



*NOVEMBER 20, 2018*

2018 Update  
Cherokee County

# Comprehensive Plan

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

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# Executive Summary

# Checking In



## We Have Changed

In the last 10 years, Cherokee County has changed significantly. We have continued to see increases in population, housing and employment despite the recent economic downturn. Major developments include the Outlet Shoppes of Atlanta, Canton Marketplace, Cabella's, new Northside Cherokee Hospital, Inalfa, Adidas, and Papa John's. With all of these changes, it is critical to check in with the whole community and update our Comprehensive Plan to ensure the county remains a great place to live, do business and enjoy amazing recreation opportunities.

## Importance of the Comprehensive Plan

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

- Looking ahead 5, 10 or 20 years - the long view
- Looking across many different elements of what the County does - it's comprehensive
- Looking to residents and business owners to understand the needs and desires of the County - thought through and intentional

## Why Now?

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

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

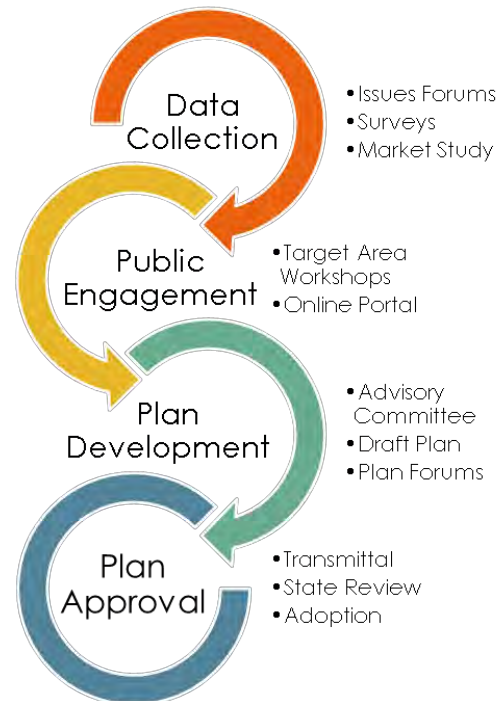
- Develop a vision for what it wants
- Establish priorities
- Encourage dialogue and actions
- Guide decision making
- Determine how to best allocate limited resources

## Our Plan In a Nutshell

### THE PROCESS

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

In the Data Collection phase, we brought together data and projections concerning growth while taking the pulse of the county through surveys and forums. Public Engagement intensified with six Target Area



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

### THE PLAN

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

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

In the Community Introduction, the stage is set to discuss the demographic trends facing the County in terms of population, housing and employment. Not surprisingly, Cherokee County is projected to grow significantly in the near future, from an estimated population of 247,573 in 2017 up to 392,411 in 2040 according to the Atlanta Regional Commission. In this timeframe, the County will become more diverse and the percentage of 65+ age residents will increase from 9.2 % in 2010 to 13% in 2020. The number of houses will continue to increase to match the rising population, with demand for a wider range of house types. Jobs will also increase as existing industries expand, new businesses are started, and outside companies locate their new facilities in Cherokee County. The challenge is to try to align the new jobs with the skills and talents of existing county residents to have an impact on the 80% of the county that leaves the county each day for work. The links between the Comprehensive Plan and the other Related Plans are described with key initiatives highlighted that relate back to the plan.

## Cherokee County Vision

*Our unique character blends natural beauty and a proud heritage of diverse cultures and lifestyles making Cherokee a desirable and sustainable community.*

*The pace of life is quiet with an overarching commitment to thrive and grow responsibly. The rich agricultural foundation and extensive equine activities are a critical part of our past, present and future that is preserved and enhanced through careful and deliberate community design.*

*Lake Allatoona and the Etowah River provide our essential natural water supply as well as expanding recreational opportunities. Special care must be exercised to preserve water quality and quantity to support community expectations.*

*Success is sustained through thoughtful planning – an executable plan and consistent implementation. As we progress toward the future, there is a recognizable ‘balance’ between housing options, employment opportunities, quality education, shopping, recreation, infrastructure, transit options, public safety and exceptional services.*

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

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

Each Core Issue contains implementation steps that inform the tasks listed in the Short Term Work Plan. This section concludes with a brief summary of results of each of the six Target Area Workshops. These areas are portions of the county that were identified because of significant or forthcoming changes that merited a closer look, especially with lots of community input.

The Plan for the Future section contains the Future Development Map with the character area descriptions that we often associate with a Comprehensive Plan. In this update process, each of the character area descriptions has been refined and enhanced with pictures that illustrate examples of these areas around the county. The Utilities / Services character area had its origins in the Waste Management area but reflects a significant expansion to incorporate three other nearby facilities.

Finally, Vision Into Action describes how this plan will be implemented. It will have an immediate impact on zoning and land use applications that come before the Board of Commissioners. They will use this updated Plan to evaluate and make decisions concerning rezoning property, modifying existing zoning conditions and granting special use permits. To provide continuity, the Recent Accomplishments lists the status of implementation tasks from the 2008 plan and subsequent updates. The Short Term Work Plan (STWP) is a comprehensive list of work items (FY2019 to FY2023) to implement the vision of this Plan. This list includes rough cost estimates, if available, as well as those organizations that should be responsible for each item. While Cherokee County government has a key role to play through the use of regulations, capital spending and programs / staffing, a wide range of partners, including ordinary residents, will be involved in making this vision a reality.

# Community Introduction

# Community Introduction

## Brief History

Cherokee County stretches across 429 square miles at the northern edge of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. Previously inhabited by Paleo-Indians and Cherokee Nation, the county was first surveyed in 1832. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the county's primary industries were tobacco, cotton, and marble. The Marietta & North Georgia Railroad linking Canton to Marietta and Atlanta was completed in 1879. Three years later, the railroad extended to Ball Ground and ultimately reached Murphy, NC in 1887. The railroad's extension increased commerce for Cherokee County by opening up new markets for industry and farm products. In 1899, local merchant R.T. Jones established the Canton Cotton Mill. The mill quickly dominated the economic and social life of Canton, making it a major center for denim cloth manufacturing.

Around the turn of the 20th century, Cherokee's five municipalities—Canton, Woodstock, Ball Ground, Holly Springs, and Waleska—emerged as centers of commerce and trade, shaping each city's identity. Eventually, the roadways were improved and expanded, giving way to bedroom communities for workers who commuted to Metro Atlanta job centers. Interstate 575 was constructed in 1980, improving access for residents wishing to move further north of Atlanta. State Highway 20 soon followed in 1985, connecting the County with municipalities east and west. These projects helped lead to a population boom. The County saw an increase in residents from about 52,000 in 1980 to nearly 230,000 in 2015. The economic landscape in Cherokee has changed as well, with the top three industries being Professional / Scientific / Technical Services, Retail, and Healthcare.



# Demographic Snapshot — People

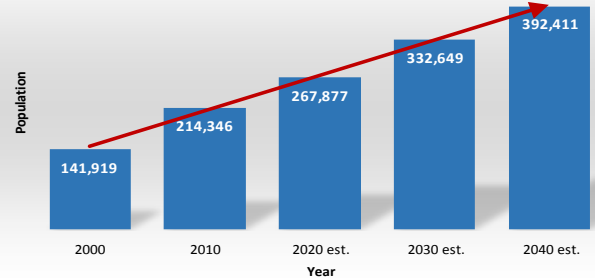
## 2ND FASTEST GROWTH IN METRO ATLANTA

Since 2000, the population of Cherokee County has grown by over 60% from 141,919 people in 2000 to 233,321 people in 2015. This is the 2nd highest growth rate in the 10-county Atlanta metro area. The County is projected to grow at a slower rate over the next 25 years, ranging from 1.7% to 2.8% per year. Over the past 15 years, the incorporated cities have made up a larger proportion of the county's population, accounting for 28% in 2015, compared to 21% in 2000. The population of Canton and Woodstock have more than doubled since 2000.

## CHEROKEE COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS

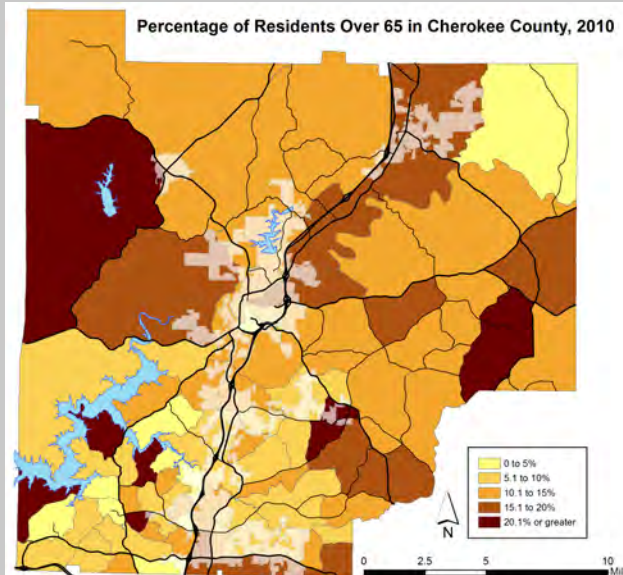
	2010	2015 est.	2020 proj.
Total Population	214,346	233,321	267,877
Ball Ground	1,434	1,729	2,308
Canton	22,958	24,980	27,340
Holly Springs	9,189	10,127	10,902
Waleska	605	622	640
Woodstock	23,911	26,681	28,987
<b>Unincorporated County</b>	<b>156,232</b>	<b>163,945</b>	<b>176,026</b>

Cherokee County Population, 2000-2040



*Cherokee County is one of the fastest growing counties in the Atlanta metro, growing at 4.2 % between 2000 and 2010, almost double the metro average.*

Percentage of Residents Over 65 in Cherokee County, 2010



## INCREASING DIVERSITY

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

## AGING IN PLACE

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

## ATTRACTIVE TO FAMILIES

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

### Data Sources:

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

# Demographic Snapshot — Homes & Households

## INCREASING HOME VALUES AND INCOME

Median home value County-wide has increased over 14.9% between 2010 and 2015 to \$223,200. Part of this is a reflection of the overall recovery of the Atlanta housing market since 2008. Home values in Cherokee County are projected to continue increasing with an additional gain of 12.4% by 2020. At the same time, median household incomes have risen 10.1% between 2010 and 2015, from \$66,320 to \$73,035 respectively. This is in line with national trends in terms of household income growth. In the next 5 years, the median household income in the county is projected to grow at nearly 12.8% to \$82,370 in 2020.

