

**JACKSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

**November 2009**



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## CHAPTER 1 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

#### Use of Natural Resources Inventory

There is an opportunity for Jackson County to better utilize the natural resources inventories provided in the technical appendix. It has been acknowledged that the county planning staff underutilizes that resource. In particular, the county staff needs to utilize the map prepared as a part of this summary report, titled “Soils with Severe Limitations on Septic Tank Absorption Fields.” Regulations may need to be amended to make explicit how the natural resources inventories will be used in the development review process.

#### Enforcement of Buffer around Bear Creek Reservoir

There is an important enforcement issue with regard to encroachments by residential lot owners into the 150-foot buffer established per state environmental planning criteria for Bear Creek Reservoir which is a multi-county water supply reservoir. While Jackson County is aware of this enforcement issue and is pursuing reconciliation, it is an important issue that needs to be resolved in order to protect the integrity of a regional water supply.

#### Refinement of the Land Use Plan to Preserve More Resource Lands

At issue is the extent to which Jackson County is willing to designate higher amounts of land within the agricultural preservation category than are now shown on the adopted land use plan map. There is great potential to make more inclusions of conservation assessment properties, especially those containing prime farmland soils, as appropriate for agricultural preservation. This would be consistent with the community survey results (pending), which are expected to show strong support for preserving agriculture in Jackson County. A corollary to this issue is the extent to which the county should strengthen its regulations applicable to prime farmlands.



**Agricultural lands are abundant in Jackson County.**

#### Tools and Programs for Greenspace Protection

The 1998 comprehensive plan recommended that the county pursue a TDR program to protect agriculture and open spaces in the county. Several citizens commented in community workshops that Jackson County should further consider TDRs. Discussion among the steering committee revealed that the county should consider TDRs as one of several possible tools and techniques for agricultural and open space preservation. TDR as a preservation tool has not “taken off” in Georgia, and there are only one or two formal instances (Atlanta and Fulton County) where TDR programs have been formally established. The technical complexity and lack of program experience in Georgia argue against this tool being implemented in Jackson

County in short-term and perhaps next decade. Hence, multiple tools including TDRs should be further investigated.

### **Mapping, Designation, and Potential Preservation of Significant Rock Outcrops**

While rock outcrops are referred to as potential conservation areas, they are not mapped in the natural resources inventory. At issue is whether they should be mapped, and whether additional protection efforts should be considered.

### **Adequacy of Existing Regulatory Measures for Wetlands**

At issue is whether the existing requirements for protecting wetlands are adequate, and if not, what additional measures should be adopted.

### **Establishment of Policy with Regard to Wetland Mitigation Banks**

As noted in the technical appendix for natural resources, wetland mitigation banks are becoming popular but are considered from a scientific standpoint to be inferior to policies and regulations that retain wetlands in their original locations in the ecosystem. At issue is whether the Jackson County comprehensive plan should establish policies and/or regulations for when wetland mitigation banks can or cannot be used to substitute for retaining existing wetlands on development sites.

### **Protection of Areas with Steep Slopes**

At issue is whether steep slopes in Jackson County are sensitive enough to warrant special protection. They are referred to in the UDC as secondary conservation lands in certain instances (based on land area involved), but that does not necessarily afford areas with steep slopes adequate protection from development practices.



This subdivision, located east of SR 124 just north of SR 11, was constructed on steep slopes.

### **Role with Regard to Habitat Conservation**

At issue is whether Jackson County is anticipated to play any sort of role with regard to habitat conservation, and/or applying the principles of landscape ecology to future development in sensitive areas.

### **Participation in Intergovernmental Efforts for Natural Resource Protection**

At issue is whether there are regionally significant environmental areas that deserve protection by multiple local governments containing those environmental areas. Some of these are already implemented, such as provisions for protected rivers and water supply watersheds.

## **River Corridor Protection**

Jackson County's Unified Development Code already defines the three major rivers in Jackson County as "protected rivers" under the state's environmental protection criteria, even though only one of them technically meets the standard for which such requirements apply. Although existing protection measures are in place, participants of the community workshops held in September 2009 suggested that river corridor protection needs to be a specific issue of concern.

## **Water Pollution from Agriculture**

Participants of the community workshops raised concern about water pollution from agricultural land practices. The community agenda should address this issue, as well.

## **Stormwater Management and Water Quality**

Although stormwater management is regulated by Jackson County's Unified Development Code, which is enforced by the Department of Public Development, citizens expressed concern with stormwater management practices and suggested that stormwater management be listed as an issue in the community assessment. Also, more attention can be given to promoting "low impact development," which has been defined as an approach to land development (or re-development) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible.

## **Green Communities and Sustainable Development Practices**

There are a number of programs and practices that Jackson County could consider implementing, under the general title of "green communities and sustainable development." These include among others, the following:

- Identification and revitalization of "brownfield" (environmentally contaminated) sites
- Water reuse (grey water) systems
- Inventories of construction/demolition materials that can be reused and recycled (e.g., building materials deconstruction and reuse plans)
- Promotion of renewable energy resources
- Green building (e.g., green roofs) and green building code practices, such as but not limited to the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Rating System
- Other sustainable practices such as use of porous materials and installation of rain gardens

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

### **Capitalizing on Jackson County's Farm Heritage**

Jackson County's history indicates that farms played an important role in its economic development during the 19th and 20th centuries. Farms also comprise many of the county's historic resources as well as cultural landscapes. Farms in Jackson County, more generally, contribute to its rural character and its inherent qualities. The recognized farms not only

represent important cultural resources, but may possess opportunities related to tourism and promoting the county's quality of life.

### **Additional Listings to the Centennial Farm Program**

Because of Jackson County's strong associations with agriculture, many other farms may be eligible for recognition by the Centennial Farm program (opportunity).

### **Formalizing Historic Preservation Programs**

Efforts suggested in the data appendix of this assessment include the following two-pronged strategy. First, the county should recognize and nurture the efforts of municipalities in Jackson County, especially including Braselton, Commerce, Jefferson, Hoschton, and Maysville (but not neglecting any of the cities), and find a way to weave the individual municipal efforts together into a formalized municipal historic preservation program for Jackson County. Secondly, in addition to a formal municipal preservation program assisted at the county level, Jackson County itself needs to strengthen and focus its efforts on the many agricultural and rural resources in the unincorporated areas of the county. Such efforts should include aggressive actions to nominate more properties for centennial farm status, a more thorough inventory of resources in the unincorporated parts of the county, an interim preservation protection ordinance, and ultimately, strong consideration needs to be given to pursuing a countywide historic preservation program to protect resources in unincorporated parts of the county.

### **Historic Trails and Marking of Resources**

Participants of the community workshops held in September 2009 revealed the desire to ensure Jackson County knows where all of its historic trails, battle sites, cemeteries, and other resources are, and that they are appropriately marked. Discussion by the steering committee revealed that one or more of the battle sites identified in community workshops may actually exist in Barrow rather than Jackson County, but the overall suggestion that historic sites and trails, including a regional trail for Northeast Georgia, be included in the comprehensive plan as appropriate. A program for making important historic sites, trails, and cemeteries is also appropriately included on the list of issues and opportunities for further consideration in the community agenda.

## **GROWTH PREPAREDNESS**

### **Amount of Growth Desired (Population Target)**

How much does Jackson County want to grow in terms of population growth? It has substantial capacity (land) for huge increases in residential subdivisions. At issue is whether the comprehensive plan should establish expectations for the amount of population increase desired (as opposed to the projected population). Should the plan set forth a maximum population as a desired benchmark? And, if so, should it take that one step further, by perhaps even specifying policies programs, and regulations that will ensure the county does not exceed its desired growth target?

### **Geographic Distribution of Population Generally**

Jackson County has a dispersed development pattern. While the adopted land use plan sets out areas for preservation of agriculture, and regulations support retention of agriculture and

prevent residential subdivisions to some extent, the county still has a scattered pattern of residential land use. At issue is the extent to which the mostly scattered pattern of population growth, in virtually all areas of the county, is desirable. There are various adopted plan policies that would suggest the “sprawl” type of development pattern is not desirable, and in fact, the adopted plan promotes a different pattern that would result in more efficient development patterns with less of an impact on the county’s future provision of public facilities and services. More importantly, if the community participation process confirms that scattered subdivisions are not what are desired, then one must look to the county’s regulations and programs to see how they need to change in the direction of more concentrated development patterns.

### **Geographic Distribution between Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas**

The community assessment indicates (see land use and character areas technical appendix) that there are vast opportunities for accommodating future residents within the city limits of the various cities, if a concentrated development patterns is desired. Huge amounts of vacant land exist within the municipal limits of most cities and towns in Jackson County. The geographic distribution of population and the division among rural and municipal populations should be the subjects of significant consideration and debate in the comprehensive planning process.

## **GROWING THE ECONOMY**

### **Georgia Innovation Crescent**

The Chamber is joining the core group associated with the Georgia Innovation Crescent. Georgia’s Innovation Crescent is anchored by the nation’s busiest airport, with Atlanta on one end and Athens-Clarke County, home of the University of Georgia, on the other. The Innovation Crescent is both a geographic area and a coalition of more than a dozen counties and entities focused on life sciences and economic development. Over the past decade, Georgia’s Innovation Crescent has quietly emerged as a hub of life science in the Southeast. The mission of the Innovation Crescent Regional Partnership is to accelerate the growth of the Innovation Crescent through focused education and economic development activities, and support the development of life science companies, organizations, and institutions located in the Innovation Crescent (Source: Moreland Altobelli Associates, Inc. July 2009). This is an opportunity that should be considered in the community agenda.

### **Preparation of an Economic Development Plan**

There has never been a formal economic development plan adopted by either the Chamber or the Jackson County Board of Commissioners. It is recognized at the Chamber that such a plan is important, and there has been discussion among the Chamber’s leadership officials. The Chamber is attempting to move the economic development program towards medical biodiversity companies in its future business recruitment efforts. A formal Economic Development Plan may facilitate success in such an endeavor. The economic development plan needs to be comprehensive, going beyond the current emphasis on recruitment of manufacturers and bio-tech firms, to include agriculture and forestry, heritage tourism, and tourism generally.

### **Heritage Tourism and Tourism Potential**

As indicated in the technical appendix on historic resources, there is great potential to capitalize on the historic resources within the various municipalities, as well as the agricultural heritage of

Jackson County. The county has identified major attractions also, which suggest that tourism development is yet another opportunity. The county and region have some unique niches, such as racing, that should also be further explored.

### **Possible New Interchange at Interstate 85 and State Route 60**

A new interchange at SR 60 and I-85 is under investigation by Moreland Altobelli Associates, Inc. as a part of its I-85 Corridor Study. Such a project, if approved, will improve transportation access and increase economic development potential.

### **Land Available for Industry**

Zoning in the county and the various cities within Jackson County establishes a constraint, or opportunity, with regard to establishing future manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, and other business and industry opportunities. Countywide (including municipalities), there are 10,851 acres of land zoned for industrial use. That constitutes almost 5 percent (4.93%) of the total county land area. With regard to the county's land use plan, it designated 9,409 acres, or 4.28 percent of the unincorporated land area, for industrial development. Counting the land use plan for unincorporated areas and the existing industrial zoning within municipalities, there is some 7.5 percent of the total land area in Jackson County that is now available or planned for industrial development. One particular issue is whether this supply of available industrial land is too large, or too small.

### **Research and Development Centers**

During the community workshops held in September 2009, participants suggested at least two opportunities for Jackson County to pursue more research and development firms as an economic development strategy. This idea differs from the conventional strategy of seeking to attract manufacturing establishments and industries. One small group suggested that an area near I-85 and SR 60 should be set aside for a research and development park. In other instances, participants recognized the opportunities to attract research and development facilities related to the University of Georgia – given the close proximity of Jackson County to the Athens campus of UGA. Specifically, there is some talk of whether a large institutional complex should be planned at U.S. Highway 129 in south Jackson County, with close connections and easy commuting distance to the main campus of UGA. The land use plan, economic development, and community facilities elements of the comprehensive plan should explore further these opportunities.

### **Tax Breaks for Industry**

Many local governments take the position that it must subsidize industry with tax breaks in order to get manufacturing and other big employers to locate in the community. Clearly, there is significant competition among local governments, all of which seek to increase their tax bases. At issue is the extent to which future ad valorem real and personal property taxes should be abated in order to attract new industry in Jackson County. The comprehensive plan should be specific regarding this issue. The community questionnaire, distributed as a part of the participation program, has a question related to this issue and should inform the debate.

### **International Investment**

Jackson County's comprehensive plan steering committee identified international investment as a potential economic development opportunity. A number of investors from other countries have capital and are interested in investing in the U.S. Investors in Germany were specifically mentioned as an example. In other local government in Georgia, such as Hart County and the City of Duluth, Koreans have invested substantial sums of capital for development. The community agenda should explore and discuss the possible role for international investment in Jackson County.

### **Lack of Retail Development**

There is consensus among Jackson County's residents that the county is "under-retailed." In other words, residents believe that the county can support considerably more retail development than currently exists. Presently, as this chapter and the technical appendix on labor force and economy show, much of the retail development is concentrated in the Commerce area of Jackson County. During community workshops, participants expressed interest in having more retail developments in the county. Some mentioned with dismay that they had to drive to Oconee County to visit a Wal-Mart or Home Depot store. The economic development element of the comprehensive plan and the land use plan should delve into future market needs with regard to retail and service uses, and determine the most appropriate locations for future retail development as desired by the citizens of Jackson County.

### **Aggressive Marketing of Retail Opportunities**

Closely associated with the opportunity mentioned above is the need to be more aggressive about marketing lands for retail development. While the county has been aggressive with regard to inventorying available industrial and manufacturing sites, it needs to exhibit the same passion with respect to retailers, so the residents participating in the community workshops have suggested.

### **Visitor's Center at I-85 and U.S. Highway 129**

The Georgia Department of Transportation has closed rest areas and visitor's centers along Interstate 85, leaving a perceived gap or shortage in terms of services to travelers along the interstate. It has been suggested that Jackson County should secure a visitor's center to be strategically located at U.S. Highway 129 and Interstate 85. Such a location may be able to capitalize on tourist and other dollars flowing through the county on the interstate, or at least attract travelers to venture further into the county and spend money. This suggested improvement should be carefully considered by the Chamber of Commerce, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, as it has considerable merit.

### **Working Relationship between Chamber of Commerce and Municipalities**

Participants in the community workshops suggested that stronger relationships between individual cities and the Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce need to be established, in order to more fully serve the economic development needs of the various municipalities. This issue is closely associated with the suggestion that heritage tourism in the various cities is an opportunity for economic development that has been largely unrecognized to date.

## **Georgia Work Ready Program**

Jackson County is in the process of becoming certified as a Work Ready county. “Certified Work Ready Community” status is a designation showing the county has the talented workforce that business demands and the means to drive economic growth and prosperity. To be designated a Certified Work Ready Community, counties must drive current workers and the available workforce to earn Work Ready Certificates, demonstrate a commitment to improving public high school graduation rates, and build community commitment for meeting these goals. Each community creates a team of economic development, government, and education partners to meet the certification criteria. Counties are given three years to reach the goals necessary to become a Certified Work Ready Community. Those counties willing to complete the process in 18 months are eligible for state-funded grants and serve as models for the initiative, showcasing successes and best practices for others to follow (Source: <http://www.gaworkready.org/>). The community agenda should acknowledge and reflect this important economic development readiness program.

