

## 10. Land Use

### Section I. Desired Land Use Patterns 10-1

- Introduction 10-1
- Historic Patterns of Growth 10-2
- The Land Use Vision 10-3  
Opportunities 10-3

### Section II. Development Patterns Today 10-5

- Overall growth trends 10-5  
Influence of Existing Land Use Patterns 10-5
- Areas in decline 10-6  
Redevelopment Opportunities 10-6  
Areas of Transitional Land Use 10-7
- Incompatible Land Use Relationships 10-7
- Existing Land Use Categories 10-7  
AG Rural Agricultural. 10-8  
Residential 10-8  
Commercial 10-8  
Offices 10-9  
Industrial 10-10  
Transportation Communication Utilities 10-10  
Public Institutional 10-10  
Parks/Recreation/Conservation 10-11  
Agriculture Forestry 10-11  
Undeveloped 10-11
- Existing Land Use Acreages 10-11

### Section III. Influences on Future Land Use 10-13

- Environmentally Sensitive Areas 10-13
- Land Use and Infrastructure Patterns 10-14  
Public Water and Sewerage 10-14  
Transportation 10-15
- Housing 10-16
- Market Forces and Development Policies 10-17

Density Policies	10-17
Infill Development	10-18
Regulations influencing development	10-18
■ Outlook For Development	10-18
■ Future Land Use Available for Development	10-19
Land Capacity to Demand Analysis	10-20
Implications for Planning	10-21

#### **Section IV. Desirable Land Use Patterns 10-22**

■ Urban Design	10-22
Overview	10-22
Architectural Themes	10-22
Comprehensive Plan Context	10-23
■ Quality of New Development	10-23
Residential Development	10-23
Non-Residential Development	10-24
■ Design Guidelines	10-25
Site Design	10-25

#### **Section V. Future Land Use 10-28**

■ Development Patterns	10-28
■ Future Land Use Plan Categories	10-29
Future Land Use Plan Map	10-29
Interpretation	10-30
Future Land Use Categories	10-30
■ Residential Character Areas	10-33
Rural Places	10-33
Suburban Living	10-34
Urban Residential	10-35
■ Commercial Districts	10-36
Transitional Corridors	10-39
Neighborhood Village Center	10-40
Community Village Center	10-41
Character Area Design Guidelines	10-42
Mixed Use Corridor	10-43
Workplace Center	10-45
Commerce Center	10-47
■ Intensive Industrial	10-48

■	Other Land Use Categories _____	10-49
	Transportation/Communications/Utilities _____	10-49
	Parks/Recreation/Open Space _____	10-49
	Public/Institutional _____	10-49
	Agriculture/Forestry _____	10-49
	Undeveloped _____	10-49

## Section VI. Land Use Assessment \_\_\_\_\_ 10-50

■	Assessment _____	10-50
---	------------------	-------

## 10. Land Use Element

### Section I. Desired Land Use Patterns

#### ■ Introduction

Land, and the uses to which it is put, constitute the base scale on which all other aspects of development are founded. Land use and development patterns establish the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan. Consequently, the principal objective of the Land Use Element is to determine the most suitable and efficient use of the land and the pattern in which these uses will occur.



The integration of existing development patterns, growth trends and the analysis of land development capacity (the ability of the land resource to support development) form the basis for preparing the Future Land Use Plan. This element also determines future patterns of growth, based on community needs and desires, and presents strategies for land use that strike a balance between effective and efficient delivery of public services, protection and preservation of valuable natural and historic resources, and respect for individual property rights. This chapter includes

- A description of current land use patterns and historic patterns of growth;
- Influences on future land use;
- Desirable land use patterns, including quality applications;
- Future land use descriptions and the development of character areas; and

- Development policies that are intended to guide the establishment of the individual uses.

The Future Land Use Plan for Douglas County reflects a cross between a rural and urbanizing development pattern. The vision of accommodating growth, while at the same time preserving the existing character and feel of Douglas County have been fully integrated into land use patterns and policies. Douglas County will strive to maintain this balance while utilizing character areas and development policies to fully coordinate infrastructure patterns and desirable land use patterns.

This Comprehensive Plan integrates the following Smart Growth Principles:

- Mix land uses;
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
- Create walkable neighborhoods;
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas;
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities;
- Provide a variety of transportation choices;
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective; and
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.



## ■ Historic Patterns of Growth

Douglas County can trace its early prosperity to its location along the Chattahoochee River, the establishment of a rail link and numerous natural resources, such as gold and the Lithia Spring. Douglas County's character remained more rural and "small town" than urban. These early growth patterns have continued to influence land use patterns in modern Douglas County.

Located 17 miles west-southwest of downtown Atlanta, Douglas County is well known for its natural beauty consisting of a typical Piedmont landscape of rolling hills, abundant pine and hardwood forests, and scenic rivers and streams. The image of Douglas County as expressed through the County's vision is that of a small town that holds deeply onto its roots as a rural and scenic area.



Improved economic conditions and changing land use patterns in the decades since World War II have reshaped the character of the county's incorporated cities as well as the surrounding countryside. The opening of Interstate 20 through Douglas County in 1962 influenced a development boom, as did the railroad in 1882. No longer isolated from the City of Atlanta, Douglas County became a destination for residential, commercial and industrial development seeking easy access to work, residences and markets.

The same attractions, easy access, abundant land, rural and "small town" environment and scenic and natural beauty offer the same attraction as they did 50 years ago, although now they are occurring within a much larger regional context. Douglas County is no longer isolated from the metropolitan area, but a significant part; and therefore, is the recipient of outside urban growth pressures.

## ■ The Land Use Vision

There were for specific areas that were expressed over and over through meetings with staff, elected officials, the general public and the Douglas Stakeholders Committee. These issues provided the basis for initial land use planning within the County, and are paramount in meeting the community's desired vision of the future:

*Douglas County will greet the future, while at the same time preserving its small town feel, its safe and rural environment, its valued historic and natural resources, and the continued creation of a quality built environment, while maintaining and developing a reasonable, balanced tax base.*

## Opportunities

Opportunities for future development in the County of Douglas include the following:

- As part of the Atlanta Region, Douglas County has been a magnet for new jobs and residents over the last few decades. Douglas County's location within the region will continue to ensure that growth and prosperity will be part of Douglas County's outlook for the future.
- Continued and sustained growth in the area will maintain a healthy market demand for new development—a "buyer's" market in which Douglas can afford to be selective.
- Douglas enjoys the amenities of the metropolitan area, while at the same time enjoying a "small town" feel. Public attitudes about "neighborhood" and "community" have notably shifted in the Metro area in recent years, with new purchasers looking for more traditional settings in which to raise their children and to put down more permanent roots.
- Direct access to the Atlanta Region by I-20.



- A proactive comprehensive plan that identifies suitable areas and amenities to accommodate projected growth and development over the next 20 years.

A challenge that Douglas County, and all of the metropolitan Atlanta Region counties will face over the next 20 years is how to accommodate continued growth in a positive way that maintains and enhances the quality of life and economic opportunities of its citizens. As stated in the Atlanta Regional Commissions "Towards a More Livable Atlanta Region" accommodating change.... "will require unprecedented cooperation, coordination and planning. It will require thoughtful, deliberate decisions about how we use our land and develop our communities."

The citizens and elected officials feel that this Comprehensive Plan will provide the roadmap to Douglas County to make the most appropriate decisions for its future.



## Section II. Development Patterns Today

### ■ Overall growth trends

#### Influence of Existing Land Use Patterns

A survey of existing land use was conducted to establish the type, spatial distribution and intensity of development within the County. A comprehensive survey of existing land use required a field inventory of each parcel of property within Douglas. Data collected as a result of the survey was classified by primary use and transferred to a map depicting existing land uses.

Douglas County is primarily a bedroom community for the metropolitan Atlanta Region. The citizens of Douglas County, as clearly detailed within their Vision Statement, see the County's current rural and small town nature as central to the quality of life they enjoy. The majority of the developed land uses within the county (excluding agricultural and public institutional) is residential, over 90%, and of that total, over 90% of all housing units within the county are single-family residences. The cities of Douglasville, Villa Rica and Austell contain a large portion of the multi-family units within the county as is appropriate within a more urban setting. Although master planned developments and village retail areas are planned, unincorporated Douglas County will continue to be predominately single family residential in nature.



Over the last 10 years, new non-residential development in Douglas has clustered largely within two areas, the unincorporated area adjacent to the City of Douglasville and the Western end of the County along the Thornton Road Area. Arbor Place Mall within the City of Douglasville and the Chapel Hill Corridor are the center of the County's retail growth. As residences age and traffic becomes heavier, the Highway 5 corridor has seen some transition from residential to small retail establishments. Careful transportation, land use planning and transitional compatible growth within these corridors area are extremely important in ensuring the County's livability in the future.

During the overall review of existing land use several problem land use patterns emerged:

- Extensive single-use districts;
- Strip commercial development; and
- Incompatible districts adjacent to the City of Douglasville.

#### Extensive single-use districts

As part of this 10<sup>th</sup> Year Comprehensive Plan Update, the County also re wrote and combined its zoning and subdivision regulations into a Unified Development Code process, many of the County's numerous zoning districts were merged. The workable master plan and open space developments replaced a number of planned developments allow a percentage of non-residential uses as well. The transitional and mixed-use corridor allows a mix of residential and the workplace and commerce centers allow mixed commercial, residential and office uses.





Although residential districts are still primarily single-use districts, the use of character areas within this plan adds a further dimension of land use flexibility. Non-residential uses have been categorized into villages, centers and corridors, including a mixed use corridor to allow even greater land use flexibility, while protecting and ensuring compatibility with existing single-family residential, as outlined within the County's overall vision. The integration of public and institutional uses is encouraged within all character areas.

#### **Strip commercial development**

A major concern is the spread of strip commercial along any arterial highway, or "retail creep." Although the County has experienced a limited amount of this type of development, there is still an opportunity to guide expected non-residential growth into appropriate village and corridor settings. Appropriate transitional land uses, such as reverse frontage residential development will help contain commercial villages within appropriate nodes.

### **■ Areas in decline**

Douglas County's housing stock is relatively well maintained, yet there is a core of lower cost houses and manufactured homes that exhibit signs of moderate to significant deterioration. Housing and property conditions may affect property values, internal and external perceptions, health and safety concerns. Problem areas include deteriorated siding roofing, and paved areas, lack of or insufficient landscaping, and litter and debris-filled yards. As outlined within the "House Cost Burden" section of the Housing Element, 18.40% of the homeowners in Douglas County are paying more than 30% of their income for housing and 33.80% of renters are paying more than 30% of their income. Another indication of neighborhood stability is the percentage of owner occupied units, especially within single-family units. Owner occupancy rates have decreased from 1990 to 2000. The owner to renter ratio within the county is 2.97, substantially higher than the state ratio at 2.08.

Many existing residential neighborhoods have excellent locations in terms of access to jobs and services. Often these neighborhoods have mature trees or close proximity to neighborhood schools. These assets make our County's existing residential neighborhoods very valuable.

#### **Redevelopment Opportunities**

As strip retail centers and strip commercial development districts become obsolete, communities can explore ways to reuse or reinvent the image of the area as mixed-use developments. Left untouched, these areas not only represent an enormous loss of potential tax revenue, but they may also signal the disinvestments and decline of the surrounding community. Recycling these valuable sites helps a community maximize the value of its resources and capitalize on their advantages: access to a ready market, working water, sewer and road infrastructure, and transportation networks. Two such areas within Douglas County are:

- Bankhead Highway Redevelopment Corridor; and
- Lithia Springs Community Village Redevelopment Center.

