
Hall County Comprehensive Plan Summary



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I. INTRODUCTION

Hall County began the process of preparing a major update to its Comprehensive Plan in the fall of 2002, in collaboration with the City of Gainesville. The Plan was originally prepared in 1994 and was subject to a minor update in the year 2000. The process of conducting this major update unfolded over an 18-month period. The planning process involved extensive community outreach and involvement, along with in-depth analysis of a wide variety of land use, economic, demographic, environmental, and public service forces and trends that have shaped the community and which continue to set the stage for the future.

The planning process was conducted in conformance with the rules of the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, which was promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. These minimum planning standards establish procedural and substantive requirements for local comprehensive planning. The full documentation of compliance with those standards is contained in a separate document. This report provides a summary of that plan as it relates to unincorporated Hall County.

II. PUTTING THE PLAN TOGETHER

There were four major groups that were responsible for this plan, including:

- A citizens based “Plan Forum”,
- The public at-large,
- A team of county planning staff and consultants; and
- The Hall County Commissioners.

At the center of the planning process was the citizen based Plan Forum. The Plan Forum was a highly inclusive group of citizens who met with the planning consultants and local planning staff on different occasions throughout the planning process. The Plan Forum was inclusive in that any individual who desired to participate was welcomed as a Plan Forum member. The group acted as a community sounding board of information, insight on planning issues, proposed approaches, and plan drafts. They heard presentations and had discussions on a range of issues from population and employment forecasts to values and attitudes about growth and development, along with numerous technical issues involving transportation, infrastructure, and natural resources.

As a supplement to the work of the Plan Forum, several series of public workshops were held in locations throughout the City and County. There were five public workshops held early in the planning process to gauge community attitudes, and another nine workshops held later in the process to gain public comment on specific future land use recommendations.

In addition, there were approximately ten focus group and individual interviews conducted in order to solicit input from specific interest groups, such as business and industry, residential neighborhood groups, and local commercial/real-estate experts.

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During the course of the planning process, there were many and ample opportunities for public comment. In addition to the Plan Forum and public workshops, notices and plan elements were posted on local internet sites and at public libraries; and written comments were solicited, considered and documented.

Rounding out the public outreach effort, the County Commissioners both individually and as a group closely tracked and monitored the process. Individual Commissioners regularly attended Plan Forum meetings, and special plan briefing sessions were conducted by staff and consultants at County Commissioner meetings on several different occasions.

Interwoven throughout this very public process were a series of technical analyses that helped to "inform the debate". These analyses, which are summarized below focused on establishing a collective understanding of the forces and trends shaping the community. They included population, employment, and land consumption forecasts; land use patterns and land capacity constraints; regional and local environmental opportunities and constraints; infrastructure and public service needs and implications; and transportation issues and needs.

In short, this is founded on a systematic, well informed, and broad based community process. While this plan does not, and can not satisfy all interests on all points, it does represent the collective will of the Hall County community.

III. PLANNING CONTEXT

There are a variety of forces and trends that are shaping Hall County, and that have in turn shaped this plan. These include natural constraints, regional growth patterns, local land use patterns, employment and housing trends, infrastructure and public service constraints, and socioeconomic and demographic trends.

HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

Hall County was founded in 1818, when the region's mountains were still populated by Native Americans, as the trading center of Northeast Georgia. Gainesville, its seat, soon became a frontier boom town as settlers flocked to homesteads in the rolling hills formerly inhabited by Cherokee Indians. With the discovery of gold in Lumpkin and White counties to the north in 1829, Gainesville became the trading and supply center for North America's first gold rush. While miners left for California in the mid-1800s, North Georgia continued to develop as a farming region with Gainesville as its hub.

In 1871, the opening of Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad brought further growth. The area developed as a mountain summer resort, with local springs touted for their health-giving qualities and resistance to fever that plagued the South's coastal areas. Gainesville, the "Great Health Resort of the South," soon housed the region's first hospital, college and military academy along with a sizeable cultural base - all traditions that remain today. Along with hotels, large Victorian and Georgian style homes graced its streets.

Hall County's first large industries - cotton mills - arrived in 1900. Gainesville also became the major shipping point for lumber harvested and milled in the mountains to the north.

With the Great Depression in the 1930s, Hall County's economy suffered. Cotton production was

hampered by infestation of the boll weevil, lumber shipping declined due to the Chestnut blight, and the nation's second-deadliest tornado struck Gainesville in 1936. More than 200 were killed and 1,000 injured in the violent storm, which obliterated many historic homes and buildings in Gainesville.

Following World War II, the area economy recovered. Poultry replaced cotton as the local cash crop, spurring job growth as new industries emerged to support production and processing of chickens and eggs. As row-crop farming declined, so did soil erosion. Verdant pastures and tall trees soon re-covered the raw, red clay of North Georgia.

Buford Dam, just south of Hall County by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s, created 38,000-acre Lake Lanier with its 540 miles of shoreline. Millions of visitors each year now enjoy recreational water sports provided by the lake, easily accessed from Atlanta via several major highways. Additional diversification in the County's economic base has come with new industries attracted to Hall County by Lake Lanier and its quality of life.

Hall County continues to build on its historic base as the primary center of Northeast Georgia: its banking and financial center; the regional seat of the Federal Court; the health center, with more than 300 physicians and the region's largest major hospital; the educational center, with Brenau University, Gainesville College, Lanier Technical College, Riverside Military Academy, two public school systems and several prominent private schools; the sports center, with headquarters of the Atlanta Falcons, Road Atlanta, Olympic rowing and canoe/kayak facilities, several championship golf courses and dozens of public parks and camping areas; the arts center, with a wealth of cultural organizations, societies, groups and clubs.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Hall County's population growth reflects both its Northeast Georgia regional center status, and its emergence as an outer suburban county in the Atlanta metropolitan region. Since 1980, its population has grown by 125%, from approximately 76,000 to 171,000. It is forecasted to grow by more than another 185% over the next thirty years to over 489,000, absent any plans to the contrary. The adopted plan reflects a future population "build out" of 445,566, as discussed in later sections of this document.

Hall County's employment base is also forecasted to grow at a dramatic rate of approximately 180% of the next thirty years, from approximately 100,000 jobs to over 280,000 jobs. Unlike the population forecast, which are proposed in this plan to be reduced in the future, this plan reflects a desire to maximize employment opportunities, particularly in higher paying skilled jobs in "clean" or high tech services and industries.

It is also particularly important to understand the interaction between the employment market and the housing market. While the forecasted population is proposed to be moderated relative to employment growth in Hall County, it is imperative for the County provide the right mix of housing types and price point relative to is economic development objectives. This plan provides for a range of housing options and public service strategies in order to achieve a balance of jobs to housing in a more sustainable pattern that has developed in the past.

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

One of the factors that has influenced, and in some ways inhibited desirable growth is the provision of public services, particularly public sanitary sewers. Specifically, the lack of sanitary sewers has inhibited productive economic development in areas that are otherwise suitable for business and industry development, particularly in the I-985 corridor south of Gainesville. Further, longer-range opportunities exist along the Highway 365 corridor to the north. These needs are being addressed through plans the provision of sewer service with a cooperative intergovernmental approach between Hall County, the City of Gainesville, and other Hall County jurisdictions.

Hall County's transportation system continues to provide both challenges and opportunities. Clearly the extension of I-985 into Hall County, along with improvements to Highway 365 north of Gainesville has acted as a tremendous economic engine for growth. However, the local street system has struggled to accommodate recent growth, with future growth not expected to slow down substantially.

NATURAL RESOURCES

There are several environmental conditions that will continue to influence the way in which growth should be managed. First, there are long-term but very real regional water constraints that must be acknowledged. The North Georgia Regional Water District has forecasted Hall County to have a population of just over 320,000 by the year 2020, which is the time frame when that body sees water as being a constraint to growth based on current land use patterns. This is not considered a "hard ceiling", and this forecast is heavily influenced by the way in which water resources are managed, but it does suggest a future limit to population based on regional water resources.

Also, the relationship between the use and return of water to the system is an important element in the provision of water and the quality of the environment. Water that is used by the public and collected in a major sanitary sewer system can be returned to the water system, and is thus not "consumed", which means that it can extend the regional water supply. On the other hand, water that is used and released through localized sanitary sewer systems such as septic systems is considered a "consumptive use", because water is returned to the ground rather than directly to surface water resources. This, combined with possible long term environmental problems associated with the widespread use of septic systems, suggests that new development be served with public sanitary sewer service as much as is practical.

Approximately 20% of the homes in Hall County are currently served with sanitary sewers, with the remaining 80% on private septic systems. Hall County is among the counties with the highest numbers of septic systems in the state. Hall County and its communities have been diligent in planning for future sanitary sewer services, with plans in place to provide service primarily around Gainesville, along the I-985/Highway 365 corridor, and in south Hall County in general. There are no current plans to provide the eastern or northern portions of the County with sanitary sewers.

Finally, the collective values and desires of Hall County residents should also be considered a major force that shapes this plan. This plan reflects a collective desire of Hall County to manage

growth in such a way as to maximize its benefits in the form of social and economic opportunities, while minimizing its negative environmental, fiscal, and quality of life impacts, and assuring individual property rights.

IV. FUTURE DIRECTION

A close examination of the forces and trends shaping the community suggest several conclusions:

- Future growth pressure, while it may be moderated through modified planning policies, will continue to be substantial into the foreseeable future;
- The community desires to manage growth and change for the positive benefit of the community;
- Environmental and community character factors suggest a lower planned residential capacity relative to forecasted growth;
- Public service, environmental, and community character factors suggest a more compact regional pattern of development than is currently planned; and
- A strong urban core with stable and desirable neighborhoods and business districts is needed to serve as the regional anchor.