## **Educational Programs at all Three Public School Systems**

The Jackson County comprehensive plan steering committee suggests that educational programs at all three public school systems (Jackson County, Commerce, and Jefferson) be assessed with regard to whether they are generating graduates with the skills needed to find jobs in all sectors – not just college academics, but vocational and technical programs as well. Input from committee members suggests that there is more the public schools can do to prepare graduates for careers in non-academic sectors. The comprehensive plan should include some attention to this issue.

## **Industry Needs Analysis with Regard to Workforce**

The Jackson County comprehensive plan steering committee also suggests that an industry needs analysis should be conducted to determine, first hand, what employers and prospective employers desire in terms of work force skills. The county reportedly conducted such an analysis some time ago but needs to revisit this tool for targeting workforce skills development in areas most closely associated with the needs of industries, manufacturers, and other employers.

## **Balance of Tax Base for Lowest Possible Tax Rate**

Like all local governments, there is concern about generating a property tax base that is sufficiently reliant upon non-residential development, so as to keep the burden on residential tax payers as low as possible. Since recent development in Jackson County has been heavily imbalanced in favor of residential development, there is growing concern that future tax burdens will fall disproportionately on the county’s residents. The county’s land use plan and economic development strategies must consider an appropriate balance of non-residential and residential tax bases.

## **Airport as an Economic Development Factor**

The Jackson County Airport is an integral part of the county’s overall economic development strategy. The community facilities technical appendix discusses how expansions and improvements of the airport are being planned with an eye toward how overall economic

development policies of the county will be achieved. The economic development components of Jackson County's comprehensive plan need to specifically acknowledge the important role of the airport.

### **Equestrian Industry as a Possible Market Niche**

Discussion among steering committee members revealed a possible market niche for Jackson County in terms of the equestrian industry. Specifically, because of a substantial amount of agricultural land a number of horse farms in the county, there may be opportunities to capitalize on those considerations as existing strengths and integrate equestrian activities into the county's overall economic development planning efforts.

## **HOUSING**

### **The Overall Housing Affordability Crisis**

Average wages have not kept up with inflation, while housing prices have been soaring (at least until recently as a result of the recession and major foreclosures). All housing policies and regulatory practices should be cognizant of the overall affordability crisis the residents of Jackson County face, now and in the future.

### **Housing for the Disabled**

People with mental illnesses and other disabilities are often released from institutions with nowhere to go. Land use regulations and neighborhood resistance can pose barriers to the development of community living arrangements, congregate living facilities and other arrangements to house such persons. Local zoning regulations need to be evaluated to ensure that they provide appropriate housing opportunities for disabled populations, without discrimination by other households in the neighborhood. The plan should establish policies and outline code revisions needed to accomplish the objectives of fair housing for the disabled.

### **Manufactured Housing**

Manufactured homes are often less expensive than traditional stick-built homes of comparable size. Therefore, manufactured housing provides an important role in terms of affordable housing in rural areas and small towns. Policy makers need to recognize that allowing manufactured housing is one of the few existing policies that contribute to affordable housing objectives in rural areas. Nonetheless, exclusionary practices with regard to manufactured homes are common in some of Jackson County's municipalities.

Local government officials sometimes adopt zoning regulations in response to concerns by the owners of stick-built homes that fear the installation of manufactured homes will lower their property values. There are also some widespread social biases against the less affluent households who reside in manufactured homes, due to their possible status as renters, transients, and minorities. Local officials are also sometimes concerned about the potential impacts of manufactured housing on public or social services in the community, or the fiscal impacts such developments create. Indeed, this concern about fiscal impacts was raised as an issue in the Jackson County comprehensive plan adopted in 1998.

If older manufactured homes cannot be replaced with new manufactured homes on the same site, then the county may lose affordable (but perhaps substandard) housing units. It seems

that a replacement policy for existing manufactured homes would have a small but measurable impact on meeting affordable housing needs. In addition, to meet affordable housing objectives, the county will need to carefully consider its land use policies and permissions for setting up new manufactured homes.

Manufactured home parks are also often raised as a significant issue in rural areas and small towns, particularly if they have deteriorated into substandard environments. In such cases, attention might be given to upgrading or eliminating them using methods including, but not limited to, code enforcement, urban renewal, relocation assistance, utility extensions, and condemnation with appropriate compensation. One idea posed to improve manufactured home parks is for local nonprofit organizations and developers to partner to create new subdivisions with better amenities and qualities that will make them more suitable places to live.

### **Accessory Housing Units**

An accessory apartment or dwelling unit is a second dwelling unit that is added to the structure of an existing site-built single family dwelling, or as a new freestanding accessory building (e.g., residential space above a detached garage) on the same lot, for use as a complete, independent living facility for a single household, with provision within the attached accessory apartment for cooking, eating, sanitation and sleeping. Such a dwelling, whether attached or detached, is considered an accessory use to the principal dwelling.



Zoning ordinances can provide for the establishment of attached accessory units in existing single-family subdivisions as another method of meeting needs for affordable housing. Current regulations should carefully consider whether appropriate opportunities are provided for accessory apartments.

### **Inclusionary Zoning and Mixed Income Housing Strategies**

Inclusionary zoning or land use policies require or encourage developers to set aside a portion of residential projects for low- and moderate-income housing. There is evidence that inclusionary zoning programs have produced more housing in areas where they are used than have federal housing programs. Mandatory set-asides of a portion of the total units for low- and moderate-income households should be considered, but one has to acknowledge some legal obstacles to making such a program mandatory. The community agenda should consider whether there is a proper role in Jackson County for these tools.

### **Housing for Seniors**

Planners and housing market analysts are increasingly aware that the typical, suburban subdivision is losing attractiveness in terms of the increasing senior population. Seniors and near-seniors (e.g., 55 years and above) have exhibited increasing preferences for housing arrangements that are different from what the market has been providing. In particular, seniors do not want to be burdened with the maintenance of yards and other chores normally associated with homeownership. Condominium forms of ownership therefore tend to appeal to seniors. They also tend to need smaller homes, usually single-story dwellings, so that they do not have to climb stairs. Also, various living arrangements for seniors can combine some care along with independent living. Jackson County's comprehensive plan needs to consider the

merits of specifically providing for continuing care retirement communities, active adult retirement communities, and other forms of housing more appropriate for seniors.

### **Dispersed Opportunities for Starter Housing**

Generally, starter housing can be defined as housing that is affordable for first-time homebuyers to own. The term usually refers to detached, single-family dwellings, but it is not necessarily limited to that context. During the community workshops held in September 2009, participants suggested that starter housing should be available in different locations around the county, not concentrated in one particular area of the county. The comprehensive plan should be specific about what constitutes “starter” housing, and it should consider the geographic distribution of available starter housing.

### **Apartments and Condominiums**

The Community Agenda should anticipate that higher density housing such as apartments and condominiums is a controversial subject. On the one hand, there are some residents who believe that apartments, condominiums, and other forms of higher density housing are necessary and appropriate. Others would prefer that apartment complexes not be built in Jackson County. Yet others suggest that it is the responsibility of the municipalities in Jackson County to ensure sufficient supplies of higher density housing, since unincorporated Jackson County generally lacks sanitary sewer to service higher density residential development. The county’s comprehensive plan should reconcile these differences of opinion and establish appropriate policies for when and where higher density housing is appropriate in Jackson County.

### **Excess of Unoccupied Homes**

Because Jackson County has been a suburban frontier of sorts, with much new housing constructed during the next decade, it is not surprising that the severe economic recession and “housing bust” has resulted in an excess of homes for sale. As noted in the discussion of land use, there are many subdivided lots that have yet to be built upon, confounding the problem. The county’s land use plan must consider, at least in a general sense, the amount of existing homes that are already available to accommodate future populations (as well as the numbers of vacant, subdivided residential lots), before planning new areas for future residential growth.

### **Workforce Housing**

Workforce housing can refer to almost any housing, but always refers to affordable housing. Based on criteria set by mortgage lenders, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development concludes that no more than 30 percent of household income should be allocated to housing Principal, Interest, Taxes and Insurance (PITI). Typically, pricing calculations define workforce housing as costing no more than 30 percent of household income. Workforce housing usually refers to single-family, detached homes for sale at prices that workforce households can afford, but it can also include alternative housing opportunities such as rental apartments and rental homes, townhouses, and condominiums. This housing issue clearly overlaps other housing issues such as housing affordability, manufactured housing, “starter” housing, mixed-income housing, and others. The Community Agenda should relate the term “workforce housing” in the context of Jackson County and further explore how to address the need for additional, affordable workforce housing.

## **House Size Versus Housing Quality**

During the community workshops held in September 2009, participants suggested that the quality of housing should be considered more important than the size of the home. In other words, zoning ordinances tend to emphasize the size of homes, placing minimum thresholds for the size (minimum heated floor area requirements) for new homes. On the other hand, there may not be enough emphasis on ensuring the quality of new homes. Vinyl siding was cited as an example of lack of quality by one or more participants in the community workshops. Therefore, Jackson County's housing policies should address the issues of what quality measures are needed, and where such policies and/or regulations will apply. The housing part of the comprehensive plan must also consider the appropriate balance between such quality considerations and their effects on affordable, starter, and workforce housing.

## **LAND USE**

### **Residential Scatteration and Rural Sprawl**

At issue is the extent to which Jackson County's leaders are willing to place stronger controls to guide residential growth in an overall pattern that is more sustainable and cost efficient with regard to the provision of future community facilities and services. One of the most pressing concerns is the approval of subdivisions in areas designated for agricultural preservation on the future land use plan map. In the picture below, a farm owner in a PCFD zoning district expresses dissatisfaction with the approval of a residential subdivision across the street. Such approvals, in today's failing residential market economy, are not only unwise but they also have the effect of marginalizing or negating agricultural preservation objectives.

### **Over-subdivision and Lack of Market Need for Areas Designated Residential**

Closely associated with the issue described immediately above is the observation (documented by external market analysts) that Jackson County already has enough vacant lots and residential subdivisions to supply market needs during most if not all of the 20-year planning horizon. The excess supply of buildable lots is so vast, it begins to beg the question of whether the community agenda should call for strict limits, if not an all-out moratorium, on the creation of new subdivisions, until market trends at least begin to catch up with the available supply. The consequences to the public fisc of allowing more and more subdivisions in light of the huge excess supply could become seriously worrisome. This analysis also indicates that, even if one were to disregard all of the vacant subdivision lots in unincorporated Jackson County, the agricultural and vacant land within municipalities in Jackson County is enough to supply anticipated market needs for residential growth during the planning horizon. Therefore, there may be an opportunity to more closely align the county's land use plan with those of the municipalities in Jackson County, in a way that places expectations on future development approvals.

### **Character Area Implementation**

At issue generally is the extent to which Jackson County has been successful in implementing quality development principles. It may need additional measures, such as more overlay districts, in order to implement the recommendations for character areas.

### **Consistency between Character /Future Land Use Map and Zoning**

Jackson County's Unified Development Code requires that rezoning decisions be made in accordance with the future land use plan. There appears to be strong support for maintaining that requirement, but there are some complexities and difficulties involved in implementation. Specifically, the current consistency requirement has resulted in spot land use plan changes (and spot zoning amendments) simply to accomplish the development of small subdivisions or even a single lot with a size smaller than the land use category (and accompanying zoning district allows). The consistency issue must be further addressed in the comprehensive plan.

Jackson County has committed itself to assuring consistency between the comprehensive plan and zoning decisions. However, at issue is making the determination of consistency as clear as possible. The Community Agenda will need to further refine and inform consistency determinations.

### **Coordination of Water and Sewer and Land Use Plans**

The partial plan update for Jackson County (2007) also indicated that the County must work specifically with the Jackson County Water and Sewerage Authority to ensure new water and sewer lines are planned only in those future land use areas intended for denser residential and commercial development. This is an important opportunity that must be addressed in the plan.

### **Scenic Road Designation and Scenic Resource Regulation**

At issue is whether the scenic resources identified in the comprehensive plan will be protected in some way through regulation, and whether development alongside scenic roads should be further regulated.



**There is tremendous potential for designating SR 334 a scenic road corridor. Other opportunities for scenic roads designation also exist in Jackson County.**

### **Transitions of Land Use**

Community workshop participants identified the need to have more suitable transitions in land uses. Specifically, the future land use plan should make use of appropriate step downs or transitions in land use in character, from farmland, to rural places, to suburban residences, and

so forth. The future land use plan needs to specifically describe the nature of appropriate transitions in land use in Jackson County.

### **Consumption of Industrial Lands before Designating Others**

Community workshop participants described the need to ensure that Jackson County does not pre-plan or pre-zone too much land for industrial development, in its efforts to ensure a balanced economic base. It was suggested that the county should ensure that a sufficient amount of existing industrially designated lands get used before planning and zoning for new industrial parks and individual developments. This suggestion also implies that the county must get a good handle on existing acreages for industries, consumption patterns and absorption trends. This suggestion may also result in more descriptive guidelines for phasing of industrial development over time.

### **Residential Lot Sizes**

The community participation process undertaken in support of this community assessment revealed a divergence of opinions with respect to lot sizes. Some residences would like lot size requirements to be increased, while others believe that smaller lot sizes are needed. This issue will clearly deserve much more attention in the community agenda process, as Jackson County puts into place a new future land use plan.

### **Areas for Mixed Uses and Live/Work/Play Communities**

Several small groups reported during the community workshops that Jackson County should designate areas for mixtures of land uses. Residents were particularly interested in the prospects for promoting “live-work-play” or complete communities. The land use plan needs to discuss the merits of mixed uses, identify areas where such development is appropriate, and the parameters under which it can be accepted and built in Jackson County. It is likely that a new character area/future land use district will be created to accommodate this desire.

### **Commercial Development Patterns – Nodes or Corridors?**

When small groups of citizens gathered to undertake the mapping exercise in community workshops, there was a divergence of opinion on whether future commercial development along Jackson County’s major highways should follow a nodal (concentrated) development pattern, or whether the entire length of highway corridors should be designated for commercial development. Clearly, this is an issue that will be addressed in the county’s land use planning efforts, and it is a critically important one. The future land use plan map will graphically depict the pattern of future commercial uses, and it can be drawn with a nodal development emphasis or provide for linear development of commercial uses along highways. Policies articulating the desired patterns for commercial development are essential in terms of guidance to developers and therefore need to be included in the comprehensive plan.

### **Incentives for Innovative Development**

Participants of the community workshops suggested that good, innovative development should be rewarded with incentives. The community agenda should identify what incentives are available to encourage more carefully thought through and innovative development practices, and the extent to which such incentives will be promoted or given in the county’s land use plan.

### **Commercial Development Close to Neighborhoods**

There is a growing sense among certain citizens that the separation of residential neighborhoods from commercial areas in Jackson County may have a negative impact on the county's quality of life in the future, especially given the recent, rapid increases in the costs of gasoline. Some citizens have suggested that Jackson County consider allowing a more dispersed pattern of small, neighborhood serving retail uses that can possibly be reached from adjacent residential areas by foot, or bike, or with a shorter drive time than exists now. The extent to which neighborhood serving commercial areas are proposed in the county's land use plan deserves considerable attention as a land use issue. In considering these prospects, the county's settlement character area map may be used as an organizing framework for further consideration. The settlement character area map is representative of how original settlements developed in rural Jackson County, and the center points of those settlement character areas are the most accessible to the prevailing settlement patterns in rural Jackson County. One or more of the central points of settlement character areas may be appropriate for small neighborhood commercial centers, but only if they are built based on market needs and constructed in a manner that is sensitive to the context and character of the settlement character area.

