Conservation | ▪ Industrial |
| ▪ Suburban Neighborhood | ▪ Airport |
| ▪ Emerging Suburban | ▪ Dalton State Corridor * |
| ▪ Rural Corridor | ▪ Medical District * |
| ▪ Commercial Corridor | |

** The majority of parcels are located inside the Dalton city limits. For a complete description of these character areas please reference Chapter 3.*

PRESERVE

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately-owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas and significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and conservation areas not suitable for development of any kind. The Preserve character area seeks to enhance the significance of these resources and ensure their protection.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for passive use recreation and tourism destinations (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, addresses greenway trail crossings of all roads, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and addresses recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance
- ☞ Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve character areas



Mill Creek in west Whitfield County and its floodplain are part of the Preserve character area.



Wetlands such as those shown above found adjacent to the Old Dixie Highway corridor south of the Dalton Bypass, are part of the Preserve character area.



Public parks, such as the county-owned property adjacent to Valley Point middle and elementary schools, are also part of the Preserve character area.

- ☞ Promote Preserve character areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations
- ☞ Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices(BMP) to protect water quality
- ☞ Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners
- ☞ Adopt “Part V” Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ minimum environmental planning criteria
- ☞ Follow BMPs for erosion and sedimentation control, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act



Ridge conservation is important in order to protect views and the natural resources.

RIDGE CONSERVATION

This area includes the Rocky Face Ridge and Dug Gap Ridge that both parallel I-75, as well as all steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%). Hillside development has the potential to harm the area’s natural resources and scenic views due to erosion and the loss of trees. The Ridge Conservation character area is intended to maintain the areas’ ridgelines, which contribute to the County’s unique character and its history, while accommodating low-density residential development with minimal impact on the environment.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures
- Preserve historic/cultural resources along ridges
- Incorporate adequate infrastructure for accessibility and for water and fire protection needs
- Protect existing trees
- Protect steep slopes and natural landscape
- Protect scenic views
- Preserve rural character and viewsheds
- Conserve natural features and resources
- Limit impacts of new development on the environment
- Reduce impervious cover
- Utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Encourage low-intensity uses



New residential development occurring atop the ridge in the Ridge Conservation character area.



Dug Gap Road winds through the ridge west of Dalton.

Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Forestry/Agricultural

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Adopt hillside development/steep slope ordinance

RURAL AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

The Rural Agricultural Reserve character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural and large-lot residential uses. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural. Housing tends to be scattered across the landscape on very large lots and is typically not in proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or sewer infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's rural tradition and active farms and maintain its rural, open spaces. These areas lack sewer infrastructure which makes urban and suburban scale development unsuitable.

The Rural Agricultural Reserve character area comprises much of the northeast, southwest and southeast portions of the County, including the following communities: Beavertdale, eastern Hopewell, Norton, Prater's Mill, Gordon Springs, Trickum, River Bend, and portions of Nance Spring and Tilton.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes and adopting local policies promoting the right to farm
- Benefit from use of land conservation tools that may include conservation easements, conservation subdivisions, Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer of Development (TDRs)
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, hillsides and other natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways
- Discourage extension of public utilities into these areas (i.e. public sewer)
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover



Farms on large acreage dominate the countryside in northeast Whitfield County, which is home to a majority of the Rural Agricultural character area.



Conservation subdivisions allow smaller lots in exchange for protecting large areas of open space and are appropriate in Rural/Agricultural areas. These subdivisions are appropriate, though at different overall densities, for the Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas.

- Discourage excessive clearing and grading in order to protect trees, topography and water quality
- Accommodate low-intensity residential uses at a net density of 1 dwelling unit per 25 acres
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

Primary Land Uses

- Agricultural
- Rural residential
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Adopt a policy that discourages extension of public utilities into Rural Agricultural Reserve character areas
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Rural Agricultural Reserve zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Agricultural Reserve Character Area
- ☞ Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Adopt typical street cross-sections and/or development standards for Rural Agricultural Reserve character areas that identify appropriate width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk
- ☞ Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners to help preserve viable farmland
- ☞ Promote the use of Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer of Development (TDRs)
- ☞ Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks **(for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)**



Rural Agricultural character area includes large farms.



Rural Residential character area along Old Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The Rural Residential character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural, “conservation subdivision” and/or large-lot residential uses. Rural Reserve areas consist of privately owned areas where agricultural uses and low density development are common. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural. Housing tends to be clustered in hamlets or are scattered across the landscape and are typically not in

proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's agricultural tradition and maintain its rural, open spaces.

Lack of sewer infrastructure is common, which makes urban and suburban scale development unsuitable. Conservation subdivisions may be a suitable alternative to large-lot residential uses and an appropriate response to development pressures for neighborhood development in order to maximize existing open space and viewsheds.

Rural Residential character areas are located north of Dalton, east and west of the Emerging Suburban areas (see Emerging Suburban character area description) that parallel SR 71/Cleveland Highway, as well as in the southwestern of the County. The following communities are included in the Rural Residential character area: Cohutta Ridge, western Hopewell, Cedar Valley, Dawnville, Toonerville, Mill Creek, and Carbondale.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes or clustering residential development in a design that incorporates significant amounts of open space and natural conservation areas
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, and natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Discourage extension of public utilities into these areas (i.e. public water and sewer)
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Accommodate rural residential with a net density of 5 dwelling units per acre
- Promote the use of conservation subdivisions
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion controls and groundwater recharge protection area measures, including Best Management Practices (BMP)



Conservation subdivision example in South Fulton County, Georgia. These subdivisions are appropriate, though at different overall densities, for the Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas.



Rural Residential character area in the Carbondale area of south Whitfield County



Rural Residential character area is generally characterized by large lot residential development.

Primary Land Uses

- Agricultural
- Rural residential
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Rural Residential zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Residential Character Area
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Residential character areas
- ☞ Adopt typical street cross-sections and/or development standards for these areas that identify appropriate width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk
- ☞ Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality
- ☞ Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks **(for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)**



Rural Corridor character area along SR 52 east of Varnell

RURAL CORRIDOR

The Rural Corridor character area includes sparsely developed or undeveloped public or private land on both sides of a rural arterial with significant natural, scenic or pastoral views that would be disrupted by leap frog, conventional suburban residential development along or near the corridor. Public roadway features, such as signs, roadside erosion control, drainage and materials storage also have a major impact on the scenic quality and character of these corridors. The overall character of the Rural Corridor character areas is similar to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential areas, but it differs in that pressure for development tends to be greater along corridors. The Rural Corridor character area covers roughly 300 feet of property on each side of Rural Corridors shown on the Future Development Map.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Prohibit linear, commercial strip center development and concentrate commercial development at Rural Crossroads nodes

- Enact guidelines for new development that enhance the scenic value of the corridor and addresses landscaping and architectural design to protect rural scenery, historic resources and prevent unattractive sprawl development/visual clutter along the roadway
- Preserve tree lines and groves adjacent to the corridor
- Consider the use of drainage swales for paved roads in lieu of curb and gutter
- Encourage compatible architectural styles that maintain the regional rural character and do not include franchise or corporate architecture
- Limit parking in front of commercial properties
- Connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes
- Provide bicycle accommodations
- Institute driveway controls and access management standards to facilitate traffic flow
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Promote Cohutta-Chattahoochee Scenic Byway spur to Prater's Mill

Primary Land Uses

- Passive or small active parks
- Agriculture
- Large lot residential

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt Rural Corridor Overlay District
- ☞ Prepare an Access Management Plan for Rural Corridors with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access

RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

The Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area encompasses the southern portion of the County, east of I-75 on both sides of U.S. 41/Dixie Highway. The character area includes residential uses (primarily low-density residential) as well as undeveloped or agricultural areas. Like the Rural Residential character area, development should respect the community's agricultural tradition and maintain its rural, open spaces, which can be achieved with the use of conservation subdivisions. Unlike the Rural Residential areas, this character area includes opportunities for infill development and community revitalization efforts in more established residential areas.