With these conclusions as a basis, this plan is built on the following vision:

The Gainesville/Hall County community will embody the best and most balanced forms of urban, suburban, and rural development. It will balance these three forms to achieve fiscal and economic health, preserve natural and cultural resources and open space, foster community facility efficiency and quality, and provide for a diverse housing stock and community livability. This will be accomplished by promoting a more compact form of growth, with new growth directed towards areas that can be efficiently provided with infrastructure and services. Infrastructure will be used as a tool to help manage growth, with infrastructure provided in support of desired types and patterns of growth, with a particular emphasis on high quality commercial, industrial, and business development. Gainesville/Hall County will have a strong economy that promotes fiscal health and prosperity for its citizens and as a means to allow local government to provide a high level of public services. Sensitive and compatible infill development that respects the historic fabric of existing neighborhoods will be encouraged as a way to maintain the viability of existing urban areas. In areas that can not be efficiently served with public services such as sewers, rural densities will be maintained. Rural character, open space, and environmental resources will be preserved through the use of conservation oriented development practices that also acknowledge long term investments by existing land owners.

This vision will in turn be supported by the following series of goals:

LAND USE

Development Quality

Gainesville and Hall County will ensure that land resources are allocated for uses that will accommodate and enhance economic development, protect natural and historic resources, ensure adequate community facilities, and provide a range of housing - resulting in the preservation of a high quality of life.

Efficient Growth

Gainesville and Hall County will grow and develop efficiently relative to the cost and timing of providing infrastructure and public services.

Fiscally Sound Growth

Gainesville and Hall County will grow and develop with a fiscally responsible land use pattern consisting of a balance of housing and jobs that supports the economic health and vitality of residents and businesses.

Urban and Rural Distinction

Existing and planned urban and suburban areas will be stable, vibrant, and well defined; development in rural areas will reflect low density that maintains true rural character.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Efficient Public Facilities and Services

In order to foster a fiscally efficient provision of services, development will occur in a more compact form, with growth oriented in and around existing and planned service areas.

Adequate Public Facilities and Services

Gainesville and Hall County will ensure that public facilities have the capacity, and are in place when needed, to support and attract growth and development and maintain quality of life.

Utilities

Gainesville and Hall County will be provided with safe and adequate utilities that are coordinated with the future land use plan and that support economically productive growth.

Parks and Leisure

Gainesville and Hall County will provide recreational and cultural opportunities for citizens of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Public Safety

Gainesville and Hall County will provide public safety services to all citizens.

Government, Health, and Education

Gainesville and Hall County will provide adequate and accessible government facilities, health care facilities, and educational facilities to all citizens.

TRANSPORTATION

Adequate Transportation System

Gainesville and Hall County will provide transportation system to move people and goods with a level of service that supports economic development goals and maintains a high quality of life.

Transportation Alternatives

Gainesville and Hall County will continue to explore and promote mechanisms to alleviate traffic congestion through use of alternative modes of transportation, and better management of the existing road network.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Conservation and Protection

Gainesville and Hall County will conserve and protect the natural environment, open spaces, and historic resources.

Open Space Preservation

Gainesville and Hall County will promote the preservation of open space systems throughout the County and City.

Historic Preservation

The preservation of historic resources is recognized as an important contributor to community livability, as well as economic development, and will be promoted.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Balanced Economy

Gainesville and Hall County will have a growing and balanced economy, which equitably benefits all segments of the population, consistent with prudent management of the County's resources.

Balance of Housing and Jobs

Gainesville and Hall County will have a fiscally healthy balance of employment and housing.

HOUSING

Quality and Diverse Housing

Gainesville and Hall County will have a balanced range of adequate and affordable housing, making it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.

Neighborhood Preservation and Housing Maintenance

Existing neighborhoods will be maintained as stable and desirable places to live and raise families.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Regional Coordination

Regional coordination will be emphasized that sets regional priorities, identifies shared needs, and finds collaborative solutions, particularly related to problems that transcend local jurisdiction boundaries.

Coordinated Growth

Growth planning and management will be coordinated between municipal and county government.

These goals guided the analysis of trends and the development of implementation policies and strategies in six plan elements. An overview and the policies for each element are presented in the following section.

V. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Future Land Use Plan for Hall County reflects an urban development pattern along the I-985/S.R. 365 corridor through and including the Cities of Buford, Flowery Branch, Oakwood, Gainesville, and Lula. Lower density suburban development is reflected around the balance of Lake Lanier and Gainesville, along the major highway corridors to the north, east and west, and in most of the southern portion of the County.

A more detailed discussion of the land use plan and policy follows by geographic area:

South Hall

Generally defined as areas lying south and west of Mundy Mill Road and Mulberry Creek, this area is characterized by suburban residential development serving the commercial/industrial corridor along I-985, Atlanta Highway and McEver Road. A key feature of this area is the amount of access to and businesses serving Lake Lanier, including Lake Lanier Islands resort and major marinas. Potential regional retail nodes are planned at I-985 and Friendship Road, and the future I-985 interchange with Martin Road. Additional community level retail exists or is planned for Gaines Ferry Road and McEver Road, Flat Creek Road and McEver Road, Spout Springs Road and Friendship Road, Spout Springs Road and I-985, and Thompson Mill Road and Old Winder Highway.

Chestnut Mountain/Candler Area

This area is generally defined as east of I-985 between Mulberry Creek and Allen Creek, this area is shown for residential development based on a large number of existing projects of this type. A significant area of industrial and mixed use development is shown in the area between Winder Highway and Old Winder Highway, taking advantage of the two I-85 interchanges that are only about 2 miles from the County line.

This area is served by the existing community commercial node at Winder Highway and Atlanta Highway. Additional community commercial nodes are also planned at Winder Highway and Martin Road, Winder Highway and Old Winder Highway/Tanners Mill Road, and Candler Highway and Poplar Springs Road.

East Hall

Lying in a crescent from Allen Creek north to the Chattahoochee River, this area features a cross-section of most of the land use categories identified in the Plan. Residential development is located along the Harmony Church Road up Gillsville and Athens Highways to Gainesville. That land use continues north around Gainesville to the Highway 365 employment corridor, and surrounds that corridor up through Lula to the County line. Residential is also shown along other state road corridors. The remainder of the area to the east is designated for rural residential densities, protecting the Cedar Creek Reservoir and continuing a pattern of lower density living that is established in much of this area.

The Highway 365 corridor features a significant industrial area taking advantage of rail access, and large areas of mixed use that are anticipated to be dominated by office and

business park development. Along either side of the office/industrial corridor, Residential development is proposed.

A regional retail node is planned at the intersection of Highway 365 and SR 52, based on its unique accessibility in this region. Community commercial nodes are planned for the intersections of Highway 365 and White Sulphur Road, Highway 365 and Belton Bridge Road, and Athens Highway and Gillsville Highway. Community level commercial services are also anticipated within Lula and Gillsville.

North Hall

This area, generally lying between the Chattahoochee River and Wahoo Creek, is characterized by rural residential densities. Residential is also designated along Lake Lanier, up the U.S. 129 corridor through Clermont, and along other state road corridors.

A mixed-use corridor is shown along U.S. 129 to accommodate some office and light industrial areas. Community Commercial nodes have been identified at U.S. 129 and Nopone Road and U.S. 129 and SR 52 (Quillian's Corner), and an additional commercial area of this scale is anticipated within Clermont.

Murrayville/Sardis Area

This area, virtually surrounded by Lake Lanier and its Wahoo Creek and Chestatee arms, is characterized by Residential development adjacent to the Lake and its two major highways, Thompson Bridge Road and Dawsonville Highway.

Mixed uses are shown along much of the major highway corridors, and community commercial nodes are shown at Thompson Bridge and Mt. Vernon Roads, Sardis Road and Dawsonville Highway, and in the Murrayville area.

Gainesville Area (south of the Lake)

The area around the City of Gainesville is characterized by Residential development. Areas to the immediate west of the City, such as along Skelton Road and Atlanta Highway, are shown as Residential, based on existing development patterns and potential for infill and redevelopment. Areas further west, including the Browns Bridge peninsula, are dominated by Residential development. Areas to the southwest, along Mountain View Road, Old Oakwood Road, and Atlanta Highway are generally non-residential, including Industrial and Mixed Use areas, and the institutional uses of the Gainesville College/Lanier Tech area. Areas to the south and southeast along I-985 near Candler Road and Athens Highway are dominated by industrial and allied uses. Areas to the east are Residential densities, and areas to the northeast along SR 365 and White Sulphur Road are shown for Industrial and Mixed Use areas.

Community commercial nodes serving this ring on the edge of and around Gainesville include Browns Bridge and McEver Roads, Mundy Mill and McEver Roads, Mundy Mill and Frontage Roads, Athens Highway at Gaines Mill Road, I-985 and Jesse Jewell Parkway, and Limestone Parkway at Clarks Bridge Road.

LAND USE DEFINITIONS, AND POLICIES

The following are the specific land use categories depicted in the future Land Use Plan, along with development policies that apply to those land use categories. The Development Policies are intended to define the circumstances under which the land use is considered appropriate.

Residential

The Residential land use categories are characterized primarily by single-family residential development at moderate densities. The Residential category allows for larger lots served with septic systems as well as smaller lots served by sanitary sewers. Road infrastructure will be developed with urban dimensions and design features such as curb and gutter drainage.

The Residential designation strikes a balance between market desires for larger lots and sufficient densities to provide a higher level of public services.

Residential includes areas containing or planned for single-family residential development and limited non-residential uses. Residential development intensity is dictated by minimum lot size based upon infrastructure provision. For those properties with both public water and sewer service available, development will be allowed on minimum ½ acre lots. For those properties with public water, but utilizing septic tanks, development will be allowed on minimum 1 acre lots. For those properties where development must rely on wells and septic tanks, development will be allowed on minimum 1½ acre lots.

Development Policies:

1. The appropriate land uses in the Residential category include single-family residential, limited neighborhood commercial and appropriately scaled institutional uses. Agricultural uses are appropriate interim land uses, but eventually it is expected that agricultural uses will transition into residential development.
2. Uses such as parks, schools, churches, and senior housing should be considered as appropriate ancillary uses when part of an integrated site design and when located and designed to minimize negative impacts.
3. Neighborhood retail uses are appropriate as indicated on the future land use map. Sites other than those indicated on the future land use map may be appropriate, subject to certain development policies as identified in the commercial land use section.
4. The lot size requirements are based on infrastructure availability. For the purpose of this policy, public sanitary sewer refers to facilities that return treated effluent to the surface water system and are not considered a consumptive use of water.
5. The integrity of environmental features should be preserved in suburban low-density areas. Measures should be implemented to ensure the protection of stream corridors and water quality, and measures should be taken to minimize adverse impacts of septic systems.
6. While this land use category is intended to promote residential character, neighborhood “connectivity” between subdivisions is encouraged wherever practical to avoid the creation of isolated islands of development, and reduce traffic impacts on the major road network.
7. Development within this land use category should be designed to be compatible with, and connect with open spaces, recreation facilities, and trails as established or proposed in county plans.