### **Healthy/Fitness Communities**

Closely associated with the issue already described above (mixed use and live-work-play communities) is the notion that communities should be designed with personal health and fitness in mind. This means, in short, more "walkable" communities. It also implies that new types of development patterns are needed in contrast to conventional suburbs which do not encourage walking and fitness. Opportunities for more walkable, fitness-oriented residential developments should be explored in the comprehensive plan.

### **Control of Strip Malls**

Some Jackson County residents have expressed concern that the county's character will be negatively impacted if the same type of "strip mall" commercial development which has been built in other places occurs in Jackson County. The plan should consider articulating the aesthetics and site development principles for commercial development along major highways, since there is much opportunity to guide future commercial development in a manner more accommodating of citizen desires.

### **Moratorium on Subdivisions and Mobile Home Parks**

The surplus of vacant residential lots and perceptions among the community that Jackson County has too many manufactured homes already have led to suggestions or implications that the county should consider a moratorium on the future development of these residential uses. Moratoria need to be developed with a specified purpose in mind and for a limited duration, in order to be legally upheld. At issue is whether there is a need for moratoria and if so how such limitations can be made legally defensible.

### **Crop Potential of Agricultural Land**

The steering committee recommended that the crop potential of agricultural land be specifically identified as an issue, in light of growing recognition of the benefits of having food production

sources in close proximity to residents. Hence, there is a need to formally integrate crop production potential in the county's future land use plan.

### **Property Rights**

During the second meeting of the steering committee, there was discussion about negative impacts land use regulations have, or could have, on individual property rights. There are undoubtedly property owners in Jackson County who do not agree with land use regulations and believe they are entitled to the highest and best use of their property, whereas land use planners suggest that only a reasonable economic use is required. It is recognized that in any scheme of land use planning in regulations, some property owners will benefit while others will be denied opportunities to pursue development of their own choice (i.e., land use regulations create "windfalls" and "wipeouts"). Property rights must be respected, and the steering committee agreed it should be specifically listed as an issue. Land use regulations can constitute a "taking" of private property without just compensation in violation of the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions if the regulations go too far, but beyond those obvious legal constraints, Jackson County needs to be sensitive to the individual property rights of each and every landowner in unincorporated Jackson County, as they will be affected in some way (many significantly) by the decisions made in terms of the county's future land use plan, particularly since a "consistency" requirement is currently used in Jackson County.

### **Equestrian Subdivisions**

The steering committee observed that Jackson County has some "equestrian subdivisions," or in other words, residential tracts which are designed to accommodate individual ownership of horses on larger lots than found in conventional suburban subdivisions. This type of residential development needs to be specifically addressed in the comprehensive plan, since some observe that they are not meeting much of a market need and/or are not very suitable as developed for horses. This issue should be further considered in the land use plan.

### **Review of Unified Development Code**

One of the most fundamental recommendations of any comprehensive plan is to thoroughly reassess and revise the land use regulations that are supposed to implement the comprehensive plan. Without a thorough review and revision process for the county's unified development code, its comprehensive plan once adopted may call for new policies and practices that are currently prohibited. Similarly, the code may espouse certain policies that are no longer consistent with the plan, as revised. The short term work program will undoubtedly call for a series of significant amendments to the county's unified development code, if not a comprehensive rewrite, in order to implement the recommendations of the comprehensive plan. Indeed, there is a growing acceptance that this task should begin immediately, as there are concerns and suggestions about certain provisions of the code, independent of the comprehensive plan. Code reviews and amendment processes may take several months, even years to complete, and so the comprehensive plan should provide specificity to that upcoming effort, describing general needs. Also, it should be noted that the county's evolving major roads plan will have some specific recommendations for amending the county's unified development code with regard to access management, functional road classifications, road standards, and the like. One cannot emphasize enough the importance of this task, upon completion of the comprehensive plan. Given the importance placed in the community on land use regulations, Jackson County may decide to accelerate this work even before plan adoption (once the plan is in the required regional and state review process).

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **Consideration of Alternative Fire Department Service Arrangements**

Jackson County should feel obligated to ensure that all citizens of Jackson County have reliable and rapid fire and rescue services. The current arrangement of volunteer fire departments in most of the county is unlikely to meet the county's needs as it continues to develop. It is acknowledged that the volunteer firefighters and separate volunteer fire departments hold considerable sway in the political culture of Jackson County, and that any suggestion about consolidation of them or changing in some way the current arrangement is surely expected to meet with resistance. There needs to be discussion about possible alternative future arrangements for fire and rescue protection in Jackson County; it is too late if resource arrangements and staffing no longer meet acceptable level of service standards, and the county should not wait until public safety is threatened, to begin those discussions. Improved fire protection can result in improved ISO ratings, which can reduce fire insurance costs to households and businesses.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

There is a perceived need for an additional EMS unit in West Jackson, plus weather siren coverage in that area. And as development continues and demands increase, there will be additional needs to expand facilities and coverage areas.

### **Public Safety Master Plan**

The 2007 Partial Plan Update called for preparation of a public safety master plan and indicated its preparation was ongoing. Such a master plan will provide more detailed assessments and identification of future facility needs.

### **Water**

Major issues associated with water supply and distribution include planning for a new water supply reservoir, possible unification and consolidation of water systems, and plans for extending existing water service areas. Specific issues and opportunities regarding water are listed below.

1. *Additional water source.* Planning is already underway for Jackson County to secure an additional water source for potable water to meet long-term needs. There are generally three sites under investigation in Jackson County for possible development as a new water supply reservoir. The county's land use plan should anticipate a decision on that important facility planning question.
2. *Possible consolidation and/or unification of systems.* It was suggested during the planning process that the county consider unification and/or consolidation of all water service providers in the county, for efficiency.
3. *Water service to Arcade.* Water service to Arcade, via the Jackson County Water and Sewerage Authority as well as plans for municipal service by the City of Arcade, is increasingly critical since groundwater still serves a number of residents in the area and it is contaminated with environmental hazards.

4. *System interconnections for contingencies.* If not already sufficient, contingency plans should be prepared for dealing with major water line breaks, loss of water sources during drought, and other possible damages to the water system such as flooding. There may be additional opportunities to connect municipal and county water distribution systems in order to move water around the county during periods of drought.
5. *Extensions of service to additional unincorporated areas.* Adequate water supplies are needed for all parts of unincorporated Jackson County from a public health and also a fire fighting capability standpoint. However, as water lines are run to into rural areas, such projects may not be very efficient (i.e., the marginal costs exceed marginal revenues in terms of connecting additional water customers in low-density rural areas). Yet, JCWSA relies on user fees to fund its system tends to provide an incentive to expand its system to increase revenues. Extending water lines into previously unserved areas can stimulate residential development, sometimes in a manner inconsistent with countywide land use plans. At issue is how the county and JCWSA coordinate their activities to ensure that proprietary concerns of the authority are met, critical public needs are satisfied, and county land use planning efforts are not frustrated.
6. *Water conservation.* It is important that governments take steps to promote water conservation. As population growth continues, there is an increased strain on existing water supplies, so water facility expansion is necessary. Water conservation efforts can minimize the levels of increased expansion by cutting down on the amount of water used per capita.
7. *Financial considerations.* Because water systems are operated as utilities, the revenue produced by the system should be sufficient to pay for all necessary capital expenditures, operation and maintenance costs, debt service, administrative costs, and provide a contingency fund for emergencies. Customers should also pay for the amount of water they use. Flat monthly rates for water encourage wasteful practices. Customers requiring very large volumes of water should pay additional demand charges. All customer lines should be metered. Developers of new subdivisions should be required to install the water mains and appurtenances through or along the tract and deed the facilities to the county (JCWSA).
8. *Oversizing of water mains where necessary for growth.* Regulations should establish a policy for the “oversizing” of water mains so that when a larger water main is needed than would serve the subdivision or development, the county can contribute a prorated share of the cost to construct a water main that serves a larger population or area.

## **Sanitary Sewer**

Issues with regard to the sewer system including planning for additional treatment capacity, possible unification and consolidation of sewer systems, and plans for extending sewer service areas. A community questionnaire has been developed and one of the questions asked was whether the county should plan for a countywide sanitary sewer system. The results of that questionnaire will be published after this community assessment is in the review process. Some have already suggested that the county should reserve at least 20 percent of its sewer treatment capacity for future industrial development. Participants of community workshops have suggested the county should consider the unification/consolidation of sewer service providers in

the county. Depending on decisions made about future sanitary sewer service areas, the county will most likely need to plan for additional treatment plant capacity.

### **Water and Sewer Master Plan**

The 2007 Partial Plan Update indicates that water and sewer master planning was ongoing at that time. Clearly, the master plans for water and sewer facilities need to be coordinated with this comprehensive plan update, in particular to ensure that land use plans and facility extension plans are compatible with one another. With respect to water and fire protection, there is an identified need to install additional fire hydrants throughout the county for improved fire protection.

### **Long Range Planning for Utilities**

Among members of the comprehensive plan steering committee, there was some discussion about whether the comprehensive plan should get into issues of utilities, such as electricity and natural gas. Indeed, the City of Commerce is a provider of electricity and natural gas, so this question is elevated in importance to the extent there is already a local government involved in service provision. One resident suggested that the county should establish a gas authority and get into the natural gas business. Even if the issue of direct service provision is or is not addressed in the comprehensive plan, it is prudent to at least investigate on a cursory level the various issues associated with utilities plans that will serve all development projected within Jackson County during the planning horizon.

### **Parks and Recreation**

According to the FY 2009 county budget document, there is a need to provide greenways and trail systems throughout the county, as well as at individual parks, particularly Sells Mill Park, which is presently underdeveloped. Input from the public during the course of preparing this community assessment revealed a consensus that Jackson County does not have enough parks and needs to provide more facilities for not only youth but the elderly as well. There is also a great need for indoor facilities; with the exception of the old gymnasium at Center Park (now in private hands) and facilities at county schools, there are no indoor recreation facilities available for use by county residents. Residents during the community workshops held in September 2009 also suggested that the county build a cultural arts facility. They also suggested that the county pursue a YMCA for youth activities.

To address growing needs for parks and recreation in Jackson County, a bond referendum for \$15 million in parks and recreation improvements was held in February 2008, but it was not passed by the citizenry. Though the parks and recreation bond referendum failed, the list of needs is retained for future capital improvement programs; furthermore, as needs mount, however, a new referendum for parks and recreation may be warranted.

In 2002, the county completed a System-Wide Recreation Master Plan, 2003-2012. That plan needs updating to account for several new initiatives and improvements made.

### **General Administrative Facilities**

The county has a large property complex for the addition of facilities in the future – participants during the community workshops raised a question of what the county plans to do with the land

that is currently banked at the county's major facility campus. It has also been suggested by citizens that the county should use the property it has, before buying any more properties.

The County Administration Building, at 67 Athens Street in Jefferson, was constructed in the 1930s and consists of approximately 26,000 square feet. It is by no means considered adequate to continue in its current role of housing county administrative offices, including the public development department, GIS, and tax assessment offices among others.

### **Road and Bridge Construction and Maintenance**

The Service Delivery Strategy calls for establishment of countywide road and bridge construction standards, uniform road classifications, and countywide transportation master planning.

### **Planning and Zoning**

During the process of developing this community assessment, at least one participant suggested that the county staff should be more open to working with individual property owners on zoning matters, as opposed to simply telling them that they cannot do what they want with their land.

### **Geographic Information Systems**

Jackson County has a GIS Department which serves the mapping needs of all county departments, especially the tax assessor, as well the municipalities in Jackson County. GIS services represent an opportunity for intergovernmental joint service delivery by the county's GIS Department.

### **Public and Environmental Health**

The comprehensive plan in 1998 identified the long-term need to provide more convenient health services to residents of southern Jackson County. Otherwise, south Jackson residents have to drive several miles to Jefferson or Commerce for public health assistance. Though recognizing limitations to funding, the 1998 plan also indicated that health-related transportation was needed, such as to and from the BJC Medical Center. During the public participation process of preparing this community assessment, participants suggested there were needs for non-hospital emergency health facilities, particularly in West Jackson County.

### **Hospitals**

There is a growing consensus that Jackson County is in need of a full-service hospital and more health facilities in the Braselton-Hoschton area of the county.

### **Public Schools**

The Jackson County comprehensive plan steering committee suggested that the comprehensive plan needs to include a review of the five-year facility plans for each of the three school systems and acknowledge/integrate those plans into the comprehensive plan.

## **Library Funding and Capital Provision**

Under current arrangements, and with no countywide facilities plan, the municipal libraries are expected to continue serving Jackson County's growth, the vast majority of which is expected to occur in the unincorporated portions of the county. This is creating a serious fiscal disparity that raises funding equity issues. The cities cannot be expected to continue funding improvements to municipal libraries to serve a burgeoning unincorporated population. Clearly, Jackson County is participating in the funding of libraries in the municipalities, but at issue is the extent to which municipal library expansion can be expected to meet the needs of unincorporated residents without substantial increases in funding from the county government, or without the county becoming a library service provider itself (or considering a regional service alternative). Jackson County should seriously consider changing the loose confederation of individual municipal libraries into either a countywide system or officially merging all municipal libraries into the Piedmont Regional Library System.

## **After School Child Care**

Participants in the community workshops suggested that Jackson County should consider the need for after school child care. While child care is a service that has been traditionally provided by private providers and non-profits institutions like churches, the community agenda should consider whether there is an appropriate role for Jackson County itself in this important service arena. Furthermore, the need for more dispersed child care facilities and youth opportunities should be considered in the county's land use planning efforts.

## **Capital Improvement Programming**

The Board of Commissioners, during the FY 2007 budget hearings, were apprised and agreed to the need to establish a Capital Improvement Program in order to address restoration, maintenance and preventative maintenance of the County's facilities. Previously, decisions about capital facilities funding were made on a year-to-year, ad hoc basis. Recognizing a growing funding shortfall in terms of maintaining existing facilities, and the need to anticipate major capital improvements to address growth pressures, Jackson County formally adopted a policy to pursue capital improvement programming. However, progress has been somewhat slow. The capital improvement programming effort would achieve two goals espoused by citizens during the community workshops held in September 2009 – optimal use of existing facilities to maximize their potential use, and purchase in advance of land for schools and fire stations (also called "land banking").

## **Existing and Future SPLOST Monies**

During community workshops, a few members of the citizenry raised some concern whether all SPLOST funds were being spent for their original purposes. The future use of SPLOST monies is also an important issue that could receive more attention in the comprehensive plan, as there will clearly be competition for those funds in terms of paying for critical facility improvements.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Issues with the Road System**

Many of the issues and opportunities with regard to the major road system are being addressed separately in a countywide roads planning effort. Because of that parallel effort, specific comments from the community workshops about roads have been omitted here. The work of Moreland Altobelli in its draft Countywide Roads Plan includes detailed comments on issues and concerns identified by stakeholders with the road system. Those are too numerous to identify here, but they are enumerated in the transportation technical appendix which is a part of this Community Assessment.

### **Jackson County Airport Airspace Protection and Land Use Compatibility**

The airspace surrounding Jackson County Airport affects the surrounding unincorporated parts of Jackson County but also the City of Jefferson. The flight paths of incoming and outgoing aircraft need to be mapped, and regulations may be needed (or existing regulations already in place evaluated) to protect air space (e.g., conical height limits in local zoning ordinances). Airport noise may be incompatible for some types of land uses and should therefore be assessed.