Rural Corridor character area along SR 286/Dawnville Road in east Whitfield County



Example of the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area in southeast Whitfield County

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Stabilize and maintain existing housing stock
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setbacks and style of existing adjacent homes
- Preserve rural character, open spaces, view sheds, natural features/resources and farmland
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Accommodate rural residential at a net density of 1 dwelling units per 5 acres
- Promote the use of conservation subdivisions
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and sedimentation control and groundwater recharge protection area measures



Example of the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area in southeast Whitfield County

Primary Land Uses

- Rural residential
- Agricultural
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a new zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area
- ☞ Prepare revitalization strategy for addressing housing needs identified in the Whitfield County Housing Condition Study for this area
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character areas
- ☞ Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character areas that identify



Site designs that place parking to the rear or side of buildings help preserve rural character, while also providing retail and other services for surrounding communities.

appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use grass drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk

RURAL CROSSROADS

The Rural Crossroads character area includes key intersections in small communities in more rural areas of the County, including Cedar Valley, Cedar Ridge, Gordon Springs and Mill Creek. These areas are intended to serve adjacent residential or agricultural areas with limited goods and services concentrated around an intersection rather than spread out in a linear fashion along a roadway. Small scale retail uses, public facilities such as churches, fire stations, post offices and libraries, and agricultural support businesses such as commercial nurseries, farm implement sales and supply stores, farmer's markets and feed and seed stores are appropriate uses in this character area.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect rural character
- Provide small-scale commercial opportunities for meeting local needs
- Cluster buildings at the area's center
- Maintain open space surrounding the center
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character rather than "franchise" or "corporate" architecture
- Limit clearing and grading
- Reduce access points along the highway
- Connect to greenways/trail system, wherever possible

Primary Land Uses

- Neighborhood or rural commercial uses
- Civic/institutional (at a rural scale only)
- Passive or active parks

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Adopt Rural Crossroads Zoning Overlay District that includes minimum standards for commercial building and site design
- ☞ Widen roadways only when absolutely necessary

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Suburban Neighborhood character area describes areas where conventional patterns of post-World War II suburban residential subdivision development have been the dominant pattern. In addition to conventional subdivisions, some multi-family uses are present in this character area. Neighborhoods tend to be



Rural Crossroads character area in the Mill Creek community



Suburban neighborhood character area near Varnell

characterized by low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, and are predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.

This character area is typically found in established neighborhoods that surround historic areas and in unincorporated areas where growth has occurred over the last thirty years. Examples can be found surrounding Dalton, Tunnel Hill, north and southwest of Varnell and in the communities of Plainview, Waring, Pleasant Grove, Rocky Face, Mt. Vernon, and Five Springs.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setback and style of existing adjacent homes
- Maintain existing tree cover
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, school buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Incorporate sidewalks, traffic calming improvements and/or increased street interconnections, where appropriate, to improve walkability within existing neighborhoods as well as connectivity to neighboring communities and major destinations, including schools
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to local shops and services
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a connector street plan

EMERGING SUBURBAN

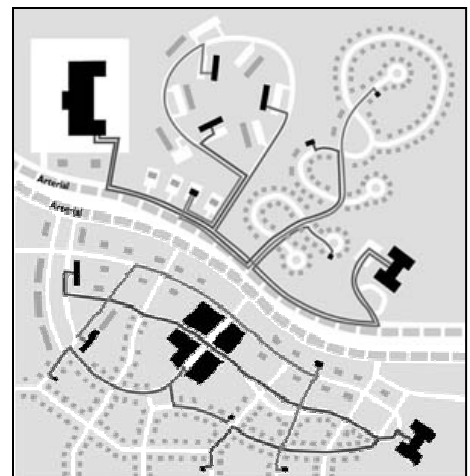
The Emerging Suburban character area covers areas east of Dalton, west of I-75 around and south of Tunnel Hill, and along SR 71/Cleveland Highway that have experienced some residential growth and are positioned to accommodate more due to general



Example of suburban neighborhood development in the Mt. Vernon community of Whitfield County



Suburban Neighborhood development in Whitfield County typically has wide lots with a limited pedestrian network, as shown above.



The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram.

land use trends in the area or to proximity to existing neighborhoods.

New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated in the Community Activity Center character area.

Neighborhood focal points can be created within Emerging Suburban areas by locating schools or community centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Small-scale, walkable mixed use neighborhood centers can create neighborhood focal points and can be accommodated with master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). In addition, conservation subdivisions should be permitted as a suitable alternative to traditional low-density residential subdivisions in order to protect and maximize open space.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect natural and scenic resources
- Provide connected system of streets within new neighborhoods and to existing neighborhoods where possible, resulting in an expanded/alternate local street network for motorists and emergency vehicles
- Accommodate master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern, encourages walking, and minimizes the need for auto trips within a subdivision
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Provide adequate open space and active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Limit clearing and grading
- Permit use of conservation subdivisions with the goal of maximizing open space
- Include a variety of housing choices
- Provide sidewalks, street trees and decorative, pedestrian-scale lighting
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences



Emerging Suburban neighborhood located in Westside



A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Whitfield County.



Pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees and homes with front porches are encouraged in Emerging Suburban.

- Protect water quality with appropriate measures for soil and erosion control and groundwater recharge area protection, including Best Management Practices (BMP)

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential (net density of 2 dwellings per acre)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance
- ☞ Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- ☞ Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Suburban, Suburban Neighborhood and Traditional Neighborhood character areas currently underserved
- ☞ Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintains the natural tree canopy as much as possible

REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER

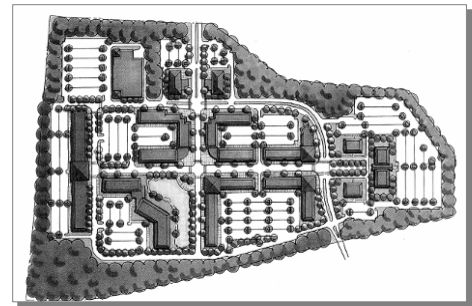
Regional Activity Center character area represents a concentration of regionally-marketed commercial and retail centers, office and employment areas, and mixed use development. These areas are characterized by a high degree of access by vehicular traffic, on-site parking, low degree of internal open space; high floor-area-ratio; large tracts of land, campus or unified development.

While established Regional Activity Centers are typically single-story suburban shopping centers with minimal office space and housing and limited parking lot landscaping, over time these areas should evolve into mixed use, walkable centers of commerce that attract customers from a regional market and include a variety of housing choices.

An example of this character area is West Walnut Avenue., located east of I-75. This area, which includes the Dalton Factory Outlet Stores and other commercial uses that benefit from close proximity to the interstate and serve both local residents as well as interstate traffic, is currently the retail center of the County and is a significant gateway to Dalton and surrounding areas. As an important gateway to the county as well as a heavily traveled area, focus should be paid on enhancing mobility and connectivity for cars and pedestrians, as well as the overall aesthetics of the area (streetscape and building/site design).



Example of appropriate design and intensity for Regional Activity Centers shown above at The Avenues of Indian Lake in Hendersonville, Tennessee



Master Plans are an essential part of ensuring that regional mixed use areas develop as envisioned.