Retail Commercial

The retail commercial land use category generally includes retail uses, offices, personal services, restaurants, automotive related business, and related uses. This land use category is intended to provide retail and related uses at three levels including neighborhood retail, community retail, and regional retail.

The following standards are used to define policy and guide retail land use decisions:

Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial is a node of development containing 10,000-50,000 square feet of small scale buildings on sites totaling 2-5 acres, serving a population of approximately 2,500-5,000 living within a 1-2 mile radius. Such areas are typically made up of small shops and offices, possibly anchored by a small neighborhood grocery or drug store.

Community Commercial

Community Commercial is a node of development containing 50,000-250,000 square feet of buildings on sites totaling 5-25 acres, serving a population of approximately 10,000-50,000 living within a 2-5 mile radius. Such areas are typically anchored by a major grocery store, major drug store or large-scale retailer.

Regional Commercial

Regional Commercial is a node of development containing from 250,000 to over 1,000,000 square feet of buildings on sites totaling 25 – to over 100 acres, serving a population of 150,000 or more living within a 5-10 mile radius. Such areas are typically anchored by a number of large-scale retailers.

These categories of retail development are intended to provide a hierarchy of retail locations that are designated based upon infrastructure, suitability, and access. These sites are identified on the future land use map.

The intent of the plan for this land use category is to provide adequate land to serve the anticipated future population. An excess of retail land is illustrated on the future land use map in order to provide market flexibility; the amount of land and number of sites proposed in the future land use plan exceeds the amount of land needed to support the anticipated future population by approximately 50% in order to create this market flexibility.

The following definitions apply to Retail Commercial depicted on the Future Land Use map.

Retail Commercial

Retail Commercial includes areas containing or planned for focused retail activity, and specifically designated to provide for neighborhood, community or regional retail needs as defined within the Plan.

Retail is planned at a number of locations on the future land use plan, including:

Regional Commercial

- I-985 and Friendship Road
- I-985 and Martin Road
- SR 365 and SR 52
- Shallowford Road/Dawsonville Highway/McEver Road Area

Community Commercial

- Spout Springs and Friendship Road
- Spout Springs and Hog Mountain Road
- Gaines Ferry and McEver Road
- Flat Creek and McEver Road
- Browns Bridge and McEver Road
- Pearl Nix and Browns Bridge Road
- Atlanta Highway and Memorial Park Drive
- Winder Highway and Martin Road
- Winder Highway and Old Winder/Tanners Mill Road
- Old Winder Highway and Thompson Mill Road (Relocated)
- Candler Road and Poplar Springs Road
- Athens Highway and Gillsville Highway
- Jesse Jewell Parkway and I-985
- South Enota and Downey Blvd.
- White Sulphur Road and SR 365
- Belton Bridge and SR 365
- Limestone Parkway and Clarks Bridge Road
- Cleveland Highway and Nopone Road
- Cleveland Highway and SR 52 (Quillians Corner)
- Thompson Bridge Road and Enota Avenue
- Thompson Bridge Road (Murrayville)
- Thompson Bridge Road and Mount Vernon Road
- Dawsonville Highway and Sardis Road

At least one additional Community Commercial node is expected to be developed within Buford, Braselton, Clermont, Flowery Branch, Gillsville, Lula and Oakwood.

Neighborhood Commercial

- Spout Springs and Williams Road
- Spout Springs and Union Circle
- Spout Springs and Capitola Farm Road
- McEver and Lights Ferry
- McEver and Jim Crow Road
- Poplar Springs and Sherman Allen Road
- Candler Road and Tanners Mill Road
- Athens Highway and Roy Parks Road
- Harmony Church and Gillsville Highway
- Harmony Church and Mangrum Mill Road
- Gillsville Highway and East Hall Road
- Gillsville Highway and SR 52
- Old Cornelia and SR 52

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- SR 52 and Glade Farm Road
- SR52/Skitts Mtn./Holly Springs Road
- Hubert Stephens and Mount Vernon Road
- Jim Hood and Mount Vernon Road
- Price Road and Thomas Road
- Price Road and Cool Springs Road
- Price Road and Sardis Road
- Chestatee Road and Cool Springs Road

Several additional Neighborhood Commercial nodes are expected to be developed within Buford, Braselton, Clermont, Flowery Branch, Gillsville, Lula and Oakwood.

Retail Development Policies:

Neighborhood Retail

1. Neighborhood retail is intended to serve nearby residential areas with basic personal and retail services. Such uses are generally located in stand-alone buildings or in small commercial centers and they include uses such as convenience stores, beauty salons, specialty shops, and smaller restaurants, grocery stores and drug stores. These uses are appropriate in many areas and can help to minimize traffic by providing services near homes. On the other hand, they can also be obtrusive and have negative impacts on homes if they do not respect the neighborhood scale or are not properly located and designed.
2. Neighborhood retail should be located at a significant intersection along a collector street or arterial street, easily accessible from the area it is intended to serve.
3. Neighborhood retail clusters should be adequately spaced to avoid an over concentration in individual neighborhoods. The amount of neighborhood retail in a given neighborhood should be generally proportional to the needs of the surrounding area.
4. Adequate landscape buffering should be provided adjacent to any residential areas.
5. Building design should be compatible with surrounding residential areas with regards to materials, building scale, building massing, and relationships to streets.
6. Connections should be provided to any adjoining sidewalk or trail system that exists.
7. Parking facilities should be carefully designed to minimize visual impacts on surrounding residential areas and on the neighborhood as a whole.
8. Access should be limited to minimize impacts on surrounding residential areas.

Community Retail

1. While community retail serves a larger area, it often serves a neighborhood retail function for immediately surrounding areas. For this reason, community retail should maintain a pedestrian scale that connects to surrounding residential areas.
2. Other related but smaller uses may also occur as part of community retail, such as restaurants and smaller specialty stores. These smaller uses must be carefully coordinated from a site-planning standpoint with the larger retail uses, particularly related to traffic access and circulation.
3. Community retail uses should meet quality standards related to site layout, building configuration, materials, massing, shape, height, landscaping, signage, parking lot aesthetic and functional design, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, trash removal, lighting, storm water management, environmental protection, and others as discussed below. Community retail should be subject for land use impact review and mitigation for such issues.
4. Community retail should be approved only upon a demonstration that adequate public facilities exist or will be established by the time of opening.
5. Circulation systems should be designed to efficiently facilitate traffic flow, yet designed to discourage speeds in volumes that impede pedestrian activity and safety. Common or shared access points are encouraged. Access management principles and techniques should be incorporated in the site plan design and development phase.
6. Adequate parking should be provided, but excessive parking is discouraged. The visual impacts of parking should be minimized with interior landscape islands, and through dividing parking areas into groupings. The edges of parking lots should be screened through landscaping or other methods.
7. The location of service areas and mechanical equipment should be considered as part of the overall site design. Service areas and mechanical equipment should be screened from public view.
8. A master sign plan should be prepared illustrating the location, type, size, and material of signage.
9. Lighting should be designed to avoid spill over onto adjacent properties, including the use of cut off shields or similar features.

Regional Retail

1. Regional retail is intended to serve larger areas, and include uses such as retail/grocery superstores, large discount stores, warehouse clubs, large specialty retailers, manufacturers' outlet stores, and department stores.
2. Other related but smaller uses may also occur as part of regional retail, such as restaurants and smaller specialty stores. These smaller uses must be carefully coordinated from a site-planning standpoint with the larger retail uses, particularly related to traffic access and circulation.
3. Regional retail uses should meet quality standards related to site layout, building configuration, materials, massing, shape, height, landscaping, signage, parking lot aesthetic and functional design, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, trash removal, lighting, storm water management, environmental protection, and others as discussed below. Regional retail should be subject for land use impact review and mitigation for such issues.
4. Regional retail should be encouraged only where they have a strong network of interstate or arterial roadways to provide access.
5. Regional and community retail should be approved only upon a demonstration that adequate public facilities exist or will be established by the time of opening.
6. Circulation systems should be designed to efficiently facilitate traffic flow, yet designed to discourage speeds in volumes that impede pedestrian activity and safety. Common or shared access points are encouraged. Access management principles and techniques should be incorporated in the site plan design and development phase.
7. Adequate parking should be provided, but excessive parking is discouraged. The visual impacts of parking should be minimized with interior landscape islands, and through dividing parking areas into groupings. The edges of parking lots should be screened through landscaping or other methods.
8. The location of service areas and mechanical equipment should be considered as part of the overall site design. Service areas and mechanical equipment should be screened from public view.
9. A master sign plan should be prepared illustrating the location, type, size, and material of signage.
10. Lighting should be designed to avoid spill over onto adjacent properties, including the use of cut off shields or similar features.

Industrial

The industrial land use category includes a wide range of office, business, light industrial, manufacturing, research and development uses, and support commercial uses. Industrial uses involve a significant number of vehicle trips, particularly in the morning and evening peak hours. They also involve a mixture of automobile and truck traffic. They also may prefer rail access and are typically located near major highway facilities in areas naturally buffered or away from residential areas.

Industrial uses are generally planned for one of several areas including:

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- The industrial area along Candler Road, which is an area that has historically been used for industrial uses.
- The Interstate 985 Corridor generally around Buford and between Flowery Branch and Oakwood. This is an area recommended generally for lighter industrial uses with some heavier industrial uses anticipated along the railroad. Some of this area is already served with sanitary sewers and the remainder is planned for sanitary sewer service pursuant to a cooperative agreement between Hall County and Flowery Branch.
- The Interstate 985 Corridor between Candler Road and Athens Highway. This area supports more intense industrial uses, especially southeast of the Highway.
- The Winder Highway area around Road Atlanta, which has a high quality of development and has good access to both I-85 and I-985 via Winder Highway.
- State Route 365 north of Gainesville. This area includes some existing development, but also provides a long-term supply of industrial land with access to both regional highway and rail systems. Sanitary sewer service will be provided to this area through a cooperative agreement between the City of Gainesville and Hall County.