## MORE FOR THE MONEY

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

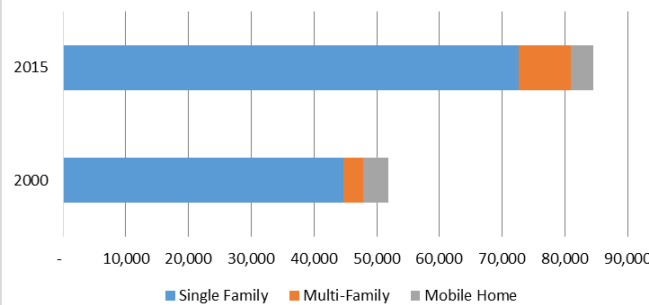
## PERMITS INCREASING

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

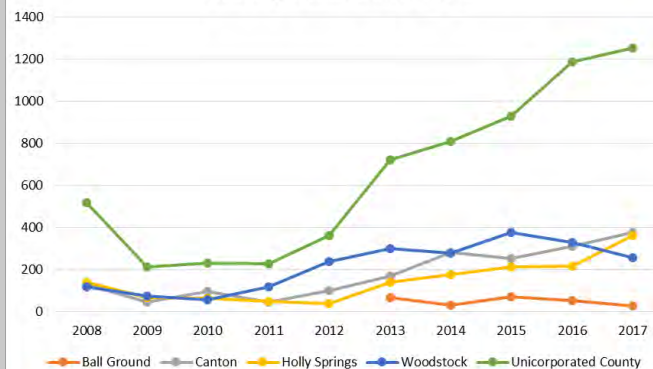


	2010	2015	2020
Median Household Income	\$66,320	\$73,035	\$82,370
Median Home Value	\$194,200	\$223,200	\$243,517

County Housing Options



Building Permits, 2008 - 2017



## CHANGING HOUSING OPTIONS

Housing in Cherokee County is overwhelmingly single-family homes (86% in 2000 and 85.8% in 2015), with pockets of mobile homes, and multi-family developments. Canton and Woodstock have seen a steady increase in multi-family development since 2000, with the cities adding 2,400 and 1,200 units respectively. In the same time period, the percentage of single family housing units in Canton has dropped from 70.5% in 2000 to 65.1% in 2015. Woodstock has increased all types of housing so the percentages have held generally steady at 78% for single family and 21% multi-family.

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

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

### Data Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau (2000-2017 statistics)

# Demographic Snapshot — Education & Jobs

## LOW UNEMPLOYMENT

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

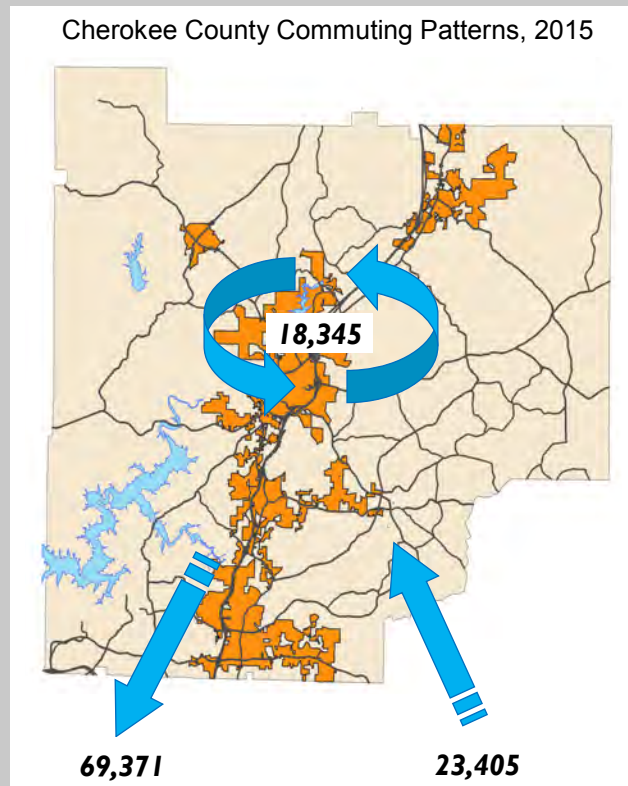
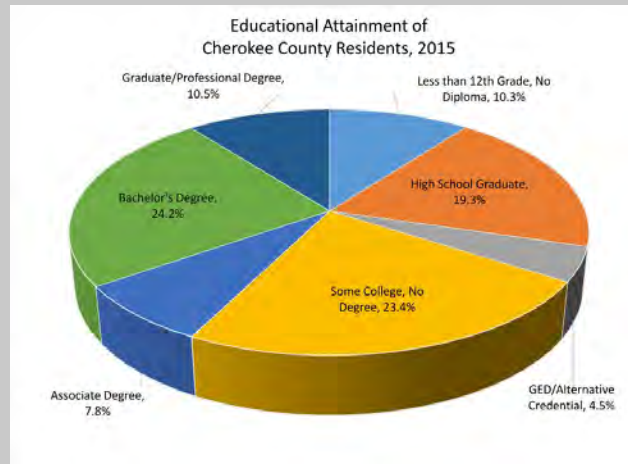
## STRONG IN EDUCATION

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

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

## COMMUTING PATTERNS

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



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

## GROWING INDUSTRIES

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

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

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

### Top 5 Private Employers in Cherokee County:

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

Source: Cherokee County Office of Economic Development

# Putting Together the Plan

## *ROLE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN*

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

## *YOUR VOICE*

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

## *GENERAL PUBLIC MEETINGS*

### Critical Issues Forums

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

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

### Target Area Workshops

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Draft Review Forums

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

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

## *ONLINE PORTAL*

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

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

# Incorporating Related Plans

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

## *COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN*

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

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

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

## **Key Initiatives**

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

## *CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ELEMENT*

Cherokee County utilizes Impact Fees to help fund the construction of important facilities for libraries, parks & recreation, sheriff, fire and roads. The Capital Improvement Element is a detailed study of the existing facilities, needed facilities and the costs to maintain the current levels of service in these different areas. This document was last updated and adopted in 2013 but will be updated shortly after this Comprehensive Plan is complete.

## *CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN*

In 2017, Cherokee County began an annual capital planning program with detailed information on each future capital facility. This capital plan gives much more information about the size, cost and timing of these facilities. Information from this plan has been used to supplement information in the Short Term Work Plan about major capital projects. These projects typically pertain to Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Fire and Emergency Services, as well as enforcement agencies, senior services, and internal government initiatives.

## **Key Initiatives**

- Preserve and improve the infrastructure of Cherokee County through construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance
- Identify and examine current future capital needs and forecast these needs with available funding sources

### ***OPPORTUNITY CHEROKEE 2015***

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

#### **Key Initiatives**

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

### ***CONSOLIDATED PLAN***

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

#### **Key Initiatives**

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

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

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

#### **Key Initiatives**

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

### ***AIRPORT AREA MASTER PLAN***

The Airport Area Master Plan was developed in collaboration with the Cherokee Office of Economic Development and a large group of stakeholders representing long-time residents, property owners, business owners, utility providers and local government. The goal was to take advantage of a major county asset—the Cherokee County Regional Airport, opened in 1968. The plan outlined strategies to help make the airport a major economic engine for the region. The primary goals of the plan include the creation of a Regional Airport Area District, the adoption of development standards, the development of links between the Airport Area and nearby business centers, and the attraction of employers to the area. From this

report, a Concept Plan was developed and included designated areas for business parks, a workplace zone, and low-intensity housing as part of the Master Plan. These elements were further explored in the Airport Area Target Report which is in the appendix to this Comprehensive Plan.

### **Key Initiatives**

- Develop a Regional Airport Area District as an overlay zoning district
- Create a signage program to identify the district

### ***BELLS FERRY LCI PLAN***

In 2005, Cherokee County received a Livable Centers Initiatives (LCI) grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission to study land use and transportation in the Bells Ferry Corridor. Having long-served as a major shopping center and service hub, this plan allows the community to envision the potential redevelopment of this 3-mile stretch of Bells Ferry Road starting near the Cobb County line. Bells Ferry is such an integral part of the County that it was designated as its own character area, for which the LCI report provides recommendations. A major priority of this plan is to develop “greyfield” commercial areas and to create a gateway to Cherokee County that provides shopping, basic needs, and housing. The plan developed guidelines within the following categories: Community Character, Transportation, Land Use, and Economic Development. These key items will be addressed through the character area implementation strategies.

### **Key Initiatives**

- Create a “sense of place” and a unique identity for the community
- Improve traffic flow and vehicular circulation through the area
- Promote mixed-use development that offers live/work/play environments
- Attract additional businesses and employers to the area that provide diverse jobs and enhanced tax base

### ***SW CHEROKEE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN***

The Southwest Cherokee Opportunity Zone lies at the very corner of southwestern Cherokee County. Through this plan, drafted in 2009, the area roughly bounded by Cobb County, Bartow County, and the intersection of Highway 92 and Woodstock Road became a state-designated Opportunity Zone. This state tax program provides tax relief to employers or property owners who establish businesses within those boundaries to

spur job growth. The plan highlights issues that this area faces such as the underutilization of developable land, deteriorating commercial buildings, the overall lack of tax revenue generation and high demand for services to address disinvestment and blight. As you will see in this Comprehensive Plan Update, Southwest Cherokee has great potential as a Workplace Center that supports new and existing industries with a variety of nearby housing options for potential employees.

### ***TECHNOLOGY RIDGE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN***

This plan provides the background, goals, and strategies for redevelopment of what would become Cherokee County’s second Opportunity Zone, Technology Ridge, which sits along I-575 and reaches from Canton to the southern portion of Ball Ground. In recent years, this area has experienced underdevelopment and an increase in blighted properties. It has also faced a lack of retail market appeal, difficult access, and economic stagnation. To remedy this, the plan aligned itself with the principles of the county and City of Canton’s comprehensive plan.

A primary goal of the plan includes designating Technology Ridge as an Opportunity Zone (since accomplished) that would make potential employers eligible for tax benefits for setting up shop in the area. Other strategies include supporting the development of a variety of commercial uses to encourage activity and employment and encouraging businesses to utilize existing structures that are compatible with the surrounding character areas. Like previous small-area plans, the Technology Ridge Plan provides a localized guide that builds on the Comprehensive Plan’s overall goals, especially with regard to increasing employment in the area.

### ***SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN***

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

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

# Our Vision

# Our Vision



## Overall Vision

Cherokee County's future begins with a clear statement of its identity and competitive position in the marketplace. As the Atlanta metropolitan region continues to expand, being the most accessible, the most attractive or even the most affordable does not guarantee a community's success. The Vision is based on choices and opportunities. Today the community stands poised between the old and the new; between remaining a bedroom community to the Atlanta Metropolitan Area and becoming a destination on its own; between the choice to continue its current growth patterns or to embrace a variety of lifestyles and life cycles.