Example of appropriate scale and landscaping in the Regional Activity Center shown from the Gerber Village development in Asheville, North Carolina

Desired development patterns

- Include relatively high-density mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, including multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums, including affordable and workforce housing
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Design should be very pedestrian oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Include direct connections to nearby networks of greenspace or trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreation purposes
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Provide bike lanes or wide curb lanes to encourage bicycling and provide additional safety, provide conveniently located, preferably sheltered, bicycle parking at retail and office destinations and in multi-family dwellings
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and should not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture
- Provide parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious arrangements in addition to the use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Extend sewer infrastructure to Regional Activity Center character area locations currently without service
- ☞ Encourage “greyfield redevelopment” of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use, walkable development
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Ordinance to facilitate greyfield redevelopment and implement Regional Activity Center character area master plans



Quality commercial development appropriate in the Regional Activity Center character area here shown from the Town Center area of Cobb County, Georgia.



Mixed use should be encouraged to include upper-floor residential uses in the Regional Activity Center, such as the above from Rosemary Beach, Florida



Regional Activity Center example of appropriate scale shown from The Avenue of Murfreesboro in Murfreesboro, Tennessee

- ☞ Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects
- ☞ Prepare and adopt Big Box ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- ☞ Adopt Master Plans for Regional Activity Center character areas

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Community Activity Center character area typically represents locations at important intersections along major thoroughfares adjacent to Suburban Neighborhood and Emerging Suburban areas. Community Activity Centers serve the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community, generally those neighborhoods within a five-to-10-minute drive. These community focal points include a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Develop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the center through locating higher density housing options adjacent to the center, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provides a transition between the character area and surrounding areas
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with sidewalks between different uses
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development at major roadway intersections (nodal development) to serve surrounding residential areas
- Discourage strip development



Development should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees, as shown by this pharmacy in the Grant Park neighborhood of Atlanta.

- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage, align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways
- Provide inter-parcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities
- ☞ Prepare and adopt “Big Box” ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- ☞ Implement an overlay district or amend land development regulations to direct building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- ☞ Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- ☞ Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects
- ☞ Adopt a Mixed Use Development Overlay District
- ☞ Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly

TRANSITION CORRIDOR

The Transition Corridor character area represents arterial or collector roads with frontage that generally developed with single-family residences that have over the years seen increased traffic and resulting capacity improvements (i.e. road widening). These improvements resulted in increased traffic volume and associated impacts (e.g., noise, increased trash, street widening, etc.) making uses other than single-family residential more attractive. Some corridors are more densely developed with older structures and numerous curb cuts that may provide an opportunity for



Mixed use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office and residential in the same building, as shown in this example from Seaside, Florida



Transition Corridor character area along U.S. 41/Dixie Highway south of Dalton includes some industrial uses within its mix

redevelopment, while others are less developed with a mix of lot sizes and uses, including undeveloped property.

Transition Corridors have experienced or have the potential to experience piecemeal zoning changes that over an extended period result in front yard conversions to parking lots, unsightly home to business additions and conversions, and signage out of proportion to the structures. The Transition Corridor seeks to avoid this approach.

Frontage properties along Transition Corridors should follow the development pattern described for the adjacent road-fronting character areas. However, upon completion of more detailed corridor master plans, these corridors could accommodate new commercial development concentrated in nodes at important intersections, but should not accommodate strip commercial between nodes. With a master plan, the Transition Corridor could also accommodate higher residential densities along the roadway between nodes, with lower density areas beyond the frontage properties. Master plans along with a zoning overlay are necessary to ensure that change along these corridors occurs in an orderly, comprehensive manner and applies consistent development standards throughout the corridor.

Transitional Corridor character areas include:

- U.S 41/South Dixie Highway south of Dalton to the Connector 3 interchange
- Lafayette Road between Old Highway 41 and Mt. Vernon Road
- Old Highway 41
- U.S. 76 to Lower Dawnville Road/ SR 286

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- With a corridor master plan, cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor that serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide for walkable, higher intensity housing choices located between nodes
- Accommodate conversion of existing residential uses into office or commercial uses while maintaining the existing building
- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards and display unobtrusive business signs that are appropriately sized and constructed for the area
- Incorporate streetscape enhancements to improve the overall appearance of the corridors”



Transition Corridor character area along U.S. 41/Old Dixie Highway south of Dalton includes some residential uses within its mix



New development set back from the street on redeveloping Transition Corridors should protect mature trees where possible and include new landscaping and quality architectural design.

- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and adjacent character areas, in particularly those that include residential uses
- Landscape parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, to improve the appearance of a site, and to shield parking areas from public view
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage)
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning by coordinating land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Prevent encroachment of commercial uses into adjacent residential areas
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards



Existing Commercial Corridor character area shown along Sk 52 northeast of the Dalton city limits in unincorporated Whitfield County lacks sidewalks and is characterized by limited sign and building design consistency.

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial/retail uses, professional offices, mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space) and multi-family residential with the completion of a master plan for the corridor.
- Single-family residential

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridors to guide future enhancements along the roadways (e.g. landscaping, sidewalks and streetlights)
- ☞ Adopt a corridor overlay district to regulate building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor.



Corridor Commercial areas should over time redevelop as mixed use, pedestrian-friendly communities.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Commercial Corridor character area includes developed land on both sides of a high-volume street or highway that is primarily made up of automobile-oriented strip commercial and office development. It is characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk (though they often do not have sidewalks) by parking lots with few shade trees. Commercial Corridors generally have a high degree of traffic congestion; numerous curb cuts, especially in more densely developed areas such as Dalton, minimize the transportation functionality of a corridor. Over time, the area should redevelop as pedestrian-friendly mixed use corridors.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor (see also Commercial Corridor character area description)
- Provide sidewalks and a more pedestrian-friendly environment by incorporating landscaped buffers between the roadway and sidewalks and placing buildings closer to the street
- Limit signs and billboards
- Increase landscaping along the corridor, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design related to the building, the site, and signage
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Commercial Corridor character areas to guide future enhancements
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Overlay District to facilitate “greyfield redevelopment” and implement Commercial Corridor character area master plans
- ☞ Prepare and adopt “Big Box” ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- ☞ Implement Commercial Corridor overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access management, interparcel access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor



Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors should strive to create the connected, mixed-use corridor shown on the bottom and avoid recreating the existing condition shown on the top in the above graphic.

- ☞ Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- ☞ Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects
- ☞ Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly

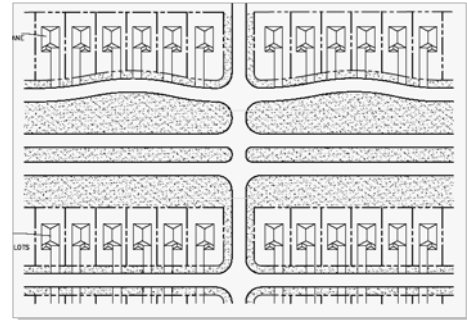
BYPASS CORRIDOR

The Bypass Corridor character area is the Dalton Bypass. In addition to its transportation function, the Bypass is generating new development activity. This is true of the northern portion, where industrial uses are prevalent and where residential areas north of Dalton continue to expand. Development plans include a 1.2 million square feet mixed use development at Underwood Road (part of the Regional Activity Center character area), to include retail, residential (apartments and senior housing and flex office space. The project in turn has the potential to spawn additional growth along the Bypass.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Discourage strip development
- Maintain traffic flow with access management measures and nodal development
- Establish a connected street network for new development that links to existing streets
- Include a relatively high-density mix of commercial and retail centers, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types (town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums) that can serve a broad range of incomes, including workforce and senior housing
- Encourage mixed use development with screened parking, landscaping, internal sidewalk and street connectivity, and quality building materials and site design
- Provide strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Connect to nearby networks of greenspace/multi-use trails/bike paths where available
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential areas Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots



Access management is necessary along the Dalton Bypass to allow for development



Dalton Bypass area shown above east of Dalton city limits

- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Prohibit billboards and limit business sign height/size to minimize “visual clutter”
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses

Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Industrial Warehousing
- Mixed use
- Higher density residential uses