Not only is there the opportunity to revitalize the business within these areas, but also the County has the opportunity to create vibrant, mixed use communities that can become a community focus by ensuring public investment and integrating complimentary uses into the site. The addition of residential, civic, retail, office, education, or hotel can facilitate more of a focal point and create a walkable community.

## Areas of Transitional Land Use

The vast majority of Douglas is so relatively new, and the County was able to apply modern land use planning concepts to so much of the development before it occurred, that areas of blight and transitional land use are very limited. Where they occur is in the older parts of town.

Transitional land use pressures tend to be composed of older single-family homes that have come face to face with incompatible development or other changes to their residential environment. Two such areas are the homes located along Hwy 5 and Hwy 92. Some of the homes have been redeveloped as office and small retail type uses. Higher traffic volumes and ensuing road improvements have made the properties undesirable for residential purposes, but excellent opportunities for adaptive reuse as offices. Spot commercial zoning has been granted along these corridors to accommodate area changes; some conversions have been appropriate, while others have not. By keeping the uses low intensity both in use (offices) and density, the traffic capacity and remaining single-family residential uses can be preserved while offering a reasonable reuse of the properties. Further reuse of the remaining residences is expected, and eventual assembly and redevelopment for new office construction is encouraged.

Community Character areas and design guidelines are another essential tool in this process and have recently been refined and expanded as discussed below. The community character areas foster a distinct visual identity and "feel" for the area. Locations in transition are categorized as "transitional corridors." This special character area provides for conversional uses, while at the same time protecting residents that choose to remain and adjacent and surrounding established single-family neighborhoods.

## ■ Incompatible Land Use Relationships

Properties within the unincorporated county have been developed with strong compatibility standards in the past, and will continue to be developed with appropriate mechanisms, such as transitional and step-down zoning and buffering in the future to ensure compatibility. The main issue of incompatible land use relationships concerns properties that boarder municipal boundaries within the County. The County and its municipalities, especially the largest, the City of Douglasville, have worked together in coordinating future land use plans, densities and area designations with each of their respective plans throughout this process. Although adjacent land uses are much more compatible than in the last Comprehensive Land Use Plans, there are still compatibility issues between the unincorporated sections of the County and specifically the City of Douglasville. There areas, primarily concerning established single-family communities adjacent to the City, are expected to remain unstable areas. As the City of Douglasville continues to increase their non-residential tax base through annexation, these areas will continue to be under development pressure to rezone commercial. Douglas County feels very strong about protecting its established single-family communities and will continue to work with the City of Douglasville to stop any incompatible zoning pressures in these areas, in addition to discouraging strip corridor commercial especially in the Chapel Hill Corridor.

## ■ Existing Land Use Categories

For planning purposes, land uses are identified under the following categories and grouped by major category in accordance with State DCA guidelines. Several categories are further broken down for a more thorough understanding of development trends and patterns in the County. The following categories are shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

## AG Rural Agricultural.

The AG Rural Agricultural District is established to protect rural areas of Douglas County in which agriculture, farm operations, conservation lands and timber stands on parcels of 10 acres or more are the established land use pattern, and to provide an environment which encourages residents to continue to live and practice agricultural operations without adverse impact arising from more dense development.

## Residential

Single-family residences consisting of individual houses, either attached or detached usually on separate lots, and often developed in subdivisions, as well as multi-family uses. There are three designations of single-family dwellings within the County. Multi-family residential contains two or more dwelling units, and is broken down into duplexes, buildings of 3 to 9 units and apartments.

Residential development played a significant role in Douglas during the decade of the 90's. As the predominate land use within the County, Single-Family residential is distributed throughout the county in all areas, except for the Thornton Road Corridor.

- **Large Lot Single Family Detached.** This category includes individual homes on lots of three acres or greater and to promote a suitable environment for rural or "large lot suburban" family life, agriculture including the raising of livestock and poultry, and the development of natural resources and other uses requiring extensive areas of land. The homes are often in a "rural" setting, and the properties may include horse barns and riding areas or other types of personal (as opposed to commercial) agricultural uses. The Dog River Basin and a portion of the Bear Creek Basin are considered natural resource protection areas and feature this type of development.
- **Single-Family Detached** covers all other single-family home sites, many of which are located within organized subdivisions, and are more "suburban" in character than the Large Lot category.
- **Single-Family Attached** includes all forms of attached housing (i.e., no dwellings located above others), such as duplexes and townhouses. Residential developments of this kind include a provision for useable open space and recreational areas and provide a transition between single-family areas and higher density dwellings and/or commercial areas.
- **Multi-Family/Apartments** includes all multi-family residential buildings in which some dwellings are located above others, such as garden apartments.

## Commercial

Commercial developments predominately occupied by establishments that offer goods or merchandise for sale, or rent, and other commercial uses that do not operate in "office" settings. Such uses include stores, shopping centers, hotels, restaurants, gasoline stations, automobile body shops; physical fitness centers, markets, hotels and building supply centers. These uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center.

Major commercial concentrations are located along Thornton Road and I-20, Highway 5, West Stewart Mill Road Extension, Chapel Hill and Highway 92/Fairburn Road. The City of Douglasville contains the primary regional commercial areas in addition to the majority of small shopping and free standing commercial areas. These concentrations contain large and small strip shopping centers and freestanding single-tenant commercial buildings. Although still primarily residential, the High-



way 5 corridor has seen increasing conversion of single family residences to retail and service establishments as traffic has increased.

The commercial category is broken into 5 categories by intensity levels:

- **Neighborhood Commercial** includes commercial uses that sell goods and services purchased frequently and generally in small amounts by the public in an intimate, pedestrian-oriented scale. Small convenience retail and service establishments, bakeries and fresh food markets, pharmacies and barber/beauty shops characterize neighborhood commercial areas.
- **Community Commercial** includes commercial uses that sell goods and services purchased frequently by the public in a shopping and personal service setting. Grocery stores, drug stores, and small retail and service establishments characterize community commercial areas. Commercial uses commonly found in neighborhood commercial areas are also found in community commercial areas.
- **General Commercial** includes commercial uses that benefit from close proximity to each other. These areas provide for the location of regional and sub-regional centers for retailing and finance. Its primary purpose is to group their uses together in a compact area designed to accommodate pedestrian movement. General commercial areas are characterized by shopping centers containing department stores, big box retailers such as Home Depot and PetSmarts, discount clubs and retail and service establishments serving a wide market area. Commercial uses commonly found in neighborhood and community commercial areas also are found in general commercial areas.
- **Heavy Commercial** includes those commercial uses that benefit from direct access to major streets or are located on major streets and thoroughfares that are classified as major arterial roads or interstate highways. Such uses commonly which generate loud noises and require large areas for open storage, or generate substantial motor vehicle traffic.
- **Regional Commercial** includes commercial uses that provide amusement for the public and/or have bright lights and noise.

## Offices

This category encompasses uses that are employment based, such as administrative operations and corporate offices, as well as traditional "office" uses such as doctor's offices, insurance and real estate brokers, and businesses that offer their services away from the site.

Office commercial development in the County ranges from major corporate office buildings to small professional offices. Although a number of the industrial parks contain "headquarter and regional" offices, these concentrations will be discussed in greater length in the "industrial" land use category. Small professional offices within commercial areas are not necessarily broken out on the existing land use plan map. There are primarily two types of office categories:

- **Low Density Office** contains office uses with some semi-commercial uses including very limited retail sale of goods. Low intensity offices are intended as a transitional zone from commercial use to less intensive uses such as residential uses.
- **High Density Office** areas are a more dense office environment allowing mid-rise and high-rise office buildings and accessory retail uses. High-density offices should be located in or adjacent to heavy concentrations of commercial or light industrial uses such as major nodes, interchange areas, or industrial or office parks.

## Industrial

This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses. Douglas has a limited range of such uses.

Industrial development is reflected in three types of development: Business center uses, standalone industrial uses, and intensive industrial uses such as quarries and landfills. There is a mix of both types within the county. Current industrial parks include, Douglasville, Interstate West Business Park, McKay Industrial Park, Odessa Industrial Park, Sweetwater Industrial Park and Westford Business Park. Industrial corridors that are more intensive manufacturing/warehousing/wholesaling operations are concentrated on Thornton Road and Bankhead Highway. There is also a quarry and landfill located within the county.

- **Light Industrial** areas including accessibility to major transportation facilities, availability of adequate utilities and other public services, and availability of large quantities of suitable land. Uses compatible with light industrial development are to be encouraged insofar as they are in accordance with comprehensive development plans for the county. This category includes industrial uses with limited negative impacts such as limited manufacturing, warehousing and wholesale operations.
- **Restricted Light Industrial** are light industrial developments that are characterized by office and administrative operations in the front and storage space in the rear, usually served with loading docks, where merchandise is stored for distribution, repair assembly or otherwise handled in transit to the user. The use of campus type business centers is encouraged to promote a suitable environment for high quality, visually attractive, stable, light industrial, research and administrative offices.
- **Heavy Industrial** including industrial uses that require accessibility to major transportation facilities, availability of adequate utilities and other public services, and availability of sufficient quantities of land to adequately support such establishments. Heavy industrial uses tend to have major impacts, such as noise, traffic, odor and maybe utilizing chemicals or process that require strong separation from other types of uses such as residential or retail development.

## Transportation Communication Utilities

This category includes such uses as power generation plants, railroad facilities, transmission towers, public transit stations, telephone switching stations streets and highways.

Uses classified as "TCU" are almost exclusively streets and highways. Other uses within this category are within the light industrial district category.

## Public Institutional

State, federal or local government uses, and quasi-public institutions. Governmental uses include City Hall, fire stations, libraries, post offices and public schools (but not parks). Institutional uses include churches, cemeteries and other private non-profit uses.

Public and institutional uses are typically not concentrated in specific locales. The main government center for Douglas County is located within the City of Douglasville. The government center offers the public many services within a public a one-stop shop for government services and contains the "citizens hall," the primary location of public governmental meetings and public hearings within the county. Other public buildings are scattered throughout the county to serve localized needs, such as libraries and fire stations. Facilities that are publicly owned, but would be classified more accu-

rately in another land use category, are not included in this category. For example, publicly owned parks and/or recreational facilities are placed in the Park/Recreation/Conservation category, and general office buildings containing government offices are placed in the Offices category.

### Parks/Recreation/Conservation

Land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These lands may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, etc. Stream buffers and the Chattahoochee Corridor are also included in this category.

### Agriculture Forestry

Land being actively farmed, including crop cultivation or livestock operations, or set aside for commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting as an agricultural pursuit.

There are currently several tracts within the County that have been identified as "agricultural or timbering" within the county, primarily within the southern portion of the county. Small agricultural sites are also scattered throughout the county. These properties are often in a "rural" setting and the properties may include horse barns and riding areas or other types of personal (as opposed to commercial) agricultural uses. These properties are therefore classified Residential, since that is the primary use of those properties.

### Undeveloped

Land not developed or not being used for a specific purpose, and lands where development has been abandoned or where deteriorated, vacant buildings are located. This category includes woodlands or pastureland (not in agricultural crop, livestock or commercial timber production), undeveloped portions of residential subdivisions and industrial parks, water bodies (lakes, rivers, etc.), and locations of structures that have been vacant for some time.