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

## VISION STATEMENT

*Our unique character blends natural beauty and a proud heritage of diverse cultures and lifestyles making Cherokee a desirable and sustainable community.*

*The pace of life is quiet with an overarching commitment to thrive and grow responsibly. The rich agricultural foundation and extensive equine activities are a critical part of our past, present and future that is preserved and enhanced through careful and deliberate community design.*

*Lake Allatoona and the Etowah River provide our essential natural water supply as well as expanding recreational opportunities. Special care must be exercised to preserve water quality and quantity to support community expectations.*

*Success is sustained through thoughtful planning – an executable plan and consistent implementation. As we progress toward 2040, there is a recognizable 'balance' between housing options, employment opportunities, quality education, shopping, recreation, infrastructure, transit options, public safety and exceptional services.*

## Guiding Principles

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

## Core Issues

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

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

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

### Policies

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

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

### **Growth Pressure Areas**

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

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

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

### **Large Potential Projects**

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

The 4,000 acre “Willoughby and Sewell” property on the west side of Cherokee County holds significant potential for creating an example of sustainable growth. The property being adjacent to the largely undeveloped Army Corps of Engineers land surrounding Lake Allatoona

and the site’s proximity to Interstate 75 and Interstate 575 make this property attractive for eventual development. The key for this project will be the planning and phasing of the project as well as addressing the lack of infrastructure in the immediate area.

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

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

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

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

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

## **Infrastructure and Service Capacity**

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

- Traffic Impact Studies

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

- Utilities Capacity Analysis

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

- Schools and Parks Capacity

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

## **Capital Improvements Plan and Budget**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Connections to the Community**

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

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

## Implementation Steps

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

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

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

### **Policies**

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

### **Historic Preservation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Rural Roadways -

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

- Neighborhood Streets -

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

- Mixed-Use / Urban Streets -

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

### **Implementation Steps**

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

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

## **AGING IN PLACE**

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

### **Policies**

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

### **Discussion**

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

### **Implementation Strategies**

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to address the broad range of housing options needed by the growing number of senior residents.
- Consider revising ordinances to encourage appropriate senior housing in existing and future development nodes, where goods and services are easily accessible.
- Study developing a new zoning district for small-lot single family residential (between 3 and 6 du) to address senior housing needs.
- Encourage non-profit sponsors to make applications for all types of federal and state funding for the construction of rental housing for seniors and the disabled, and take such actions necessary to expedite processing and approval of such projects.
- Take an active role in encouraging a greater medical presence, especially in areas that are "senior" friendly such as development nodes.
- Consider changing ordinances to promote the development of new homes built to the Easy Living Standards, which would make those homes easier to live in with physical disabilities.

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

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

### **Policies**

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

### **Discussion**

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

### **Smaller Households**

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

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

### **Workforce Housing Challenges**

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

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

### **Executive Housing**

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

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

### **Overall Housing Outlook**

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

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

### **Housing Programs**

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

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

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

### **Implementation Strategies**

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

## **DESIGNING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT**

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

### **Policies**

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

### **Discussion**

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

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

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

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

### **Civic Spaces**

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

### Open Space and Conservation Areas

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

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

### Greenway Trails

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

### Parks

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

### Greens

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

### Plazas and Squares

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

### **Implementation Steps**

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

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

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

### **Policies**

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

### **Discussion**

Jobs in Cherokee County have historically been in manufacturing, with this industry accounting for more than 25 percent of the employment in the 1980's. Over the past two decades, there have been major shifts in the

national and regional economy towards a "knowledge"/service economy including professional and administrative services, technology, education, and health and social services. It is important for our economic development policies and strategies to reflect this change.

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

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

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

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

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

community will need more workforce and executive housing in order to support these economic goals.

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

### **Implementation Strategies**

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

- Protect the Cherokee County Regional Airport as an economic development asset with an overlay district that meets Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards.

# Target Areas

## **AIRPORT AREA**

The Airport Area is a relatively undeveloped portion of the county with predominately agricultural uses. Based on stakeholder and community meetings, the Airport Area Target Area is an ideal location for industrial growth and could provide jobs and housing that encourage residents to live and work in the county. In addition to the airport as an asset, the expansive room for growth, significant public investment, and access to the Etowah River provide the foundation for a major employment hub. To achieve this, there needs to be more amenities that serve the population.

Because the area is mostly undeveloped, it is critical that planning efforts emphasize a 'sense of place' for residents and employees. Job training and matching programs may assist employers in finding qualified applicants to work at various businesses. Finally, the area must include affordable housing nearby. Current housing options do not match the profile of the typical area worker, so modest starter homes are crucial in catering to area employees. Key implementation strategies include:

- Encourage more local retail and services within the Workplace Center Character Area
- Preserve prime industrial land with good transportation access for industrial uses
- Create a stronger sense of place and identity
- Support the development of recreation options and pedestrian amenities
- Support job training and matching programs
- Encourage greater housing options

## **BALL GROUND**

Founded in 1882, Ball Ground was once the largest city in Cherokee County. Today, the city is home to numerous businesses and industries. The charm of the historic town and its surrounding area has led to an increasing interest in tourism in the area. The last decade has also seen significant growth in new residential neighborhoods within the city. With direct access to I-575 and sewer capacity, the city is well-positioned for continued growth in the next 20 years. It is also important to note that Ball Ground is directly adjacent to the Airport Area so these two Target Areas are somewhat interrelated.

To realize the vision for the future, there are a series of issues that need to be addressed. They include the lack of a grocery store and other daily needs retail, the need for more housing options, and the challenge of managing truck traffic through downtown. For the future, Ball Ground has many strengths such as the unique, authentic character of the historic downtown, the growing local tourism and manufacturing industries, and strong transportation connections through I-575 or the nearby Cherokee Airport. Key implementation strategies include:

- Pursue the development of a grocery store
- Expand the variety of housing options
- Continue to connect residences within the downtown with pedestrian facilities
- Support the reuse of older, existing buildings
- Invest in a strong system of parks and green spaces
- Continue to build the area's industrial base
- Develop a cohesive tourism strategy based on Ball Ground's unique character and nearby destinations
- Control development along the Highway 372 Bypass

## **HICKORY FLAT**

The Hickory Flat Target Area centers on the intersection of Hickory Flat Highway (Highway 140) and East Cherokee Drive and Hickory Road/ Batesville Road. It is a close-knit community that emphasizes agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, but has seen increasing congestion and suburban-style development in recent years, particularly residential subdivisions. Hickory Flat Highway and East Cherokee Drive serve as commercial hubs that ultimately provide a gradation into the more rural areas surrounding the target area.

Complicating Hickory Flat's issues are the numerous residential developments that have taken place in recent years, traffic congestion, loss of rural character, and lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The primary goals that came out of the community workshop were to create a more connected community that encourages the protection of natural resources, supports agribusinesses and other local amenities, works to fix existing infrastructure prior to approving additional development, and increases pedestrian access via sidewalk construction and trails. These elements will help Hickory Flat to grow while maintaining its community character. Key implementation strategies include:

- Proactively collaborate and coordinate with the City of Holly Springs
- Preserve the rural and natural character of the Hickory Flat community
- Encourage the development of a mixed-use community village center
- Invest in a strong system of parks and green space
- Move forward with short- and long-term transportation improvement projects
- Develop a system of interconnected sidewalks and trails

## **HIGHWAY 20**

The Highway 20 Target Area stretches 12 miles from Canton through the communities of Buffington, Macedonia, Lathemtown and Freehome to the Forsyth County line. The widening of Highway 20 over the next decade will change the corridor dramatically. Much of the land is currently used for

agricultural purposes, with a significant residential component and commercial properties dotted along the corridor. Each historic community consists of a mix of historic commercial buildings with newer, small scale, suburban shopping centers surrounded by medium density suburban subdivisions.

Primary issues facing the Highway 20 target area include traffic congestion, lack of community facilities, potential impacts from the Highway 20 widening project, and the potential for uncontrolled development. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain the character of the target area's historic communities, advocate for historic structure reuse, improve transportation access to nearby employment centers, and be proactive about planning via target studies. Key implementation strategies include:

- Encourage a nodal development pattern along the corridor
- Target appropriate businesses within the nodes
- Invest in a system of parks and green spaces along the corridor
- Enhance the stronger sense of place and identity in each of the communities along the corridor
- Maintain an open dialogue with the community on planning issues related to the road widening

## **SOUTHWEST CHEROKEE**

The Southwest Cherokee Target Area is one of the denser areas of the county and serves as our only direct connection to I-75. Highway 92 is the major east-west thoroughfare and is an industrial/business hub. This target area contains some of the county's older neighborhoods along with a mix of newer developments like Centennial Lakes. Housing is the dominant land use, but industries are also present such as Inalfa Roof Systems and Oeschler/Adidas. The target area contains no parks, although Lake Allatoona is adjacent to the north and west.

While residents love the access that southwest Cherokee provides, many are concerned with high speed traffic on Highway 92 and its overall appearance that deter pedestrian and bicycle activity along the corridor. Concerns also include aging and abandoned housing, congestion, and the lack of retail amenities. However, residents remain optimistic about the

possibilities for growth, as proximity to I-75 will attract more development. With that will come the need for job training, better connectivity and transportation options, and greenspace. Key implementation strategies include:

- Encourage more supportive retail, hospitality, and mixed-use along the Highway 92 corridor through revisions to the Zoning Ordinance including the Highway 92 Overlay District
- Preserve prime land with good transportation access for industrial and office uses
- Encourage greater housing options
- Support job training and matching programs
- Support the construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Support the development of parks and amenities

- Open dialog with Reinhardt University and look for opportunities to collaborate on projects to improve the city
- Encourage the development of a village center
- Support improvements to SR 140 and SR 108 that are compatible with the community vision
- Ensure the connectivity of roads, sidewalks and trails to link new development into the city
- Encourage a broader diversity of housing options
- Strengthen connections with Lake Arrowhead
- Preserve the rural and natural character of the surrounding area

## **WALESKA**

Incorporated in 1889, Waleska has historically been home to diverse industries, including grist mills, timber businesses, tobacco manufacturing, and mineral development. In addition, Waleska was always a college town—Reinhardt University was founded in 1883. Today, the University remains a significant presence in the downtown area. A handful of retail shops and businesses line Reinhardt College Parkway (SR 140) that serves as “Main Street” in Waleska. Residential homes on a wide range of properties surround the University and commercial properties at the core of the city. Waleska also serves for the closest city to Lake Arrowhead, a master-planned community in the foothills of the North Georgia mountains.