### **Railroads**

While freight and passenger railroads do not necessarily require conventional planning by the locality, since they are usually private, they pose a number of public issues of concern. There is, of course, the land-use perspective of planning compatible land uses along railroad tracks due to noise and vibration generated by trains. Equally if not more important are the access implications. There are also beautification and aesthetic considerations.

If streets cross railroad tracks at grade, they need to have adequate crossing restrictions (gates), flashing lights, and warning signs. At-grade crossings of railroads should sometimes be eliminated if they pose safety concerns. Railroad crossings also can affect public safety response times by if road access is delayed or constrained by a railroad crossing, when a train is traveling through. Finally, there is potential for cooperative agreements with railroad companies for installing improvements such as additional safety features, pedestrian crossings, and beautification efforts (e.g., planting in the railroad right-of-way). These deserve some consideration in Jackson County's Community Agenda.

Another rail-related issue to consider is the extent to which Jackson County may be served in the longer term by either commuter rail or high speed rail. The community agenda should consider any such long, or very long-range plans for commuter and high speed rail, including along the Interstate 85 corridor from Atlanta to Charlotte.

### **Attention to Pedestrian and Bicycle Needs**

Sidewalks and bicycle lanes are critical transportation infrastructure elements necessary for providing alternative travel options versus automobile traffic. Providing connectivity to existing community facilities (such as schools, libraries, and parks) is an important use of the pedestrian and bicycle network. At issue is the extent to which Jackson County is willing to begin providing

for the needs of pedestrians and beginning to plan a system for bicycle travel. The Northeast Georgia's Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005) is a good starting point.

### **Bicycle Facility Improvement Specifications**

The plan (or implementing regulations) should have cross-sections and minimum specifications for all types of bike facilities, including shared-use, bike lanes on roads, bike lanes on shoulders, and off-street bike paths and multi-use trails.

### **Critical Review of Existing Sidewalk Requirements**

Where sidewalk systems exist, policies and implementing regulations need to require connection of private land developments to the public sidewalk system. Plans and implementing regulations, need to be reviewed to determine the extent to which sidewalks are required for private land developments and whether those requirements are adequate.

### **Improving Rural Transit Service**

Jackson County's rural transit program provides one of the only means of travel for some people. At issue is the level of commitment Jackson County will provide in the future as these needs grow.

### **Access Management along Major Roads**

Transportation plans need to establish policies for separating (minimum distances between) street intersections and driveways, principles for lining up driveways on both sides of streets, and placing road median breaks, among others. Because access management relates primarily to safety considerations, it deserves prominent treatment in transportation plans. At issue is the extent to which the county's current regulations provide adequate controls for access points on local and major roads.

### **Alternative Street Standards for Areas of Varying Character**

Community building has become more context sensitive over time, and communities have become increasingly critical of wide subdivision street cross-sections that were developed when engineering considerations were dominant. Jackson County should consider whether it needs to re-evaluate and change street right-of-way and pavement standards so they are not excessive, or at least provide greater flexibility in New Urbanist developments, conservation subdivisions, and other "context sensitive" places.

### **Scenic Road Designations and Appropriate Standards**

Many communities desire to preserve the rural, historic, or scenic character of a given roadway. There highways and roads in Jackson County that deserve designation as scenic, and the transportation plan should consider and if appropriate designate scenic roads and highways in Jackson County, then establish the appropriate improvement standards and land use regulations to protect the character of those designated scenic roads.

## **Requirements and Guidelines for Traffic Impact Studies**

Transportation plans and implementing regulations should establish policies for when a traffic impact study is required. At issue is the extent to which Jackson County should specify when traffic impact studies are required, and if so, what their contents should be.

## **Zero Emissions Transportation Technologies**

The county's comprehensive plan steering committee suggested that the county should be proactive in planning for zero emission transportation technologies. Specifically, it was suggested that the county should anticipate the eventual conversion of gas-powered vehicles to electric vehicles, and being to impose new requirements such as requiring electric chargers in parking lots for electric vehicles. Jackson County's comprehensive plan should anticipate new technologies and the vast changes that will be associated with implementing them.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION**

### **Communication via an Annual Summit**

To improve coordination and intergovernmental cooperation, the Partial Plan Update (2007) proposed that an annual meeting be held with all elected officials and managers of all local governments to share information.

### **Formal Coordination with Other Counties with Regard to Braselton and Maysville**

There are two cities in Jackson County that cross into other counties: Maysville is partially within Banks County, and Braselton extends into three other counties besides Jackson County: Barrow, Gwinnett, and Hall. Braselton and Maysville may be receiving county level services from Jackson or some other county, or a combination from more than one county. This means there are opportunities, if not obligations, to be sure that the municipalities are provided with county-level facilities and services that are the most cost effective possible.

### **Regional Comprehensive Plan, Short-term Work Program**

The regional comprehensive plan short-term work program is a document that covers the time period of 2009 to 2013. Some of the work program items list local governments as a responsible implementing partner. Therefore, it is important that Jackson County anticipate those suggestions and integrate them as appropriate into its comprehensive plan. Also, it should monitor and participate in current and ongoing efforts as the regional comprehensive plan is being updated by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission.

### **Airspace Protection around the Airport**

Jackson County airport is located close to, but not within Jefferson. Since Jefferson's land use jurisdiction surrounds much of the airport's airspace, there is a need to coordinate land use in Jefferson with requirements for safe airport operations.

### **Watershed Protection and Stormwater Management**

Watersheds do not adhere to political boundaries of counties and cities. It is not uncommon for watersheds to cross over several cities and counties. Therefore, protection of watersheds and

(by extension) stormwater management programs must also be treated as intergovernmental issues. Cities are generally too small to take on many of the important watershed protection and stormwater management functions that are likely to be needed during the planning horizon, and there are important economies of scale in terms of performing watershed assessments and providing for regionwide stormwater facilities. Furthermore, there is growing concern that Jackson County and its municipalities have not comprehensively addressed the needs for stormwater management. While subdivision developers are required to provide drainage facilities for their subdivisions, it is apparent that not enough attention is being paid to the long-term maintenance (or even the ownership) of stormwater facilities. Often, the stormwater facilities are left to homeowners associations to maintain, or worse, there is no association at all and the individual lot owner is held responsible.

Neither of those approaches (home owners associations or individual lot owners) have the capital needed to maintain expensive stormwater management facilities, which can involve significant repair, dredging, replacement, etc. All of these observations lead to the suggestion that countywide stormwater management maintenance will be needed during the planning horizon (even if not mandated by a higher level authority). Then, there is also the issue of how to fund a stormwater utility, if one is created. Increasingly, local governments are imposing stormwater utility fees in order to provide for the maintenance of stormwater facilities, the needs of which have gone unrecognized so far or are basically ignored.

### **Curry Creek Watershed Protection**

The Curry Creek water supply watershed, which provides water for Jefferson's reservoir, is mostly encompassed within the city limits of Jefferson but also extends into unincorporated Jackson County. Thus, there is a need for joint efforts of the city and county to protect the watershed for public water supply. Specifically, since Jackson County and Jefferson both control land use decision-making in this watershed, there needs to be a cooperative agreement with regard to holding impervious surfaces to the maximum 25 percent allowable under the environmental planning criteria for water supply watersheds.

### **Annexation Planning**

In 1997, the Georgia General Assembly enacted the Local Government Services Delivery Strategy Act (HB 489). This bill required that counties set up processes to resolve disputes when it objects to a municipal annexation. While that process has worked pretty well in Jackson County, there is an opportunity to cooperatively establish and define annexation spheres of influence for each municipality, outside of which each city would agree not to pursue annexation. Such a plan would ease transitions from one local government to another.

The pursuit of annexation plans by municipalities is particularly important in Jackson County, since annexations by Jefferson result in changes to fire district boundaries (and have also in Commerce) in some cases, and annexation by those two municipalities also results in a change over from county to city school systems. In fact, there is an apparent incentive on some residents' part to annex into Jefferson simply to become a part of that city's school system.

During one of the community workshops in support of this community assessment, one citizen raised concern about the ability of the City of Commerce to annex parallel access roads built by Jackson County in the Interstate 85 corridor. That concern raised the question of whether something could and should be done with regard to those annexation practices.

## **Economic Development**

Presently, none of the local governments in Jackson County have full-time personnel dedicated to economic development matters. The Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce provides all services related to economic development for the county and its municipalities. Hence, this service is consolidated on a countywide basis. At issue, however, is the extent to which the Chamber of Commerce is responsible for the unique needs of the smaller cities with respect to developing, redeveloping, and promoting their “main street” downtowns. If the municipalities are to have the healthy main street downtowns that many of them aspire to have, more logistical efforts (staffing and resources) will be needed.

## **Historic Preservation**

Most if not all of the cities and towns in Jackson County have significant historic resources, and there are still significant historic resources in unincorporated Jackson County. Because the smaller cities lack staff devoted to historic preservation, there is an opportunity to provide a more coordinated approach to preservation in the county. At issue is whether a countywide historic preservation commission should be created and/or whether the county and various interested municipalities can pool resources in favor of a coordinated, countywide historic preservation program.

## **Water and Sewer Service Areas**

As noted in the preceding sections, several cities provide their own water and sewer services, and the county provides those services to selected areas of the county through the Jackson County Water and Sewerage Authority. At issue is the adequacy of existing service areas. There is a need to comprehensively reassess those service area boundaries, and to clarify the formal boundaries in light of municipal annexations.

## **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)**

There is an informal effort which has been underway during the last 18 months to move Jackson County toward a countywide GIS system with services to municipalities. Previously most GIS services for municipalities were provided by the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center (now Regional Commission). Commerce is one exception; due to its utilities department it provided for its own GIS needs at least until recently, when the county has assisted with map updates. As GIS systems take expertise and resources to operate, it is beyond the budget capabilities of most if not all cities in Jackson County to provide regular updates of maps and meet the needs for specialized maps and studies involving geographic data. There is an opportunity to formalize a countywide partnership for GIS services to all municipalities.

## **Coordination of Development Authorities**

The only city in Jackson County that an authority similar to Jackson County’s Industrial Development Authority is the City of Jefferson, which created a Development Authority in 1996 to promote economic development. Periodic coordination between the Jefferson and Jackson County Development Authorities is warranted, and there may be opportunities for collaboration.

## **Animal Control**

There may be opportunities to formalize or revisit current service delivery arrangements with the municipalities for animal control.

## **Road Operations**

One issue that arises on occasion is who is responsible for road maintenance when a municipality annexes the road, or along one side of the road. Also, if the county operates traffic signals in a given area that is annexed, responsibility may not necessarily be shifted to the annexing municipality. These are issues that deserve further attention and policy development.

## **Roads Accessible Only through Other Counties**

There are examples where portions of roads are only accessible via entrance into other counties. For instance, B.T. Minish Drive and Ingram Hancock Road intersect with SR 98 (Ila Road) in Madison County, east of Commerce, but extend into Jackson County. There is no way to access those portions of these roads within Jackson County without exiting the county through Madison County. Similarly, southeast of Nicholson, off Nowhere Road which extends into Madison County, off Nowhere Trail there is Beth Haven Road in Jackson County which is only accessible via Madison County.

Similarly, there are subdivision streets within western Jackson County, south of Harmony Church Road, which are accessible only through Hall County. These subdivision streets include Fountain Drive, Silverwood Drive, Dogwood Court, Rolling Ridge, Saddlewood Court and the end of Pond Fork Way. In yet another area, there is a small segment of Rustic Oak Lane in Jackson County which is only accessible via Hall County off of Ellison Farm Road. And there are planned subdivision streets in Jackson County off of Guy Cooper Road which extend into unincorporated Hall County, with the only access from Hall County's standpoint through Jackson County.

These examples (and there are probably others) suggest that Jackson County should consider intergovernmental agreements to have adjacent counties provide first responder service (if it is deemed adequate) by the adjacent county. Similarly, to the extent such roads place the same circumstances on other counties, Jackson County should express willingness to provide first responder services for emergency and public safety calls.

This same issue of concern can be applied to municipal limits as well in certain cases. If there are unincorporated islands within a municipality that provides police service, the same principle should apply. Jackson County should identify and pursue coordination strategies for all such areas that are identified.

## **Intergovernmental Agreements with Nicholson and Talmo for Law Enforcement**

Since Jackson County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement (in effect the police force) the Cities of Talmo and Nicholson, it should have intergovernmental service agreements in place, and should periodically re-evaluate and update those agreements.

### **Intergovernmental Agreements Generally**

Review of the county's service delivery strategy reveals there are not very many formal agreements with municipalities with regard to certain services. There is an opportunity to formalize many of the service arrangements with formal agreements that will avoid potential conflicts later. The countywide service delivery strategy itself is probably not going to provide sufficient detail to reconcile confusion or conflicts, when they develop. Jackson County should be opportunistic in this regard, rather than waiting for a critical impasse or serious issue force the parties into a reactive effort.

## CHAPTER 2 ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

### QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The state's 15 quality community objectives are articulated verbatim below. The remainder of this chapter provides a summary assessment. For a more detailed assessment, please see the Technical Appendix Synopsis.

**“Open Space Preservation Objective:** New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.”

**“Environmental Protection Objective:** Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”

**“Growth Preparedness Objective:** Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.”

**“Appropriate Business Objective:** The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”

**“Employment Options Objective:** A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

**“Educational Opportunities Objective:** Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”

**“Housing Opportunities Objective:** Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.”

**“Traditional Neighborhood Objective:** Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.”

**“Infill Development Objective:** Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.”

**“Regional Identity Objective:** Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

**“Heritage Preservation Objective:** The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”

**“Sense of Place Objective:** Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”

**“Transportation Alternatives Objective:** Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.”

**“Regional Cooperation Objective:** Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.”

**“Regional Solutions Objective:** Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

**SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: QCO GRADES**

This summary assessment employs a letter-grade system for each QCO, much like a school student would be assigned on a report card. The grade is assigned by the reviewer (planning consultant) based on several objective considerations. However, the grades assigned are, in the end, subjective, and may not be based on all applicable considerations. The “grades” should be considered constructively critical, not offensive in terms of evaluating current county policies, programs, and regulations. Jackson County’s grades for QCOs are summarized as follows:

QCO	Letter Grade	QCO	Letter Grade
Environmental Protection	B+	Infill Development	D
Open Space Preservation	C	Regional Identity	n/a
Growth Preparedness	B	Heritage Preservation	B-
Appropriate Business	A-	Sense of Place	B-
Employment Options	A-	Regional Cooperation	B-
Educational Opportunities	A	Regional Solutions	B-
Housing Opportunities	B-	Transportation Alternatives	C
Traditional Neighborhood	n/a		

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Jackson County has natural resource inventories needed to ensure it knows what resources need to be preserved. The resource inventory is improved remarkably over the 1998 comprehensive plan, with the preparation of this community assessment (see “natural resources” technical appendix). It has appropriate policies to encourage environmental protection. In this sense, Jackson County receives a strong “A” grade (excellent) from the reviewer in those respects for the Quality Community Objective for Environmental Protection.