The following definition applies to Industrial depicted on the Future Land Use map.

Industrial

Industrial includes areas containing or planned for industrial activity including manufacturing, processing, mining and major warehousing and distribution facilities.

Industrial Development Policies:

1. The appropriate land uses in this category include manufacturing, processing, mining, and major warehousing and distribution facilities.
2. Industrial uses should meet quality standards designed to mitigate negative impacts on any surrounding non-industrial uses.
3. The most desired form of industrial uses is that of an “employment campus” with an integration and coordination of uses, although freestanding industrial uses are also anticipated.
4. Industrial uses should be located within easy access to an arterial roadway and the interstate highway system, and take advantage of rail locations that are compatible with surrounding development.
5. Employer transportation programs are encouraged to reduce the percentage of trips made by single-occupancy vehicles
6. Vehicular access should be designed to maximize efficiency and minimize negative impacts on the level of service of adjacent roads.
7. On-site amenities such as walking trails and eating areas are encouraged.
8. Accessory uses designed to serve on-site employees, such as restaurants, day care centers, and personal services are also encouraged but only when integrated with and subordinate to the primary business uses.

Mixed-Use

The category of mixed use is intended to create a land use environment where compatible land use can be located in close proximity to each other. This can be desirable for several reasons. First, allowing compatible and mutually supportive uses in close proximity to each other can reduce the length and amount of automobile trips on the road system, thereby helping to reduce congestion and negative environmental impacts caused by automobile traffic. Second, a well-planned mixture of land uses and help to create a positive transition of land uses, with less intensive uses serving as a transition between more intensive uses and single family neighborhoods. At the same time, the idea of mixed uses should not be interpreted as allowing for the intrusion of incompatible land uses into single-family neighborhoods that create negative land use impacts. On the contrary, mixed use is intended, in part, as a tool help protect neighborhoods.

The following definition applies to Mixed-Use depicted on the Future Land Use map.

Mixed-Use

Mixed-Use includes areas containing or planned for a mixture of light industrial and office-based employment, retail activities, and institutional uses, as follows:

Office/Business Parks – Anticipated to make up approximately 65 percent of this land area providing high quality employment areas such as offices, employment based institutions, “flex” office/warehouses, and research and development facilities, with limited light assembly and warehousing.

Limited Retail – Anticipated making up approximately 25 percent of this land area providing support retail for business parks, neighborhood office and service uses, and specialty retail for surrounding land uses.

Residential – Approximately 10 percent of this land area is anticipated to provide supporting residential development in single family, townhouse, or multi-family developments of up to 12 units per acre. Such residential development should be in response to commercial and industrial development, and restricted to the Gainesville sewer service districts.

Mixed-Use Development Policies:

1. The dominant use in the mixed-use category is intended to be office/business park use. Retail uses are intended to be supportive of the job-based uses. Residential uses are also intended to be supportive of and in response to the establishment of job-based uses. Residential uses are only anticipated in those mixed use areas in the Gainesville sewer service districts, and the percentage of residential development may be greater on certain properties based on surrounding land uses. While not every individual development must meet the ratio guidelines identified above, the intent of this land use category is to provide for the mutually supportive mixture of land uses with business uses being the primary use.
2. Because this land use category is intended in part as a transition between more intensive uses and single-family uses, all sides of a building open to view to the public should display a similar level of architectural quality. Building materials should be limited to brick, masonry, stucco, wood, fiber cement siding, wood shingle, wood siding, cultured stone, or similar materials.
3. Buildings and sites should be designed to emphasize pedestrian orientation. A coordinated pedestrian system should be provided throughout the development including connections between uses on the site, in between the site, and adjacent properties and rights-of-way where appropriate.
4. Circulation systems should be designed to efficiently facilitate traffic flow, yet designed to discourage speeds in volumes that impede pedestrian activity and safety. Common or shared access points are encouraged.
5. Adequate parking should be provided, but excessive parking is discouraged. The visual impacts of parking should be minimized with interior landscape islands, and through dividing parking areas into groupings. The edges of parking lots should be screened through landscaping or other methods.
6. The location of service areas and mechanical equipment should be considered as part of the overall site design. Service areas and mechanical equipment should be screened from public view.
7. A master sign plan should be prepared illustrating the location, type, size, and material of signage.
8. Lighting should be designed to avoid spill over onto adjacent properties, including the use of cut off shields or similar features.

Public/Institutional

Public/Institutional includes areas containing or planned for public and institutional uses including governmental, educational and medical facilities, houses of worship, residential child care, and institutional facilities. Specific areas are not identified for most future institutional uses, but appropriate criteria for their location are specified in other land use designations. Once institutional uses are established, extra care should be used to insure that surrounding development is compatible with the institutional uses function.

Public/Institutional Development Policies:

1. Institutional uses should be located at a significant intersection along a collector street or arterial street; easily accessible from the area it is intended to serve.
2. Adequate landscape buffering should be provided adjacent to any residential areas. Surrounding land uses and site planning should be sensitive to the needs and long term function of the institutional use.
3. Building design should be compatible with surrounding residential areas with regards to materials, building scale, building massing, and relationships to streets.
4. Parking facilities should be carefully designed to minimize visual impacts on surrounding residential areas and on the neighborhood as a whole.

Transportation/Utilities/Communications

Transportation/Utilities/Communications includes areas containing or planned for major transportation, utilities, or communications facilities.

Parks/Recreation/Conservation

Parks/Recreation/Conservation includes areas containing or planned for parks and recreation facilities (including marinas and associated accessory commercial uses), permanently designated open space, and conservation areas, including buffers along waterways and other environmental features.

Master Planned Communities

Hall County recognizes that quality, balanced growth is desirable and occasionally there will be opportunities to plan and develop large contiguous parcels as new, master planned mixed-use communities throughout the County. These master planned communities may be desirable and can complement the Comprehensive Plan's stated goals. They can enhance economic development, protect natural and historic resources, ensure adequate community facilities, provide a range of housing types, improve the balance between jobs and housing, and achieve a higher standard of quality development across larger portions of the County. The approval of large-scale master planned communities, including the appropriate amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use map, is anticipated when compatible with the following policies.

Master Planned Communities Development Policies:

1. A master planned community should have significant frontage or direct access to a state or county arterial highway.
2. Master Planned Communities should include a mix of commercial, business, residential, community, and open space, in a configuration that builds on the benefits of mixed-use development.
3. A significant percentage of a master planned community should be recreation, conservation, and/or open space, reflecting environmentally sensitive site planning and conservation practices.
4. The developer should demonstrate a commitment to partner with the County in order to ensure the provision of adequate public facilities to support the phased development of the master planned community.
5. Comprehensive Plan amendments proposed under these policies for a master planned community must contain a minimum of 500 contiguous acres.

City of Gainesville Annexation Areas

Through the joint planning process of the City and County in this plan, the land uses in most areas of future annexation by the City have been agreed to by both jurisdictions. Over the years, voluntary annexation of land into the City of Gainesville has created small pockets of County land that are surrounded by or significantly influenced by lands within the City limits. While this situation can happen along any boundary, City and unincorporated areas are particularly intermingled along the southern and western edges of Gainesville. Because of the potential for infill and redevelopment, and fine grain of uses in many of these areas, well conceived projects may be proposed for annexation that are not in specific conformance with the land use designation for that area. In order to protect the interests of area residents and landowners, while allowing for some flexibility in such situations, specific policies are offered to help manage such requests.

Policies:

1. Where an annexation request is made in clear non-conformance with the County land use designation for the property, the City and County staffs will work together to try and develop a program to make the proposal compatible with City and County development goals prior to formal submittal of the application for County Land Use review.
2. When the area proposed to be annexed is surrounded by City land and no impact on County territory is identified, it is the intent of the County to defer to the City of Gainesville on land use impact related issues, unless extraordinary circumstances dictate otherwise.

In addition to the Future Land Use Plan for the County, there are additional planning elements with goals and policies that will influence the future of the County. The elements are summarized following the Future Land Use Map and additional information can be found in the complete plan element as part of the Gainesville /Hall County Comprehensive Plan.

INSERT FUTURE LAND USE MAP FOR HALL COUNTY

VI. TRANSPORTATION

OVERVIEW

Transportation planning is a continuous process in which planning factors, such as growth and needs assessments, are monitored and deficiencies are identified and evaluated. Long-range transportation plans cover at least a 20-year period and must be updated regularly to reflect changes in development patterns, travel demand, legislative requirements, political issues, available funding levels, and other factors. Hall County's growth necessitates a proactive process to support quality decision-making in regards to transportation facilities.

Transportation in Hall County has reached a significant milestone. The U.S. Census 2000 population for the Hall County was 139,277, making it one of 76 newly designated urbanized areas nationwide. That designation triggers federal requirements impacting the transportation planning process. Urbanized areas are required to establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and comply with the federally regulated metropolitan planning process. An MPO is made up of representatives from local governments, the State Department of Transportation, and local/regional transportation and planning agencies and authorities. The MPO's duties and responsibilities are outlined in Title 23 CFR Part 450 of the U. S. Code of Federal Regulations in April 2004.

On February 25, 2003, Georgia's Governor designated the Hall County Planning Department as the MPO for the Gainesville-Hall County Transportation Study (GHTS). The newly designated GHTS metropolitan planning process is expected to establish a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive framework for making transportation investment decisions.

The GHTS process was launched on January 9, 2004. The MPO's Committees met and adopted the MPO Bylaws and held their first official meeting. MPOs have an established schedule for their transportation planning work program. Generally, each MPO is required to develop a short-range transportation improvement program (TIP) based on a long-range transportation plan. Development of the plans follows a federally prescribed transportation planning process.