In the next 20 years, the city must address a number of issues to realize its vision. These include their reliance on Reinhardt University, lack of commercial / retail / local services, barriers to village-like development in the Zoning Ordinance, and an imbalanced tax base. Waleska’s future also provides many opportunities such as working with the University, transportation improvements especially at the intersection of Reinhardt College Parkway and Fincher Road, and the proximity to Lake Arrowhead to support businesses. Key implementation strategies include:

Plan for the Future

# Plan for the Future



## The Power of Character Areas

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

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

### Character Areas:

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

## Future Development Map

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

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

## Why Use Character Areas?

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

## Benefits of Character Areas

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

## How it Works

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

## Zoning Decision Process with Character Areas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Interpretation

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

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

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

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

**Definition of Terms:**

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

*Grid Pattern Example*

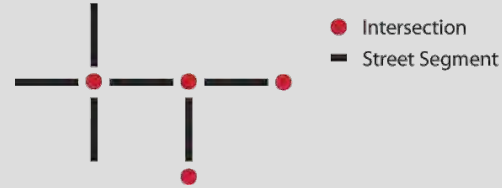
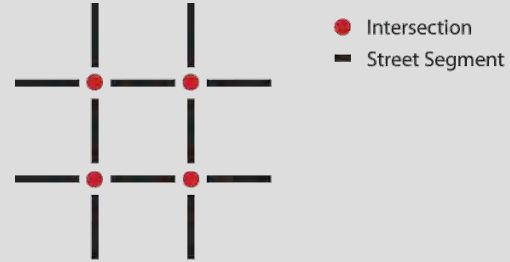
4 4-way intersections with 12 street segments - the Connectivity Index would be calculated as follows:

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

*Cul-de-sac Pattern Example*

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

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



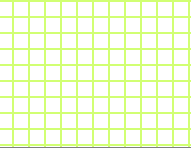
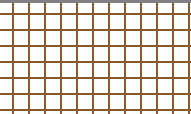
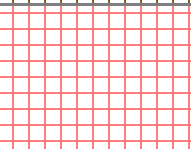
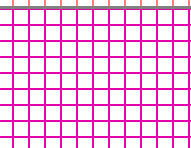



Note: The segments that do not end in a cul-de-sac either make a connection to existing public road or are connection point for future development

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

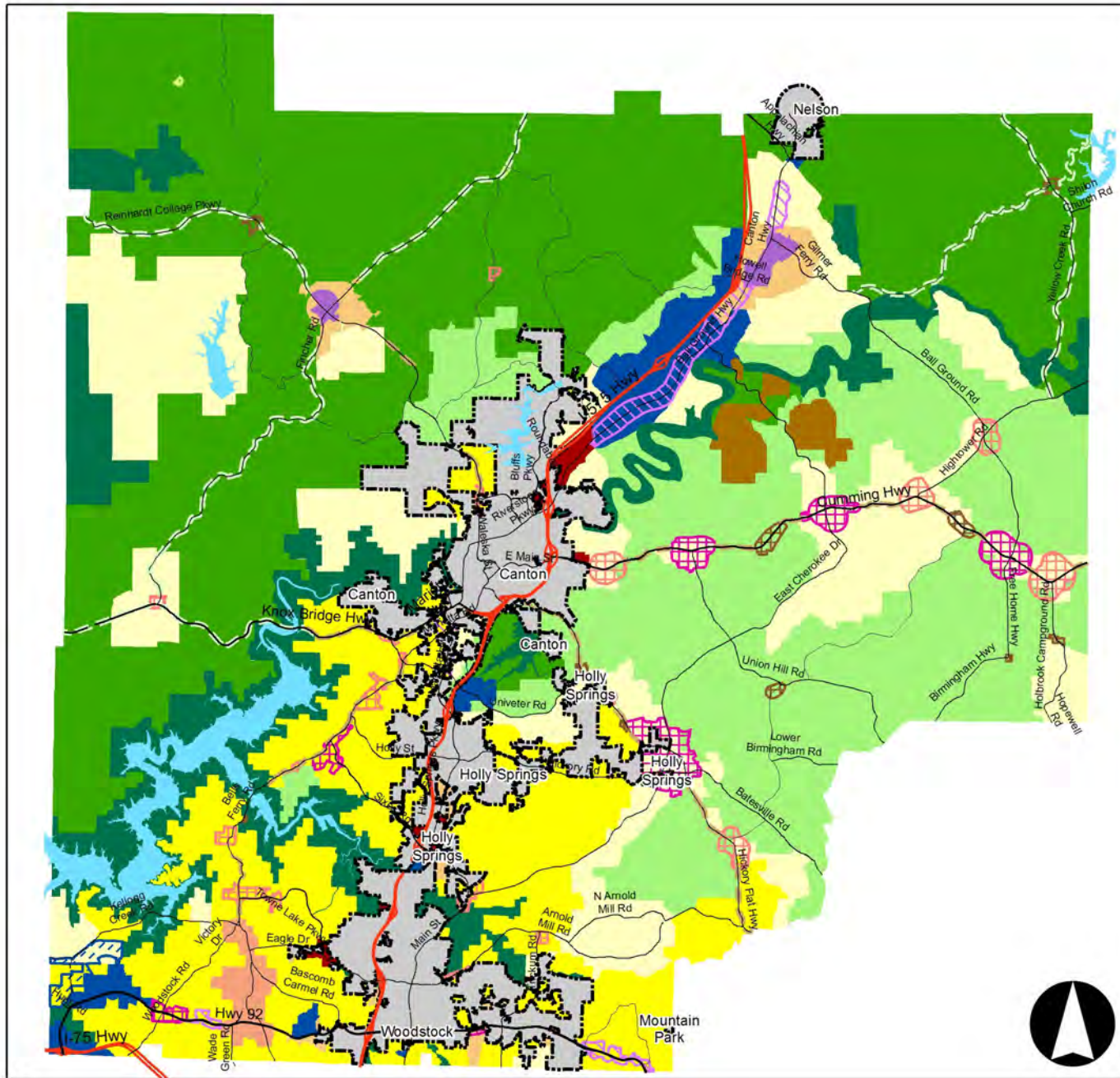
# Character Area Summary Table

Future Development Map Symbol	Character Area	Description of Character and Primary Land Uses	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Suggested Residential Density	Suggested Floor Area Ratio
	Natural Preserve	Undeveloped natural lands with significant natural features that currently have some form of protection from development.	Very low level of services and community facilities	0.5 dua max.	
	Rural Places	Outlying rural areas with active farming and scattered single-family housing on large lots. Preservation of sensitive natural resources is important.	Low level of services and community facilities. Potentially with public water but sewer is not planned.	0.5 dua max.	
	Country Estates	Area of low intensity land use with a mixture of single-family housing on large lots and farms.	Local-serving roads, potentially with public water, typically lacks sewer	0.5 dua max.	
	Suburban Growth	Areas located outside identified centers that are experiencing a high volume of residential growth, primarily single-family houses.	Public water available, public sewerage available or planned; local public facilities	0.5 – 1.0 dua	
	Suburban Living	Established residential neighborhoods with potential infill and redevelopment opportunities.	Public water available, public sewerage available or planned; local public facilities	1.0 – 3 dua	
	Neighborhood Living	Urbanized and growth oriented areas, adjacent to identified activity centers with higher densities. Various types of residential dwellings, and mixed-use developments.	Full urban services; regional public facilities.	3 – 8 dua	0.75 – 2.0 FAR
	Bells Ferry LCI	Area targeted for new development and redevelopment integrating residential, commercial and greenspace per the LCI Plan.	Full urban services; regional public facilities.	4 – 12 dua	0.75 – 2.0 FAR
	Urban Core	Traditional downtown areas with a broad range of uses, primarily in Ball Ground and Waleska.	Full urban services; regional public facilities.	3 – 16 dua	1.0 – 3.0 FAR
	Workplace Center	Major employment centers utilizing a mixture of manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale, commercial and office. Retail and high intensity residential are accessory uses.	Full urban services	3 – 16 dua	0.1 – 1.5 FAR
	Regional Center	Regionally oriented large scale commercial, office, retail, entertainment and recreational development, often with a residential component.	Full urban services	3 – 16 dua	0.5 – 1.5 FAR
	Utilities / Services	Major facilities for utilities or services to Cherokee County.			

# Character Area Summary Table

<b>Development Nodes and Corridors</b>					
<b>Future Development</b>	<b>Character Area</b>	<b>Description of Character and Primary Land Uses</b>	<b>Community Facilities &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<b>Suggested Residential</b>	<b>Suggested Floor Area Ratio</b>
	Country Crossroads	This commercial activity node is envisioned as a restricted commercial node located at existing commercial "crossroads" locations within the rural areas. 5,000sf Maximum.	Limited Levels of Service, Based on existing commercial development		0.1 – 0.5 FAR
	Hamlet	Hamlets are places where small-scaled commercial uses are arranged in a village-like setting. 17,500sf Maximum.	Limited Levels of Service		0.1 – 0.5 FAR
	Neighborhood Village	Small-scaled commercial designated to serve a single neighborhood with access and size restrictions. May be part of a residential development. 50,000sf Maximum.	Public water is available & sewer may be available. Good transportation access.	Underlying Character Area plus 1.0 dua	0.1 – 1.0 FAR
	Community Village	Medium-scaled commercial designated to serve several neighborhoods. 80,000sf Maximum.	Public water is available & sewer may be available. Good transportation access.	Underlying Character Area plus 1.0 dua	0.1 – 1.0 FAR
	Scenic Corridor	Scenic corridors have low intensity development parallel to a viewshed.	Very low level of services and community facilities	0.5 dua max.	
	Transitional Corridor	This corridor is designed to allow more intensive compatible residential uses and limited compatible nonresidential uses along major roadways. Limits are parcel-specific, but should allow a smooth transition to surrounding area.	Linear transitional areas along major transportation corridors.	Underlying Character Area plus 1.0 dua	0.1 – 0.5 FAR
	Development Corridor	Areas that extend along a major thoroughfare that have or are experiencing major development of retail, office or industrial land use and associated housing. These areas function as town centers.	Full urban services	3 – 10 dua	0.5 – 1.5 FAR

# Future Development Map



## Cherokee County Future Development Map

- Legend**
- Lakes
  - Cities Outside of Plan
  - Potential Workplace Center Expansion
  - Character Areas**
  - County Crossroads
  - Hamlet
  - Neighborhood Village
  - Community Village
  - Scenic Corridor
  - Transitional Corridor
  - Development Corridor
  - Natural Preserve
  - Rural Places
  - Country Estates
  - Suburban Growth
  - Suburban Living
  - Neighborhood Living
  - Bells Ferry LCI
  - Urban Core
  - Regional Center
  - Workplace Center
  - Utilities / Services



Date: November 20, 2018

Prepared by:  
Cherokee County Planning & Zoning

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# Natural Preserve

## Description

The Natural Preserve character area consists of undeveloped land with significant or unique natural or ecological features like lakes, streams, view sheds, wetlands, and other natural areas. You are likely familiar with Brick Mill Falls (top right) and Fields Landing (bottom right); these are examples of iconic Natural Preserve lands. Archaeological sites containing Native American artifacts, and remnants of early settlements serve as important pieces of the county's heritage in this character area.

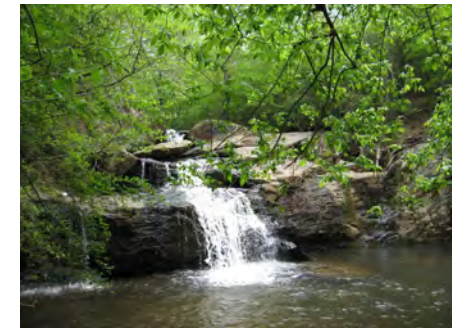
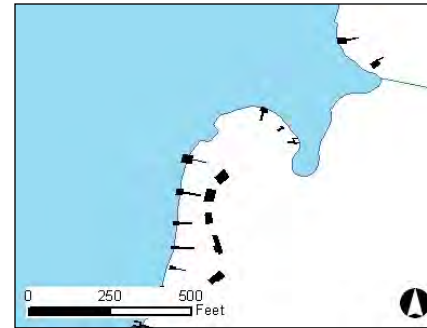
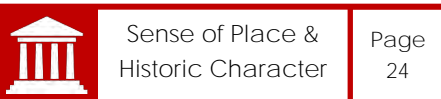
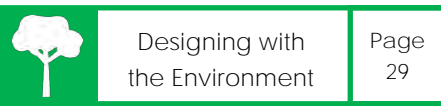
## Intent

This character area identifies large contiguous areas that are under some form of protection from development, such as easement, acquisition or other means. These areas serve critical environmental functions such as habitat protection, stormwater management and filtration of surface and ground water. Some of these lands are also open for passive recreation like Lake Allatoona, Garland Mountain and the Etowah River.