Jackson County has put into place ordinances implementing the environmental planning criteria, has adopted tree preservation requirements, and has an enforcement staff to ensure best management practices for soil erosion and sedimentation control are followed. However, the county does not utilize its natural resources inventory to any significant degree in reviewing new subdivision and development proposals. There are some acknowledged weaknesses in its tree protection and landscaping ordinances. Furthermore, enforcement of water supply reservoir buffers around Bear Creek Reservoir has been lacking. Jackson County therefore receives a “B” (good) grade for this part of the environmental protection QCO. Its overall grade assigned for the environmental protection QCO is a “B+” (very good). Jackson County can improve its grade by utilizing the map “soils with severe limitations on septic tank absorption fields” and other resource maps in all subdivision and development review processes.

## **OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION**

The inventories of natural resources have been improved upon in this community assessment, therefore increasing the prospects that important resource lands in the county will be preserved in the future. Jackson County participated in the Georgia Greenspace Program in 2000, when that was a major emphasis of the Gov. Barnes Administration. Furthermore, the county has made strides to add to their park lands and open spaces and develop better “green infrastructure” with passive recreational opportunities for the citizens of Jackson County to enjoy. Like most counties, with funding no longer provided for the Georgia Greenspace Program, formal programs to acquire and/or protect open spaces in Jackson County have not been pursued.

Jackson County’s UDC defines conservation lands, and puts in place a requirement for open space subdivisions and master planned developments to set aside at least 20 percent of the total area for open space. However, open space subdivisions and planned developments are optional, and up to developers to determine whether these development types will be pursued. A stronger open space policy is needed, and implementing regulations need to be enhanced if Jackson County is to improve its score for this QCO.

Jackson County’s comprehensive plan identifies several areas for “agricultural preservation” and has the implementing tools (such as the PCFD zoning district and conservation use assessment programs) to help conserve agricultural lands.

Jackson County’s overall grade for consistency with the open space QCO is a “C” (average), because it (like most counties in Georgia) has no formal acquisition process for open spaces, yet tremendous opportunities. There is much more that Jackson County can do, and this community assessment provides an agricultural preservation map (Areas Requiring Special Attention) to highlight those areas that need to be considered during the planning process if Jackson County is to elevate agricultural preservation to the level expected by its citizenry. The county can also more formally pursue land acquisition policies and seek implementation of

major suggestions in the prior comprehensive plan (such as transferable development rights, greenways acquisition and development and stronger agricultural preservation programs).

### **GROWTH PREPAREDNESS**

Jackson County is well aware of its growth challenges. Leaders in the county have supported planning and capital improvements in response to the needs, including improving prospects for workforce training. The county's Unified Development Code in conjunction with a "consistency" requirement that rezoning decisions be made in accordance with its land use plan, has helped to ensure that the county does not get overwhelmed by the pace of development. And the county is aware of the parts of the county that need more infrastructure. Yet it still can do more to prepare for facility needs. Its overall grade is a "B" (good), but with room for improvement.

### **APPROPRIATE BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS, AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

While there may be fewer jobs in Jackson County than workers participating in the labor force, Jackson County has matched almost exactly the number of manufacturing jobs with the number of residents working in manufacturing industries. Concerted, coordinated efforts have been made to ensure that new manufacturing jobs can locate in the county. The infrastructure needed to support manufacturing growth (especially sewer and roads) is in place. The county has committed to the appropriate level of resources to provide technical training of the work force. Institutional arrangements are in place with the Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce being the lead coordinating agent.

A formal economic development plan is still in the formative stages. While appropriate emphasis has been placed on manufacturing, other sectors and economic development opportunities, such as tourism, heritage tourism, and agriculture and forestry, have not yet been fully integrated into the county's formal economic development efforts. Furthermore, there is more that can be done to integrate the municipalities (especially those with historic and cultural resources) into a more comprehensive economic development strategy. Jackson County receives "A-" grades for the employment options and appropriate business QCOs, and an "A" for educational opportunities (but with room for improvement).

### **HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

Jackson County's housing stock provides a range of housing costs, from more upscale homes, to stick-built starter housing, to manufactured homes. There is some range of density for single-family units, but there is generally a lack of higher density residential areas in the county, even when the municipalities are included. In terms of types of units, multi-family dwelling are underprovided, even after considering the municipal housing stocks. While, overall, the housing stock appears affordable, statistics reveal that more than one in every four households in the county as of 2005-2007 were cost-burdened or severely cost burdened. Workers in some industries have some incentive to seek higher wages and salaries outside Jackson County. The reviewer gives Jackson County a "B-" grade for housing opportunities. During the planning horizon, Jackson County will need to address further specific housing needs for the disabled and elderly, as well as any other "special needs" housing.

## **TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD**

We conclude that a “not applicable” (N/A) grade is warranted. There are some things that Jackson County can do to promote more of this type of development, at least within master planned developments where densities can begin to approach urban scale. Furthermore, Jackson County can promote some of the objectives and ideals inherent in this QCO, by ensuring pedestrian access, encouraging more grid-like street patterns, and allowing for mixtures of land uses in the same neighborhood.

## **INFILL DEVELOPMENT**

In 2003, Jackson County adopted a land use plan that promotes the concentration of development in existing developed areas. However, actual development approvals and practices have gone in the opposite direction – toward extensive scatteration and sprawl, as evidenced on the two maps referenced in this section. One has to also consider that the two maps referenced in this section do not indicate the extent of rural residential development which has occurred on individual lots, outside subdivisions; hence the nature of rural sprawl is even vaster than can be depicted here.

Prior to this assessment, Jackson County’s leaders have never seen numbers that indicate the infill development potential inside the various cities in Jackson County. And, the full scope and nature of the residential development pattern today has similarly not been made evident. Now, with this information, leaders in Jackson County are aware that the scattered residential development pattern and infill development opportunities, including both for municipalities and the unincorporated areas, are so vast that there appears to be no market need that cannot be realized first by developing inside the municipalities, and second by simply building on vacant, subdivided lots. There is simply no justification to approve additional residential subdivisions in Jackson County any time soon. And, rezoning decisions for new residential development must be made more closely in accordance with the residential recommendations of the county’s land use plan, as opposed to allowing subdivisions in isolated areas, including within those areas designated for agricultural preservation. The county, including municipalities which have annexed large areas of undeveloped land, therefore receives from the reviewer a nearly failing (“D”) grade with respect to promoting a development pattern that minimizes the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery and encourages development of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban cores (cities) within the county.

## **REGIONAL IDENTITY**

Because Jackson County is on the fringe of three identifiable regions yet does not have any themes of regionally identifiable architecture, the reviewer assigns a “Not Applicable” grade with regard to this QCO. However, more is said in this chapter about rural character, which Jackson County shares with a number of counties in abutting regions.

## **HERITAGE PRESERVATION**

Jackson County has not maintained a current inventory of historic resources (something that is badly needed and which will be called for in its short-term work program). It has not formally adopted and staffed a preservation program. Nonetheless, the county government has undertaken some critically important steps toward preservation of its history. It has formed a committee and appropriated money to restore the historic county courthouse in Jefferson, one of the most historically important public properties in the county.

Jackson County has also created a Heritage Village site at its Hurricane Shoals Park, where historic buildings and structures from various places in the county have been saved from destruction and relocated in a village-type arrangement. Though when historic structures are removed from their original site they lose some of their authenticity, Jackson County is to be commended for that effort. The county has also restored the historic Sell's Mill on its Sells Mill park site, and the county is overall supportive (including financially) with regard to the Jackson County Historical Society.



**Heritage Village at Hurricane Shoals Park**

On balance, Jackson County receives a B- (low good) grade with respect to attaining the Heritage Preservation QCO. Its public efforts have been outstanding but it has so far focused only on those properties within its own ownership, to the potential detriment of all historic resources on private properties. Clearly, there is more the county can do.

### **SENSE OF PLACE**

Most of the considerations of this QCO, as literally worded, do not apply to unincorporated Jackson County. However, its overall sense of place includes an agricultural heritage, one that has not been cultivated and formally identified for protection, as the above discussion about historic resources indicates (which is assessed and graded separately). Jackson County has begun to pay attention to the aesthetics of new development, by adopting and implementing quality development regulations and by establishing architectural standards via zoning overlay districts for the SR 53 and SR 124 corridors. While some of the principles of the Sense of Place QCO do not apply to unincorporated Jackson County, it receives a “B-“ (a low good score) grade for its mixed efforts of underemphasizing its agricultural flavor and proactive efforts to promote quality sense of place in certain new developments.

### **REGIONAL COOPERATION AND REGIONAL SOLUTIONS**

There are some significant positives in terms of Jackson County's efforts to cooperate and coordinate services on a regional basis, and within the boundaries of the county itself. However, there are also some acknowledged weaknesses in terms of communication and coordination, particularly with regard to service providers. A fragmented system of fire districts and municipal libraries (within the framework of a regional system), as well as three public school systems, indicate challenges which lie ahead. An overall score is difficult to assign, but the reviewer gives the county a “B-“ (low good) for these QCOs – it is clearly trying but faces institutional arrangements that make it more difficult to coordinate.

## **TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES**

The above references would suggest Jackson County should receive a failing grade, along with the rest of the northeast Georgia region outside of Athens. However, since Jackson County is in company with many other counties with the same type of conditions, it receives an average or “C” grade from the reviewer. Though facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists are largely missing, there are some requirements in place for improvement. No matter how much Jackson County supports improvement of these modes, financial limitations and the external environment of rural and suburban places make its limitations very difficult to overcome in the short-term and even during the longer-range planning horizon.

## **CHAPTER 3 ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

The analysis of development patterns includes an existing land use map and a narrative summarizing existing land uses.

### **EXISTING LAND USE**

The land use and character areas data appendix provides more details, including statistics, on existing land use in Jackson County as a whole, in the unincorporated areas, and for each of the nine municipalities (Jackson County portion only). The following paragraphs summarize existing land use trends.

#### **Agriculture and Forestry**

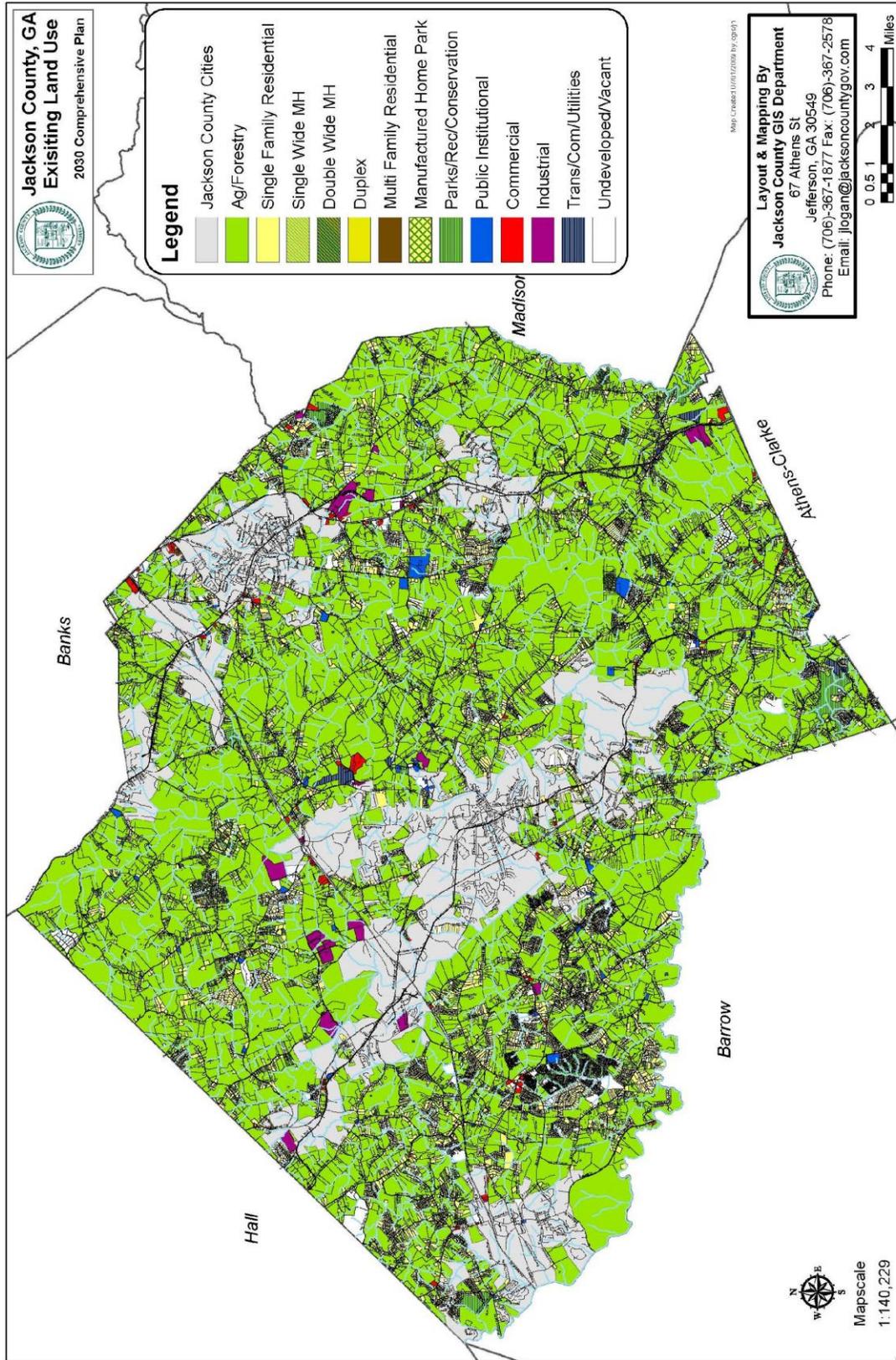
As of 2009, almost three-quarters (72.1 percent) of the land area in the county, including municipalities, is classified as agriculture and forestry. In the unincorporated area, that figure is 77.5 percent. From the Census of Agriculture (2007), it is apparent that Jackson County lost 23 farms and nearly 15,000 acres of farmland between 2002 and 2007; that was a decrease of 14.8 percent in terms of farmland acreage. The average size of farm also decreased from 109 acres in the year 2002 to 95 acres in the year 2007. Farmland loss from 2002 to 2007 occurred across the spectrum in terms of the size of farms; not only large farms were lost, but small- and medium-sized farms as well.

The amount of harvested cropland remained more or less the same from 2002 to 2007, at about 15,300 acres. However, total cropland declined by 18,424 acres from 2002 to 2007; almost all of the total cropland lost was “cropland used for pasture or grazing” (18,151 acres). Total woodland decreased by 2,730 acres from 2002 to 2007; the largest share of the decrease during that time period was for woodland pastured (for more information, see tables 5, 6, and 7, land use and character areas data appendix).

#### **Residential**

Jackson County has added approximately 7,117 housing units from July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2007. The western portion of the county has experienced the most rapid development due to its proximity to Gwinnett County. Jackson County has followed standard practices for most suburbanizing communities, allowing and even encouraging conventional suburban land development patterns in a dispersed pattern. As a result, there has been a significant “scatteration” of residential subdivision across most parts of the county, sometimes even encroaching into areas of agricultural preservation (see maps in this chapter).

In fact, there are some 365 residential subdivisions distributed throughout the county. The aggregate number of residential lots is 16,718, with the average subdivision size being 46 lots. The largest subdivision in terms of residential lots is the Traditions Subdivision, which has 1,103 lots, but the second largest subdivision only has 299 lots (Countywide Roads Plan).