As is further indicated by the Existing Land Use Map, a small portion of the land within the County limits is either undeveloped or underdeveloped. The underdeveloped designation is for large tracts with only one or two residences or where a small portion of the tract is being utilized.

## ■ Existing Land Use Acreages

There are currently 104,777.21 acres within the unincorporated areas of Douglas County.

The Current Land Use by Acreages shows the amount of land being used under the various land use categories in the County. Of the total acres, almost 72 % of the land within the current county limits is currently developed with residences or businesses, schools and other facilities, churches, cemeteries or parks. Of the developed acreage, the clear majority is

### Land Use by Acres Douglas County, GA

Existing Land Use	
Land Use Category	Net Acres
Agricultural	3,362.89
Agriculture / Timber	4,870.13
Single Family Residential (<5 ac tracts)	17,167.88
Single Family Residential (5 to 25 ac tracts)	16,713.73
Single Family Residential (>25 ac tracts)	7,840.26
Townhouse	9.82
Commercial	1,711.25
Industrial	1,682.21
TCU	297.86
Public / Institutional	2,286.50
Parks / Recreation / Conservation	15,820.01
Vacant	33,014.68
<b>Total Acreages</b>	<b>104,777.21</b>



residential, and of the residential acreage, the overwhelming majority, is single-family detached houses. The second largest land use category is undeveloped and vacant parcels at over 31%. Currently 33,014.68 acres are considered vacant within the county. This figure does not include the many large parcels that are underdeveloped, and will soon change uses.

The last influence on future development is the availability of land to accommodate future growth. The Population Element and Economic Development Elements of this Plan presents the population and employment forecasts for the County in detail. The relationship to land absorption and population and employment growth is presented within the Land Demand Analysis later in this Chapter.

## Section III. Influences on Future Land Use

### ■ Environmentally Sensitive Areas

A major goal is to protect the natural and sensitive environment of Douglas County and the areas that contribute to its unique character by ensuring a balance between the natural and the built environment. Douglas County, and the Atlanta region's water supply, tree cover, natural habitats, open space and other environmentally sensitive areas are vital to sustaining our quality of life. Protection of these natural resources provides current and future economic benefits to the region.



Douglas has long had strong environmental regulations in place, such as effective flood plain restrictions, watershed protection areas and has enforced erosion control regulations for many years. As outlined more fully in the Natural Resource Element of this Plan, the WSA is now in charge of enforcing both stormwater and the soil erosion and sedimentation control regulations within the county to ensure greater protection and coordination. The newly adopted UDC will further coordinate and help enforce environmental issues within the county through a user-friendlier format.

mat.

The Future Land use Map and corresponding character areas were developed with environmental sensitivity in mind. A watershed overlay district of a 3-acre density has been instituted in Bear Creek Basin and a portion of the Dog River Basin. The Future Land Use Plan and Map directly acknowledge environmentally sensitive areas through a rural character area designation. Higher infrastructure investment and planned location for medium density residential areas and non-residential areas have been identified outside of these sensitive areas. Infrastructure and level of services standards have purposely been kept lower in sensitive areas.

An aim to create more walkable communities and "village" and "main-street" centers is also highly encouraged through quality design standards and character areas within this plan. Walkable communities are integral to achieving the goals of smart growth because they enhance mobility, reduce negative environmental consequences, strengthen economies and support stronger communities through improved social interactions. Greenspace linkages and required sidewalks within all subdivisions and along all public right of way is a new requirement of the UDC.

The County's newly adopted Unified Development Code (UDC) advances sustainable Greenfield development. The UDC provides for master planned and open space subdivision development that protects the integrity of the land and environment, while creating a quality product. All primary resources whether in a master planned, open space or conventional subdivision within the county must

be protected with a natural resource conservation easement to ensure their sustainability. Better growth can occur when governments create incentives for developing better projects.

WSA has evaluated several alternative methods to determine the most environmentally sound means of ultimate biosolids disposal to ensure pollution prevention. The present method of composting the biosolids generated at its wastewater treatment facilities serves to minimize pollution while at the same time proving to be a cost effective ultimate disposal measure. Biosolids are mixed with peanut shells, converted to compost and then made available to nurseries in bagged and bulk form. The benefits include:

- The relationship between the use and return of water to the system is an important element in the provision of water and the quality of the environment.
- Stormwater runoff is also returned to the system, the quality of this runoff affects the quality of the overall system.
- North Georgia Metropolitan Water District Plan anticipates that as density increases sewers will account for a greater percentage of wastewater treatment.
- Given the nature of the water cycle and the relationship between water quality and wastewater treatment, responsible regional water planning suggests maximizing sanitary sewer connections and minimizing septic systems.

## ■ Land Use and Infrastructure Patterns

The continuous residential development without proper land use management throughout the county during the past twenty years has had a tremendous impact on infrastructure and public services. Of primary concern is the lack of water and sewerage in many portions of the unincorporated areas of the county and the subsequent reliance on septic systems. The transportation network is inadequate both in capacity and condition to support unconstrained growth. Infrastructure system improvements should be planned to address projected needs, and to be used as a tool to guide land use patterns. Other community facilities and services that are based more on demand should be funded and planned in conjunction with projected land use patterns on the Future Land Use Plan Map. Principles on the Future Land Use Plan Map include:

- Growth follows major community facilities (transportation, utilities); so therefore, these facilities are a strong determinant of growth and land use patterns.
- Demand based services (public safety, parks, schools, libraries), should be planned and financed in concert with projected growth and land use patterns in order to maintain quality of life.
- Community facilities shape the form of the community—urban densities and commercial uses require transportation and public utilities and rural densities can utilize rural street and septic systems.
- Growth and density should be concentrated in areas of the county, which are served by public water and sewerage systems, or in areas that are easily accessed by existing systems, and therefore leaving the rural unsewered areas in a lower density use.

## Public Water and Sewerage

The timing and development of the public water and sewerage infrastructure is a major influence on land use patterns. In addition, because of limited funding, the strategic placement of this infrastructure it is essential to achieve land use goals and policies as set out in the Comprehensive Plan. Linking land use and community facilities requires strong planning and coordination. Land use and in-

infrastructure planning can work together to maximize the return on investment through policies encouraging smart growth, and a strong requirement for planning, such as infrastructure concurrency.

- Coordinate, plan and construct public facilities to service expected land use patterns as established on the Future Land Use Plan Map.
- Require infrastructure concurrency during the rezoning and development process utilizing the criteria as outlined within this plan.
- Growth should generally be directed towards existing or planned service areas and away from rural area with expected lower levels of service and dependence on septic systems.
- Infrastructure will be targeted as priorities to areas suitable for commercial and medium density residential to most efficiently and effectively provide these services.
- Funding sources and water may ultimately constrain the growth in Douglas County.

The Future Land Use Map shows that the County will expand its wastewater treatment to target commercial, industrial areas and medium density residential areas. The Comprehensive Plan policies will guide the location of wastewater infrastructure. As well, the intergovernmental agreements for wastewater per House Bill 489 will be continued into the future as the County and cities grow.

## Transportation

It is imperative that the proposed Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CPT) supports the Comprehensive Plan to assure coordination and consistency in population and housing forecasts, natural and cultural resource protection, economic development policies and land use policy and plans. In some cases transportation demand and the lack of adequate systems may very well influence significant change in land use character and patterns. Likewise, land use changes will dictate needs for expansion of the transportation infrastructure. Preliminary transportation improvements have been tested against alternative land use scenarios:

- Transportation Network;
- Quality of Life (level of service vs. cost);
- Evaluate environmental impacts;
- Support economic development;
- Anticipate future demand (population, employment and new development); and
- Evaluate the impacts of current and proposed policies.



### Impact and influence of the region on the transportation network

Douglas County is primarily a bedroom community to the metropolitan Atlanta, and also on the edge of a major tourist generation for the region (Six Flags). The county is significantly affected by external growth of Paulding County and lack of options to move traffic across the railroad barrier. This barrier also has caused negative impact to mobility in northern unincorporated areas of the county as external growth increases.

Douglasville is the urban core area/activity center in the county. The impact of the City lessens on the south side of I-20 except in areas of commercial centers around the interstate interchanges. (Arbor Place Mall, Chapel Hill and Highway 5 Commercial Area). During the Comprehensive Plan Process the County coordinated extensively with the City of Douglas-





ville on transportation and land use issues. The proposed CTP will also be Countywide to include the impacts of Douglasville within the entire county network.

For land use purposes, the impact of commuting patterns into and out of Douglas County has been analyzed to reflect the influence of these travel patterns. In addition, pass through traffic, especially from Paulding County has been examined for transportation impacts. The role of Douglas County in Regional Transportation, GRTA and other initiatives will be fully incorporated into the transportation network.

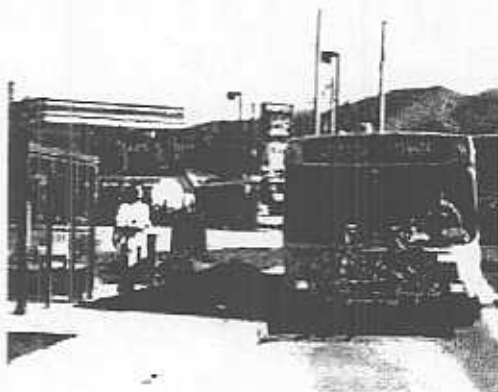
#### **Position on I-20 and the number of interchanges**

I-20 is both a blessing and a burden for the County. It acts as a barrier to north south mobility in the county but also serves the county well for access to the rest of the region. The impact of the interstate has certainly influenced jobs, population growth and the local economy of the county. It is unlikely that additional interchanges will be approved in the county other than HOV access interchanges. Interstate short-trips are a common occurrence within the county and is a function of inadequate surface street connectivity for east west movements. The long-range transportation plan may need to address this issue with some type of CD system along the freeway.

#### **Provide a variety of Transportation Options**

Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities and transportation is a key aim of smart growth. In response to predicted worsening traffic congestion and a diversity of non-dependent automobile users (especially seniors and children), transportation choices will be a very

important element of the CTP; the county is coupling a multimode approach to transportation with supportive land-use patterns that create a wider range of transportation options such as concentrated villages and centers that provide a high level of land use interaction and internal and external linkages. Multimodal systems offering options to the Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) must be incorporated into future plans. Transit, Transportation Demand Management, and walkable and pedestrian friendly communities will become increasingly more important as the county's population grows and opportunities and funds to expand conventional transportation systems diminish due to air quality issues and related federal, state and regional mandates.



## ■ Housing

Future housing-type demand will depend on a number of variables from availability and economics, to the changes in demographics in Douglas County and Douglasville. The demand analysis for the county (including Douglasville) shows the demand for 92,697 units by 2025, with the predominate type continuing to be single-family detached units. The forecast indicates that by 2025 the number of multi-family units in the incorporated areas will be almost double that of the unincorporated area - at approximately 10,581 multi-family units (inclusive of duplex units) within the incorporated areas, as compared to 5,517 multi-family units in the unincorporated county. Based on past development trends and objectives of the County, it is anticipated that single-family detached units will continue to be the prevalent form of residential development in the next decade in the unincorporated area.

A recent trend in residential development in the County has been the master planned development, where residential uses are combined with amenities and open space. Although an overall general per acre density applies, natural resource protection through clustering of units or subdivision into smaller lots to allow for preservation of natural resources, open space and provision of amenities such as swimming pools, nature trails, parkland or passive open space areas, playfields, ponds or lakes, golf courses and putting greens, and other such activity sites. Development under the master plan concept is expected to continue in the future. The Zoning Code has been revised to reflect the use of the master plan concept as the predominant type of residential subdivision.