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ *Prepare and incorporate into development review a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites*
- ☞ *Recruit businesses that are suitable for the Bypass Corridor character area*
- ☞ *Implement a Bypass Corridor Overlay District to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access management, interparcel access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*
- ☞ *Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*
- ☞ *Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects*



Interchange character area shown above located at the I-75/Carbondale Road interchange

INTERCHANGE

The Interchange character area represents three of the five Whitfield County interchanges locations along I-75: east of Tunnel Hill and south of Dalton (Connector 3 and Carbondale exits are combined into a single Interchange area, as reflected on the Future Development Map). The interchanges are characterized by auto-oriented commercial and industrial uses that cater to travelers along I-75 and the nearby industrial workforce. Access to the interstate has allowed industrial uses to flourish in some areas while also providing numerous entry points to the County. As prominent gateways to the County, attention should be paid to permitted signage, the presence of sidewalks and other site or streetscape features that can enhance or detract from the aesthetic and functional qualities of the area.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Limit “interchange commercial” uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural or residential areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Provide access management measures such as interparcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Discourage strip development
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter”
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures



Connector 3 interchange includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and retail uses in buildings with large, one-story footprints. The area is designed to accommodate automobile traffic, but provides few options for walking and biking.

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Interstate commercial (gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores)

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and incorporate into development review a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Continue to coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks
- ☞ Implement Interchange Overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the interchange area
- ☞ Prepare an Access Management Plan, with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access
- ☞ Expand sewer service to include all Interchange areas currently underserved (e.g. west of I-75 including portions of Carbondale and Connector 3 interchange areas)



Interchange area near Carbondale Road/I-75 interchange designated for future industrial and business park development.

INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial character area includes land used in low and high intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade, distribution, assembly, processing, and similar uses that may or may not generate excessive noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics. Most notable in the County is the carpet industry, which traditionally has been the driving economic force in the area and continues to be a large employer. A goal of this character area is to allow opportunities to expand this base while also accommodating new businesses.

Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Prohibit residential uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential or rural areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Provide access management measures to maintain traffic flow (e.g. shared driveways and interparcel access for similar uses on adjacent properties)
- Incorporate landscaping of parking lots
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavements
- Protect air and water quality
- Prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding population
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site design
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter”

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites



Industrial area in south Dalton defined by large footprint, one-story industrial and warehouse structures.



Industrial character areas should encourage development of attractive large-scale building footprints that can accommodate the needs of a changing economy.

- ☞ Prepare and incorporate into development review a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks

AIRPORT

The Airport character area is composed of those lands in the approach zones around the Dalton Municipal Airport (DMM). Largely vacant, with the exception of the airport, is currently largely undeveloped and rural with some scattered single-family residential development nearby.

Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Building heights limited to avoid conflict with airport operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses, including residential land uses, public gathering places (i.e., churches and schools), and any other use that may affect visibility or safe electronic instrument approaches and departures from the airport
- Discourage land uses that may present a potential conflict with future aviation operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses by enforcing regulations
- Promote traditional rural land uses in the surrounding areas



Dalton Municipal Airport in southeast Whitfield County

Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Enforce existing height restrictions
- ☞ Review rezoning requests to insure compatibility with this character area.
- ☞ Determine and administer appropriate buffer for noise and safety to accommodate the long-range needs of the airport
- ☞ Evaluate need for other requirements for new development to address land use compatibility and the mitigation of any impacts that may adversely affect existing or future aviation operations or aviation-related land uses at the airport

Map I Future Development Map – Unincorporated Whitfield County

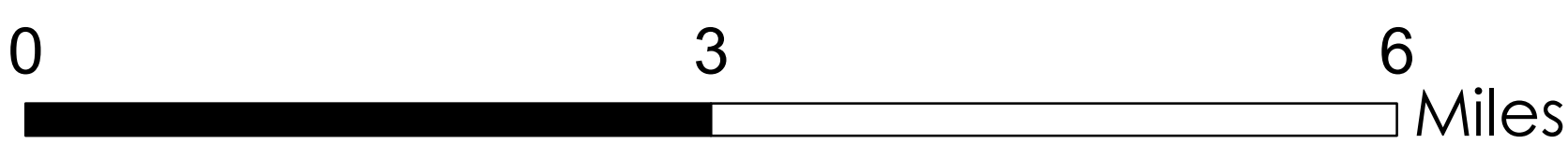
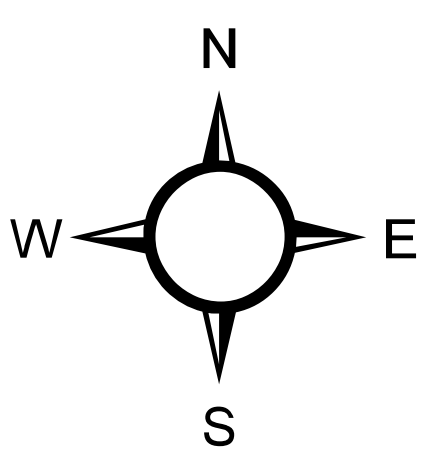
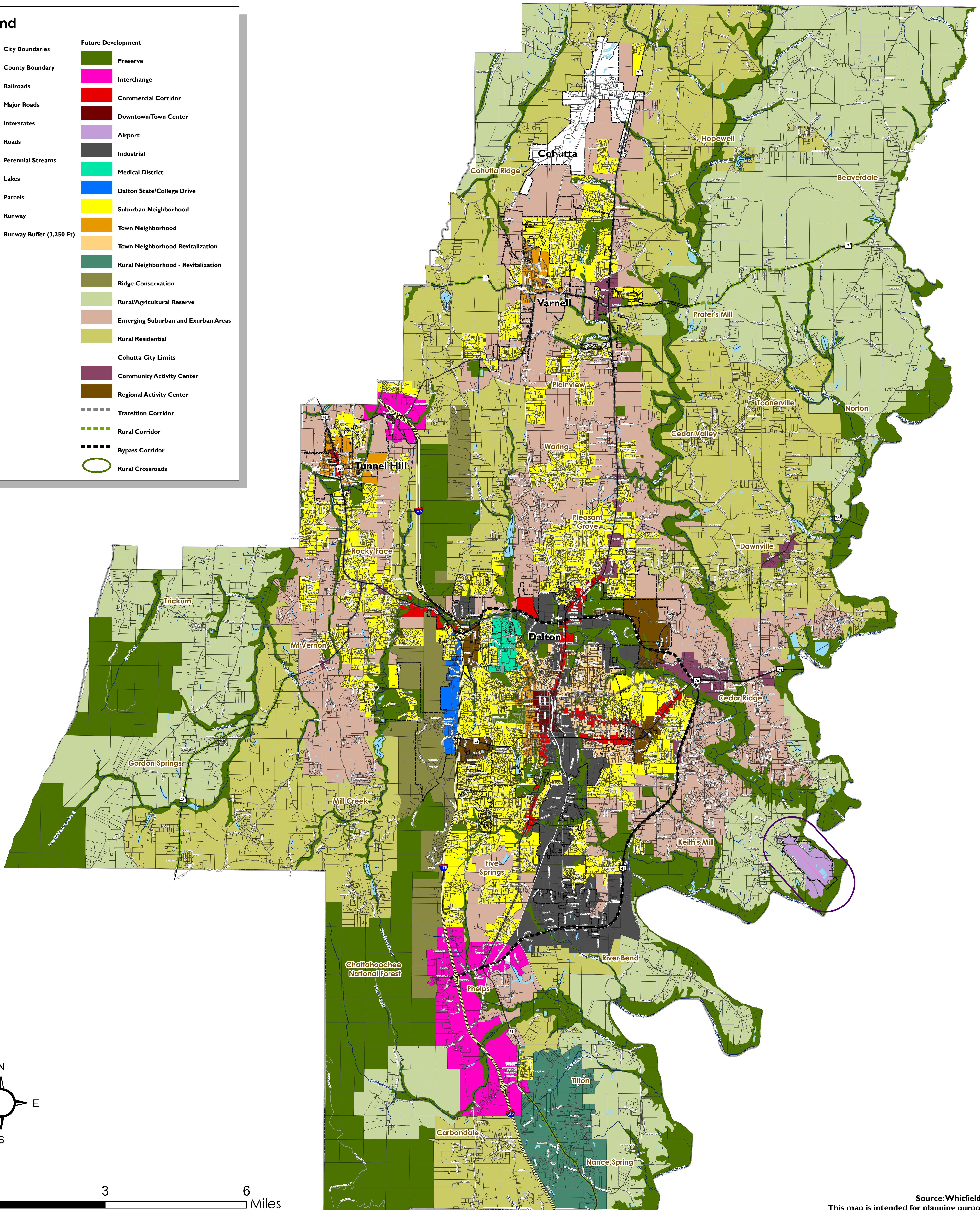


Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Update 2008 - 2018

Joint Comprehensive Plan for Whitfield County and the municipalities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell

Legend

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| | City Boundaries | | Future Development |
| | County Boundary | | Interchange |
| | Railroads | | Commercial Corridor |
| | Major Roads | | Downtown/Town Center |
| | Interstates | | Airport |
| | Roads | | Industrial |
| | Perennial Streams | | Medical District |
| | Lakes | | Dalton State/College Drive |
| | Parcels | | Suburban Neighborhood |
| | Runway | | Town Neighborhood |
| | Runway Buffer (3,250 Ft) | | Town Neighborhood Revitalization |
| | | | Rural Neighborhood - Revitalization |
| | | | Ridge Conservation |
| | | | Rural/Agricultural Reserve |
| | | | Emerging Suburban and Exurban Areas |
| | | | Rural Residential |
| | | | Cohutta City Limits |
| | | | Community Activity Center |
| | | | Regional Activity Center |
| | | | Transition Corridor |
| | | | Rural Corridor |
| | | | Bypass Corridor |
| | | | Rural Crossroads |



Source: Whitfield County
This map is intended for planning purposes only.

Prepared by:



DRAFT

Future Development Map

Map Document: C:\Whitfield\mxd\FutureDevelopment.mxd
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COMMUNITY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

This section provides an updated list of issues and opportunities for Unincorporated Whitfield County that was identified in the *Community Assessment* portion of the Comprehensive Plan. This updated version reflects public comments gained from the community participation activities as well as other input gathered during the review of the *Community Assessment*. The following information is organized by the major topics defined in the DCA Local Planning Requirements:

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

POPULATION

Issues

Aging population – Whitfield County’s aging population will increasingly have special needs in terms of residential choices and community services and facilities.

Poverty rates increased – In 2004 it was estimated that 11.9% of the County’s residents lived at or below the Federal poverty level, which represented a significant increase from 2000. Persons living at or below the poverty level included 16.8% of all children 17 and under and 16.2% of children between the ages of 5 and 17.

Growing Hispanic community – The persons of Hispanic origin population increased significantly from 1990 to 2006. Hispanics made up 29.3% of the County population in 2006. The net increase of this population was almost three times that of adjacent counties. This population is projected to increase from 29.3% of the population in 2006 to 41.4% of the population in 2030. There will be a growing need in the County for education and other services to assist non-English speaking residents.

Opportunities

Young population – While segments of Whitfield County’s population age, as expressed above, the County’s median age is increasingly younger than that of its neighbors due to the growing Hispanic population.



Schools are impacted by the growing population of school-age children. Whitfield County’s median age is increasingly younger than that of its neighbors.

Steady income levels – Whitfield County’s per capita personal income (PCPI) level ranked 16th in the state and was 96% of the state average and 86% of the national average.

Strategies

- ☞ Update comprehensive plan frequently to insure planned growth and enact appropriate growth management ordinances

HOUSING

Issues

Aging in place – As large segments of the population age, the need continues to grow and demand will be created to address residential needs of the Baby Boomers and empty nesters, including providing for “aging in place” with associated services and reasonable accommodation for those that are handicapped or disabled.

Limited housing mix outside of Dalton – Most of Whitfield County’s multi-family housing is located in Dalton. Large-acre lot, single-family residential products dominate the housing market outside of Dalton. Few multi-family products have come on line to meet the growing demand for housing to support the workforce in areas outside of Dalton.

Affordable workforce housing – Many employees of Whitfield County businesses have limited affordable housing choices within the County at their income levels. Mobile homes/trailers and manufactured housing are currently providing many with affordable housing in Whitfield and adjacent counties.

Additional housing need relative to employment - The 2006 employment-to-housing ratio of 1.85 fell well above the standard target of 1.5. The 2006 employment-to-labor force ratio of 1.36 fell well above the standard target of 1.0. These ratios show the continued strength of the Whitfield County employment base, but outline the need for additional housing within the County for local employees.

High foreclosure rate – Foreclosures require alternative housing options for property owners, and resulting vacant homes contribute to declining neighborhood property values and local tax revenue.

Deteriorating housing – Poor housing conditions can be found throughout the County, and in some cases entire neighborhoods are in need of repair.

Opportunities

High rate of home ownership in the county – Home ownership rates in unincorporated Whitfield County remained higher than the state averages.

Affordable County housing – Housing in unincorporated Whitfield County is affordable relative to larger metropolitan areas.

Steady home value increases - Both the number of sales and the value of homes in Whitfield County showed a steady increase from



Attached housing provides housing choice and is encouraged.

1997 to 2004. Average home sale prices increased 23.7% from 1997 to 2004, and 15.7% from 2000 to 2004. The average home sales price was \$124,430 in 2004.

Large lot residential options – There is adequate land in unincorporated Whitfield County to provide the option for large lot, rural character residential environments for many residents.

Local assistance - The Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation offers comprehensive services for residents, helping to increase home ownership, improve the physical condition of housing and the quality of affordable housing, decreasing the foreclosure rate and decreasing the number of homeless and unstably housed residents.

Infill housing - Infill housing opportunities can contribute to affordable housing stock and help stabilize and enhance established neighborhoods. Implementation of infill-related studies, guidelines and recommendations can facilitate the addition of infill housing.

Strategies

- ☞ Increase code enforcement throughout the County (incorporated and unincorporated areas) to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")
- ☞ Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas concentrating new higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores and other services
- ☞ Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments and also encourage a variety of housing types
- ☞ Complete a detailed housing market study and continually track housing market data; recruit residential developers who build affordable housing as well as higher value housing
- ☞ Adopt/amend zoning districts that prescribe more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development and also encourage a variety of housing types
- ☞ Promote a range in housing options, including affordable housing, senior housing, and higher value housing development based on a large population of homeowners who may "trade up" in upcoming years



Whitfield County's housing stock is made up primarily of large-lot suburban single-family development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues

Lagging wages in County— Average weekly wage and annual pay for most industries trailed the state and nation. Whitfield County residents who were part of the labor force were less likely than residents of the state as a whole to hold management, professional

and related occupations and more likely to hold positions in production, transportation and material moving occupations.

Dependence on few industries – The County is largely dependent on a few industry super-sectors – Manufacturing, which is supported by chemicals and plastics firms; Trade, Transportation & Utilities; and Professional & Business. These three sectors account for 80% of all jobs in the County. One in 10 textile product mill jobs in the United States is located within Whitfield County.

Employing educated young workers – College educated young residents often seek job opportunities outside of Whitfield County. New, diverse industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

Educational Attainment – The County is not as competitive with other nearby Metropolitan Statistical Areas with respect to current educational attainment levels.