Those areas of unincorporated Jackson County which have so far escaped significant subdivision development activity include the northern tip (west, southwest and south of Maysville), Apple Valley (between Jefferson and Commerce along SR 15 Alt.), the Brockton area (east of Jefferson, north-northeast of Arcade, and west of Nicholson), and most areas on the eastern fringe of Jackson County. Not surprisingly, these areas not subjected to residential subdivision development correspond pretty closely with the county's agricultural preservation designation on its future land use plan map.

### **Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial**

As would be expected for a rural county with numerous municipalities, the lion's share of public and institutional properties are located within city limits, especially Jefferson which is the county seat. Institutional land uses in unincorporated areas consist primarily of schools and churches, along with some rural cemeteries often located next to historic community churches.

Like with public-institutional uses, most of the existing commercial land is located within municipalities. The extent of unincorporated commercial land use is actually quite limited; commercial uses (with some exceptions for isolated zones) exist along segments of U.S. Highway 129 and U.S. Highway 441, and near the interchange of SR 53 and I-85 outside the city limits of Braselton. Most of the existing industrial land use outside of municipalities is located between Interstate 85 and Wayne Poultry Road.

### **Transportation/Communications/Utilities**

Major land uses classified in the Transportation/Communication/Utilities category include: Jackson County Airport east of SR 82 North along Airport Road and Lyle Field Road (north of Jefferson's city limits); the waste water treatment property west of Opossum Creek Road north of Interstate 85 in Jefferson; wastewater treatment plant property along Curry Creek in Jefferson; water treatment property at New Savage Road and Bear Creek Lake; property east of Jarret Road which lies east of U.S. Highway 441 south of Commerce; and property at the intersection of Davis Road, County Farm Road and Airport Road.

## **CHAPTER 4 AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION**

In this community assessment report, certain areas are designated as requiring special attention. It is important to underscore at the outset what is meant by that phrase. A given resource or area may be important, and require regulations or some public policy action or program. For example, wetlands are clearly important, and they are mapped in the technical appendix of this report. However, since the county has already addressed them adequately in its Unified Development Code, they are not designated here as areas requiring special attention. In other words, those important regulatory issues and policy problems that have already been adequately addressed are not shown on maps in this summary report and labeled as areas requiring special attention.

It is also important to emphasize and clarify the relative time period which is being considered, when one identifies areas requiring special attention. To suggest something needs “attention” means that it deserves consideration and action in the short-term, i.e., within the next five years, as opposed to consideration over the “long range.” Therefore, Jackson County’s efforts to identify areas requiring special attention are focused on those items that need to be addressed during the next five years.

The categories required to be assessed in this chapter include:

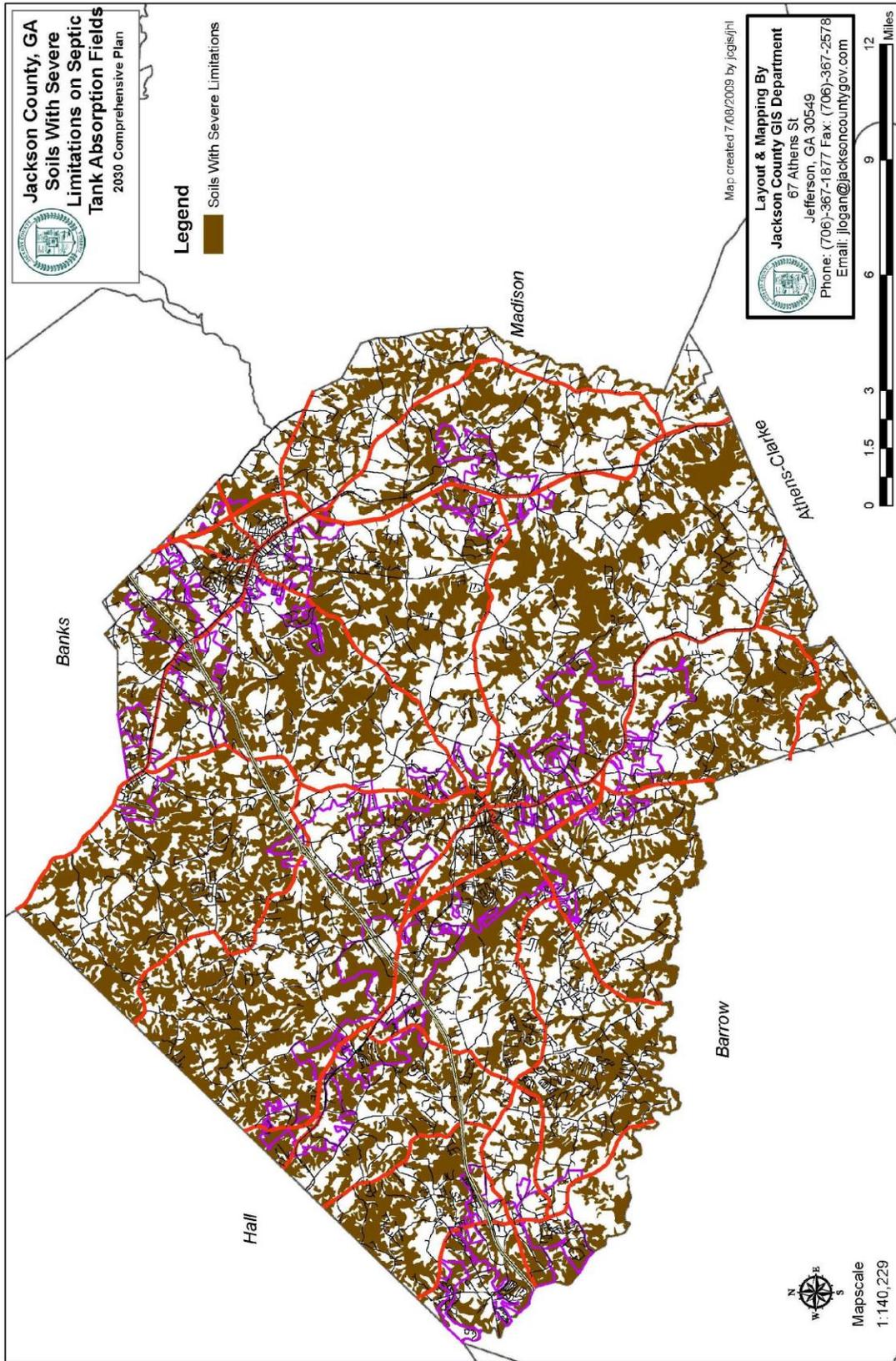
- Areas of significant natural and cultural resources;
- Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur;
- Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation;
- Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics and attractiveness;
- Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated;
- Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites); and
- Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment.

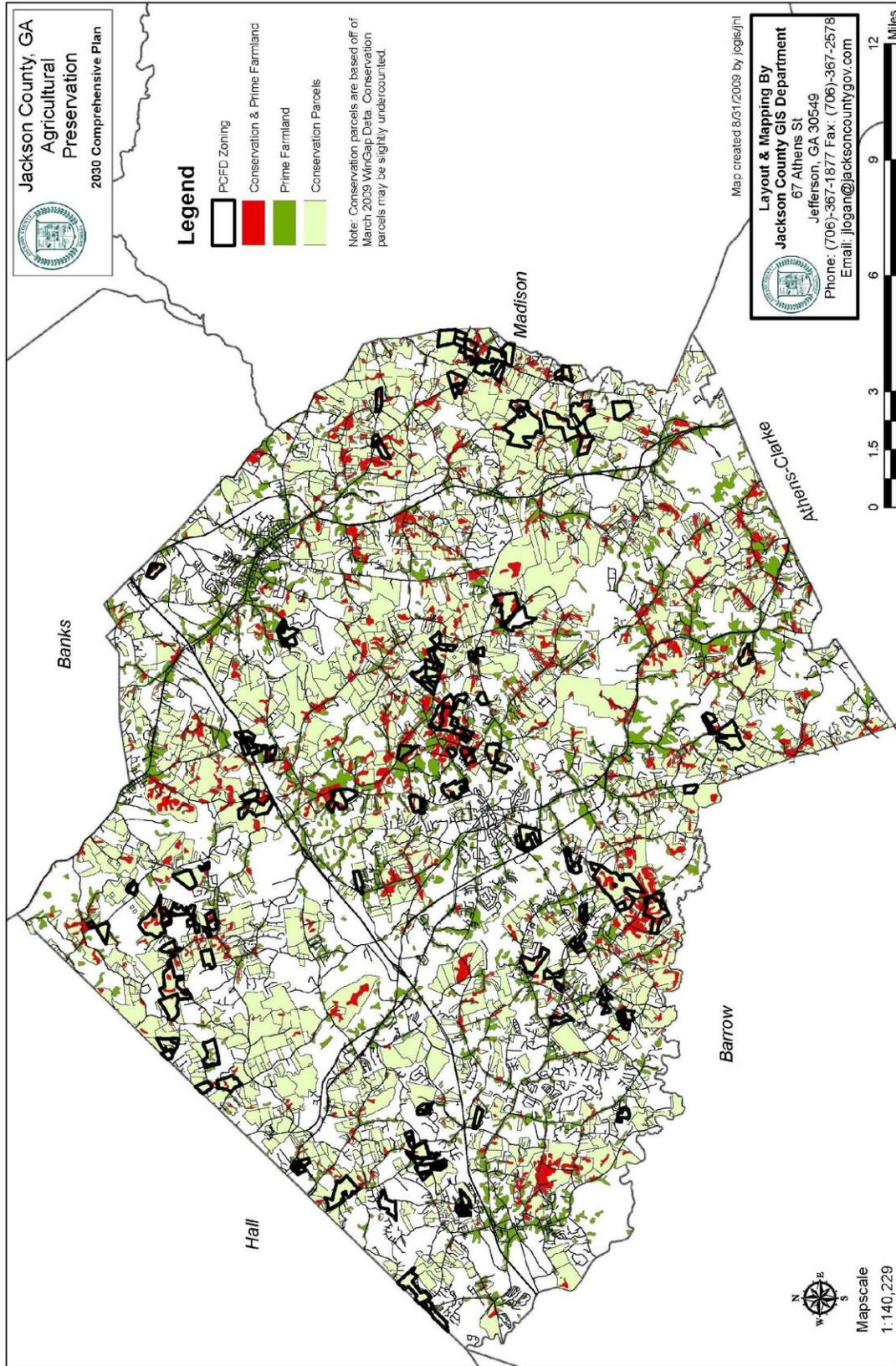
### **SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

There are two maps produced with regard to this category, as described in the following paragraphs.

#### **Soils With Severe Limitations on Septic Tank Absorption Fields**

This map is a composite of all soils in the county that have severe limitations on septic tank drain fields. This map is very important because it shows where residential subdivisions should not be constructed if they are to utilize onsite sewage management systems (i.e., septic tanks). This map, therefore, is designated as a map of “areas requiring special attention.” It needs to be consulted each time a residential subdivision utilizing individual septic tanks is proposed, and proposals for residential subdivisions in these areas should be disapproved or at least discouraged unless specific studies and technologies are used to overcome the severe limitations soils pose on septic tank absorption fields.





## **Composite Map of Agricultural Preservation**

This map of areas requiring special attention combines prime agricultural soils, conservation use parcels, and PCFD zoning into one composite map titled “Agricultural Preservation.” This map is considered a map of “Areas Requiring Special Attention” because more can be done to preserve the agricultural character and agricultural uses within Jackson County.

## **RAPID DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE OF LAND USES**

Whether rapid development will resume any time soon, after the severe economic recession of 2008 and 2009, is uncertain. However, one can be certain that eventually, the economy will turn positive again, and significant development will resume again in Jackson County. Therefore, it is prudent to anticipate those areas that will experience rapid development in a healthy economy and put plans in place to address the new development. It is an opportune time for Jackson County (while development is not taking place so rapidly) to focus on proactive rather than reactive measures. The comprehensive plan is an opportunity for Jackson County to be proactive, anticipating and planning for future development. A map titled “Areas Requiring Special Attention” is provided, which shows several areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur. Those areas are described further in the paragraphs below.

### **SR 53 Corridor North of Braselton**

Due to planned road widening and residential growth trends, this corridor is confirmed as being an area of potentially rapid development. Road widening tends to promote changes in land uses, toward commercial. Also, due to proximity of this area to growth centers in Barrow and Gwinnett County, and its convenient access to those centers via Interstate 85, the SR 53 corridor is likely to be one of the first to witness rapid development when market conditions turn around. Some of this corridor has already been annexed by Braselton, suggesting another opportunity of intergovernmental coordination.

### **U.S. Highway 129 Corridor**

The U.S. Highway 129 corridor (a.k.a., Daman Gause Bypass), from Talmo through Jefferson is expected to experience rapid commercial development in the near future or as soon as the market economy improves. This corridor is governed from a land use standpoint, not only by Jackson County (unincorporated areas) but by the cities of Talmo, Pendergrass, and Jefferson, and further south, by Arcade. Hence, the management of development in the upper U.S. Highway 129 Corridor is also an issue of intergovernmental coordination to ensure that development is compatible through all local government jurisdictions. Furthermore, because this corridor is mostly undeveloped now, there is an opportunity to enhance the quality of development with additional regulations and guidelines matching the “sense of place” objectives of Jackson County and its municipalities (see Chapter 5 of this summary report).

### **U.S. Highway 441 Corridor in the Commerce Area**

Properties along US Highway 441, starting at Banks Crossing in Banks County and extending southward into the City of Commerce and Jackson County, is likely to witness significant additional commercial development in the near future. This corridor is almost equally divided between incorporated (City of Commerce) and unincorporated (Jackson County) areas, thus necessitating (like other corridors mentioned) a coordinated, intergovernmental approach to corridor management.

### **SR 98 Corridor near I-85**

Maysville Road (SR 98) north and south of its interchange with Interstate 85 is another corridor that deserves designation as an area likely to undergo significant, rapid commercial and industrial development in the near future. Again, like the other corridors, some of the land within it has been incorporated (i.e., annexed by the City of Commerce), while large sections of unincorporated lands remain. While this area is mapped as generally coinciding with Commerce's water and sewer service area, it is possible that development could eventually extend into Maysville's service area. Hence, three governments and potentially two service areas are involved in this area.

### **AREAS OUTPACING THE AVAILABILITY OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Generally, the area most undersupplied at this time with important public facilities and services is the West Jackson area. Participants in community workshops in support of this assessment identified a number of facilities that are needed now or will be needed in the future in Western Jackson County, including but not limited to health facilities, EMS, weather warning sirens, better fire service coverage, and more parks, among others. There are three designations on the map, "Areas Requiring Special Attention," which fall under this category. They are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

#### **Suburban Residential Concentration Areas**

Two non-contiguous areas are identified as requiring special attention because of existing and platted residential subdivisions. This is a more tightly drawn iteration of the "residential concentration area," delineated in the major roads plan and referenced above. These two areas are (1) including the Traditions development and adjacent subdivisions west of SR 332 and mostly south of SR 124; and (2) an area west of Jefferson, along both sides of SR 11. Several homes already exist in these areas, but there is vast additional potential for homebuilding given existing platted lots. These two areas are expected to generate substantial demands for urban services, including park and recreation, library, fire and public safety services and facilities in the near future.

#### **Diamond C Ranch (DRI 1162)**

This area consists of 1,400 acres in the northernmost corner of Jackson County south of SR 52 and bordering Hall and Banks Counties. This approved and rezoned development, if constructed, can ultimately result in 2,232 housing units in a golf course community, along with acreage for commercial retail and hotel development. This development, if constructed, will result in substantial additional needs with respect to infrastructure and public facilities and services that are not presently accommodated in the county's comprehensive plan.