## ■ Market Forces and Development Policies

The market forces affecting land use development in Douglas are fully discussed in the Economic Development Element. Douglas's Comprehensive Plan policies are aimed to direct growth that the market generates into appropriate locations that will strengthen the County's quality of life as an exceptional place to live, work and do business. As stated earlier, Douglas will continue to be impacted by growth pressures from the Atlanta Region, and will also continue to hold its own attraction as a "small" town in close proximity to big city amenities without the big city problems. Demographic analysis and the Land Demand Analysis have also shown that there are clear and unmet needs for retail uses, higher-level employment opportunities and "executive" housing.



The Future Land Use Plan Map and its use of Character Areas were based on these market forces and various analyses. Appropriate amounts of land for each type of development is clearly defined on the Future Land Use Plan Map, as is appropriate planned infrastructure and compatibility measures. The character area concept and design standards will ensure that the County will provide managed and quality growth over the next 20 years.

## Density Policies

Some uses are not considered appropriate for unincorporated Douglas County's within the Communities overall vision, such as heavy industry that generates air or water pollution, very high-density housing and intensive regional commercial development. Environmental regulations and the UDC will ensure that all industrial development attracted to Douglas County is also environmentally friendly, as not to infringe upon the overall single-family environment of the County. As for very high-density residential and commercial developments, analysis has shown that the commerce and urban core of the County, the City of Douglasville, currently contains a much higher density in both commercial and residential development. This type of density is appropriate within an urban setting such as the City of Douglasville, but would not be appropriate with the more unincorporated rural county. As a transition from higher residential and commercial densities, the county has provided for appropriate locations for medium density residential and higher intensity commercial locations on its Future Land Use Plan Map. The Urban Residential, Work Place Center, and Commerce Center Character Areas provide a good transition for higher and medium density development.



## Infill Development

The State Department of Community Affairs requires, in their guidelines, an “evaluation of the options of encouraging infill development in areas where infrastructure and services are available versus expanding infrastructure and services into new areas.” For Douglas, these are not mutually exclusive options. As seen on the Future Land Use by Acreage Table, the County is expected to be substantially built out by the year 2025. Thus, all infill areas where infrastructure is available will have been developed by that time, as well as new areas to which infrastructure had to be extended or its capacity expanded.

Character areas have been developed that promote a more dense residential community adjacent to the exiting urban core of Douglasville and existing higher density centers. This land use organization promotes land use efficiency by utilizing existing infrastructure. To encourage compact and compatible development within infill areas, this plan encourages creative urban design solutions, and a mix of residential and non-residential types to accommodate projected growth.

To encourage compact and compatible development within infill areas, this plan encourages creative urban design solutions, and a mix of residential and nonresidential types to accommodate projected growth.

## Regulations influencing development

This Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Code have been developed simultaneously, allowing the County to develop appropriate regulations to implement the County’s Vision, Guiding Principles and goals and objectives. The Character Area descriptions and design guidelines further allows the County to accept development that meets the intent of the overall vision. We believe that by developing the long range plan and UDC together, the County will be able to achieve its goals and vision both through policy and regulation. Greater detail regarding regulatory influences is discussed in the Implementation Element.

## ■ Outlook For Development

Douglas County can look to the future with optimism, but as in the past should be proactive in guiding development. Douglasville is currently a “bedroom” community, and will continue to carry this identity into the future, with a twist. Thought of as a “*small town within reach of the city*” the community would like to enhance and add to this image in the future. Douglas County citizens are well aware of their proximity to the Atlanta Region, and the opportunities and growth pressures that this proximity brings. The Community does not choose to isolate itself from these opportunities, but at the same time will be proactive in attracting the type of growth that it deems desirable in appropriate location. At the same time, the community would like to strengthen its character as a small town and its rural heritage image, while at the same time strengthening its amenities, such as Greenspace, recreational opportunities, retail sales and employment opportunities. The Douglas County Vision speaks of a more balanced community, a “live, work, play” community with a small town feel. The community feels that this can be accomplished through proactive land use policy and strategies.

The County performed an intensive land demand analysis to determine the appropriate mix of residential, retail, and employment opportunities within the County. The Future Land Use Plan Map reflects these realities and provides sufficient developable land for each use. Compatibility, appropriate transitional land use and quality standards will allow this to happen.

Development opportunities outweigh constraints by a comfortable margin. However, rapid growth in neighboring counties and the City of Douglasville may continue to strain the infrastructure and

present the County with incompatibility issues within the unincorporated areas of Douglas County. The planned Countywide Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the WSA may help to coordinate many of these future issues.

## ■ Future Land Use Available for Development

The last influence on future development to be discussed is the availability of land to accommodate future growth. The population and economic development elements of this Plan presents the population and employment forecasts for the County in detail, and their relationship to land absorption. A full land demand analysis was completed to order to match projections and land capacity, and as the basis of the Future Land Use Plan Map. As an innovative step, the County has decided to use "character areas" instead of general land use categories. Within the non-residential character areas, the mixing of uses is a major component of these areas, and therefore although it is impossible and undesirable to determine specific uses within each character area, the following offers predominate land uses within each of the character areas. In order to translate these character areas into distinct land use categories for this analysis, the following categories shall be applicable:

- Residential: Rural places, suburban living, urban residential;
- Retail Commercial: Transitional Corridor, Neighborhood Village Center and Community Village Center;
- Employment (office): Mixed Use Corridor, Workplace Center; and
- Industrial: Commerce Center and Intensive Industrial.

The Future Land Use by Acreage Table shows the number of acres by land use category that are expected to be developed by 2025. There is expected to be 1,337.60 acres vacant; but this land will be within water sources. It is expected that Douglas County will be completely built out by 2025. According to this analysis the County will need 74,693.97 acres for residential development, 2,205.86 for retail development, 5,522.22 for office development, 2,145.99 for industrial development and 25,186.62 for "other" development (including TCU, Public Institutional and Parks/Recreation and Conservation). Given the sustained growth projections in the Metro Atlanta Region over the next twenty years, the growth and development that can be anticipated within

Future Land Use		
Land Use Category	Net Acres	Square Miles
Agricultural	1,719.80	2.69
Rural Places	30,834.54	48.18
Suburban Living	35,520.27	55.50
Urban Residential	8,339.17	13.03
Transition Corridor	610.04	0.95
Neighborhood Village Center	444.33	0.69
Community Village Center	1,151.48	1.80
Mixed Use Corridor	2,155.42	3.37
Workplace Center	3,366.80	5.26
Commerce Center	1,128.19	1.76
Intensive Industrial	1,017.80	1.59
TCU--Property	298.74	0.47
TCU--Roads	6,528.00	10.20
Public / Institutional	2,525.05	3.95
Parks / Recreation / Conservation	15,834.82	24.74
Vacant--Land	0.00	0.00
Vacant--Water	1,337.60	2.09
<b>Subtotal--Unincorporated County</b>	<b>112,812.06</b>	<b>176.27</b>
Incorporated Areas	15,380.66	24.03
<b>TOTAL--ALL COUNTY</b>	<b>128,192.71</b>	<b>200.30</b>

Douglas County is more a function of its capacity to accept growth and the quality expect than a paucity of market demand.

## Land Capacity to Demand Analysis

The County currently has capacity to accommodate additional residential growth in the years ahead, embodied by its supply of vacant, developable land. Actual development capacity, based on: the current zoning; net acres of vacant land available for development; realistic minimum land required per lot within each zone, and applicable development densities; appears to be adequate, for the most part, to serve the projected housing needs. Altogether, there are some 37,900 acres in the unincorporated area that are vacant, 3,900 of which are within the 100-year flood plain, leaving a net of 34,000 acres. Of these, 31,400 are residentially zoned and 2,600 are zoned in the office, commercial or industrial districts. As currently zoned, the unincorporated area could accommodate, at most, about 32,400 new housing units and 24.6 million square feet of nonresidential development. Among the residential zoning districts, the vast majority of new units that could be accommodated (93%) are zoned for single-family detached use. Among the nonresidential districts, the clear majority (almost 80%) is zoned for industrial development.

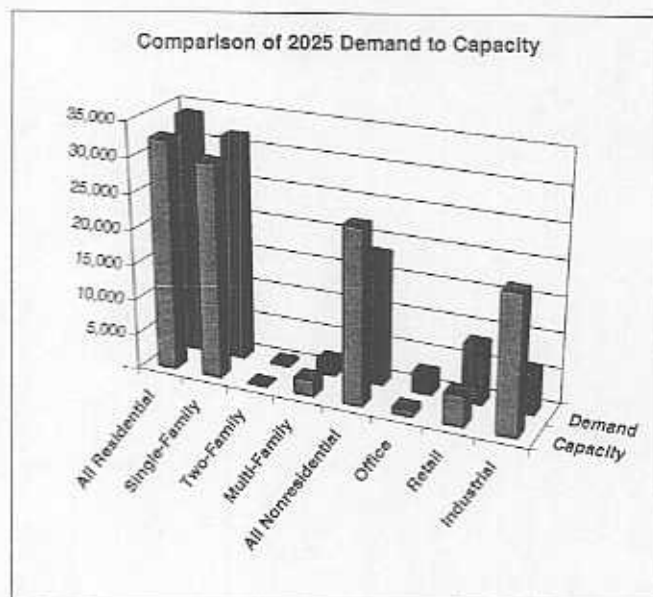
The following table and graph compare the "unconstrained" growth forecasts to the maximum amount of development that could be accommodated under current zoning patterns.

Overall, projected residential growth is very close to the capacity available, exceeding it by only 4%. Given the approximations in the methodology used in this report, this would represent a complete build out of the residential areas by (or before) 2025 as currently zoned. The same can be said for the single-family detached category, with demand at 5% over current capacity. There is a clear but very small lack of land designated for duplexes, while the multi-family zoning districts can accommodate 14% more units than demanded in 2025.

**Growth Capacity and Demand  
Unincorporated Area**

	Capacity	Demand
All Residential	32,419	33,888
Single-Family	30,130	31,693
Two-Family	28	247
Multi-Family	2,261	1,941
All Nonresidential	24,590	18,298
Office	616	2,746
Retail	4,337	8,204
Industrial	19,437	5,918

Residential figures show number of housing units.  
Nonresidential in 1,000s of square feet of floor area.



On paper, nonresidential zoning, overall, can accommodate a comfortable 26% more development than the 2025 demand. This "overhead" of excess capacity could easily disappear by 2025, however, absorbed by developed but vacant sites, excess land bought by companies for future expansion, and

inefficiencies in land development. The distribution of the vacant land by zoning category, however, does not match the future demand by land use type very well. For instance, there would appear to be far more land zoned for industrial development than needed, at least by 2025, while only about one-half of the retail commercial demand can be accommodated on commercially zoned land. Land specifically zoned for office uses is particularly in short supply; although office uses are allowed in the commercial zoning districts, there is already too little land zoned commercial to accommodate retail development alone. Together, future demand for office and retail development will amount to almost 11 million square feet of floor area, while only 5.2 million of that can be accommodated by existing office and commercially zoned land. Providing the new office and retail zoning for the additional 5.8 million square feet could involve as many as 625 acres of land.

Industrially zoned land can also be used for certain professional and administrative office uses, and limited commercial use, which would absorb some of the excess industrial zoning. While mid-rise office parks are often found in and around the kind and quality of industrial development that M-1R requires, industrial zoning is often unattractive to commercial and office development oriented to retail sales and personal services.