## Strategies

- Work with federal and state programs to increase the level of protection on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Widen roadways in Natural Preserve areas only when absolutely necessary and design the alterations to minimize visual impact.
- Create additional public access areas that do not disturb the natural environment.

## Core Issues Links



Intensity	Residential Density — 0.5 units per acre maximum Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Typical Intersection density— 1.42 per square mile Overall Connectivity Index— 2.63 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Timber management and conservation uses Passive Recreation <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Homesteads
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenways, trails, path systems, private roads/drives for cars/pedestrians</li> <li>• Generally no sewer</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Open space and conservation areas

# Rural Places

## Description

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

## Intent

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

## Strategies

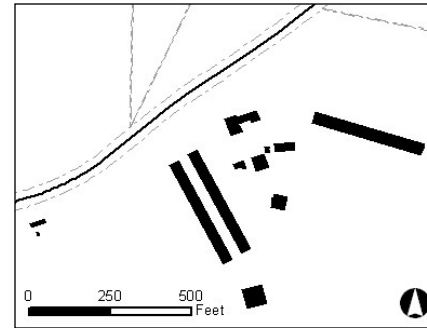
- Discourage the conversion of undeveloped land into residential developments
- Utilize appropriate transitions between existing and newer developments to prevent incompatible uses
- Provide services at a level appropriate to the development pattern to help maintain the area's rural character

## Core Issues Links

 Designing with the Environment Page 29

 Sense of Place & Historic Character Page 24

 Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure Page 20



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

# Country Estates

## Description

The Country Estates character area is noted for its low intensity housing, horse farms, and agricultural production. Country Estates serves as a transition between rural and suburban areas as well. This area promotes farming and livestock production along with large lot housing that does not disturb the surrounding rural areas. Country Estates residential lots are typically around two acres or more, with more prevalent housing development than in Rural Places. This Character Area contains lands that are sparsely developed, sometimes contain agricultural production, or have been developed as “estate farms” and large-lot subdivisions. Horse farms and equestrian related developments dot the area landscape. This mixture provides a low-intensity residential community..

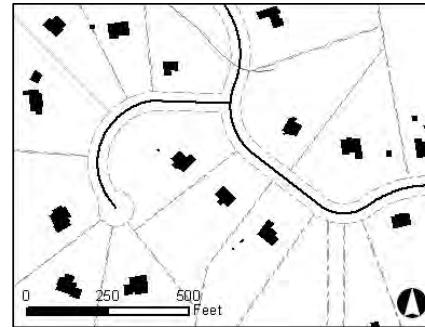
## Intent

The intent of this Character Area is to retain the low-intensity nature of the area by supporting the existing production-oriented agricultural activities such as animal production and crop cultivation and encourage the further development of large lot estates and “gentlemen’s farms” that blend into the overall fabric of the area.

## Strategies

- Maintain the estate lot minimum requirement of 80,000 square feet or more
- Ensure that development does not disturb rural areas or obstruct scenic views or vistas

## Core Issues Links



Intensity	Residential Density — 0.5 units per acre maximum Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Intersection Density — 4.06 - 13.37 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.22 - 7.32 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Homesteads on individual lots Large lot single-family residential development Active farming, timbering and conservation uses <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Passive Recreation Semi-public and institutional uses
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most roads have grassy swales and narrow lanes</li> <li>• Some subdivisions have curb and gutter</li> <li>• Public water available but no sewer</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Greenspace on private property Conservation areas in residential neighborhoods

# Suburban Growth

## Description

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

## Intent

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

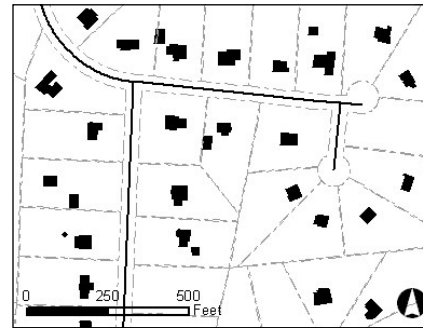
## Strategies

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

## Core Issues Links

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

# Suburban Living

## Description

Suburban Living areas are distinguished by the established suburban neighborhoods of single family detached houses, the complimentary shopping areas, institutions, such as churches, schools, libraries and regional parks. Homes tend to be on modest sized lots within large scale residential developments. Ideally, residents in Suburban Living have space, but should also be able to walk to parks, schools, and community centers near their neighborhood.


## Intent

The Suburban Living Character Area is designed to support existing suburban neighborhoods with compatible residential and commercial development. Suitable development in this area should be similar to the existing pattern of development in terms of size, scale and lot density. This Character Area should help to foster a sense of community by providing connections (vehicular and pedestrian) to commercial development, civic land uses, recreation and open space. Finally, higher intensity development should be limited to areas where there is available capacity within the existing infrastructure i.e. roads, schools, water/sewer, etc.).

## Strategies

- Ensure that infill development complements existing uses
- Incorporate public and semi-public uses into neighborhoods by considering the size, scale, and impact to ensure compatibility
- Utilize traffic calming techniques, sidewalks, and street connections to improve connectivity and walkability within this character area

## Core Issues Links



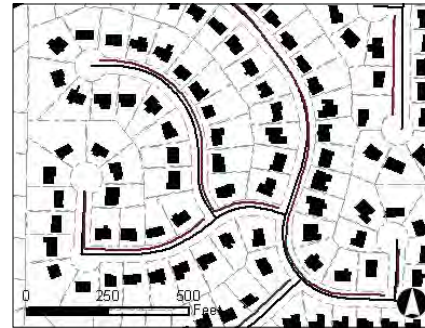
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Intensity	Residential Density — 1.0 - 3.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Typical Intersection Density — 69.0 per square mile Connectivity Index — 1.94 - 2.23 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Single-family detached housing Conservation Subdivisions Master-planned communities <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Semi-public and institutional uses Regional outdoor recreational uses or parks
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All new roads have curb and gutter</li> <li>• Sidewalks within subdivisions extending to community facilities</li> <li>• Sewer is available in most areas</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Open space and conservation areas

# Neighborhood Living

## Description

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


## Intent

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

## Strategies

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


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Intensity	Residential Density — 3.0 - 8.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.75 - 2.0 Floor Area Ratio Typical Intersection Density — 32.79 per square mile Connectivity Index — 4.72 - 4.97 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Small lot single-family homes Attached single-family duplexes & townhouses <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Public and Institutional Uses Mixed-use buildings
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban streets with sidewalks on both sides</li> <li>• Full urban services (water and sewer)</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Smaller civic spaces (i.e. pocket parks, playgrounds, etc.) within the residential areas

# Bells Ferry LCI

## Description

The Bells Ferry LCI area serves as a gateway into Cherokee County from neighboring Cobb County and connects the southwest part of the county with the Woodstock area. Initially developed in the 1960's and 70's, this area is home to outdated commercial parcels and underutilized properties that are ripe for redevelopment. Various housing types can be found in the Bells Ferry LCI area including single-family detached, townhouses, and multi-family developments as well as commercial nodes.


## Intent

The ultimate vision for the Bells Ferry community is to provide diverse choices in housing, entertainment, shopping, job opportunities, and greenspace for area residents and serve as a destination for the region. The Bells Ferry LCI area should be focused on integrating land uses by emphasizing patterns of more compact development to give residents transportation alternatives, such as sidewalks and trails, and support a connected community. The final element of this vision is a significant park space to accommodate both active and passive recreation and serve as a public gathering place.

## Strategies

- Promote alternative transportation, especially in the form of bike and pedestrian paths to reduce vehicle trips and connect neighborhoods
- Encourage appropriate densities that can support retail, entertainment, and commercial activities that provide a vibrancy to the area

## Core Issues Links

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Intensity	Residential Density — 4.0 - 12.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.75 - 2.0 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density — 32.79 - 56.53 per square mile Connectivity Index — 4.72 - 4.97 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Small lot single-family homes Attached single-family duplexes & townhouses Mixed-use buildings <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Public and Institutional Uses Senior Housing Single-use commercial
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban streets with sidewalks on both sides</li> <li>• Full urban services (water and sewer)</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Smaller civic spaces (i.e. pocket parks, playgrounds, etc.) within the residential areas

# Urban Core

## Description

The Urban Core Character Area covers the few unincorporated pockets of urban core areas within Canton, Holly Springs and Woodstock. More detailed information for Ball Ground and Waleska can be found in their plans. This Urban Core consists of higher density development and a wide range of commercial and institutional uses. Civic spaces and public buildings amidst retail storefronts and dense housing help create a compact core that promotes an urban feel and vibrancy.





## Intent

The purpose of the Urban Core Character Area is to support the urban downtown areas of Canton, Holly Springs and Woodstock with compatible development.

## Strategies

- Encourage the adaptive use of older buildings into newer uses
- Ensure that new developments connect to existing infrastructure to promote walkability and maintain the urban feel of the area
- Locate parking on the side and rear of buildings to strengthen the 'main street' feel and improve walkability
- Market the historic core to attract additional businesses and ultimately grow the downtown area

## Core Issues Links

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Intensity	Residential Density — 3.0 - 16.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 1.0 - 3.0 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density — 56.53 - 94.03 per square mile Connectivity Index — 4.97— 5.22 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Attached single-family duplexes & townhouses Multi-family flats Mixed-use buildings <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Public and Institutional Uses Single-use commercial
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban streets with sidewalks on both sides</li> <li>• Full urban services (water and sewer)</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Smaller civic spaces (i.e. pocket parks, playgrounds, etc.) within the residential areas Patios and Courtyards for commercial areas

# Regional Center

## Description

The Regional Center Character Area is an energetic hub of retail, restaurants, offices, and high density residential development laid out in a main street-like fashion. This area includes public spaces and amenities catering to residents. Regional Centers promote walkable environments for pedestrians to work, shop, eat, and live. They are most commonly found just outside city boundaries along major transportation corridors.


## Intent

The overall Regional Center environment should be oriented toward the pedestrian experience and focused on connectivity to allow drivers many ways to get around the area. Sidewalks, paths, green spaces and open spaces are as important as the buildings. This high intensity of mixed uses should be organized to provide a pleasant “Main Street” type feel and planned allow for ease of movement, internal and external.