Based on population projections and transportation demand, the future transportation needs of the community cannot be met by the existing transportation facilities and services. Additional improvements are needed to maintain an acceptable level of service. The following policies were developed to help guide decisions in Hall County related to transportation needs.

POLICIES

The policies below have been developed during the comprehensive planning process with significant citizen input. These policies are directly related to the goals and objectives set forth for transportation in Hall County and are important initial implementation steps, providing greater detail to guide decision-makers.

Aduquate Transportation System

- **Policy 1:** Hall County will establish a goal for arterial and collector roads in all urban and suburban areas of Level of Service E, and for arterial and collector roads in all rural areas of Level of Service D.
- **Policy 2:** Hall County will develop a land use plan and review development approvals based on the goal of exceeding or maintaining the above levels of service on all roads that currently meet this standard.
- **Policy 3:** Hall County will take actions to alleviate congestion on those roads that do not currently meet this standard.
- **Policy 4:** Hall County will place a priority on transportation projects that directly support economic development goals.

Transporataion Alternatives

- **Policy 1:** Hall County will develop standards to ensure that sidewalks are developed along urban and suburban roadways.
- **Policy 2:** Hall County will continue to work with Hall Area Transit to provide an appropriate transit system to serve the community.
- **Policy 3:** Hall County will explore transportation demand programs to alleviate congestion in major employment areas, and continue to support carpooling activities in the County.

Hall County will strive to provide adequate transportation options and level of services to the current and future residents and business of the County. The following programs illustrate the course the County will pursue to achieve the community vision.

PROGRAMS

These programs illustrate the first steps in achieving the long-term goals and objectives established for transportation in Hall County. Many of these steps require collaboration with the City of Gainesville or other local jurisdictions. These programs break down into four major categories. For the most part, the County will be the lead implementation agencies.

Growth Management/Regulatory

The County has begun to revise their development codes (zoning, subdivision, etc.) to conform to the comprehensive plan. The County is focusing on targeting urban/suburban density residential development in and around its municipalities where public facilities and services are more readily available. Additionally, new zone districts are being created for modern industrial and commercial uses; County infrastructure investments (e.g., roads, sewer lines) will be targeted in these areas.

The County may consider adoption of regulation dealing with the following transportation programs.

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- Transportation Demand Management
- Clean Air Campaign
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements
- Cleaner Fuels and Vehicle Inspections, and
- Passenger Rail

Financial/Fiscal

Hall County will examine a range of tools to deal with the fiscal impacts of development, including impact fees (which the County already has in place for some facilities/services), adequate public facility standards, and fiscal impact assessment requirements. These tools will help to ensure that new development is provided with a transportation system that is of a type and quality that does not undermine the fiscal health of the County.

Capital Improvement

Road improvements are on the Capital Improvements Budget on an annual basis. The most costly of potential solutions to transportation problems can be infrastructure enhancements. The most cost effective infrastructure or capital improvement enhancements are the development of High Occupancy Vehicle facilities and Intelligent Transportation System features. Road widening and new road may be necessary in Hall over the next 20-25 years, because of new growth. These issues are addressed in the MPO and will be included in future planning efforts.

Intergovernmental Coordination

The Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization is the principal intergovernmental coordination element for transportation planning. The transportation planning process is underway and GHTS is conducting the GDOT process following federal guidelines. The process is a proven, resilient and effective method of assessing existing and future transportation conditions in a land use setting. The Gainesville-Hall Comprehensive Plan, developed during the establishment of the GHTS process, will assist the City and County in integrating land use and transportation decision-making to accurately anticipate future need.

VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

Community facilities are inclusive of services, infrastructure, and amenities provided to the public by the government or other agency. Community facilities include: water supply and treatment facilities, sewer systems and treatment facilities, solid waste or landfill sites and collection services, general government services and facilities, public safety services and facilities, fire protection and EMS services and facilities, recreation facilities, schools, hospitals and public health facilities, libraries and other cultural facilities. Through the House Bill 489 Service Delivery Strategy and general service management practices, Hall County in conjunction with Gainesville has been able to provide residents and local businesses with effective and efficient services. As the County's population grows, the demand for services will also increase. The ability to provide these services at an equivalent or higher level over time will strongly influence the strength of the County's economy. Through independent planning efforts, including the North Georgia Metropolitan Water Planning District and the CIE study due for completion in concert with this plan, projections and assessment of future demand for services have been analyzed to determine necessary improvements to maintain an expected level of service in each category.

The maintenance and construction of community facilities are essential to the protection of the health, safety, welfare and quality of life for the public. Community facilities should enhance the community's character and provide a sense of place. Facilities should also be environmentally sensitive, consistent with the urban form, maintain desired levels of service where applicable, maximize existing infrastructure, and be cost efficient. Community facilities in the form of infrastructure are critically important to the economic development capabilities of the County. Natural and cultural opportunities provided through community facilities are important for social interaction and provide amenity value for the community. It is important to enhance community facilities where possible and identify deficiencies to accommodate the expected population growth of both the City of Gainesville and Hall County.

POLICIES

These policies have been developed during the comprehensive planning process with significant citizen input. They are directly related to the goals and objectives set forth for Community Facilities in Hall County and are an initial, important implementation step, providing greater detail to guide decision-makers.

Efficient Public Facilities and Services

- **Policy 1:** Development will be targeted to areas with adequate public facilities and services through zoning code and map revisions. Allowable densities will be reduced in rural areas that cannot be efficiently served.
- **Policy 2:** Infrastructure investment will be focused in identified growth corridors and zoning districts appropriate for commercial, industrial, and suburban/urban density residential uses.

Adequate Public Facilities and Services

- **Policy 1:** The County will explore standards for ensuring that public facilities and services are available concurrently with development that requires such facilities.
- **Policy 2:** The County will explore adding fiscal impact analysis requirements to their development codes to establish a solid foundation for fairly allocating infrastructure costs.
- **Policy 3:** The County will explore a maintenance and enforcement program for septic systems to ensure that such systems adequately function in a fashion that protects public health and water quality.

Utilities

- **Policy 1:** The City and County will cooperate to extend sanitary sewer service to areas targeted for commercial growth, such as along the Highway 365 Corridor. The County will continue to pursue the extension of sanitary sewer to areas targeted for commercial growth in south Hall.
- **Policy 2:** Low-density rural residential uses will not be served with sanitary sewer services except in unusual circumstances. Such services will be focused in areas planned for medium- and high-density residential development in the County and City.

Parks and Leisure

- **Policy 1:** The City and County will complete their respective parks plans and identify future park sites necessary to meet or exceed acceptable level of service standards for parks and recreation facilities.
- **Policy 2:** The City and County parks plans will promote a linked system of parks and open spaces.

Public Safety

- **Policy 1:** Gainesville and Hall County will explore financing mechanisms such as impact fees, adequate public facility ordinances, and general funds to ensure that adequate levels of service are maintained for fire and police protection and emergency services.

Government, Health, and Education

- **Policy 1:** The City and County will work closely with the Hall County and Gainesville School systems to provide adequate funding for projected school expansion, including the use of the Special Local Option Sales Tax, which have been utilized to fund school construction in the past.
- **Policy 2:** Hall County will use impact fees to fund projected library expansion needs.
- **Policy 3:** The City and County will cooperate with public and private health care providers to ensure that there is adequate land suitably zoned in appropriate locations for expanded and new health care facilities.

Hall County will strive to provide adequate public and community services and facilities to the current and future residents and businesses of the County. The following programs illustrate the course the County will pursue to achieve the community vision.

PROGRAMS

These programs illustrate the first steps in achieving the long-term goals and objectives established for community facilities in Hall County. Many of these steps require collaboration with the City of Gainesville or other local jurisdictions. These programs break down into four major categories. For the most part, the County and City will be the lead implementation agencies.

Regulatory/Growth Management

The County has begun to revise their development codes (zoning, subdivision, etc.) to conform to the comprehensive plan. The County is focusing on targeting urban/suburban density residential development in and around its municipalities where public facilities and services are more readily available. Additionally, new zone districts are being created for modern industrial and commercial uses; County infrastructure investments (e.g., roads, sewer lines) will be targeted in these areas.

The County will continue working to protect water quality by implementing its Storm Water Management Plan and exploring a system to require periodic maintenance of septic systems to protect public health and the environment.

Finally, the City and County will continue working on their parks master plans ensuring coordination of trails and other linkages between the two systems.

These regulatory revisions and plans, some of which are already well underway, should be completed in 1-2 years.

Fiscal/Financial

Both jurisdictions will examine a range of tools to deal with the fiscal impacts of development, including impact fees (which the County already has in place for some facilities/services), adequate public facility standards, and fiscal impact assessment requirements. These tools will help to ensure that new development is of a type and quality that does not undermine the fiscal health of the City and County. The time horizon for this effort is 2-3 years.

Capital Investment

The City and the County have committed to providing infrastructure in areas targeted for development in the comprehensive plan. Most urban/suburban density residential development will take place in and around the County's municipalities, including the City of Gainesville. The City is also committed to upgrading infrastructure in areas with potential for infill and redevelopment housing. These programs will have a long-term time frame of at least 5 years.

Interagency Cooperation

The City and County will work closely to provide infrastructure to targeted growth areas such as the Highway 365 Corridor. A joint effort is already underway to provide sanitary

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sewer service in this area. Gainesville and Hall County have initiated discussion regarding a joint, coordinated annexation policy that reflects comprehensive plan policies. Additionally, the County is already exploring cooperative infrastructure policy and investments with its other municipalities. Hall County is updating the House Bill 489 Service Delivery Strategy to reflect the recent adoption of impact fees for provision of community facilities and services. The horizon for these efforts will extend over the next decade on a continuing basis.

While many of these programs will be implemented over an extended period, there are specific short-term actions that can be taken to ensure that the efforts are begun and demonstrate progress. These actions are presented in the Implementation section of this plan.

VIII. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

OVERVIEW

Hall County has a number of natural and cultural resources that contribute to the character and quality of life in the community. The unique feature of Lake Lanier offers a tourism and recreational destination that enhances the local economy. The scenic beauty of the lake and the topography of north Hall County, combined with the rural character of this area, are elements that draw new residents to the community and make current residents proud to call it home. The natural green spaces along river corridors and in wetlands, forested areas, and other open spaces provide habitat for wildlife and are important for maintaining a healthy ecosystem in Hall County. The watersheds provide quality drinking water to the citizens, and maintenance of the health of these watersheds impacts protected species.