### Implications for Planning

The demand/capacity analysis has several implications for preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, including specifically the Future Land Use Map.

- By 2025, the residential areas of unincorporated Douglas County will be completely built out.
- Outside of the 3-acre lot watershed protection areas, pressures to bring sanitary sewer to all portions of the unincorporated area will mount. Given the market pressures generating demand, rezoning requests to R-2 for subdivisions on sewer will increase accordingly.
- There appears to be more than adequate land already zoned and available for multi-family development. Unless a particular location would be notably advantageous to the county for multi-family zoning, no additional land zoned for multi-family use is needed.
- There is a small but unmet market for two-family residential development (duplexes compose less than 1% of future residential demand). Rather than focus on new R-3 rezonings, the inclusion of duplexes as one type of housing in a mixed-use master planned development could be encouraged.
- Upwards of 600 acres of additional office and commercially zoned land is needed to accommodate future retail and service uses, both of which will be attracted to the county by its population growth and resulting increase in disposable income.
- While the county contains many more acres of industrial land than 2025 forecasts would absorb, retaining an excess of land for development beyond 2025 would not be inappropriate. While some vacant industrially zoned land may not be well located for non-industrial uses, some should be considered for commercial and/or higher density/smaller lot residential development (particularly in a planned development setting).



## Section IV. Desirable Land Use Patterns

### ■ Urban Design

#### Overview

Urban design refers to the dynamic relationship of land uses and how they are connected within the built environment. More specifically, urban design strategies determine the configuration of buildings, massing and density, the appearance and character of places, open spaces, parks and plazas, transportation networks (pedestrian and automotive), as well as the relationships among land uses and the linkages within the community as a whole. Ultimately, urban design is about creating a sense of place that achieves the community's desired vision.

At the scale of "the village or center," urban design elements such as lighting, signage, landscaping, street furniture and architectural guidelines, create the visual character and identity of a place, making it recognizable and distinct from other areas. When applied within a comprehensive system of connected streets, sidewalks, greenways, and open space, urban design has the power to transform intersections into walkable districts, and subdivisions into neighborhoods.

At the scale of "the county," urban design focuses on the linkages between communities and their relationships to one another. Thus, at the level of a comprehensive plan, urban design strategies focus less on the visual appearance of buildings and streets and more on the organization of neighborhoods, commercial areas and open spaces and their connectivity to one another within a larger framework.

#### Architectural Themes

A carefully developed set of design guidelines can be an ideal tool for bringing visual and spatial unity to an existing or developing area. Design guidelines should respond both to the conditions of the built environment and to the expressed goals of the community. In areas featuring a well-defined concentration of mostly historic structures, design guidelines can focus on restoring the buildings to a dominant or common period of their past. In new communities, or in communities whose historic character is not a priority, design guidelines can foster a particular atmosphere or image by creating an entirely new look. Communities that have adopted this rather extreme approach, such as Helen, Georgia, often feature an architectural style that has no historic precedent but creates visual unity. The building stock of many communities—including Douglas—falls somewhere in the middle, combining traditional storefronts and residences with later construction which may differ considerably in terms of form and function. These conditions present a challenge to the development of comprehensive design guidelines, but the task is not an impossible one.

Douglas is typical of communities that possess a diminished stock of historic structures, but have expressed a desire to project an image that respects the community's overall desire to preserve its small town feel. Situations vary, but a common approach is to research, identify, and restore the area's remaining landmarks to their original appearance or to their appearance during a unifying, influential period. The materials, proportions, and character-defining details of this influential period then become the basis for design standards for the area as a whole. New construction is then executed in forms and materials that are compatible with an overall theme in order to create a visually unified area "signature."

## Comprehensive Plan Context

There are a variety of ways to achieve the County's vision for the future. From an urban design standpoint, the key is to avoid dispersed development projects that are unrelated to one another and exist in isolation at random locations. Instead, by focusing appropriate development within distinct character areas, corridors and centers and arranging these areas within a comprehensive circulation system that incorporates multiple modes of transportation, the County will achieve a sustainable development pattern that will carry them through to the year 2020.

As a first step in creating an appropriate development atmosphere, the County has developed "Community Character Areas." In the context of the Comprehensive Plan, urban design through distinct character areas describes a classification of development patterns, their distinct differences and their relationship to one another as the County continues to grow over the next 20-years.

## ■ Quality of New Development

All new public buildings, institutional buildings, residential and non-residential private developments should be characterized by high-quality architectural design and construction and should reflect Douglas County's unique community image and character. These types of improvements help us create an identity or sense of place for the business community and will ultimately set Douglas County apart from other communities and provide our residents and businesses a reason for investing in Douglas County.

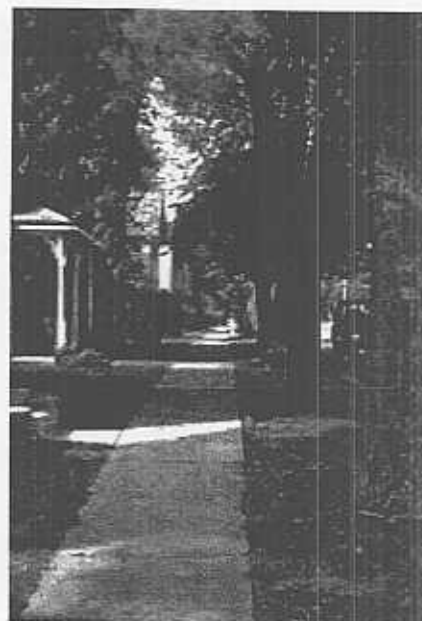
### Residential Development

The Comprehensive Plan anticipates that Douglas County will continue to be primarily a single-family low-density residential community, and that its neighborhoods and subdivisions be enhanced as important community assets. To address diversity and special housing needs within the county, transitional areas have been designated to accommodate and incorporate medium density and mixed housing types. New residential development should reflect the overall quality and character of the Douglas County community vision, and compatibility as an integral part of the surrounding neighborhoods and character areas.

Considerations in evaluating new residential development should include:

- Compatibility with adjacent and nearby uses;
- The availability of public services and facilities;
- The character of the landscape;
- The continuity of local roads, walkways, pathways and opens spaces; and
- Protection from traffic and other undesirable impacts.

The County's newly adopted Unified Development Code outlines several quality enhancements for new





residential construction, such as the developments of open space, recreational amenities and sidewalks in every subdivision over 25 units, landscaping requirements and a minimum house size. The UDC also encourages master planned and open spaced subdivisions whenever possible. These developments would utilize innovative techniques such as traditional neighborhood design, human scale development and pedestrian linkages. All quality objectives within the plan aim to create a "sense of place" within communities.

The following additional enhancements that would further the development of communities should be added whenever possible:

- Internal multi-use trail system should be incorporated into the design of large residential developments to increase bicycle and pedestrian accessibility to schools, public facilities, employment and shopping areas and parks and open spaces, and connected where possible to the County's Planned Trail System.
- Site planning within new residential development should include the use of effective and attractive buffers to protect residential areas from adjacent arterial roadways and non-residential developments.
- An "anti-monotony" code should be considered for major subdivisions to promote diversity among housing products, densities and site development characteristics.

The designation of land for residential uses recognizes the need to provide land for support services to the individuals living in the area. Uses such as schools, parks and churches are compatible with the residential designations. However, in introducing such additional related uses into these residential environments, it is intended that they be designed, located and maintained with full and complete regard for the surrounding residential environment. In addition, to ensure that quality is an integral component in residential development, infrastructure should be adequate to support residents' needs.

## **Non-Residential Development**

The Comprehensive Plan promotes high quality commercial and business development with Douglas County during the next 20 years emphasizing non-residential in order to enhance the County's tax base, create new jobs, and provide convenient shopping opportunities for local residents. Commercial and other non-residential uses have been separated into several character areas according to intensity, locational requirements and land use compatibility.

By establishing these guidelines the County proposes to encourage several important public and private objectives:

- Improve the quality of physical alterations to commercial corridors and village centers.
- Enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience along a commercial corridor and within a village by providing a pleasant shopping experience for business patrons.
- Enhance economic investment for business and property owners.
- Protect, preserve or create neighborhood communities and architectural character.
- Promote community awareness of the physical environment.
- Encourage flexible and individual creativity rather than anonymous uniformity.

Commercial corridors often lack a sense of organizational structure, and this confusion reflects poorly on the community. Retail and service establishments should be designed to resemble town squares of varying intensities. The "Main Street" concepts incorporating internal circulation patterns for both automobiles and people surrounding public spaces such as small pocket parks, squares, and plazas should be encouraged. "Main Streets" are envisioned as a collection of retail shops, specialty shops and private offices along tree-lined sidewalks that promote and a sense of identify. Villages should become centers for community interaction where you would "usually run into someone you know, or the friends of someone you know while hanging around there." Commercial strip development is discouraged in all areas of the county.

Workplace and Commerce Centers should be developed as self-sustainable town centers that provide multi-services to its residents and employees. A sense of entry or arrive should be created at primary entryways into the development. Building placement, landscaping, gates, entry monuments, specialty lighting and other design elements can be used to create this design effect. These are large-scaled employment generators that should be designed to create pleasant work and play environments with an integrated design and circulation plan.



## ■ Design Guidelines

The guidelines presented in this section are intended to enhance the value of public and private properties by promoting a distinctive architectural design quality and to help ensure that new buildings blend in with the natural character of the landscape, the semi-rural character of Douglas County, and the overall intent of the designated character areas.

### Site Design

Site design of commercial development is one of the most critical aspects of a successful project. Development proposals will be reviewed with respect to their response to physical characteristics of the site and to the contextual influences of the surrounding area. Both the physical site characteristics and contextual influences should be considered early and throughout design development:

- Environmental—existing vegetation, topographic features, minimally undisturbed natural areas, and drainage.
- Visual—view sheds, view corridors and primary views from on-site and off-site.

- The patterns, character and scale of existing and planned development in the immediate area.
- Potential connections and other relationships with adjoining development—i.e., pedestrian access points, shared driveways, off street vehicular connections, open space systems and landscape buffers and service corridors.
- Perimeter open spaces and buffer zones to provide for a smooth transition to lower intensity uses.
- All building frontages and sides of buildings oriented to the street or other public areas should incorporate a combination of arcades, pedestrian level display windows, storefronts, and entrances.
- Linear “strip” development must incorporate variation in building height, building mass, roof pitch, and changes in wall planes in order to mitigate the linear effect of a development. Particular attention should be made to building design when the building is adjacent to residential property or within any public view.



### Materials

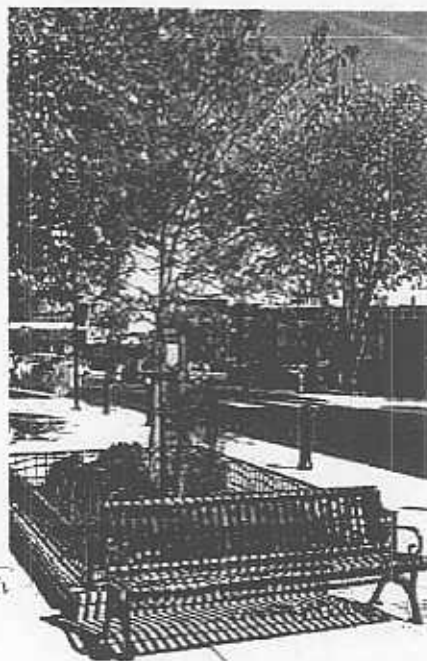
- Materials such as brick, stone, glass and clapboard should be encouraged as the dominant exterior cladding. These materials should be used on all four sides of new public and non-residential buildings.
- Concrete block, sheet metal and stucco may be considered as accent features; however, these should not be used as predominate building materials.
- Earthtones in red, buff, cream, white, and gray color ranges should be encouraged on the exteriors of new buildings.
- A single building or development or multiple buildings within a development must maintain a consistent style/architectural theme. Architectural design, building materials, colors; forms, roof style and detailing should all work together to express a harmonious and consistent dosing. This includes all “pads” within retail development as well as gasoline pump canopies or other accessory structures.
- Accessory buildings or structures, which are not compatible and consistent with the materials and design of the main building, are discouraged.