## Strategies

- Develop streets in a grid-like pattern with small blocks to allow pedestrian connectivity throughout the center
- Ensure buildings are oriented towards the street and are in close proximity to each other; all parcels should be interconnected along streets, squares, plazas, etc.
- Design buildings that are compatible with the existing development in term of color, material, and pattern
- More intensive uses and taller structures should be located in the center of the Regional Center to protect surrounding residential neighborhoods and prevent incompatible development

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Intensity	Residential Density — 3.0 - 16.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.5 - 1.5 Floor Area Ratio Typical Intersection Density — 13.83 per square mile Connectivity Index — 3.53 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Large-scale retail buildings Regional and professional buildings Entertainment, restaurant and cultural uses Mixed-use buildings <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Dense residential neighborhoods
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban streets with sidewalks on both sides</li> <li>• Full urban services (water and sewer)</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Trails connecting to passive recreation areas and surrounding residential areas Pocket parks and greens

# Workplace Center

## Description

Workplace Centers represent major employment areas, including professional and corporate offices, regional offices, and light industrial districts. They are located along major transportation corridors and have a high level of access to the region. Retail and residential developments are secondary uses on the periphery that complement these employment centers. Greenspaces and civic spaces that connect workplaces together are integral as well.


## Intent

Development within a Workplace Center should be focused into villages, and compact activity centers. An integrated mix of uses and building types, along with external and internal connectivity will create a synergy between retail, office, industry and surrounding residential development. Residential uses should only be located where integrated into a mixed-use development or at the edge of the Workplace Center on property that is not suitable for the primary land uses. It is critical to ensure residential uses do not become a primary land use, therefore substantially reducing the non-residential character of the area and causing land use conflicts.

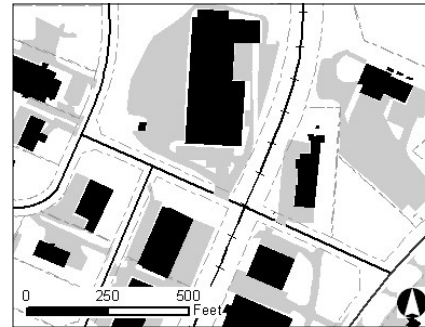
## Strategies

- Develop master plans for various Workplace Center developments, including provisions for trails, greenways and other civic spaces.
- Encourage the “clustering” of office and retail uses that are integrated with parking, landscaping, and pedestrian areas
- Install buffers between incompatible uses in the character area
- Preserve prime land with good transportation access for industrial and office uses

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Intensity	Residential Density — 3.0 - 16.0 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.1 - 1.5 Floor Area Ratio Typical Intersection Density — 13.83 per square mile Connectivity Index — 3.53 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Office buildings & complexes Light industrial / manufacturing & warehousing Mixed-use buildings <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Retail & services commercial development Residential neighborhoods
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suburban streets with a sidewalk on one side</li> <li>• Full urban services (water and sewer)</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Trails connecting to passive recreation areas and surrounding residential areas Private on-site amenities for employees

# Utilities / Services

## Description

Previously known as Waste Management, this character area was expanded to include additional uses that should be buffered from rural and residential areas, in keeping with the county's environmental goals. The Utilities/Services character area represents a cluster of uses near the Airport that provide services to Cherokee County and the larger region. These areas include the Pine Bluff Municipal Solid Waste Landfill, the Atlanta Gas Light Plant, the Etowah Water Treatment Plant, and the Riverbend Wastewater Treatment Plant.

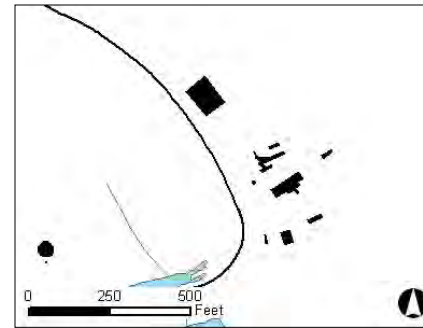
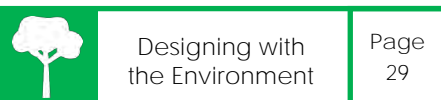
## Intent

The Utility / Services area developed because of the strategic advantages of the I-575 corridor north of Canton and the Etowah River corridor. These utility sites are usually located on large tracts of land and may have intense usage. The surrounding rural character has also been an advantage that provided significant buffers to prevent incompatible land uses.

## Strategies

- Maintain significant buffers between industrial/utility plants and surrounding uses, to ensure they don't intrude on adjacent properties
- Update the county's Solid Waste Management Plan after 2018
- Continue exploring additional sites that may be appropriate for the Utilities character area

## Core Issues Links



Intensity	Residential Density — Not Applicable Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Intersection density — 4.06 per square mile Connectivity Index — 2.44 (0 to 12 scale)
Future Development	Primary Land Uses Landfill Water & Sewer Treatment Facilities Natural Gas Facility
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to major arterial roads, state highways, and/or interstates</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Generally consists of undeveloped areas or buffers surrounding the site

# Country Crossroads

## Description

Country Crossroads are very small commercial areas that serves residents living near historic crossroads in the county’s rural areas. These Businesses within Country Crossroads typically offer limited local convenience goods and services. These nodes typically consist of single story buildings with a single establishment in each. The Country Crossroads node provides a central location for residents to fulfill their basic needs that still respects their rural environment.


## Intent


The intent of the Country Crossroads character areas is to recognize limited retail uses in the rural areas of Cherokee County. In these areas it is common for existing structures and buildings to be adapted for commercial use. Existing Country Crossroads businesses are expected to remain and make improvements, but further new development or expansion of a Country Crossroads Character Area would require upgrading to a Hamlet.

## Guidelines

- No individual store or building larger than 5,000 square foot, with a maximum height of 1 story
- Ensure that scenic elements such as tree canopies and view sheds are not adversely affected by development
- Country Crossroads should be compatible with surrounding residential properties and developed to serve a very limited immediate service area and pass-by traffic

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Intensity	Residential Density — Not Applicable Non-Residential FAR — 0.1 - 0.5 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density— 7.0 to 17.90 per square mile Connectivity Index— 3.83 to 7.32 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Convenience retailers & local groceries Tack shops, “feed and seed” stores Gas stations <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Local institutions—churches, schools, day care, fire stations
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural roads with shoulders &amp; swales</li> <li>• Public water is available</li> <li>• Typically lacks public sewer</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Not Applicable

# Hamlet

### Description

Hamlets consist of smaller commercial uses and civic amenities clustered together a village-type setting. A typical Hamlet would include a handful of businesses such as a bank, day care, restaurant, dry cleaner and gas station, and other similar “daily-needs” commercial uses to serve nearby residents. These nodes are typically located in character areas that have more residential development such as Country Estates and Suburban Growth. Hamlets may also feature parks or greenspace.


### Intent

This stage of development is critical for building a node that is a focal point rather than an afterthought for the surrounding community. Expansions of a Hamlet must be considered carefully in ensure they are compatible. Developments within the Hamlet should include a small civic space, such as a neighborhood park, or green with sidewalks or paths connecting the area together. Adaptive reuse of existing structures and buildings is encouraged to preserve the community character and scale.

### Guidelines

- No individual store or building larger than 17,500 square foot, with a maximum height of 2 stories
- Larger buildings and more intensive uses should be located in the center surrounded by smaller, residential-compatible buildings
- All principal buildings should have a front door facing a roadway or civic space and incorporate design elements / materials from the node. Parking beyond a single row in front should be located to the side or rear of the building.

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Intensity	Residential Density — Not Applicable Non-Residential FAR — 0.1 - 0.5 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density— 7.0 to 17.90 per square mile Connectivity Index— 3.83 to 7.32 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Small-scale shops, drugstores, restaurants Tack shops, feed and seed stores Personal services—dry cleaners, barbershops Professional services—doctors, lawyer offices <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Local institutions—churches, schools
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located along arterial or collector roads</li> <li>• Sewer availability varies depending on location within the county</li> <li>• Public water should be available</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Small civic spaces such as a park or green

# Neighborhood Village

## Description

A Neighborhood Village is a slightly larger collection of buildings and businesses arranged around a civic space such as a green or plaza in a small-town setting. Neighborhood Villages provide basic amenities such as retail, restaurants, doctors offices, schools, and churches to serve the surrounding neighborhoods. These nodes are typically located in a variety of character areas at major intersections along arterial roads in the County.





## Intent

The size and scale of the Neighborhood Village is very important. Multi-tenant buildings should be broken apart to permit vehicular and pedestrian circulation to the surrounding neighborhood. The design of pedestrian circulation within the village shall be of equal importance as vehicular circulation and parking. Inter-parcel access and access management are also vital to give drivers options and improve road safety.

## Guidelines

- No individual store or building larger than 50,000 square foot, with a maximum height of 3 stories
- Larger buildings and more intensive uses should be located in the center the node surrounded by smaller, residential-compatible buildings
- New development should be pedestrian oriented with front doors that open directly onto a sidewalk or civic space and connections between commercial and residential areas

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Intensity	Residential Density — Character Area plus 1.0 unit/acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.1 - 1.0 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density— 7.0 to 69.36 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.52 to 7.32 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Grocery stores, drugstores, restaurants & shops Personal services—dry cleaners, hair salon Professional services—doctors, lawyer offices <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Local institutions—churches, schools Residential housing/senior housing
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located along arterial or collector roads</li> <li>• Sidewalks connect into surrounding neighborhoods</li> <li>• Public water is available</li> <li>• Sewer may be available depending on location</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Small civic spaces such as a park or green, including ball fields and courts

# Community Village

## Description

Community Villages are typically located at the convergence of major transportation corridors and allow for large buildings and intensive uses. Businesses within these nodes offer a wide variety of goods and services, including both convenience goods for neighborhood residents and shopping goods for a larger market area. Large plazas provide a pedestrian friendly environment for residents, many of whom may walk or easily drive from their home to the village center, thanks to street/sidewalk connectivity.







## Intent

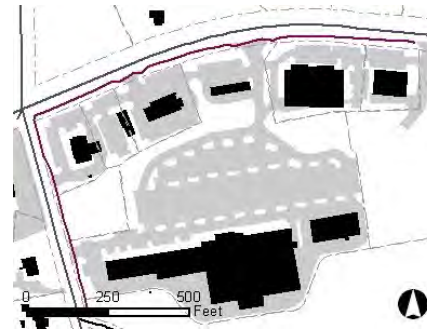
Community Villages are envisioned as places where a compatible mixture of higher-intensity uses are located, including a variety of housing options, small offices, retail shops, services, and well-placed parks / plazas that create a small, interconnected community. At the center of the node, there is a core area containing the more intensive, primary land uses. Moving outward from the core, the land uses are a mixture of less intense retail, office and some residential. At the edge of the Community Village, the land uses are generally residential but with streets leading back to the core area.

## Strategies

- No individual store or building larger than 80,000 square foot, with a maximum height of 3 stories
- Design centers to be pedestrian-oriented and break up large parking areas with landscaping and open spaces.