As demand for development of the currently rural areas of north Hall County intensifies, the natural resources will be increasingly impacted. Analysis of population growth in Hall County shows a steady demand for new housing, even in the currently somewhat rural north Hall County. Development can have an impact on not only the environmental quality of an area, but a visual and scenic impact as well. In the future, land that currently is valued for its open and natural state and contributes to a healthy ecosystem will likely be reduced, thereby changing the character of the community and increasing risk to the natural resources. The County has measures in place to ensure a continuation of the environmental quality of the natural resources by establishing buffers for streams and rivers according to the rules for Environmental Planning Criteria and creating regulations and guidelines for storm water and wastewater management.

Like the natural resources, the historic and cultural resources are a source of pride and opportunity for the community. Hall County must continue to preserve its historic resources, because historic buildings and other structures are physical links to the community's past. Historic resources also provide evidence of earlier ways of life, which can be studied and enjoyed by current and future generations. Preservation can also help the County maintain a "sense of place" in the community and protect unique architectural structures. Historic preservation can also stimulate the local economy through job creation and tourism, among other benefits. Hall County should approach growth and development in a way that recognizes the value and importance of the historic resources. The following is an outline of policies that the County will use to guide future decisions in regard to cultural and natural resources in the community.

POLICIES

This section sets forth the natural and cultural resource policies that have been developed during the comprehensive planning process with significant citizen input. These policies are directly related to the goals and objectives set forth for natural and cultural resources in Hall County and are important initial implementation steps that provide greater detail to guide decision-makers.

Conservation and Protection

- **Policy 1:** The County will review and upgrade, as necessary, resource protection standards in their development codes, including but not limited to floodplain management, watershed protection, soil erosion, tree protection, and riparian areas.

- **Policy 2:** Extend public infrastructure and services to areas targeted for development in the comprehensive plan and refrain from providing services in areas such as sensitive natural areas that should be protected from intense development.
- **Policy 3:** Consider alternative transportation policies that reduce the amount of vehicle trips and require more detailed traffic impact analysis/mitigation for major projects.

Open Space

- **Policy 1:** Complete County parks plan and identify future park sites. Base land acquisition on these plans.
- **Policy 2:** Revise County development code to require a minimum open space set aside in all developments.
-

Historic Preservation

- **Policy 1:** Based upon a comprehensive preservation plan, the County will consider and put into place tools to protect historic resources from demolition or incompatible development.
- **Policy 2:** Hall County will target cultural resources for protection in determining open space set-asides as part of any conservation subdivision process.
- **Policy 3:** The County will promote the use of economic incentives for historic preservation projects to complement protective regulations.

Hall County will strive to achieve the vision of the community and protect and preserve the local cultural and natural resources through a series of programs.

PROGRAMS

These programs illustrate the first steps in achieving the long-term goals and objectives established for natural and cultural resources in Hall County. Many of these steps require collaboration with the City of Gainesville or other local jurisdictions. These programs break down into four major categories. For the most part, the County and City will be the lead implementation agencies.

Regulatory/Growth Management

The County has begun to revise their development codes (zoning, subdivision, etc.) to conform to the comprehensive plan. Many of these revisions are directly related to natural and cultural resources. For example, the County is revamping its tree protection and open space standards and creating a conservation subdivision process. In the second phase of the UDC Update, the County will review and update its existing hillside and watershed protection standards and soil erosion control ordinances, drawing on guidance provided by the North Georgia Water District model ordinances.

Local Historic Preservation Regulations

The County will undertake a local preservation plan and will consider adopting local historic preservation regulations to provide a greater measure of protection for cultural resources and landmarks. The time frame for these regulatory efforts will be 2-4 years.

Fiscal/Financial

Both jurisdictions will examine a range of tools to deal with the cost of growth, including impact fees (which the County already has) and fiscal impact assessment requirements for new development. The County has conducted a parks impact fee background study and is considering adopting park/open space impact fees. Moreover, both the City and County are undertaking comprehensive parks plans and will acquire open space in accord with those plans, which will include natural resource areas. The City and County will also promote the use of federal and state tax incentives for historic preservation projects. The time horizon for this effort is 2-3 years.

Capital Investment

The City and the County have already initiated a program to provide water and sewer services to areas targeted for development in the plan. Additionally, the County and City will refrain from making capital investments in rural areas that are not slated for urban/suburban intensity growth, thus providing an additional measure of protection for natural and cultural resources. It is estimated that the initial water/sewer construction will take 2-4 years.

In addition, the City and County enjoy the benefits of an array of natural areas such as the Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve. These areas will be maintained and expanded based on completion of the City/County parks master plans. Cultural sites and resources should be considered in the parks master plans.

Interagency Cooperation

The City and County have begun exploring a joint, coordinated annexation policy that reflects the comprehensive plan policies. The time horizon for this effort is 2-3 years.

Additionally, continued cooperation with local non-profit agencies such as the Gainesville/Hall County Trust for Historic Preservation and the Gainesville/Hall County Historical Society will enhance the opportunity to preserve the community's historic resources. The time horizon for this effort is ongoing.

These programs may be implemented over an extended period. There are additional actions that can be taken to ensure that the efforts are begun and demonstrate progress. These actions are set forth in the implementation section of this plan.

IX. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

Hall County has enjoyed a strong economic base over the past several decades. Historically, the economy has revolved around the agriculture and manufacturing industries. As the area continues to evolve in the first part of the century, local leaders feel the challenge is to promote and foster broader employment opportunities and economic diversity. Hall County should continue to exploit its natural and cultural assets to attract and retain employers. The County is striving to work with the City of Gainesville in unison to create an environment conducive for economic development and diversification, along with local agencies and organizations connected to the economic and development community. Hall County will continue to support and enhance the economic viability of its hallmark industries while being flexible enough to respond to market forces. The projected population increase and growing labor force will afford opportunities to capitalize on the growing regional marketplace in the planning horizon.

Hall County's economic development strategy entails sustaining existing development and working collaboratively to establish new business opportunity. Hall County can develop standards that will attract businesses, which are sensitive to the community character, natural environment, and complement the existing business community. These tenets are embodied in the following Economic Development Policies.

POLICIES

The policies below have been developed during the comprehensive planning process with significant citizen input. These policies are directly related to the goals and objectives set forth for economic development in Hall County and are important initial implementation steps, providing greater detail to guide decision-makers.

Balanced Economy

- **Policy 1:** The City and County will work together and with other agencies to attract new job-generating businesses with above-average wages. Such efforts will include initiatives such as marketing, infrastructure investment, and making adequate land available for commercial and industrial development.
- **Policy 2:** The City and County will remove unnecessary regulatory and other impediments to the retention and expansion of existing businesses while ensuring that infill and redevelopment are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Policy 3:** Both jurisdictions will revise their land development regulations and zoning maps to provide appropriate locations for a range of retail uses (e.g., neighborhood, regional). Quality standards should be put in place to ensure that retail uses enhance the character of the County and protect residential areas.
- **Policy 4:** The County will protect natural and cultural resources that provide an essential foundation for tourism and work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to identify and provide needed infrastructure to support tourism.

Balance of Housing and Jobs

- **Policy 1:** The County will target capital investments in infrastructure for uses and locations that will provide a better fiscal balance for both jurisdictions.
- **Policy 2:** The County will make adequate land available in appropriate locations for commercial, industrial, and other business developments that are significant local tax generators.
- **Policy 3:** The County will revise their development code to ensure that zone districts are available that accommodate modern commercial and industrial uses in a quality environment.
- **Policy 4:** The County will continue their tradition of making available a wide range of housing to accommodate workers in local businesses.
- **Policy 5:** The County will reduce overall residential densities throughout its jurisdiction to ensure a better balance between residential and nonresidential uses.

These policies can help guide decision makers on issues regarding economic development, however, specific programs have been developed as part of the planning process to expand the level of guidance to achieve the vision the community has established.

PROGRAMS

These programs illustrate the first steps in achieving the long-term goals and objectives established for housing in Hall County. Many of these steps require collaboration with the City of Gainesville or other local jurisdictions. These programs break down into four major categories as noted below. The City and County will cooperate closely with two other agencies that have a major role in economic development, the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Regulatory/Growth Management

The City and County have begun to revise their development codes (zoning, subdivision, etc.) to conform to the comprehensive plan. Specifically, for example, the County is creating new commercial and industrial zone districts to accommodate modern businesses uses. Design and development standards are also being drafted to ensure that new development is of high quality and environmentally sensitive. The County will also study changes so that its zoning map better conforms to the future land use map in terms of location of new commercial and industrial development. The City, for example, will revisit their current zoning classifications and lot sizes, and make revisions based on the future land use map and citizen comments to lower densities in established neighborhoods. The time frame for this effort will be 2-4 years.

Fiscal/Financial

Both jurisdictions will examine a range of tools to deal with the fiscal impacts of development, including impact fees (which the County already has in place for some facilities/services) and fiscal impact assessment requirements. These tools will help to ensure that new development pays its fair share of the costs of public services and infrastructure necessitated by new growth. The time horizon for this effort is 2-3 years.

Capital Investment

The City and the County have already initiated a program to provide water and sewer services to areas targeted for business development in the plan. This is a multi-million dollar effort that will help promote appropriate business development and bring a better balance to the property tax base in the County and City. Additionally, the County and City will refrain from making capital investments in rural areas that are not slated for urban/suburban intensity growth. It is estimated that the initial water/sewer construction projects will take 2-4 years. The City and County will also continue to maintain and upgrade facilities utilized by tourists such as the Clarks Bridge Rowing Venue. These programs will have a long-term time frame of at least 5 years.

Interagency Coordination

The City and County will continue to cooperate with and lend financial support to the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce in its efforts to improve regional marketing. Also, both jurisdictions will work with and support the Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote tourism in the County and to identify and provide needed infrastructure to support tourism. Additionally, they will work with educational institutions in the County to provide support for local businesses through training and other initiatives. These programs are currently underway and will continue throughout the planning period.