### Public Spaces

- Development of a project of greater than 5 acres should include a publicly accessible outdoor space, such as a pedestrian plaza, pavilion or courtyard. A water feature, fountain, sculpture, or other art features may be considered in lieu of a larger outdoor space. Amenities such as specialty paving, specialty lighting and street furniture are required throughout the development.

### Infrastructure

- All developments should provide safe and pleasant vehicle and pedestrian circulation patterns. The County

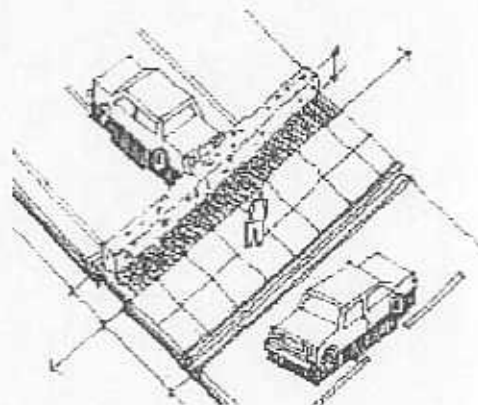


requires sidewalks along all rights of way to encourage interconnectivity between land uses.

- Shared driveways, internal vehicular circulation system linking properties and linkages of interior pedestrian systems to adjoining sites are encouraged.
- Trees can define the character of a roadway corridor and unify the diverse elements that make up the corridor's visual experience. Trees and natural vegetation should be used extensively throughout the development.
- Ensure that at least some part of the development of a site contributes to the liveliness of the street.
- Buildings placed along sidewalks shall have windows and doors facing the street, and should incorporate other architectural features.

### Parking

- Parking should not only be provided between buildings and the street. In shopping centers, buildings shall be placed along the sidewalk so that at least 15% of the building has "street" presence.
- While off-street parking is essential for all but the smallest commercial projects, screening and buffering techniques can be used to effectively hide such areas and soften the visual effects associated with vast wastelands of asphalt.
- By delineating the edge of a project, landscaping actually serve to increase a projects visibility and hence its viability in the competitive setting of the corridor.
- Commercial developments are encouraged not to exceed parking requirements within the UDC and to seek opportunities and incorporate features intended too reduce the dependence on the automobile (i.e. enhanced accessibility to transit and pedestrian connectivity).





## Section V. Future Land Use

### ■ Development Patterns

As stated in The Vision for Douglas County, the County's vision for the future is based on a pattern of continued growth focused on identified development nodes, corridors and character areas that discourage urban sprawl, inefficient use of infrastructure, and land use incompatibility, while maintaining and creating viable residential areas. It is the County's intent through their community character areas to address the overall vision of Douglas County as a vibrant live, work and play center on the outskirts of the metro-Atlanta area, while maintaining the County's small town feel.

These "Community Character Areas" are intended to ensure compatible and unified development within specified areas of the county. The Future Land Use Map is broken into the following Community Character Areas:

- Rural Places
- Suburban Living
- Urban Residential
- Transitional Corridor
- Neighborhood Village Center
- Community Village Center
- Mixed Use Corridor
- Workplace Center
- Commerce Corridor
- Intensive Industrial



As described in the next section, these Community Character Areas define the overall land use characteristics in generalized areas of the County, such as density, land use, economic development, natural and historic resources and types of community facilities. In addition, as outlined on the land use table, each character area identifies associated zoning districts for each character area. Character area designations and characteristics are designed to guide zoning decisions.

The outlined "Quality of Development Guidelines" and "Character Area Standards" should be used by Douglas County staff, the Planning Commission, the Board of Commissioners, and other boards in reviewing specific proposals for new development and major renovation proposals. Architects, property owners, and developers should also use the guidelines as a reference as they prepare plans for projects for the Douglas community. These guidelines cannot predict the unique potential and/or constraints for each project. Thus, the following guidelines are intended to establish a general direction and a base level of development quality and compatibility with surrounding areas.

It is recommended that Douglas County adopt a two-step growth management strategy that begins with the effort to define the character of a place (Community Character Areas) and ends with establishing the regulatory measures (such as adopted design guidelines by area, zoning districts or overlays) required to protect that character.

In order to get to step 2 the County should engage in developing urban design plans for individual nodes and corridors within the county. Typically, a natural outcome of an urban design plan is the recommendation to formulate design guidelines and implement regulatory controls to speak to specific development characteristics such as site planning, massing, scale, and density. This can be achieved several ways, one of which is to add the requirement for a concept plan for all applications during the rezoning process. Another method is the use of zoning overlay districts that supplement current zoning provisions and safeguard the designated area from development patterns that perpetuate sprawl. By implementing this type of control measure, Douglas County can continue to support Community Character Areas and Development Patterns.

This Plan provides pro-growth policies while remaining confident about maintaining its desired character and pride of place. At a later time the County might consider an Architectural Review Committee to review, monitor and work with developers, architects and builders in implementing the guidelines.

It is initially recommended that the following areas be studied for detailed design standards and plans:

- Bankhead Highway Redevelopment Corridor
- Lithia Springs Community Village Redevelopment Center
- The Post Road Community Village

## ■ Future Land Use Plan Categories

The intent of the Land Use Element is to identify the most desirable pattern of land use in Douglas. This pattern is represented on the Future Land Use Plan map, which indicates areas appropriate to the various land use categories. These use categories are defined in this Section. The plan map is a representation of the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies and, to a great extent, reflects current development patterns and trends, as well as current zoning approvals. The map designations indicate the predominant type of land use in the general areas identified. Guiding concepts for future land use in Douglas include:

- Ensure that future land use and development decisions are consistent with long range planning goals and policies and that such decisions promote social and economic well-being.
- Implement a land use plan that articulates a physical policy for a compact urban area and assures the availability of infrastructure concurrent with development that achieves the desires of the community's vision;
- Encourage and promote clean, high tech industrial development that strengthens the economic base of the community and minimizes air and water pollution.
- Promote development that is pedestrian-oriented, community centered and minimizes vehicular trips.

## Future Land Use Plan Map

The Future Land Use map is a representation of the plan's goals and policies and indicates where various types of land uses are permitted. The plan map designations indicate predominant types of land uses, which are described below.

The Future Land Use Plan map was developed to illustrate the most desirable pattern of land use in Douglas. The Future Land Use Plan map was developed taking into consideration the land use pat-



terms illustrated on the County's Existing Land Use Plan Map, the Current Zoning Map, approved PUDs and other developments, topographic characteristics, natural resource sensitivity, the availability of infrastructure, and needs demonstrated by residential and employment forecasts. The needs and goals for each of the other chapters within the Comprehensive Plan were also used in development of the Future Land Use Plan map.

## Interpretation

The plan is developed with the concept that the Future Land Use Plan map and the text are to be used as an integrated whole, with the map being a graphic representation of the text.

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

Plan implementation is carried out through the application of regulations such as the Unified Development Code and through projects and programs outlined in the STWP. The Board of Commissioners administers it with input from the Planning Commission and planning staff. The procedure, once the plan is adopted, will involve checks for plan and ordinance consistency as part of the review for issuance of subdivision approvals and development and building permits.

If a specific land use or development project is proposed for an area but is not consistent with the designated use or density on the Future Land Use Plan map, it cannot be approved. The initial contact for plan interpretation begins with the Douglas Development Services Department. It is at this point that the proposal is evaluated for its conformity and compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and functional plans. In the event a use or development proposal is inconsistent with the Future Land Use Plan map or Comprehensive Plan policies, an applicant may file for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment in accordance with the amendment procedures contained in the UDC.

## Future Land Use Categories

The following Table presents the land use categories, "Character Areas," as shown on the Future Land Use Plan map, and indicates those zoning districts that are most commonly compatible with the use designation. In addition, designations are shown as most commonly used in a Master Planned Development project. Specific requirements of the Unified Development Code, master plan site plan approval and other conditions control in all cases.

Future Land Use Categories				
Character Area	Description of Character and Pre-dominant Land Uses	Community Facilities	Zoning Districts	Master Planned Developments (MPDs)
<b>Residential Character Areas</b>				
Rural Places	Outlying rural areas with active farming and scattered single-family housing on large lots. Preservation of sensitive natural resources. Commercial Activity Centers within this area will be designated as Cross-rural Villages Centers. Commercial development	Typically lacks public water and sewer is not planned. Very low level of services planned due to low	AG, RA, Designated Dog River Basin Area, and RRR	Single-family, equestrian oriented and open space and master planned developments. Small integrated communities

<b>Country Crossroads*</b>	<p>should only be developed as designated on the FLUPM and within master planned developments.</p> <p>A Country Crossroads is a small, restricted commercial node located at existing "crossroads" within the rural places character area. Due to the sensitive residential orientation of the area, existing crossroads and limited future crossroads development will not be shown on the FLU map.</p>	<p>density nature of the area.</p> <p>Located with the Rural Places Character Area. Use of existing commercial areas.</p>	<p>Creek Overlay, Country Crossroads*</p> <p>C-N, OI-L Max 3,000 SF</p>	<p>mercial (see "crossroads") as designated.</p> <p>N/a</p>
<b>Suburban Living</b>	<p>Areas located outside identified centers that are experiencing a high volume of residential growth, primarily single-family houses. All non-residential development will be within designated corridors or master planned developments. Commercial Activity Centers will be designated as or NVCs.</p>	<p>Public water available, public sewerage available or planned; local public facilities</p>	<p>RLD, R-MD.</p>	<p>Single-family and duplex, MPD with limited institutional uses &amp; neighborhood commercial. Limited Community Commercial with a special use permit.</p>
<b>Urban Residential</b>	<p>Urbanized and growth oriented areas experiencing growth pressures and potential compatibility issues. This character area is a transition from potential commercial and high-density pressure from growing activity centers. Various types of residential dwellings, mixed-use developments and transitional corridors. Commercial activity centers would include NVC, CVC, and Transitional Corridors.</p>	<p>Public water &amp; sewer; regional public facilities.</p>	<p>R-LD, R-MD, R-D, R-TC, R-MF, R-MH</p>	<p>MPD featuring mixed housing uses, neighborhood commercial. Community Commercial with a special use permit.</p>