## Core Issues Links

	Designing with the Environment	Page 29		Housing Choices & Spirit of Inclusiveness	Page 27
	Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure	Page 20		Diverse Economic Opportunities	Page 31
	Aging in Place	Page 26		Sense of Place & Historic Character	Page 24



Intensity	Residential Density — Character Area plus 1.0 unit/acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.1 - 1.0 Floor Area Ratio Intersection Density— 7.0 to 69.36 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.52 to 7.32 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Grocery stores, drugstores, restaurants & shops Personal services—dry cleaners, auto repair shops Professional services—doctors, lawyer offices <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Local institutions—churches, schools Residential housing/senior housing
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located along major arterial roads or highways</li> <li>• Sidewalks connect into surrounding neighborhoods</li> <li>• Public water is available</li> <li>• Sewer may be available depending on location</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Major civic spaces such as a park or green, including ball fields and courts for active recreation

# Scenic Corridor

## Description

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

## Intent

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

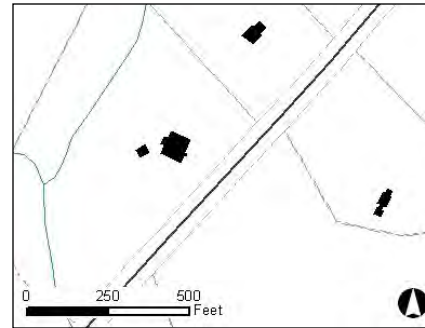
## Strategies

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

## Core Issues Links

	Designing with the Environment	Page 29
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	Sense of Place & Historic Character	Page 24
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Intensity	Residential Density — 0.5 unit per acre maximum Non-Residential FAR — Not Applicable Typically Intersection Density— 4.06 per square mile Connectivity Index— 2.44 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Active farming, timbering and conservation uses Homesteads on individual lots <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Outdoor recreation Semi-public and institutional uses
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local along rural local roads</li> <li>• Very low street connectivity</li> <li>• Public water should be available</li> <li>• Sewer is not always available or planned</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Greenways and Greenspace on private property

# Transitional Corridor

## Description

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





## Intent

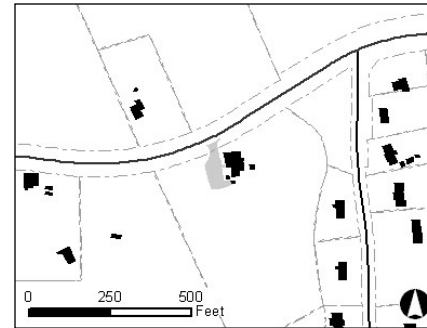
It is the intent of the Transitional Corridor to allow more intense development immediately adjacent the roadway while transitioning to lower intensity surrounding areas. The depth of the Corridor is dependent upon the configuration of the property, access to the roadway, size of the property and the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

## Guidelines

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

## Core Issues Links

	Designing with the Environment	Page 29		Diverse Economic Opportunities	Page 31
	Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure	Page 20		Sense of Place & Historic Character	Page 24



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

# Development Corridor

## Description

Development Corridors extend along major thoroughfares that have or are experiencing major development of retail, office or industrial land uses, townhouses and multi-family housing. This character area provides a linkage between existing developed areas centered on major intersections, allowing for a cohesive layout of businesses and residences that make it easy for drivers and pedestrians to fulfill various needs in a small radius. Most of the Development Corridor areas are located around Ball Ground or along Highway 92.

## Intent

The overall goal of this Character Area is to provide, through transportation, land use and other physical enhancements, an environment that provides a distinctive “place,” not merely a roadway. Higher intensity development should be clustered at major intersections with new secondary roads added to improve circulation. Site planning, building design and landscaping are critical in order to create an appealing mixed-use corridor.


## Guidelines

- Plan and implement a grid-style street network that improves access management and allows for alternative modes of transportation
- Encourage retrofitting of existing strip development into pedestrian scale, interconnected nodes
- Focus development in villages, urban, and workplace centers to protect the surrounding area

## Core Issues Links

 Sustainable Growth & Infrastructure Page 20

 **Housing Choices & Spirit of Inclusiveness** Page 27

 Sense of Place & Historic Character Page 24

 Diverse Economic Opportunities Page 31



Intensity	Residential Density — 3 - 10 units per acre Non-Residential FAR — 0.5 - 1.5 FAR Intersection Density— 32.79 - 69.05 per square mile Connectivity Index— 1.94 - 4.72 (0-12 scale)
Future Development	<b>Primary Land Uses</b> Retail/Commercial Centers Grocery stores, drugstores, restaurants & shops Personal services—dry cleaners, barbershops Professional services—doctors, lawyer offices Office Buildings <b>Secondary Land Uses</b> Local institutions—churches, schools Townhomes & Multi-family residential
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located along 4-lane urban arterial roads with sidewalks on both sides of the street</li> <li>• Public water &amp; Sewer is available</li> </ul>
Greenspace	Greenways and conservation areas

# Zoning Connections Matrix

		CHARACTER AREAS										
		Natural Preserve	Rural Places	Country Estates	Suburban Growth	Suburban Living	Neighborhood Living	Bells Ferry LCI	Urban Core	Workplace Center	Regional Center	Utilities / Services
Suggested Residential Density		0.5 dua max.			0.5 – 1.0 dua	1.0 – 3 dua	3 – 8 dua	4 – 12 dua	3 – 16 dua	3 – 16 dua	3 – 16 dua	NA
Suggested Floor Area Ratio							0.75 – 2.0 FAR	0.75 – 2.0 FAR	1.0 – 3.0 FAR	0.1 – 1.5 FAR	0.5 – 1.5 FAR	NA
RELATED ZONING DISTRICTS	AG	✓	✓	✓								✓
	R-80				✓							
	R-60				✓							
	R-40				✓	✓						
	R-30					✓						
	R-20					✓						
	R-15					✓						
	RD-3					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	RZL						✓		✓	✓	✓	
	RTH						✓		✓	✓	✓	
	RM-10								✓	✓	✓	
	RM-16								✓	✓	✓	
	TND						✓	✓				
	OI						✓				✓	
	CP									✓	✓	
	NC						✓			✓	✓	
GC									✓	✓		
LI									✓	✓	✓	
HI									✓		✓	

# Zoning Connections Matrix

		NODES				CORRIDORS		
		Country Crossroads	Hamlet	Neighborhood Village	Community Village	Scenic	Transitional	Development
Suggested Residential Density				Character Area plus 1.0 dua	Character Area plus 1.0 dua	0.5 dua max.	Character Area plus 1.0 dua	3 – 10 dua
Suggested Floor Area Ratio		0.1 - 0.5 FAR	0.1 - 0.5 FAR	0.1 - 1.0 FAR	0.1 - 1.0 FAR		0.1 – 0.5 FAR	0.5 - 1.5 FAR
RELATED ZONING DISTRICTS	AG					✓		
	R-80			Depends on Underlying Character Area	Depends on Underlying Character Area		Depends on Underlying Character Area	
	R-60							
	R-40							
	R-30							
	R-20							
	R-15							
	RD-3							
	RZL						✓	
	RTH						✓	
	RM-10						✓	
	RM-16						✓	
	TND							
	OI	✓	✓	✓			✓	
	CP				✓			✓
	NC	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	GC	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
LI				✓			✓	
HI								

Vision Into Action

# Vision Into Action



## Implementation Process

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

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY**

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

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

- Guiding principles, policies and development strategies are developed from the Vision; all new development should relate and coordinate with policy;
- Review general design considerations for consistency with Character Area descriptions, and Node or Corridor descriptions if applicable;
- Character Areas suggest qualitative controls until small area and corridor studies are completed for specific areas; and

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

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

- Character Areas, Nodes and Corridors are not regulations, and therefore will allow flexibility during project review.

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

### ***DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS***

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Annual Plan Review**

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

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

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

The STWP will be updated annually, reflecting the results of the Annual Plan Review. The STWP will be extended one year into the future in order to maintain a full five years of future activity, and any changes appropriate to the other years will be included. The updated STWP will be forwarded to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) for their files. A new STWP for 2019 – 2023 can be found at the end of this document.

## **Plan Amendments**

As a result of the annual plan review, amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be appropriate. The desired changes must be reviewed by ARC and DCA to determine if a public hearing and full review is required. Once the appropriate process is complete, the Board of Commissioners may adopt the amendments. This process will apply to new Related Plans, Small Area Plans and other similar planning documents that need to be linked to the Comprehensive Plan.

## **5-year Plan Updates**

At a minimum, the required Comprehensive Plan elements must be updated every 5 years to maintain our Qualified Local Government status. In addition, a new Short Term Work Plan and a report of Accomplishments must be submitted for review. The public will be involved in preparation of the Plan Update documents. Following State procedural guidelines, a public hearing will be held to inform the public of the community's intent to update the Plan, and to seek public participation. The update will be submitted to surrounding communities for review in accordance with the State Minimum Planning Standards, prior to adoption.

# Recent Accomplishments

Project Description	Implementation				Status
	Complete	Ongoing	Pending	Dropped	
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>					
National Register Historic District established for Downtown Ball Ground	X				Completed in 2010
Develop plan for Etowah River Greenway				X	Dropped in 2018
Pursue qualification as a "Certified Local Government" under Historic Preservation Division of Georgia DNR				X	Dropped in 2018
Continue to participate in the Etowah River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Consider adoption of Low Impact Development Guidelines to support the HCP				X	Dropped in 2018
Develop Environmental Awareness Program	x				Completed in 2018
Explore potential for a National Register nomination for the Reinhardt Campus area in Waleska as a historic district				x	Dropped in 2018
<b>Economic Development</b>					
Faciliate stakeholder meetings concerning agribusiness and agritourism in the county				X	Dropped in 2018
Prepare Tax Increment/Finance District Guidelines				X	Dropped in 2018
Coordinating and streamline permitting processes and development regulations across all communities in Cherokee County	X				Completed in 2018
Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized shopping centers along major transportation corridors to broaden the retail and personal service offerings in Cherokee County		X			Included in other line items in 2018
<b>Community Facilities</b>					
Construct Records Retention Center	X				Completed in 2008
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>					
Fields Landing Park Expansion (Replaces Sutallee Project)	X				Completed in 2008
Aquatic Center	X				Completed in 2013
Blankets Creek	X				Completed in 2013
Buffington Park Renovations				X	Project Dropped in 2013
Cherokee Mills Lake Allatoona				X	Project Dropped in 2013, Funds Reallocated
Sequoyah Park Renovations	X				Completed in 2013
Soccer Complex	X				Completed in 2013
Barnett Park Renovations	X				Completed in 2015
Biello Park East (Riverside)	X				Completed in 2015
Biello Park West	X				Completed in 2015
Dwight Terry Renovations	X				Completed in 2015
Hobgood Park Phase II & Renovations	X				Completed in 2015