#### **4W Farms – Arcade**

This project (1000+ units), while within the City of Arcade, is substantial enough that it should be recognized in the county's plan as an area expected to undergo rapid development in the future. This area is designated as a "Town Center" in the City of Arcade's Community Agenda.



## **AREAS IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT AND AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT**

We conclude that the county, due to its economy being in the earlier stages of suburbanization, does not have places in the unincorporated areas that need redevelopment. There are no areas which have been identified as needing aesthetic improvement, because the focus here is on unincorporated Jackson County which is still mostly rural. The county does not have older, suburbanized commercial corridors that have suffered from neglect and obsolescence, although the SR 98 (Maysville Road) corridor is identified on a county map of areas requiring special attention due to potentially rapid development (as well as aesthetic concerns), and the same has been identified as an area in need of aesthetic improvement in the City of Commerce's community assessment. Therefore, no areas requiring special attention are identified for this category.

## **ABANDONED STRUCTURES AND SITES**

The only site shown on the map of Areas Requiring Special Attention in this category is Agricycle. There are no other significant structures or sites that have been abandoned.

## **AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT DISINVESTMENT, POVERTY AND/OR UNEMPLOYMENT**

The technical analysis does not reveal any significant concentrations of disinvestment or unemployment.<sup>1</sup>

## **INFILL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Here, we define "infill development opportunity" in the context of unincorporated Jackson County to mean all those opportunities to build on existing, platted lots. A map has been developed, titled "Opportunities for Residential Infill Development," and that map is considered a map of "Areas Requiring Special Attention." Because of the scale of individual lots, the reader is generally unable to grasp the extent of vacant lots across Jackson County (but readers using the pdf version of this document can zoom into the map for better detail). These development opportunities are so vast that, if the county never approved another residential subdivision during the next 20 years, it would have enough lots under current market conditions to satisfy its needs during the entire planning horizon and beyond by just directing homebuilding to these subdivisions.

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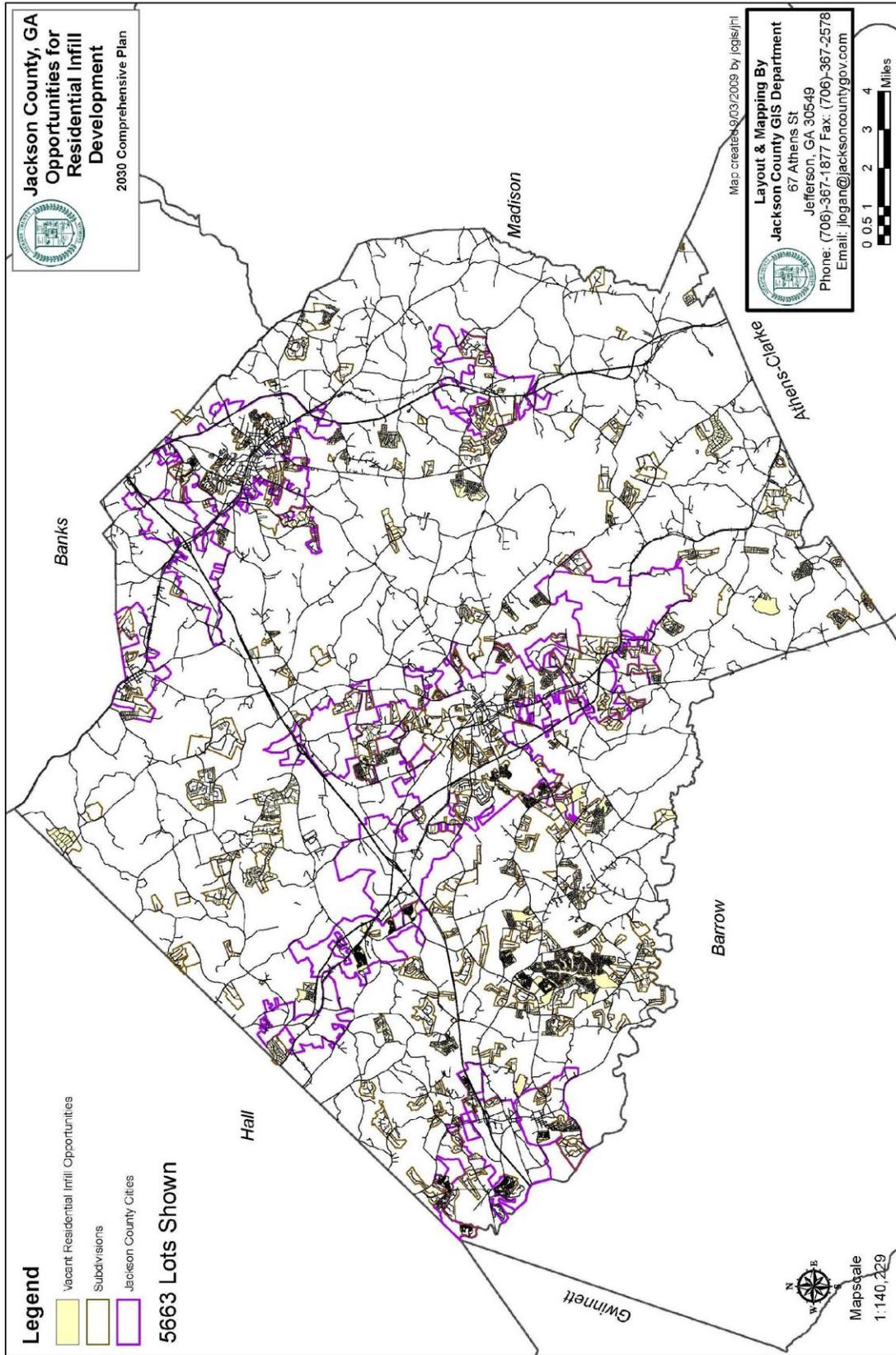
<sup>1</sup> Any significant concentration of poverty could be considered a candidate for special attention, such as community development programs. Countywide, there were an estimated 3,870 households in Jackson County in 2005 to 2007 which had no earnings at all. In Jackson County, the lowest per capita incomes in 1999 were found in Census Tract 106 (Arcade and unincorporated area), which also had the highest number of persons below poverty level in 1999 and the highest number of households with public assistance income in 1999 (Table 11, population appendix). While concentrations of poverty in Census Tract 106 or elsewhere might warrant special attention, they are not identified as such here, given that no census tract appears (as of 2000) to exhibit substantial variation when compared with other census tracts or the county as a whole.

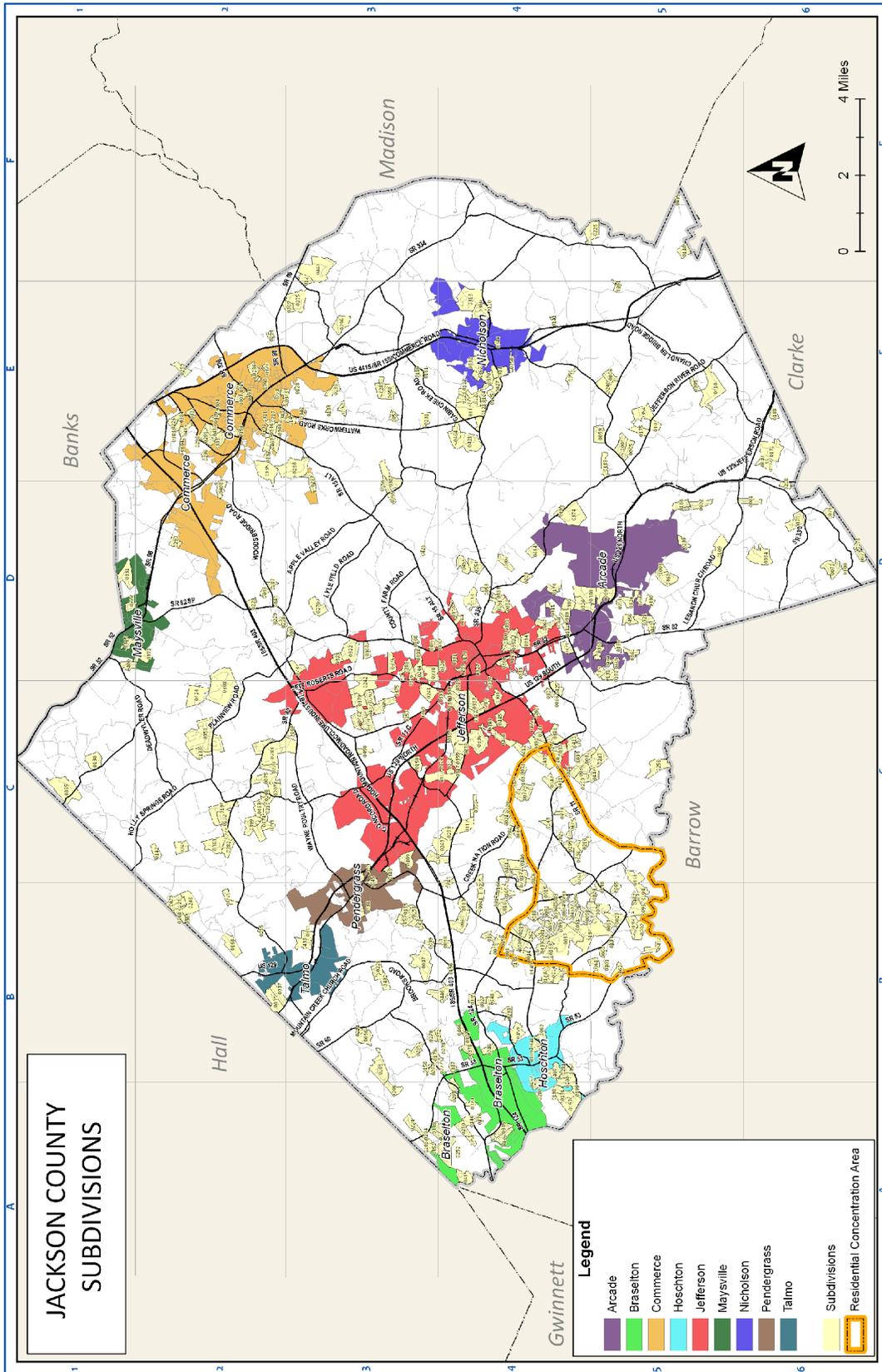
Not only is it important to recognize the value of these areas from a simple land supply standpoint, there are important public quality of life issues associated with the numerous “ghost” subdivisions that exist in Jackson County. The subdivision street pictured on the right is just one of dozens of subdivision streets that have been platted and are ready for building. Without a presence of at least some homes on these subdivision streets, a number of important problems have begun to surface. First, theft of such things as manhole covers from storm catch basins is now frequent. And those subdivisions that have a few homes (vacant at that) are increasingly being looted for such things as the copper piping on exterior air conditioning units.



**This vacant subdivision street in the River Bend Subdivision is representative of literally dozens of subdivisions that lie mostly or totally vacant; victims of excess subdivision, a flat housing market economy, and subject to vandalism and theft.**

Yet another map (see “Subdivisions” helps to show the scattered nature of the subdivisions in unincorporated areas; they are spread across nearly all parts of the county.





## **CHAPTER 5 PRELIMINARY CHARACTER AREAS**

### **SETTLEMENT CHARACTER: COMMUNITY FOCAL POINTS**

The county's planning consultant has prepared a map titled "Settlement Character Areas." In historical context, Jackson County developed in a series of mostly rural and urban settlements spanning across almost all of Jackson County. This map was drafted with several purposes in mind. First, a large county is difficult to generalize about, and it can be difficult to even refer to different subareas of the county unless there are names associated with the parts. This map allows one, fundamentally, to refer to smaller subareas of the county that would otherwise be difficult to describe without the aid of a map of this sort.

Secondly, any attempt to describe character on a countywide basis should be cognizant of the original settlement pattern of the community. The settlement character map is thus an attempt to capture the historic roots of early settlement patterns. The map includes urban areas that correspond with municipal limits generally as they exist today. Some of the areas on this map are identified today as unique, unincorporated communities and even have their own identifying signs along roads and highways (e.g., Brockton and Apple Valley). The names for other settlements were taken from maps of the county, such as the Georgia Department of Transportation's general highway map and the Aero Atlas. Names such as Clarkesboro and Attica appear on them, reflecting some evidence that unincorporated communities have taken on their own, unofficial names. Some settlements were identified by the planning consultant based primarily on the existence of churches. Yet others have roots in the earliest history of Jackson County.

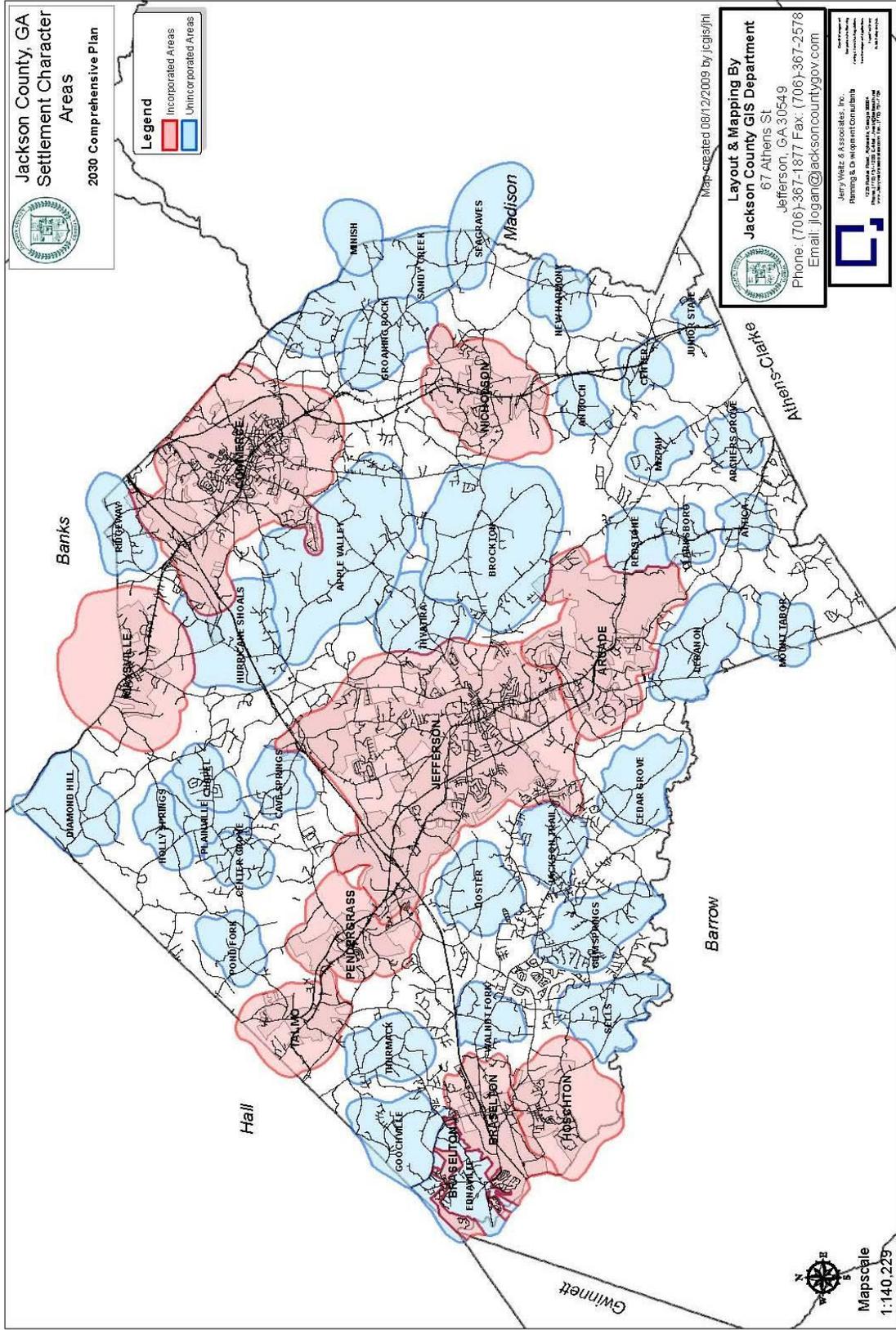
Third, the settlement character map was thought to have potential for forming more refined character area policies in Jackson County.