Limited entertainment and shopping options – Compared to nearby areas, the community suffers from a proportional lack of entertainment establishments as well as big box and upscale retailers.

Projected manufacturing sector declines – The manufacturing supersector grew modestly from 1990 to 2006 and maintained the largest share of employment in Whitfield County at 38.1% (down from 41.2% in 2000 and 51.4% in 1990). However, textile mills in the Northwest Georgia Region are projected by the Georgia Department of Labor to see employment losses in their respective sectors of 1,580 jobs between 2004 and 2014.

Attracting young professionals to County neighborhoods – Many young professional employees in Whitfield County choose to live in areas outside of the County, in spite of longer commutes. It has proven difficult for the County to attract these young professionals to neighborhoods within Whitfield County.



As the manufacturing sector declines, the county has focused efforts on attracting a more diverse economic base.

Opportunities

Strong Manufacturing base – Manufacturing accounts for nearly one in two jobs in Whitfield County. Manufacturing's share of employment in Whitfield County is more than three times the national average.

Local employment available for local residents - Approximately 87% of the Whitfield County labor force worked inside the County in 2000, leaving only 13% commuting to jobs outside of the County. Whitfield County residents held 60% of the jobs available in the county.

Carpet Capital of the World – Dalton-Whitfield County produces the majority of the world's carpeting, in addition to many other types of floor covering. The County is headquarters for the world's carpet industry. The importance of the floor covering industry in the County extends beyond direct employment. Several other important clusters in the area are largely supported by the floor covering industry (e.g. chemicals and plastics firms and wholesaling firms).

Major corporate economic influences – Dalton/Whitfield County has maintained its status as home of the world's carpet mill industry, including the headquarters of a Fortune 500 company (Shaw), which has a major positive impact on the local economy. In recent years, industry leaders have progressively improved their technology, innovation and sustainability to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Access to transportation – Whitfield County businesses have ready access to a major interstate corridor, state highways, rail corridors and airports in Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Local education and job training resources – Whitfield County has strong local institutions that provide higher education and job training, including Dalton State College which has a large student population and generous diversity of degree programs.

Strategies

- ☞ Enhance coordination of economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks to facilitate efforts to diversify the County's economic base
- ☞ Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts, Business Improvement Districts and Tax Allocation Districts along important corridors and growth areas
- ☞ Continue business/industrial retention efforts
- ☞ Coordinate completion of implementation of sewer master plan to expand infrastructure to strategic opportunity areas shown on the Future Development Map
- ☞ Aggressively promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in historic town centers as well as existing and emerging community and regional activity centers
- ☞ Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare the County workers for expanded opportunities available in a more diversified local economy
- ☞ Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County, the Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports, and the 2008 branding prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority
- ☞ Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life
- ☞ Continue to support and promote efforts of Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority



Dalton State College provides higher education opportunities in North Georgia.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Issues

Restricted sewer service area – Growth in Whitfield County is restricted due to lack of sewer infrastructure. Planned sewer expansion should be coordinated with land use planning.

Opportunities

Sewer expansion - Restricted sewer creates the need for large residential lots. As planned sewer services expand, the opportunity exists to use the expansion as a way to direct growth to locations the county outlines in the land use plan and to manage the timing of new growth.

High-tech infrastructure – Dalton and Whitfield County have adequate high-tech infrastructure in place to support business recruitment and expansion.

Future water needs – Substantial water resources are available in Whitfield County that can support long term growth with proactive planning and resource management.

Strategies

- ☞ Help to foster expansions of sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.
- ☞ Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into rural character areas where growth is not envisioned
- ☞ Support completion and implementation of a long range water resources master plan
- ☞ Continue to promote SPLOST as successful local funding source
- ☞ Implement impact fees as a supplemental funding source for some community facilities
- ☞ Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure. Septic tanks will remain appropriate for areas designated to remain rural during the planning period.
- ☞ Help to promote updated infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive land use plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with land use plan
- ☞ Promote coordination between school planning and community planning efforts; help establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments
- ☞ Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations
- ☞ Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas
- ☞ Continue to actively pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails



Dalton-Whitfield Landfill off of Old Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County



Whitfield County fire station located near the intersection of Carbondale Road and U.S. 41/Dixie Highway in south Whitfield County

TRANSPORTATION

Issues

Limitations to local street network – It is easy to get to Dalton/Whitfield via I-75 and state highways, but limited connectivity in certain areas of the local street network and some

local points of congestion can make it difficult to move around the community.

Limited public transit – There are sizable numbers of low-income, elderly, disabled, and minority persons within the county who need non-automobile options to access jobs, medical care, and shopping needs.

Limited bicycle/pedestrian facilities – Though downtown Dalton has an adequate sidewalk network, connectivity between the downtown and residential uses is limited, and sidewalk/bicycle provisions outside of Dalton in general are not extensive.

Opportunities

Coordinated planning – As the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update is upcoming (per the MPO), there is a good current opportunity for coordination of land use and transportation planning.

Railroad access – Presence of rail provides additional opportunity to move goods to and from the County and attract new industry.

Atlanta and Chattanooga connections – Interstate 75 serves the community well currently, and longer term potential for high speed or commuter rail connections to Atlanta and Chattanooga would greatly benefit Dalton and Whitfield County.

Public transportation opportunities – There is the potential to enhance public transportation, especially for special needs population, building on the currently underutilized on-call bus system or implementing a fixed-route system.

Implementation of bike/pedestrian recommendations – Projects have already been identified in previous studies, including the 2005 Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan, that identify needed improvements. In addition, roadway improvement projects present an opportunity to incorporate pedestrian and/or bicycle provisions, and the County's waterways provide potential greenway/trail alignments.

Strategies

- ☞ Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update
- ☞ Coordinate with the MPO in the development of the street connectivity study that includes the adoption of a collector street plan that provides a long-range outline for developer-driven construction of a connected street system in areas where is anticipated
- ☞ Adopt street standards that prescribe Complete Streets with the construction of new roads, including those constructed by public agencies and developers, that provide room for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles, thus offering residents and those traveling through each community a variety of transportation choices.
- ☞ Adopt subdivision regulation and zoning ordinance amendments that promote alternative pedestrian path systems in all new developments



Railroad access is an important strength for Whitfield County



Limited pedestrian infrastructure creates a dangerous environment for pedestrians and discourages walking. Above a lone pedestrian seems out of place as a result of the built environment that surrounds the Westside Middle School, Elementary School and Park.



Public transportation options should be part of the long-range mix of transportation solutions in Whitfield County. Pictured above is a bus stop in Chattanooga.

- ☞ Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas that identify appropriate roadway width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk.
- ☞ Develop a road improvement plan that supplements the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan by focusing on local streets and county roads
- ☞ Prepare an Access Management Plan with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access
- ☞ Coordinate with the MPO bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts in addition to implementing recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- ☞ Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail that includes a stop in Dalton
- ☞ Continue coordinated land use and transportation planning
- ☞ Coordinate with MPO and City of Dalton to implement the recommendations outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study



Sidewalks and alternative walking paths, such as the one shown above, are key pieces of the transportation infrastructure that should be part of all new urban and suburban development in Whitfield County.



Improvement of many County roads is needed in order to accommodate new development in Emerging Suburban areas.



Multi-use trails, such as the one shown above, can link neighborhoods and provide linear park space.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issues

Water quality – Stormwater runoff from developed and developing areas increases the pollution of the watershed and increases flooding as water moves more quickly.

Maintaining historic and rural character – Development in rural areas can contribute to the disappearance of farm land and the rural scenery of the county. As demand increases for suburban development, preservation planning and actions will be required to protect historic resources and rural character.

Protecting mountain and valley views – The views created by the topography of certain areas in Whitfield County are of great value. Protecting these assets is important in order to continue to attract quality development in addition to preserving the historic rural character of the County.