# Recent Accomplishments

Project Description	Implementation				Status
	Complete	Ongoing	Pending	Dropped	
<b>Parks and Recreation—Continued</b>					
Lighting Improvements at Sequoyah	X				Completed in 2015
Recreation Center Renovations	X				Completed in 2015
Waleska (NW) County Park	X				Completed in 2015
Weatherby Park Renovations	X				Completed in 2015
Kenny Askew Park Renovations	X				Completed in 2016
East Park (Cherokee Veterans)	X				Completed in 2017
Patriots Park	X				Completed in 2017
<b>Transportation</b>					
Complete the Comprehensive Transportation Plan	X				Completed in 2008
Extend Cherokee County Airport Runway	X				Completed in 2011
New Interchange at I-575/Rope Mill Road	X				Completed in 2013
Improvements at Sixes Road Interchange	X				Completed in 2013
Update to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan	X				Completed in 2016
Develop a Context-Sensitive Design Process such as the one recommended by GDOT	X				Completed in 2018
Develop Alternative Transportation Education Program				X	Reliant on ARC and GRTA
Bells Ferry Road widening (2 phases)		X			Included in "Roadway Improvements" line item
<b>Public Safety</b>					
Ladder Truck	X				Completed in 2008
Fire Department Supply Warehouse	X				Completed in 2008
Fire Station 17 Renovation	X				Completed in 2009
Fire Station 20 Driveway	X				Completed in 2009
Fire Engine x 2	X				Completed in 2009
Air Truck Rechassis	X				Completed in 2009
Fire Station 6 Replacement	X				Completed in 2012
Communications System				X	Project Dropped in 2013
Sheriff's Training Facility	X				Completed in 2015
Fire Station 32 Renovation	X				Completed in 2015
Fire Station 1 Replacement	X				Completed in 2018
Fire Station 3 Replacement	X				Completed in 2018

# Recent Accomplishments

Project Description	Implementation				Status
	Complete	Ongoing	Pending	Dropped	
<b>Library Services</b>					
R. T. Jones Library Facility Addition	X				Completed in 2011
Rose Creek Library Facility Expansion				X	Project Dropped in 2013
<b>Land Use &amp; GIS</b>					
Major Update of Comprehensive Plan	X				Completed in 2008
Draft specific development/design guidelines for downtown Ball Ground.	X				Completed in 2008
Develop Airport Area Master Plan	X				Completed in 2012
Develop Unified Code that combines the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations and development regulations to consistently implement elements of the Community Agenda.				X	Dropped in 2018
Revise rezoning process to provide better information on land use changes and infrastructure impact for each proposal.	X				Completed in 2018

# Short Term Work Plan

Project Description	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources	Responsible Party
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>								
Implement Parks and Rec Master Plan	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	BOC, Planning & Zoning, GIS, Parks & Rec.
Develop Historic Property Resource Kit that includes Tax Credit Basics	X	X				Unknown	County	Planning & Zoning, Historical Society
Develop and Update Historic Resources Map	X	X				Staff Time	County	GIS, Planning & Zoning, Historical Society
Continue to update the Cemetery Location Map as needed	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	GIS, Planning & Zoning, Historical Society
Develop water supply watershed overlay district	X	X				Staff time	County	Stormwater, Planning & Zoning, CCWSA
<b>Economic Development</b>								
Develop and promote business and manufacturing sites within Cherokee County	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Development Authority	Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce
Continue the focused marketing campaign targeting industries identified in Opportunity Cherokee	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Development Authority	Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce
Enhance the entrepreneurship and small business support programs with a comprehensive range of financial assistance, training, networking, professional advice and educational opportunities	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Development Authority	Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce
Continue the Business Expansion & Retention Program and advocacy for existing industry	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Development Authority	Development Authority
Focus resources on supporting and expanding the Cherokee Workforce Collaborative	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	School District, Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority	Cherokee County School District, Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority
Develop Marketing Studies for County Target Areas		X	X			\$25,000 each	County	Planning & Zoning, Development Authority
<b>Housing</b>								
Continue to evaluate/update dilapidated Housing	X	X	X	X	X	Unknown	private	Private Developers
Use CDBG funds for the Cherokee County Home Repair Program targeted for low-income seniors and veterans	X	X	X	X	X	\$500,000	County, CDBG	Community Services, GUCC
Encourage the construction of affordable housing for a range of residents	X	X	X	X	X	Unknown	state and federal programs, private	Private Developers
Develop Housing Regulations for seniors and disabled persons	X	X	X			Staff Time	County	BOC, Planning & Zoning
Identify areas with adequate infrastructure & suitable for workforce housing opportunities	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	GIS, Planning & Zoning, Engineering

# Short Term Work Plan

Project Description	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources	Responsible Party
<b>Housing - Continued</b>								
Facilitate County-wide meetings to encourage cooperation on workforce housing financing from federal and state sources.	X	X				Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning
Organize workforce housing education forums for the public	X					Staff Time/ Consultant	County, City of Woodstock	Planning & Zoning, City of Woodstock, Non-Profits
<b>Community Facilities</b>								
Periodically review Service Delivery strategies, level of services, and develop a plan to provide services to accommodate new growth	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	BOC, Public Safety, Engineering
Continue to identify, fund and implement Bells Ferry LCI projects	X	X	X	X	X	\$17,000,000	GDOT, ARC, County, Private	BOC, Planning & Zoning, Engineering, Private Developers
Expand Cherokee County Adult Detention Center	X	X	X	X		\$23,000,000	County	BOC, Public Safety
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>								
Multigenerational Center at Veterans Park	X	X				\$12,600,000	County	Recreation & Parks, BOC
Evaluate sites for multigenerational park facility in SW Cherokee	X	X				Staff time	County	Recreation & Parks, BOC
Park Maintenance Facility	X	X	X			\$750,000	County, Impact Fees	Recreation & Parks, BOC
East Park (Cherokee Veterans) Fields/Amenities	X	X				\$1,650,000	County, Impact Fees	Recreation & Parks, BOC
Connect existing trails and develop linear parks/greenways to connect high priority areas	X	X	X	X	X	Unknown	County	Recreation & Parks, Transportation, BOC
Develop additional multipurpose fields for a wider variety of activities	X	X	X	X	X	Unknown	County, Impact Fees	Recreation & Parks, BOC
Develop Thacker Property (Alison Lane) for passive recreation				X		\$500,000	County	Recreation & Parks, BOC
<b>Transportation</b>								
Roadway Improvements	X	X	X	X	X	\$140,000,000	GDOT, SPLOST	BOC
Develop character area-specific roadway standards	X	X	X			Staff time	County	Engineering, Planning & Zoning
Continue support of Ride-Share Program	X	X	X	X	X	\$15,000	County, ARC, GRTA	Community Development
Install Park/Ride Lots	X	X	X	X	X	\$2,000,000 per lot	County, ARC, GRTA	Community Development, BOC
Develop linkages between trails, sidewalks, and amenities/services	X	X	X	X	X	Unknown	County	Parks & Rec, Planning & Zoning, Engineering, Cities

# Short Term Work Plan

Project Description	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources	Responsible Party
<b>Transportation - Continued</b>								
Study alternate route for trucks going through downtown Ball Ground	X	X	X	X	X	\$150,000	County	GDOT, Engineering, City of Ball Ground
Develop access management and interparcel access guidelines/regulations	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	Engineering, Planning & Zoning
Bells Ferry Road widening & bridge replacement (2 projects)			X	X	X	\$28,444,533	SPLOST, Impact Fees	Roadway/SPLOST
<b>Public Safety</b>								
Fire Station 5 Renovation				X	X	\$1,800,000	Fire District, SPLOST	Fire Department, BOC
Fire Station 13 Replacement Station	X					\$2,095,000	Impact Fees, General Fund, SPLOST	Fire Department, BOC
Fire Station 15 Relocation & Replacement Station				X	X	\$1,500,000	Impact Fees, General Fund	Fire Department, BOC
Future Fire Station (new)			X	X		\$1,085,000	Impact Fees, General Fund	Fire Department, BOC
Purchase property for Future Fire Facilities	X	X	X	X	X	\$750,000	County	Fire Department, BOC
Airport Crash Truck		X	X			\$800,000	Impact Fees, Fire District	Fire Department, BOC
Ladder Truck			X	X		\$1,050,000	Impact Fees	Fire Department, BOC
Fire Apparatus Replacement Program	X	X	X	X	X	\$800,000	SPLOST, Impact Fees	Fire Department, BOC
EMS Squad Replacement Program	X	X	X	X	X	\$700,000	County	Fire Department, BOC
Small Fleet Replacement Program	X	X	X	X	X	\$180,000	County	Fire Department, BOC
Consolidate Fire Service with one (1) Agency	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	CCWSA	County Water & Sewer Authority
<b>Library Services</b>								
Library Collection Materials	X	X	X	X	X	\$835,512	Impact Fees, General Fund, SPLOST	Library System, BOC
<b>Water and Sewage</b>								
Expand Sewer Service Area	X	X	X	X	X	\$60,000,000	CCWSA	County Water & Sewer Authority
Consolidate Water/Sewer Operations into one (1) Agency	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	CCWSA	County Water & Sewer Authority
Link county GIS data with CCWS GIS data for easy use	X					Staff Time	N/A	County Water & Sewer Authority, GIS, Planning & Zoning

# Short Term Work Plan

Project Description	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources	Responsible Party
<b>School System</b>								
Construct New Schools	X	X	X	X	X	\$41,000,000	Tax, bonds	Board of Education
Construct Additions to Existing Schools	X	X	X	X	X	\$235,000,000	Tax, bonds	Board of Education
Develop and promote alternative transportation to schools through education and sidewalk construction projects	X	X	X			Unknown	Safe Routes to School	CCSD, Transportation
<b>Land Use &amp; GIS</b>								
Create small area plans for areas experiencing significant growth pressures or infrastructure issues.	X	X	X	X	X	\$300,000	County	Planning & Zoning
Continue to update annually the 5-year Capital Improvements Plan and STWP.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning, Engineering, Public Safety, Parks & Rec.
Conduct annual review of Future Development Map, rezonings and capital projects for plan & map adjustments.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning
Develop a joint plan with city of Holly Springs for the Hickory Flat area	X	X				Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning, City of Holly Springs
Develop master plan for SW Cherokee to integrate housing, community services, industrial development and much needed greenspace/trails	X	X				Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning
Complete a major update to the Capital Improvements Element and Impact Fee Methodology	X	X				\$50,000	Impact Fees	Planning & Zoning
Create map showing transportation improvements with off-street trails		X				Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning, Engineering, Parks & Rec
Evaluate Overlay Districts and revise standards/regulations as necessary		X	X			Staff Time	County	BOC, Planning & Zoning
Develop new zoning district for small-lot single family residential (between 3 and 6 du)		X	X			Staff Time	County	BOC, Planning & Zoning
Update zoning ordinance to add Regional Airport Area District (RAAD)			X	X		Staff Time	County	BOC, Planning & Zoning
Develop Mixed-use Ordinance for large master-planned developments			X	X		Staff Time	County	BOC, Planning & Zoning
Undertake a Comprehensive Plan update five years after adoption of this Plan.					X	Staff Time	County	Planning & Zoning