These programs may be implemented over an extended period, there are additional actions that can be taken to ensure that the efforts are begun and demonstrate progress. Additional actions are set forth in the Implementation section of this plan.

X. HOUSING

OVERVIEW

The availability and future demand for housing in Hall County are important elements in the Comprehensive Plan for the County. Hall County recognizes a need to maintain a diverse and affordable housing base to allow the people who work in the community to live in the community. It also recognizes the need to provide a full range of housing choices relative to economic development objectives to attract a more diverse economic base. Adjusted estimates to 2025 indicate a potential demand for 125,000-135,000 housing units by 2025 countywide (including all incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county). There are many factors that affect the ability to produce housing units; among them are the availability of usable land with little or no natural constraints such as steep slope, presence of floodplain, or natural resources that need to be protected, and access to utilities.

When new residential development possible under the recommendations of the Future Land Use Plan is combined with the existing housing stock, it is estimated that the County will have a total countywide (including, Gainesville, Flowery Branch, Oakwood, Beulah, Lula, and Clermont) inventory of housing units somewhere around 130,340 units. Analysis of trends shows a future demand for mostly single-family detached residence in the County.

Trends indicate a strong demand for larger units that are more affordable. However, there is still a strong community desire for affordable housing to be of a high quality. This balance creates a challenge for the County in providing opportunities for a diverse housing mix. There is also both a desire and need in the community for high quality, high-end housing. The Lake Lanier and other local features provide a backdrop and unique opportunity for high-end housing options.

A primary concern with the location of new housing is the availability of utilities and the efficiency with which they can be provided. Additional concerns about the location of housing are that County residents have a range of choices for the location of housing, and that the housing is well integrated with other non-residential uses to promote fewer auto trips and accessibility to employment without auto dependency.

There are many opportunities for new housing developed on "greenfield" sites in both the City and County. Housing in these areas will continue the suburban character of the area. It is likely that green field suburban development will be market driven due to the cost of providing new service lines and transportation networks.

As with any community, there are portions of the population that may require flexible housing options because of a special need. One group of the population that may require flexible housing options is the Hispanic population. Hispanics account for 20% of the population in Hall County and while the 2000 Census is estimated to have more accurately accounted for the Hispanic demographics, this is still a group that is significantly undercounted. Statistics for Hispanics in Hall County show a lower than average household income, as well as larger household sizes (5 people per household versus 2.5 for the general population. Housing types and affordability options have been discussed. There are homebuyer education programs available in the community, and there are indications that these are being taken advantage of by the Hispanic population. Affordability of housing plays a significant role in overcrowding conditions. With the market rate for a one-bedroom apartment in Hall County at \$480 dollars a

month, a person working for minimum wage of (\$5.15 per hour) would have to work seventy-two hours per week to afford a one-bedroom apartment. The National Low Income Housing Coalition indicates that the hourly wage necessary to afford a one-bedroom apartment in 2003 in Hall County would be \$9.23 per hour. Situations such as this cause overcrowding of housing because it requires two minimum wage incomes to afford one bedroom.

The aging and elderly population is another part of the community that has special housing needs. The demand for lifestyle communities for empty nesters and alternative independent and assisted living for the elderly are housing options that will experience an expanded demand over the planning period. Agencies such as the Guest House provide services for the frail elderly population. Hall County will strive to achieve and maintain a diverse availability of housing options in the community by establishing policies to guide the decisions related to housing.

POLICIES

The policies below have been developed during the comprehensive planning process with significant citizen input. These policies are directly related to the goals and objectives set forth for housing in Hall County and are important initial implementation steps, providing greater detail to guide decision-makers.

Quality and Diverse Housing

- **Policy 1:** The City and County will undertake necessary studies and implementing actions to ensure a full range of housing is available to workers, including both affordable units and homes for higher-end wage earners.
- **Policy 2:** Both jurisdictions will review and revise their development codes as appropriate to address special housing needs and opportunities such as elderly housing and accessory dwelling units. They will also review existing regulations and remove any unnecessary impediments to affordable housing.
- **Policy 3:** The City and County will consider standards to improve the quality of residential development to maintain community character and ensure stable long-term property values and neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Preservation and Housing Maintenance

- **Policy 1:** The County will pursue more aggressive building and housing code enforcement to prevent neighborhood deterioration.
- **Policy 2:** The County will consider revisions to their development code to better ensure that new commercial and industrial development is compatible with residential areas, focusing on issues such as lighting, buffering, signage, and landscaping.
- **Policy 3:** The County will work with local organizations and other interested agencies to initiate maintenance educational programs for first-time homeowners.

These policies can help guide decision makers on issues regarding housing, however, specific programs have been developed as part of the planning process.

PROGRAMS

These programs illustrate the first steps in achieving the long-term goals and objectives established for housing in Hall County. Many of these steps require collaboration with the City of Gainesville or other local jurisdictions. These programs break down into four major categories. In establishing an effective implementation effort, both jurisdictions will work closely with the established area-housing agency, the Gainesville Nonprofit Development Foundation.

Regulatory/Growth Management

The County has begun to revise the development codes (zoning, subdivision, etc.) to implement the comprehensive plan. The County is focusing on targeting urban/suburban density residential development in and around its municipalities and ensuring that such development is of high quality through design and development standards. New use regulations will make provision for special needs housing such as a range of housing options for the elderly. Additionally, new provisions will be included in the UDC to protect existing residential neighborhoods from incompatible development that lead to deterioration of these areas. The City will focus on infill and redevelopment to ensure that new development is of high quality through design and development standards. Provisions will be made through the UDC update and the foundation of Neighborhood Planning Units to ensure protection of established neighborhoods from incompatible development. Policies will strive to balance the housing demands with the communities needs for housing.

Another important initiative will be to undertake a series of plans and studies. The County will work to produce a study of housing needs tied to the planned economic development objectives, notably attracting firms with higher paying jobs. At the same time, the City will prepare a Coordinated Housing Plan as part of its urban area designation. It will cooperate with the Gainesville Nonprofit Development Foundation, the area's housing agency, on this plan.

The City and the County will also pursue more aggressive building/zoning code enforcement programs to help protect against deterioration of existing residential structures. The time frame for this effort will be 2-4 years for the code revisions. The code enforcement will be a continuing effort throughout the planning period.

Fiscal/Financial

Both jurisdictions will examine a range of tools to deal with the fiscal impacts of development, including impact fees (which the County already has in place for some facilities/services) and fiscal impact assessment requirements. These tools will help to ensure that new residential development is of a type and quality that does not undermine the fiscal health of the City and County. The time horizon for this effort is 2-3 years.

Capital Investment

The City and the County have committed to providing infrastructure in areas targeted for development in the comprehensive plan. With regard to housing, this means that most urban/suburban density residential development will take in and around the County's

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municipalities, including the City of Gainesville. The City is also committed to upgrading infrastructure in areas with potential for infill and redevelopment housing. These programs will have a long-term time frame of at least 5 years.

Interagency Cooperation

The City will work with the Gainesville Nonprofit Development Foundation to produce a coordinated housing plan. The City and County will work with local housing agencies to help them implement their programs and coordinate government actions affecting housing issues.

These programs may be implemented over an extended period, there are additional actions that can be taken to ensure that the efforts are begun and demonstrate progress. Additional actions are set forth in the Implementation section of this plan.

XI. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

OVERVIEW

An element of this plan that is essential to the success of the other plan policies is intergovernmental coordination. Hall County operates in a system with many autonomous entities that are able to make decisions that impact the implementation of the County's plan. Best efforts have been pursued to coordinate planning issues where possible. Population forecasts from the North Georgia Metropolitan Planning District were reviewed at the onset of the planning process and projections of capacity of the recommended plan will be available for public use as part of this plan. Services such as police, and fire protection, which increase as population and employment grow, will be provided with anticipated capacity figure through this plan. The extensive analyses and inventory contained in the multiple elements of this plan are intended to not only guide the decisions of the County, but also to serve as a point of reference for other agencies and jurisdictions not included in the plan.

Land Use and Annexation

A significant goal of intergovernmental coordination is to reduce the conflict between jurisdictions dealing with land use, service provision and annexation. Through the joint planning process of Hall County and City of Gainesville in this plan, the land uses in most areas of future annexation by the City have been agreed to by both jurisdictions. Over the years, voluntary annexation of land into the City of Gainesville has created small pockets of County land that are surrounded by or significantly influenced by lands within the City limits. While this situation can happen along any boundary, City and unincorporated areas are particularly intermingled along the southern and western edges of Gainesville. Because of the potential for infill and redevelopment, and fine grain of uses in many of these areas, well conceived projects may be proposed for annexation that are not in specific conformance with the land use designation for that area. In order to protect the interests of area residents and landowners, while allowing for some flexibility in such situations, specific policies in the Land Use Element are offered to help manage such requests.

Land use conflicts and annexation issues with the other jurisdictions in Hall County have typically been dealt with on an individual basis under the Georgia State legislation regarding annexation. One of the many goals of the update to the Hall County Comprehensive Plan was to improve the awareness of land use goals between the County and the local jurisdictions. The Hall County Land Use Plan was distributed in draft form to all of the local jurisdictions for comment. None of the local jurisdictions responded with conflicts to local plans in the review process.

Hall County is located on the southern boundary of the Georgia Mountains RDC Area. All plans for communities within the GMRDC are reviewed by the Georgia Mountain Regional Development Center for Regional Planning issues and coordination. However, Hall County is adjacent to the area overseen by the Northeast Georgia RDC and the Atlanta Regional Commission, where much of the regional influence for Hall County is located. These RDCs coordinate with Hall County through the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process, and often seek County input into policy documents that could potentially affect Hall County. Hall County has local jurisdictions that are located partially in these other RDC areas and development growing from Gwinnett County is already spreading into the southern regions of Hall County. Knowledge and coordination with efforts in these other regions would be beneficial to Hall County and its local municipalities.