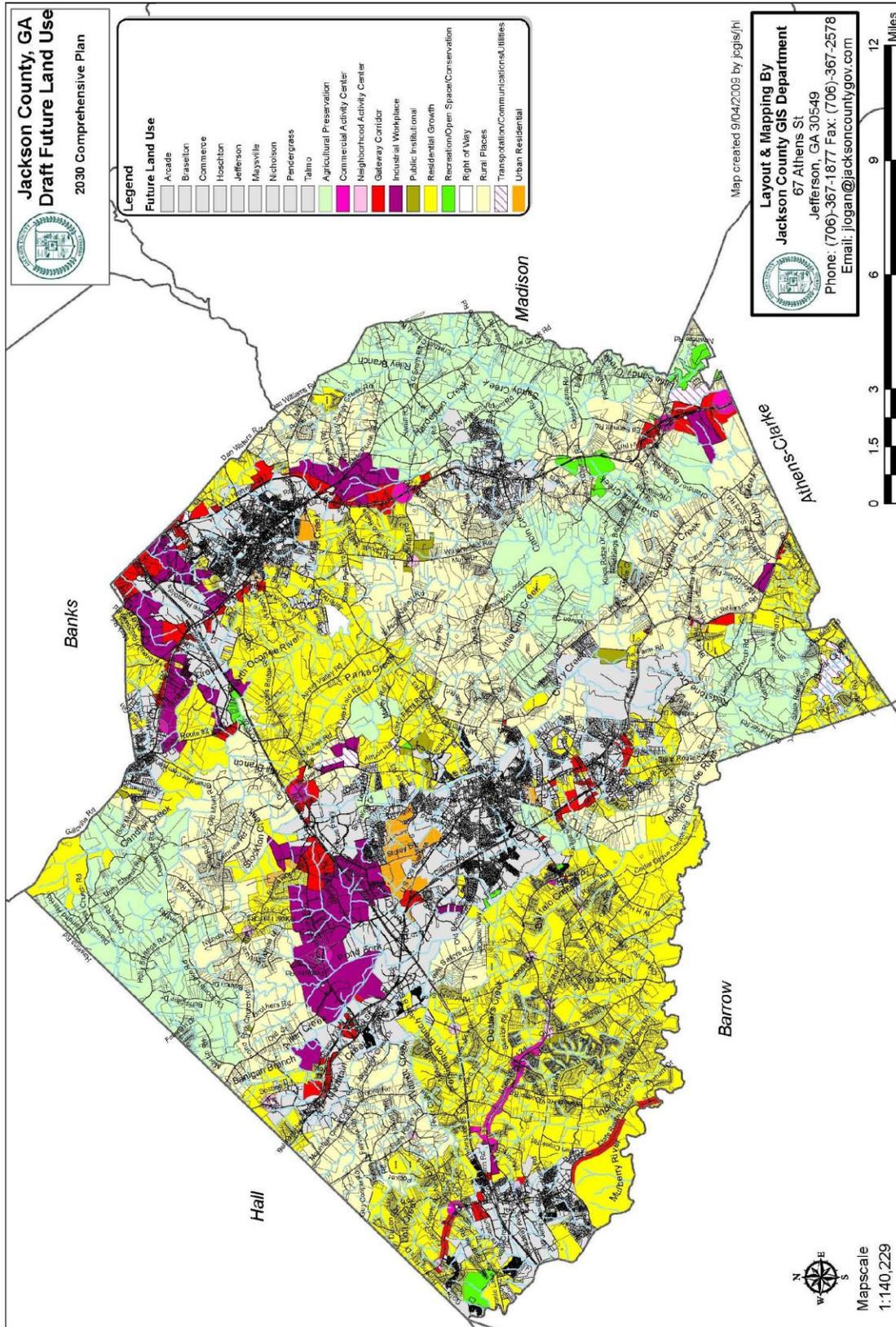
### **REFINED CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS**

When specified in the Community Agenda, the character area descriptions are required by local planning requirements to include the following; since they are required for the Community Agenda, this Community Assessment conveys those requirements, with the understanding that changes and refinements are likely during the community participation process.

- Written description, pictures, and/or illustrations that make it clear what types, forms; styles and patterns of development are to be encouraged in the area;
- Listing of specific land uses or zoning categories to be allowed in the area;
- Listing of Quality Community Objectives that will be pursued in the area; and
- Identification of implementation measures to achieve desired development patterns.

The map on the following page is the county's adopted future land use plan map, which contains character areas and constitutes the "preliminary character areas map" required for the Community Assessment. This chapter presents the county's adopted character area and future land use districts, as described in the county's adopted comprehensive plan. However, they have been modified to address some of the issues described above. They are also supplemented as necessary to meet the local planning requirements, including pictures, references to the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) to be implemented, and the appropriate implementation measures.





## Agricultural Preservation

The agricultural preservation character area provides areas that encourage farming operations. Predominant uses include intensive agricultural production, forestry, and conservation. This character area allows for agriculturally related commercial uses and cottage industries in appropriate locations. Very low density (i.e., 1 unit per 8 acres) residential uses within the character area are allowed but are intended to be primarily scattered single-family homes, or compatible large lot, conservation, and equestrian-oriented subdivisions, approved only by special permit.



**Intensive Agriculture: Poultry Farm**

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* PCFD (Planned Commercial Farm District) (a minimum lot size of 35 acres) and A-2 (Agricultural Rural Farm District) (a minimum lot size of 8 acres).



**Hay Field**



**Farm and Forest Land**

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – agriculture is an appropriate business for some households.
- Employment Options – agriculture is a viable employment option for some workers.
- Heritage Preservation – farms contribute to the county's agricultural heritage.
- Environmental Protection – farm preservation helps to protect the environment.
- Open Space – farmland preservation provides open space via resource lands.
- Housing Opportunities – as described, lower cost housing is allowed.
- Sense of Place – farmland protects agricultural heritage including equestrian "feel."
- Regional Identity – farmland protection contributes to rural agricultural identity of the region.

*Implementation Measures:* Exclusive farm use zoning; scenic corridor overlay; land acquisition; farmland preservation activities; conservation easements; purchase of development rights; transferable development rights programs.

### Rural Places

This area intends to maintain an agrarian character to outlying areas which include active, mostly small-scale, farming operations and large home sites. It stands on its own as a reflection of existing character, but is also considered a “transitional” area generally in between farmland preserves and residential developments. Residential uses are low density, reflecting reliance on on-site sewage disposal systems and often well water, and generally poor soil conditions for septic tank drain fields. Sanitary sewer does not exist in this character area. While some areas may be served by public water, there are other places which continue to rely on individual wells for water supply.



**Scene Typical of Rural Places Character Areas**

The residential density for this district is a minimum lot size of one acre if public water is available, and 1.5 acres if served by individual on-site well.

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* A-2 (Agricultural Rural Farm District), AR (Agricultural Residential), R-1 (Low Density Single-Family Residential), and MH (Manufactured Housing)



**Unimproved (Dirt) Roads are Common in Rural Places**



**Manufactured Home**

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – agriculture is an appropriate business for some households.
- Employment Options – agriculture is a viable employment option for some workers.
- Heritage Preservation – farms contribute to the county’s agricultural heritage.
- Environmental Protection – farm preservation helps to protect the environment.
- Open Space – farmland preservation provides open space via resource lands.
- Housing Opportunities – as described, housing is allowed.
- Sense of Place – supports agricultural, equestrian, and rural feel.

*Implementation Measures:* Farm use zoning; scenic corridor overlay; land acquisition; farmland preservation activities; conservation easements; purchase of development rights; transferable development rights programs; rural character design guidelines.

**Residential Growth Areas**

These are areas located outside identified centers that are experiencing a high volume of growth. They are designated primarily for single-family houses within conventional subdivisions. Public water is either available or planned. Sanitary sewer is not always available. Densities are medium (0.75 acre minimum lot size) to low (1 acre minimum) where public water is available. If sanitary sewer is available, duplexes and townhouses at up to 3 units per acre are allowed within master planned developments. Neighborhood commercial uses may be permitted in master planned developments.



**Home in River Bend Subdivision**



**Single-family Residential Subdivision**



**Entrance to Traditions Planned Community**

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* R-1 (Low Density Single-Family Residential) and R-2 (Medium Density Residential)

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Housing Opportunities – housing is the predominant use.
- Traditional Neighborhoods – potentially implemented with certain standards.
- Infill Development – potentially contributes to concentrated development patterns.
- Open Space – conservation lands set aside in master planned developments.
- Sense of Place – if amenity features are included in master planned developments.

*Implementation Measures:* Residential zoning districts; subdivision requirements; amenity requirements for master planned developments.

### Urban Residential

These are areas close to cities and places or areas experiencing urbanization and growth pressures. Public water and sanitary sewer exists, and these areas are served with urban services and facilities such as parks, community centers, libraries, and schools. The predominant use is conventional subdivisions of single-family homes. A mix of housing types, including townhouses and multi-family residences, mixed-use developments and village centers (commercial) may be permitted in appropriate areas within master planned developments.



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*Zoning Districts (UDC):* R-1 (Low Density Single-Family Residential), R-2 (Medium Density Residential), R-3 (Multi-Family Residential), and MH (Manufactured Housing)

*Densities:* Up to 8 units per acre for townhouses and apartments on sewer (R-3); up to 3 units per acre for townhouses and duplexes on sewer (R-2); up to 2 units per acre for detached single-family homes on sewer (R-1, R-2, and R-3) and manufactured homes on sewer (MH)

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Housing Opportunities – housing is the predominant use.
- Traditional Neighborhoods – potentially implemented with certain standards.
- Infill Development – potentially contributes to concentrated development patterns.

*Implementation Measures:* Residential zoning districts.

## Neighborhood Activity Center

These are envisioned to be compact assortments of convenience-oriented retail stores and services at major rural crossroads that address demands of adjacent residents in less urbanized parts of the county. For instance, it might contain small-scaled commercial uses, such as a bank, grocery store, dry cleaners, and gas station, arranged in a village-like setting. It might also include a neighborhood park or elementary school. When developed as new places, they should include sidewalks and linkages to adjacent residential areas with trees along streets that are modest in scale.



**While not meeting all aspects of this character area description, the existing Dry Pond Country Store is representative of the scale desired in neighborhood activity centers in Jackson County.**

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* NRC (Neighborhood Retail Commercial)

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – since small scale commercial uses are allowed.
- Employment Options – since employment is generated close to rural residences.
- Sense of Place – if designed appropriately to retain rural character and/or quality development principles

*Implementation Measures:* neighborhood commercial zoning; rural character and quality development design guidelines.

## Community Activity Center

These predominantly commercial areas usually surround two major transportation corridors. They are envisioned as places with compatible mixtures of higher intensity non-residential development, such as larger scaled shopping centers and professional offices. They serve a market area of several neighborhoods. A variety of housing options may also be provided if designed in the context of a master planned development. These character areas are safe, attractive, and convenient for pedestrians and motorists alike.



**This commercial development near Traditions (along SR 124) is representative of the quality of development expected in this character area.**

*Zoning Districts (UDC): CRC (Community Retail Commercial)*

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – since small scale commercial uses are allowed.
- Employment Options – since employment is generated close to residences.
- Transportation Alternatives – if appropriate sidewalks and connections to residential neighborhoods are provided.
- Sense of Place – if designed appropriately in accordance with quality development principles.

*Implementation Measures:* Community commercial zoning districts; overlay districts requiring adherence to architecture and quality development standards.

**Gateway Corridor**

This character area was conceived to correspond with major road corridors into the county and its cities. It is intended to accommodate large-scale commercial uses serving the traveling public via automobile, including but not limited to “big box” retail stores, car dealerships, car washes, and even truck terminals, but all such uses require careful site planning to ensure site development is in accordance with requirements for lighting, parking locations, landscaping, signage, and buffering. They are less pedestrian oriented than neighborhood centers.



**While not developed according to quality development principles conveyed in this character area, J & J Flea Market on U.S. Highway 441 is representative of the type of highway-oriented uses that may locate in this character area.**

*Zoning Districts (UDC): HRC (Highway Retail Commercial)*

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – since small scale commercial uses are allowed.
- Employment Options – since employment is generate close to rural residences.

*Implementation Measures:* Highway commercial zoning and quality development standards.

## Industrial Workplace

The intent of this character area is to provide a variety of tracts for industry and employment uses that are limited to office and business parks, distribution/service, light industrial, high technology and researching, wholesale companies and similar businesses. Developments adhering to planned development principles are encouraged, with a high quality of architectural appearance.



**Industrial Development within a Planned Industrial Area north of I-85**



**Warehousing exists and further warehouses are planned in the Interstate 85 corridor.**



**Free-standing industrial tracts also exist, such as at this location south of Nicholson along U.S. Highway 441.**

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* LI (Light Industrial) and GI (General Industrial)

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – these uses cater to the county's blue collar labor force needs.
- Employment Options – a variety of employment opportunities are provided.

*Implementation Measures:* industrial and business park zoning; quality development principles; business and industrial park design guidelines.

## Public-Institutional

This category corresponds with existing sites and facilities in public ownership for such uses as schools, churches, and cemeteries. Future uses of this sort are not shown on the future land use plan map.

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* A variety of zoning districts permit public and institutional development.



**Historic Lebanon Church**

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Appropriate Business – these uses cater to the county's blue collar labor force needs.
- Employment Options – a variety of employment opportunities are provided.
- Educational Opportunities – in the case of public and private schools and universities.

*Implementation Measures:* None specific other than zoning, to the extent it applies.

## Transportation/Communications/Utilities

This category designates existing electric substations, telephone facilities, transmission towers, and water and wastewater treatment plants. There are no known future locations for such facilities, but most of these facilities are not necessarily subject to local zoning restrictions.

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* Any zoning district, for public uses.



**Electric Substation off SR 334**

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:* None with any particular significance.

*Implementation Measures:* None of any significant consequence.

### **Recreation/Open Space/ Conservation**

This category corresponds with parks and areas designated for conservation. It includes such places as forested tracts south of Nicholson owned by the University of Georgia and the State Arboretum. Flood plains and stream buffers should also be included in this conservation category since they are generally not able to be developed, or are available for development only under very limited circumstances.

*Zoning Districts (UDC):* A variety of zoning districts permit public and institutional development.



**Trail Head at Sell's Mill Park**

*Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) implemented:*

- Environmental Protection
- Open Space
- Heritage Preservation

*Implementation Measures:* Flood plain ordinances; fee-simple acquisition of land; conservation easements; capital improvements on county park lands.