### Future Land Use Categories

Character Area	Description of Character and Pre-dominate Land Uses	Community Facilities	Zoning Districts	Master Planned Developments (MPDs)
Transitional Corridor	This corridor is designed to allow for transition from residential uses to compatible non-residential uses along major arterials or along roadways where major transportation improvements are planned. This corridor is restrictive in order to allow a smooth transition to surrounding residential. Size, parking and appearance standards apply to this district.	Linear transitional areas along major transportation corridors.	OI-L, C-N, C-C (limited)	Due to the linear nature of this corridor, and the potential abutment to single-family residential neighborhoods, master planned developments are not typically appropriate.
Neighborhood Village Center	Located at key crossroad intersections. Small-scaled neighborhood commercial with access and size restrictions.	Public water & sewer may be available. Good transportation Access.	C-N, OI-L	Mixed-use MPD Encouraged. "Main Street" style mixed use encouraged.
Community Village Center	Higher intensity of commercial activity intended to serve more than one neighborhood, uses such as retail, office and services.	Public water & sewer may be available. Arterial access. Regional public facilities	OI-L, C-N, C-C, C-G (limited)	Mixed-use MPD Encouraged. "Main Street" style mixed use encouraged.
Mixed Use Corridor	Designed as a redevelopment corridor for existing commercial/light industrial corridors, or new emerging corridors. Light industrial and heavy highway commercial uses are allowed only within the Bankhead Highway Redevelopment Area.	Public water & sewer may be available. Arterial access. Potential rail corridor access. Regional public facilities	OI-L, C-N, C-C, C-G, C-H*, LI*, LI-R, RMD, RTC	Mixed use and master planned developments are highly encouraged within this district. Additional design and site restrictions apply.
Workplace Centers	Intensive commercial retail and services, office and high tech development along major highway corridors that are considered major employment generators with an emphasis on landscaping and aesthetics. Integrated office parks are highly encouraged. Residential developments are also encouraged to be integrated into the overall design.	Public water & sewer available or planned in the near future. Arterial access. Rail Access. Regional public facilities	OI-L, OI-H, C-C, C-G, C-R, LI-R, RMD, RTC	Urban design characteristics and unity are major characteristics within planned developments.
Commerce Center	Industrial/Office Park development, employment generators and interstate-oriented commercial development.	Public water & sewer. Major transportation Access.	OI-L, OI-H, C-C, C-G, C-H, C-R, LI, LI-R	Mixed commercial and industrial uses are the preferred method of development.
Intensive Industrial	Large scaled and high intensity users that have potential negative impacts on residential uses.	Major transportation access.	HI	Usually stand alone use, but could be incorporated within an industrial park.

## ■ Residential Character Areas

### Rural Places

Much of Douglas County's identity is tied to its rural and small town heritage. Although large-scale farms are not a major use within the county, many smaller homestead and "estate farms" still exist. In addition, areas of sensitive natural resources require additional protection. The intent of the Rural Places Character Area is to provide a residential-agricultural community, which benefits from its scenic rural landscape with much of its identity based on its agrarian past while accommodating residential growth and very limited "Country Crossroads" type commercial. A Country Crossroad is a small commercial area that provides very limited services to the adjacent population at existing crossroads locations. This character area encompasses outlying areas of the county where public water may or may not be available; but sewer is not available or planned.

Transition  
from Rural to  
Residential

- To retain and conserve the rural character in the area;
- To protect sensitive natural resources areas;
- To encourage and accommodate the further development of estates and mini farms that is consistent with growth policies of the County and that blend into the overall fabric of the County.
- The adoption of a policy to provide a lower level of service to these areas, in terms of transportation and sewer improvements in order to maintain and protect the rural character.



### Primary Land Uses



Overlay area);

### Country Crossroads

Country Crossroads are very small commercial areas that currently exist along historic crossroads in the county that

- Active farming, timbering and conservation uses;
- Large homesteads on individual lots;
- Large Lot Single Family Home Subdivisions;
- Equestrian and Golf Club Communities;
- Master Planned Developments with an overall density of 1 unit per 3 acres (except within the Dog River Watershed





have developed over the years to serve local needs. These areas are located in the rural area of the county. Due to the rural nature and single-family orientation of the surrounding area, crossroad hamlets are envisioned to be localized service providers that provide limited local convenience goods and services to the adjacent single-family rural environment. This character designation is not shown on the future land use plan map in order to limit these Country crossroads to existing locations, and to provide for limited expansion to prevent these small commercial uses from growing into neighborhood village centers. If the location merits larger expansion, a future land use map change should be applied for as a neighborhood village center.

- Existing retail/service providers within the rural places character area.
- Limited expansion within existing crossroads areas at existing intersections within the character area on a case-by-case basis.
- Convenience retailers and service providers under 3,000 square feet that shall be no more intense than neighborhood commercial zoning (NC);
- Primary guideline is that any commercial development should be compatible with surrounding residential properties and developed to serve a very limited immediate service area.

## Suburban Living

As Douglas County continues to experience growth in both residential and commercial development, areas meant for traditional subdivision and commercial growth to serve nearby residents are necessary. The intent of this character area is to channel growth pressures to areas that are suitable in terms of land



use patterns and infrastructure investment, and to areas that have a more "suburban" feel. This character area also includes older established neighborhoods, and could include appropriate senior housing. Commercial nodes within this character area include existing country crossroads and neighborhood village centers. Neighborhood commercial villages, as described under "commercial character areas," are located at the intersections of major roads, and should be compatible with existing land uses through size, appearance and buffering. Special care should be taken to elimi-

nate any negative impacts, such as lighting, parking, and traffic. Large-scale commercial development is not appropriate within this character area. Public services and facilities are offered at a higher level of service to accommodate a denser population. Water and sewer are either existing or planned within this character area.

The purpose of the Suburban Living Character is:

- To retain and conserve the existing sound housing stock.
- To promote residential development that fosters a sense of community and provides essential mobility, recreation and open space.
- Accommodate upscale executive housing to meet the market demand.
- To provide for areas of innovative development, such as golf, master planned and traditional communities in appropriate locations.

## Traditional Subdivisions

- To stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of residential environments, including natural features.

### Primary Land Uses

- Single Family Homes on individual lots;
- Traditional Single Family Home Subdivisions;
- Equestrian and Golf Club Communities;
- Master Planned and Open Space Developments;
- Senior Housing Developments; and
- Commercial Development
  - Country Crossroads;
  - Neighborhood Village Centers.



### Urban Residential

Areas designated as Urban Residential are located primarily within areas that are currently experiencing growth pressures, such as outside of Douglasville and within areas that public water & sewer



and major transportation investment exists or are planned. This character area will serve as a transitional area from the higher density and commercial uses as planned by the City of Douglasville, while protecting existing and planned single-family neighborhoods. Compatibility issues of the surrounding area, and specifically established neighborhoods should be a primary policy determination of the type of new development that is approved. Minimum lot size varies by type of unit and whether public water and sewer serves the lot. Commercial activity centers that are appropriate include neighborhood and community villages and transitional corridors that are designed to serve the adjacent population. Master Planned developments of mixed housing and integrated development are highly encouraged within this area to further the transition from the City of Douglasville. Public Services and Facilities are provided to serve a denser population.

The purpose of the Urban Residential Character area is:

- To accommodate a variety of housing types suit the variety of Douglas County lifestyles and income levels.
- To allow for the conversion of sites to more intensive residential use when appropriate.

- To ensure compatibility between established single family and newer medium density development;
- To provide and maintain a supply of developable land throughout the urban area for residential and other supportive urban uses, as demand warrants and service capabilities permit;
- To encourage locating residential development where full urban services, public facilities, and routes of public transportation are available; and
- To permit, in certain sections of the County, multi-family housing developments which are consistent with growth policies of the County and which blend into the overall fabric of the County
- Develop residential areas that utilize innovative urban design principles that encourage community, pedestrian linkages and mixed-use environments.



#### Primary Land Uses

- All housing types; and
- Commercial:
  - Neighborhood Village Centers;
  - Community Village Centers; and
  - Transitional Corridors.



### ■ Commercial Districts

As growth continues, and changes occur in the infrastructure system, potential locations are created for commercial development businesses and residents within the area. Increase in through traffic volumes along a road generates a demand for increased goods and services. Major shopping centers often locate at interstate highway interchanges. Other shopping centers locate at major road intersections while highway-oriented stores, such as car dealerships and fast food establishments tend to concentrate along multi-laned roads. Small convenience stores typically locate at intersections near population concentrations.

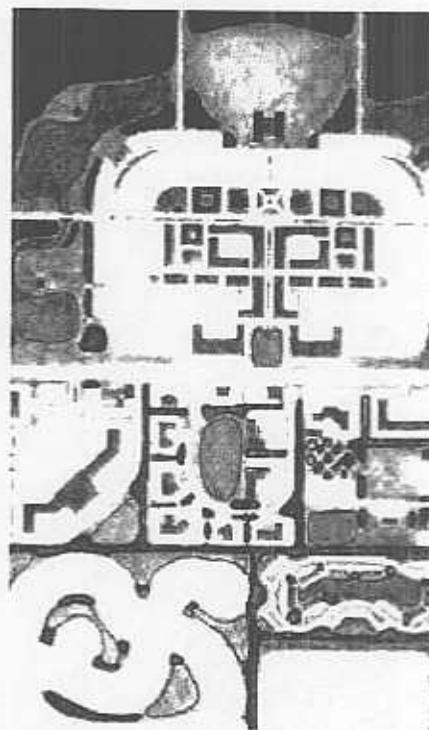


Offices are specifically addressed by two categories: Professional Offices and Office Centers. The Professional Office category allows for business and professional office uses with limited supportive commercial activity. This category is appropriate for small office complexes and in transition areas where existing residences are often converted into office use. The Retail Sales and Services category provides for a wide range of shopping and customer service facilities in the County. The category embraces neighborhood and community level shopping and service facilities as well as regional facilities such as North Point Mall. Developments in this category may be an individual store, restaurant or service business, a hotel or a shopping center. Individual office uses may also be found in this designation. Retail sales and service nodes have been developed at appropriate locations within the County to avoid "retail creep."

The second category, Office Center, provides flexibility for large developments and is intended to allow for an environment often referred to as a corporate campus. Office Centers often include limited convenience retail and business services establishments, as well as hotels and conference centers that are oriented to the employees and clients in the center.

The commercial designation indicates areas throughout Douglas that provide shopping and service opportunities of the following types:

- Regional retail facilities provide for the shopping and service requirements of the County and region.
- Community shopping and service facilities offer a wide variety of goods and services, inducing both convenience goods for neighborhood residents and shopping goods for a market area consisting of several neighborhoods.
- Neighborhood shopping and services facilities include: only those stores and services establishments that is easily accessible and is used frequently by neighborhood residents.
- Convenience stores are limited to food-oriented stores and personal services establishments close to residential uses.





In addition to considering the potential demand for increased commercial development, the Plan must also evaluate the desirability of commercial development at a given location. Concerns such as safety, traffic carrying capacity and compatibility with existing development need to be considered. Major principles of commercial development include concentrating commercial development at major intersections, restricting commercial activities which conflict with residential areas or impede the flow of traffic, and encourage shopping center type design standards for commercial development. The following criteria were developed to determine whether a location is desirable or undesirable for commercial development:

Commercial Land Use Evaluation Criteria				
Criteria	Very Desirable	Desirable	Marginal	Undesirable
Remaining Distance between intersections	< .25 Miles	.25 - .50 Miles	.50 - 1. Miles	>1.0 Mile
Service Area Populations	10,000	5,000-10,000	3,000-5,000	<3,000
Traffic Volume	>30,000	10,000-30,000	5,000-10,000	<5,000
Roadway Classifications	Interchange; Major Arterial	Arterial	Collector	Local Road
Intersection Type	Arterial W/Arterial	Arterial W/Collector	Collector W/Local	Local Road
Parcel Size	20 acres +	10-20 acres	5-10 acres	<5 acres
Current Land Use	Commercial Vacant	Vacant	Mixed Residential, Commercial, Vacant	Vacant and Single Family residential
Current Zoning	Commercial or Industrial	Commercial	High Density Residential.	Low Density Residential
Utilities Available	Water & Sewer	Water; Planned Sewer	Water	None
Future Land Use Map	Neighborhood or Community Village	Transitional mixed use corridor	Adjacent to village center or corridor	Rural or Residential Character Area

For example a very desirable corridor location would be less than ¼ mile from a major intersection, have a service population of more than 10,000, a traffic volume greater than 30,000 vehicles a day, be classified as a major arterial road, have a parcel size of more than 20 acres, have surrounding land uses being either commercial activities or vacant land and have water and sewer service.