Service Provision

The City and County have achieved a high level of service provision coordination. The House Bill 489 Service Delivery Strategy established a strong foundation for service provision in the City and County. The assessment for most of the services addressed in this agreement is that services are being provided effectively and efficiently without overlapping or duplication of services. In the rare case where it was not agreed that services were equitably being provided, additional review and analysis of the service was pursued. Services identified for additional study included: Engineering, Jail/Detention, Law Enforcement, Public Transit, Road Maintenance, Sewage Collection and Treatment, and Water Transmission and Treatment. These elements of service provision were further analyzed in the DMG-Maximus Study. The Study provided in-depth information regarding tax equity and service delivery to assist in meeting the guidelines of House Bill 489. The report covered identified individual services and selected functional areas within selected service. The effect of the report applied not only to the County, but also to all municipalities that have this service. The implementation of the report's recommendations was phased in two five-year phases beginning in fiscal year 2001. The results of these changes will be referenced in the Hall County's 489 Service Delivery Strategy currently undergoing an update.

To achieve a coordinated implementation of this comprehensive plan, Hall County is committed to developing and maintaining relationships with local jurisdictions and boards. The following policies have been designed to achieve this goal.

POLICIES

These intergovernmental coordination policies were developed during the comprehensive planning process. These policies are directly related to the goals and objectives set forth for intergovernmental coordination in Hall County and are important implementation steps, providing greater detail to guide decision-makers.

Regional Coordination—Hall County/Gainesville

- **Policy 1:** The County will work with the City of Gainesville to consult with adjacent local governments and other governmental units (e.g., school boards) on any major projects or activities that have potential spillover effects. The County and City will also seek reciprocal treatment from these entities for their projects that have potential impacts on the County/City. The City and County will seek to institutionalize such referral procedures.
- **Policy 2:** The County will explore the potential of initiating other joint planning processes with its municipalities, including joint annexation policies and joint planning areas.

Coordinated Growth—Hall County/Gainesville

- **Policy 1:** The County and City will develop a joint comprehensive plan and annexation policies that are mutually acceptable.
- **Policy 2:** The County and City will develop a process for reviewing development of regional impact that can be used as a model for other jurisdictions in the County.

- **Policy 3:** Both jurisdictions will continue work on their park master plans and coordinate these efforts to ensure that they are complementary in terms of types of facilities, location of trails, and other regional aspects.

These policies provided guidance for decisions makers on the direction that should be taken to ensure a coordinated implementation of the plan. Programs have been established to further define the steps the County should take to achieve the coordinated implementation of this plan.

PROGRAMS

Hall County and the City of Gainesville are committed to undertaking a variety of programs to implement the intergovernmental coordination goals and objectives. These programs break down into four major categories. For the most part, the City and County will be the lead implementation agencies.

Regulatory/Growth Management

The City and County have already begun discussing a joint, coordinated annexation policy and agreement that identifies preferred annexation areas, land uses, and other relevant issues. Every effort will be made to sign a formal agreement by the end of 2005. Such agreement may serve as a model for similar agreements with other local governments.

The City and County will also explore mechanisms to review developments of regional impacts (such as schools, shopping centers) with other area local governments.

Fiscal/Financial

Both jurisdictions will examine a range of tools to deal with the cost of growth, including impact fees (which the County already has) and fiscal impact assessment requirements for new development. To the extent possible, any cost recoupment measures will be complementary to avoid "competition" for new development.

Capital Investment

The City and the County have already initiated a program to provide water and sewer services to areas targeted for development in the plan. Additionally, the County and City will refrain from making capital investments in rural areas that are not slated for urban/suburban intensity growth, thus providing an additional measure of protection for natural and cultural resources. It is estimated that the water/sewer construction will take 5 to 10 years.

Interagency Cooperation

The City and County have begun exploring a joint, coordinated annexation policy that reflects the comprehensive plan policies. The time horizon for this effort is 2-3 years. The City and County will also open discussions with other area local governments and agencies (e.g., the school board) to discuss joint, cooperative review of major facility siting decisions and coordinated annexation policies.

While many of these programs will be implemented over an extended period, there are additional actions that the County should pursue to ensure that the efforts are begun and demonstrate progress. These recommendations are included in the Implementation section of this plan.

XII. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

OVERVIEW

Implementing a comprehensive plan is always a challenge, and Hall County's plan is no exception. The County is a dynamic environment with many forces shaping the development demand. Regional growth from Atlanta, and the draw of the quality of life in the County are both significant sources of development pressure for the County. The need to balance the property rights of landowners, economic development, protection of natural and cultural resources, and the efficient provision of services creates a situation that requires carefully crafted implementation strategies.

The Gainesville/Hall County Comprehensive Plan sets forth a broad vision for shaping the future of development and change in Hall County. To make this vision a reality will require an ambitious implementation strategy. Too often, comprehensive plans are heavy on vision, goals, and objectives and pay little attention to implementation. Hall County has identified a set of specific tools it intends to utilize to ensure that there is progress toward meeting its goals. The following implementation actions are intended to guide development over the planning period.

A hallmark of the recommended implementation strategy is that it calls for the use of a variety of tools to make the plan a reality. Many plans rely almost exclusively on regulations-zoning codes, design standards, environmental protection regulations-as the primary approach. While regulations and standards have an important role in implementation, experience across the United States with other plans shows that they must be complemented by other approaches if the plan is to produce results over the long run. As described in the full Implementation Element of the plan, the basic tools suggested here fall into four broad categories:

- Regulatory or Growth Management
- Fiscal or Financial
- Capital Investment
- Interagency Cooperation

This implementation strategy stresses, as does the plan, that many of the following tools will work only if there is cooperative action and effort with the various agencies and jurisdictions within Hall County.

Short-Term Actions were developed for each of the nine plan elements presented in this summary which include:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ➤ Land Use | ➤ Economic Development |
| ➤ Community Facilities | ➤ Housing |
| ➤ Transportation | ➤ Intergovernmental |
| ➤ Natural and Cultural Resources | Coordination |

The short-term actions and implementation programs developed for each plan element make it clear that there are many tools available to the County and other local governments to accomplish the plan's goals. Based on experience with these tools nationally and in consultation with the County and City of Gainesville, the following approaches have been identified as priorities for the next five years.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following section summarizes specific implementation actions recommended to achieve the vision and goals established in the plan for Hall County.

Development Code

Many of the County's goals for the comprehensive plan can be partially achieved through the revision of the County's Unified Development Code. This process is currently underway. Elements including quality regulations, environmental standards, fiscal impact assessment and others will be revised to conform to the goals of the plan. Specific element of the UDC that will be included in the current or future revisions to the UDC include:

- Creation of a conservation subdivision option, with priority for resource protection;
- Inclusion of tree protection, openspace and Planned Unit Development regulations;
- Inclusion of new residential use definitions and zoning districts;
- Development of fiscal impact analysis regulations;
- Revision of business zone districts and quality standards;
- Revision of standards to encourage infill and reduce unnecessary processing delays; and
- Revision of zoning maps to coincide with the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

Service Provision and Capital Improvements

Growth management and community service goals and objective will be pursued through intergovernmental and interagency agreements and capital improvements. Specific actions that should be completed in the next 5 years include:

- Extension of water and sewer service to targeted development locations, especially along the Highway 365 Corridor and in south Hall County,
- Improvement and maintenance of infrastructure and services in areas with potential for infill and redevelopment,
- Consideration of adequate public facility standards, and
- Utilization of development impact fees to provide services.

Annexation Policy

Conflicts between the County and local cities can often arise when a city attempts to annex land in the County. The conflict most often arises when the city and county have a conflicting future land use designation for the land in question. Hall County will work cooperatively with the City of Gainesville to draft and adopt a joint, coordinated intergovernmental annexation policy and agreement that includes resource protection provisions. The agreement should then be used as a potential model for agreements between the County and other municipalities in Hall County.

Economic Development Efforts

While economic development is supported by the other categories of action recommendations, there are some specific recommendations related to economic development. Hall County should:

- Continue to provide financial support for the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce to maintain and enhance its regional marketing efforts as well as its site selection database for potential businesses.
- Work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to continue to promote tourism and visitation, especially to identify and provide needed infrastructure to support tourism.
- Continue to explore opportunities for cooperation between the business community and educational institutions to realize a closer tie between education and job training.
- Assist with an economic development study for the Highway 365 Corridor in cooperation with the Georgia Tech.

Transportation

Transportation needs were identified in congestion, safety, pavement condition, and bridges. The GHTS process will incorporate the findings of this element into its needs assessment. GHTS will also incorporate the GDOT committed STIP projects as solutions to the identified needs. Remaining long-range needs will be specifically identified and incorporated in a program of projects for short, intermediate, and long-term implementation.

Gainesville-Hall County is recognized as a growth area with challenges to be met not only from continued growth but also from inclusion in the Atlanta air quality non-attainment area. This study estimated future transportation funding through 2030 based on previous transportation funding. Based on growth, costs for increasing transportation needs through 2030 for the City and County were also estimated. The GHTS process will refine cost estimates and estimates of future funding by completing additional model runs, public involvement and further analysis. The effective, responsive and needs-based transportation planning process is offering the community a living tool that will help prepare for the transportation challenges of the future.

Additional Studies or Plans

In the planning process a number of additional studies were identified that would enhance the effectiveness of the recommendations of the comprehensive plan. The implementation strategy recommends the County follow this planning effort with the following studies:

- Continue working on the County Parks plan with the intent of identifying key parcels for acquisition. Coordination with the City of Gainesville's Park Plan is strongly encouraged.
- In order to effectively preserve the County's historic resources, a County preservation plan with implementation tools should be developed.

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- The County should seek Certified Local Government Status to obtain funding for historic preservation activities in the County.
- Initiate a housing study to determine status of housing conditions in Hall County. Coordination with similar efforts in the City of Gainesville is encouraged. Special effort should be made to tie the study to economic development objectives.

These targeted implementation priorities set out an ambitious agenda for the County to follow over the next few years. Importantly, the County should revisit this implementation strategy periodically. State enabling legislation may be altered either expanding or limiting County authority. Development trends and market demand can change quickly, necessitating consideration of other tools. However, the County can ensure that the plan has a real, positive impact on growth and development patterns by focusing and aggressively pursuing a discrete number of implementation approaches.