Protecting Civil War sites – Civil War sites/land areas are in need of protection. The National Park Service has identified Whitfield County as having the largest intact collection of Civil War defenses in the nation. Some are located on steep terrain (such as behind the State Patrol barracks where fortification remains need protection).

Protecting Trail of Tears sites – Trail of Tears and other sites important to the County's Native American history are in need of protection.

Protecting Old Federal Road sites – The Old Federal road is in need of protection.

Protecting of County economic and cultural history artifacts –

Efforts to promote the preservation of artifacts of the County's textile roots and culture currently receive limited funding. More funding is needed to ensure preservation of these connections to the County's past.

Out-of-date historic resource inventory – The last historic resources survey in Whitfield County was performed in 1994. At that time, many structures, sites and/or districts were not identified as being eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore having historic significance, due to their age (less than 50 years old). Based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, a rule of thumb for identifying a potential "historic" resource is that it be at least 50 years old, among other criteria.

Lacking environmental regulations – Whitfield County needs regulations for protection of steep slopes; protection of areas of prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance; protection of federal and state endangered and threatened species; and protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands and protected rivers.

Greenspace and parks – There is a need for more land for active and passive parks and greenspace in Whitfield County. Existing and future parks should provide for outdoor recreation opportunities for all age groups of the population, including many more trails.

Environmental planning with future land use and development

– Environmental considerations are needed in the context of future land use planning and development to protect and preserve ecosystems and watersheds.

Opportunities

Abundance of resources – The County has an abundance of hydrologic natural resources.

Promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations – Civil War, Trail of Tears and Old Federal Road sites could be promoted more directly as tourist destinations. Interpretive trails, for example, could be developed to educate and preserve, attracting among others, visitors to Chickamauga.

County museum of cultural and economic history – A County museum of history and culture funded by a public-private partnership of local, state and federal government agencies in cooperation with local private and non-profit organizations could serve as a center for storage and preservation of the County's historic artifacts and provide a venue to promote the County's rise as the world's leading producer of carpet and floor coverings.

Appreciation of history – County's residents and elected officials have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the County and understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs.

Conasauga River – The County's rivers and streams (e.g. Conasauga River, and multiple creeks and streams) are "hidden resources" with potential for enhanced access to provide passive,



Historic preservation will play an important role in the future development of Whitfield County.



Preserving farmland is an important component of long-range planning in Whitfield County.



Conasauga River in Whitfield County

low-impact recreation and educational opportunities to Whitfield County residents.

Environmental leadership – Local industries are interested in environmental innovation and can help lead the way to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

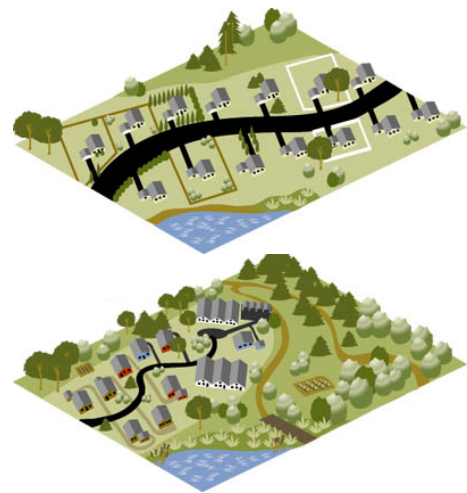
Farmland protection – Protection of farmland can also help protect historic or natural areas. Tools to this end include federal Farmland Protection Program funds, Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), recognition by the Georgia Centennial Farm Program, and conservation easements and tax credits.

Available preservation tools - Tools exist that can assist with protection and acquisition of historic buildings and sites, including revolving funds for repair and acquisition of properties, façade or conservation easement negotiation, utilization of federal funds, promotion of conservation tax credits, the DCA Regionally Important Resource (RIR) Program for historic and natural resources, and designation of Whitfield County as a Certified Local Government (CLG).

Available environmental protection tools - Part V of the 1989 Georgia Planning Act, Chapter 391-3-16, identifies environmental planning criteria for significant natural resource areas that can be used by the County to create ordinances to protect groundwater recharge areas, river corridors, water supply watersheds and wetlands.

Strategies

- ☞ Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance
- ☞ Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the review process.
- ☞ Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- ☞ Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, addresses greenway trail crossings at all roads, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and addresses recommendations of the Conasauga River Alliance
- ☞ Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources
- ☞ Prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan
- ☞ Support minimum state requirements for stream buffer requirements
- ☞ Adopt "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, water supply watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria



Conservation subdivision design (bottom image) preserves open space while providing for development.

- ☞ Continue to follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities, including tree harvesting and utility construction
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality
- ☞ Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve viable farmland including conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation zoning district to apply to non-developable properties, including publicly-owned parks/recreation/open space/environmentally sensitive areas, as well as private property that divest development rights
- ☞ Adopt zoning ordinance amendments that provide incentives to encourage landscaping with native vegetation that requires limited (or none at all) irrigation
- ☞ Adopt planning and development regulations that protect riparian buffers for water quality preservation, planned transportation improvements to enhance efficiency and reduce negative air quality impacts



Commercial development in the Five Springs community

LAND USE

Issues

Agricultural/residential conflicts – Agricultural-residential land use conflicts can emerge when new residents move to areas with intensive farming.

Industrial and commercial encroachment – Encroachment of industrial and commercial development into established residential areas contributes to neighborhood decline.

“Greyfield” sites and strip commercial development – Some older commercial centers are on the verge of becoming greyfield conditions (old Kroger site). These areas and other strip commercial areas will require special attention to prevent underutilization and blight as market and economic conditions change.

Commercial services imbalance – There is a lack of commercial services and providers of goods in the northern part of the county where there is a growing population. The southern end of the county is also lacking in business and shopping opportunities. Almost all commercial activity is concentrated in Dalton.

Scenic Corridors – New development along scenic rural routes could alter the character of the county dramatically if development occurs without an emphasis on protecting scenic views



Shown above is an example from Cobb County of a three-story mixed use development appropriate for providing increased housing choice and retail/services in Whitfield County.

Preservation of agricultural property – As new development increases property values throughout the County, pressure to convert from agricultural uses to residential and commercial uses increases. Preservation of agricultural property is considered important for the long-term sustainability of the County.

Intensive agricultural uses – While it is not necessary to encourage more intensive agricultural uses in all areas of the county, it will be important for this to be accommodated in order for agriculture to be sustainable in the long term.

Code enforcement and maintenance standards – There is a need to better protect the image and attractiveness of the community by requiring more consistent property maintenance and design standards.

Limited entertainment – Local ordinances contribute to the lack of local entertainment and dining options.

Property access for emergency services – Private access easements that exist in certain areas may not permit fire truck access due to lack of width, obstructions and inadequate development standards.

Opportunities

Mixed use development – Most development in the County is suburban residential development that separates residential from commercial. Mixed use developments that are clustered or in nodes could provide the County with the opportunity to provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences and also preserve open space.

Traditional Neighborhood Development – Traditional neighborhood development can provide a wide range of housing types in newly developing areas with a connected pedestrian-friendly street system and ample open space. The cities and county can encourage clustering of community facilities including schools, fire stations, libraries and parks in order to create a sense of place.

Greenspace preservation – In addition to public purchase of land for greenspace and parks, greenspace can be permanently protected through private initiatives such as new residential development where incentives are provided for greenspace preservation (i.e. conservation subdivision practices).

Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Rural/Agricultural zoning district or adopt amendments to existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural/Agricultural Reserve Character Area
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Rural Crossroads Zoning District



Infill development, greyfield redevelopment and new Greenfield development should include a mix of housing types within walking distance of services, parks and retail such as those shown above on Cherry Street in Chattanooga.

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Whitfield County
- ☞ Prepare and adopt “Big Box” ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.
- ☞ Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites, and consider creation of a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- ☞ Prepare and adopt Rural Corridor Overlay District
- ☞ Prepare and adopt sign ordinance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- ☞ Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Develop zoning districts, overlay or amendment to existing districts that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing, ranging from senior-oriented housing developments to attached or detached “granny flats” in neighborhoods
- ☞ Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along the gateway corridors and other throughway roads in the County to lessen the effects of linear sprawl
- ☞ Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use development
- ☞ Maintain up-to-date ordinances that adequately preserve the rights of local farmers and that provide for adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses
- ☞ Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible.



Tree canopies are an important element of the Whitfield County character

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Issues

Coordination with schools – Coordination between the school systems, city councils and the BOC ensures that new facilities keep up with growth.






Unincorporated islands and municipal boundaries – Whitfield County’s cities include multiple areas of unincorporated islands. In addition, municipal boundaries have been expanded over time in

such a way as to create confusing service delivery areas surrounding each municipality.

Opportunities

Municipal boundaries coordination – Whitfield County and its municipalities should coordinate to correct the annexation islands and other city boundary-related issues.

Strategies

-  *Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation*
-  *Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment*
-  *Establish quarterly meeting of mayors of the County's municipalities and the Board of Commissioners Chairman to discuss issues and develop opportunities to work together*
-  *Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services*
-  *Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO*

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by Whitfield County to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

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- 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments (see appendix B)
- 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM (STWP)

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the County government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA (Joint Development Authority)	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA	Variable	General Fund
Economic Development	Implement strategies outlined by branding campaign prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	JDA	Variable	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Adopt and promote County standards for the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems for Conservation Subdivisions				✓		Public Works	TBD	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Support the completion and implementation of a long range water resources master plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Environmental Health Dept.	N/A	DU (Dalton Utilities)
Community Facilities & Services	Promote updated infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with the Future Development Map and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the Future Development Map	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer	TBD	SPLOST, General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	\$25,000	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations		✓	✓	✓	✓	Recreation Dept.	\$10M +	General Fund, Grants, SPLOST

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Community Facilities & Services	Pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails		✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	TBD	Grants, General Fund
Transportation	Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update	✓	✓				County Planner, Public Works	N/A	MPO
Transportation	Development a street connectivity study / collector street plan			✓	✓		County Planner	\$100,000	SPLOST
Transportation	Adopt street standards that prescribe "Complete Streets" with the construction of new roads		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, Public Works	\$25,000	General Fund
Transportation	Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential character areas		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, Public Works	\$25,000	General Fund
Transportation	Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC	TBD	TBD
Natural & Cultural Resources	Encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor protection, water supply watershed protection and groundwater recharge area protection		✓				County Engineer, County Planner	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Incorporate minimum state requirements for environmental protection into the land development review process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer, County Planner	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Engineer	N/A	N/A
Natural & Cultural Resources	Evaluate feasibility of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)				✓	✓	County Planner	\$50,000	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits in Preserve and Ridge Conservation character areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Pursue additional greenspace acquisition funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner, Recreation Dept.	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Amend zoning ordinance to require or incentivize landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited (or none at all) irrigation				✓	✓	County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	\$20,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Rural Agricultural Reserve zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to reflect desired density	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare a "Big Box" ordinance		✓	✓			County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Create an "industrial development impact matrix"		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, JDA	\$20,000	JDA
Land Use	Amend land use regulations to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$5,000	General Fund, Grants
Land Use	Adopt a Rural Corridor Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Amend sign ordinance to implement desired development patterns of character areas		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare a Bypass Corridor Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare a Transition Corridor Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare an Interchange Overlay District		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Land Use	Adopt development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$15,000	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to accommodate increased senior housing opportunities		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	\$10,000	General Fund
Land Use	Review existing ordinances to support the right to farm, including adequate buffers between agriculture and residential uses		✓	✓	✓		County Planner	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Land Use	Evaluate need for additional land use regulations to address development near the airport		✓	✓	✓		County Planner, Airport Authority	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC, County Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in the cities in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner, County Board of Ed.	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BOC, County Administrator	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	County Planner, County Engineer	N/A	General Fund

LONG TERM WORK PROGRAM

A long term work program identifies specific long-term implementation actions the County government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*.

Housing

- Prepare housing revitalization study

Economic Development

- Examine the potential for Commercial Improvement Districts (CID), Business Improvement Districts (BID) and Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) along important corridors and growth areas

Community Facilities & Services

- Expand sewer service to include areas currently underserved and areas where growth is planned
- Implement impact fees

Transportation

- Develop a local and county road improvement plan
- Prepare Access Management Plans for important corridors
- Implement sidewalk projects in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- Coordinate with MPO and Dalton to implement the Public Transit Feasibility Study
- Adopt a connector street plan
- Adopt Streetscape Master Plans to guide future enhancements along corridors

Natural & Cultural Resources

- Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan
- Implement education and marketing program to promote local historic and cultural resources
- Update the county-wide historic resources survey
- Adopt a new zoning district to apply to non-developable properties (public and private) for open space/environmental protection
- Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance

Land Use

- Adopt a Rural Crossroads Zoning District
- Adopt street connectivity requirements for residential areas
- Prepare Master Plans for Regional Activity Center areas

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Facilitate communication among mayors of the County's municipalities and the Board of Commissioners Chairman to discuss issues and develop opportunities to work together

POLICIES

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to County officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following policies are organized by major topic in the following subsections.

Housing

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Stabilize existing neighborhoods by supporting and promoting appropriate rehabilitation activities, infill construction, and code enforcement.
- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores, services and activity centers.
- Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to facilitate denser, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments with a variety of housing types.
- Promote a range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, single-family and multi-family options, senior housing, and higher value housing.

Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements, linkages to existing businesses, and diversification of our economic base.
- Target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Take into account impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision making on economic development projects.

- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, with the County's jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority.
- Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms and private initiatives such as Tax Allocation Districts, Commercial Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts to finance enhancements along important corridors and growth areas.
- Support workforce development efforts to prepare our workforce for expanded opportunities available in a diverse economy.

Community Facilities & Services

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (*i.e.*, already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.
- Limit development within our community to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- Restrict extension of public sewer infrastructure into rural areas where growth is not envisioned.
- Foster expansion of sewer services to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact urban development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens, including in areas where growth is planned.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Support SPLOST as a successful local funding source.

Transportation

- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).
- New and reconstructed roadways will be appropriately designed, using context sensitive design considerations, to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- New and reconstructed roadways will be designed to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions).
- Support creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- Ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.
- Ensure that new development is compatible with existing airport facilities and does not impede its function.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- The protection and conservation of our community's resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Work to redirect development pressure away from agricultural areas in order to conserve farmland to protect and preserve this important component of our community.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality protection.

- Support minimum state requirements for environmental resource protection and incorporate requirements into the land development review process.
- Protect greenspace and greenway corridors, and expand opportunities for public use with a connected system of greenways and trails.
- Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve greenspace and viable farmland, including grant funds, conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR).
- Promote natural, cultural and historic areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential infill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that are human-scale and less auto-oriented.
- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.
- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial or mixed use nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip development along major roadways.
- Incorporate land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.

- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers (“greyfields”) with walkable, mixed use development.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in existing and emerging community and regional activity centers.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)
- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, among the jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS

Supplemental plans focus on special areas, situations or issues of importance to the community, such as plans for conservation or management of natural or cultural resources, redevelopment plans for particular areas of the community, master plans for downtown development, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, gateway plans, rural preservation plans, recreation plans, or the community’s required solid waste management plan. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the *Community Agenda* by reference.

- Whitfield County Housing Condition Study
- Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County
- Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implementation
- North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan
- 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan
- Transit Feasibility Study