The physical design of a commercial corridor or village contributes greatly to the overall image of the community; each has its own unique cultural qualities to attract residents, customers and visitors. The distinctive characteristics of buildings of varying ages make commercial corridors assets and are often one of the most interesting and satisfying aspects of the street. Thoughtful design improvements reinforce the positive identity of a community's retail area and create a "sense of place" that is distinct to the neighborhood.

## Transitional Corridors

### Small Businesses and services at your door

Areas suitable for designation as Transitional Corridors are those originally developed for single-family homes that have or will become impacted by adjacent multi-laned thoroughfares and commercial encroachment and may no longer be suitable primarily for residential use. In the past, individual properties have been rezoned and converted in a way that has often been disruptive from an urban design sense: parking lots have replaced front lawns; houses have been remodeled unprofessionally, resulting in structures with incoherent design elements; signage has often been out of proportion to the structure and use advertised.

In order to propose an orderly, safe and aesthetic transition, properties within designated transitional corridors can be considered for nonresidential use at intensity compatible with surrounding residential areas that maintain the essential residential "look" and feel of the area. Designation of this corridor is meant to encourage public and private investment that will promote vitality, activity and safety in the area, by controlling aesthetics, site planning and limiting non residential uses that will not overly impact existing residential neighborhoods adjacent to the site.

Transitional Corridors are located along a number of major thoroughfares that have been or are scheduled for widening, notably including portions of Highway 5.

### Predominate Land Uses

- Existing residential dwelling units.
- Commercial services within converted residential dwelling units.
- Limited mix of selected retail uses that are considered "low impact."
- Infill commercial and residential that is compatible in look, density and mass to surrounding development.
- Senior Living Facilities.
- Small churches and community facilities.

### Character Area Guidelines

Conversions and infill development should be evaluated as followed:

#### Site Design

- The new use should be compatible with the residential structure and the adjoining neighborhood and should not pose nuisance problems with nearby residential and/or office uses. Generally, light office use and small neighborhood services are compatible with houses.
- The new use should be compatible with the adjoining neighborhood and should not pose nuisance problems with nearby residential and/or office uses.
- The conversion's remodeling should be architecturally compatible with the neighborhood and must upgrade or at least be consistent with the basic architecture of the structure.

- Business hours should be limited to normal daytime hours.
- New building design should take into consideration the unique qualities and the dominant character of the surrounding area.
- New occupancies in converted houses should be limited to one business enterprise (with one business entrance) for structures under 2,000 square feet of gross leasable area. This will help eliminate overcrowding, proliferation of signs, elimination of landscaping, excessive on-site parking and parking overflow onto the street.
- The building must be compatible with the location, design, landscaping and other significant characteristics of public and private open space in relation to the site and adjacent properties.
- The architectural integrity and compatibility with surrounding properties, including siting, massing, proportion, scale, materials, colors, details, façade treatment, lighting and signage.
- Signs should be consistent with the form and materials of the building. Illuminated signs are not permitted when adjacent to existing residential uses.
- Mechanical equipment must be screened from public view and sited so as not to cause noise impacts on adjacent properties.
- Trash and garbage enclosures must be provided in rear yard areas.

#### **Parking and Circulation**

- The location and adequacy of off-street parking requirements. Vehicular circulation must take place on site; backing into the street is not allowed.
- When possible, parking should be placed in the rear or side of the structure. When parking must be placed in the front of the structure, parking areas should be kept out of the minimum setback if possible and screened from view.
- Landscaping must be installed in areas not designated for parking and circulation. Parking areas must have landscaping and be screened from public view.

### **Neighborhood Village Center**

Neighborhood Village Centers are places where small-scaled commercial uses, such as a bank, grocery store, drug store, cleaner, and gas station, are arranged in a village-like setting that might include a neighborhood park, pedestrian circulation and public spaces. Thus, a neighborhood village center is envisioned as a compact assortment of convenience-oriented retail stores and services to address the demands of nearby residents in less urbanized parts of the county. From an urban design perspective, sidewalks are important circulation features in Neighborhood Centers, but even more important is the scale of the roads that serve these areas. Given its small scale and emphasis on small stores, a Neighborhood Center would be overwhelmed by wide thoroughfares carrying high-speed traffic and instead should rely on more modestly scaled roadways and tree-lined streets.

Adaptive re-use of existing structures and buildings is encouraged as a focal point.

#### **Predominate Land Use**

The  
neighborhood  
butcher, baker,  
candlestick  
maker

- Small-scaled grocery stores, bakeries, cafes and small retail shops.
- Personal services, such as laundromats, dry cleaners, barber/beauty shops, and video rental.
- Professional services such as lawyers, accountants, physicians and dentists
- Small churches.
- Community services.

### Character Area Guidelines

A neighborhood village center should utilize the "Main Street" feel featuring specialty retail and personal services within a walkable and intimate environment.

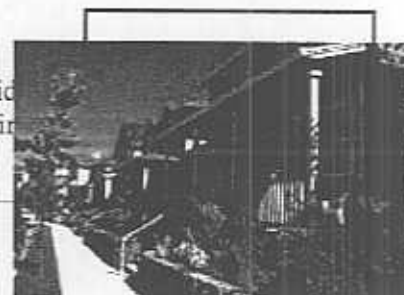
### Site Design

- **Mix of Uses**—The use of low intensity office, services, retail, and integrated residential are all part of the integrated village center. Residential use is seen as utilizing vertical portions other parts of the integrated site, and should not occupy more than 20% of the overall village.
- **Convenience Grocery Stores** with gasoline sales or any other business with gasoline sales should meet the following locational standards, unless specifically approved by the BOC.
  - Only one such business within a commercial development;
  - No more than two such businesses within a ¼ mile proximity to any 4-way intersection (measured from edge of right-of-way; and
- Buildings should be **clustered** one and two stories and should respect the predominate scale of development in the surrounding area by designing with elements of similar scale and providing a gradual transition to any larger scaled masses proposed.
- **Building Design**—centers of up to 10,000 square feet, featuring small retail, services and professional offices up to 6,000 square feet.
- Similarly, **urban design elements** such as pedestrian lights, consistent signage, and landscaping contribute to the quaint character of Neighborhood Centers and create a sense of place in what may have once been little more than a crossroads.
- The use of coordinated and identified elements such as awnings, varying shingle styles or other natural materials, archways and façade landscaping.



### Community Village Center

Typically located at the convergence of major transportation corridors, these centers are envisioned, as places where a compatible mixture of higher intensity uses





larger scaled shopping centers, professional offices and services. Mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial, service and recreational uses integrated and linked together by a comprehensive circulation system are encouraged in these nodes. Community village centers include shopping and service facilities that offer a wide variety of goods and services, including both convenience goods for neighborhood residents and shopping goods for a market area consisting of several neighborhoods. Whereas someone might live near a neighborhood village center but work outside the county, the commercial village concept includes a variety of housing options, employment opportunities, businesses, office, retail shops, services, well-placed parks, plazas and open spaces that create a community where it is possible to live, work and play. Land use components co-exist as part of a collective approach to creating communities that are safe, attractive, and convenient for pedestrians and motorists alike. Natural and historic resources within community village centers should be enhanced and preserved as a means of defining a distinct identity or sense of place. Improved connections to natural assets, both pedestrian and vehicular, particularly from existing and developing higher density residential communities tie the village together. A Community village center should create a focal point for its surrounding neighborhoods.

#### Predominate Land Uses

- Shopping Centers containing an anchor such as a grocery or large drug store.
- Small office complexes such as "office condominiums", financial institutions with drive-thru facilities, places of worship, full service restaurants and medical/dental clinics.
- Small residential component, such as lofts, or residences above ground level office or retail.
- Community gathering spaces and institutional uses, such as libraries, churches and community centers.
- Entertainment and cultural arts should be a major focus of investment in the village.



### Character Area Design Guidelines

#### Building Design

- Buildings should be designed to conform to architectural standards and oriented in close proximity to each other to facilitate walking instead of driving.
- The design of a building that occupies a pad or portion of a building within a planned project or shopping center should share similar design characteristics and design vocabulary. Precise replication is not desirable, instead utilizing similar colors, materials and textures as well as repeating patterns; rhythms and proportions found within the architecture of other build-



ings in the center can be utilized to achieve unity.

- **Building Type.** It is encouraged that buildings be two level connected spaces and a mix of over-all uses.
- Taller buildings or portions of a building should be located internally to a site with buildings stepping down in height as they reach the edges of the site that are adjoined by smaller scaled development.
- Mix of uses, including integrated residential. The residential portion of the development should not be more than 35% of the overall development and should be totally integrated into the design in materials and circulation matters. Mixed use projects that feature vertical integration (such as ground floor retail with living units above), with an emphasis on greater street presence.

### Site Design

- The development of urban public parks, plazas and other open space should be integrated into the overall design.
- Community facilities such as schools, branch libraries, and government services, pocket parks and plazas serve as anchors for community village centers and help to create identity.
- Outdoor dining areas are encouraged and when part of the development program, should be used to activate plazas, the edges of open space, building frontages and street frontages. Outdoor dining areas should be oriented away from off-site uses that are sensitive to noise or nighttime activity.

### Access and Parking

- Access is provided through a comprehensive system of streets, sidewalks and greenways that intersect at key locations and connect residential areas to commercial uses.
- Parking should be conveniently located with the same pull-right-up, walk-in and walkout convenience of traditional shopping centers, while at the same allowing for the buildings and design features to be in the forefront.
- Ground floor pedestrian traffic patterns, compatibility with adjacent street front uses and compatibility with any proposed residential uses or residential uses within the vicinity.
- Parking should be located to the rear or sides of the development whenever possible.
- **Transportation Circulation.** Whereas transportation efforts in a neighborhood village center might focus on traffic calming measures along "Main Street," a community village center presents greater challenges related to coordinating a variety of alternative transportation opportunities.

### Mixed Use Corridor

The mixed-use corridor is a special designated corridor to encom-

Auto Driven  
Power  
Shopping



pass an existing working commercial and light industrial corridor that will be going through transitional use and continued development as transportation improvements are made. Mixed-use developments incorporating commercial and office uses fronting major commercial corridors of the community, and light industrial along the Bankhead Highway Corridor.

This corridor relies on major transportation access, particularly from interstates or major arterials, including rail access. Similarly, the provision of adequate public services in the form of water, sewer, and power are critical to the functionality of these areas. This corridor is intended to create a pleasant, hazard-and-nuisance-free environment and does not create either appreciable nuisance or hazard to other property, individuals, or the public in general. The purpose of this corridor is the creation of an inviting commercial and mixed-use area. "How does my particular building work in the street, and what elements can I add to create an inviting and pleasant environment."

These corridors are envisioned as destinations for expanded interstate trade opportunities, small business opportunities and would accommodate higher densities in order to create a synergy between retail, office, industry, other commercial uses and medium density residential. Development of a wide range of housing choices can be important to ensuring the viability of these corridors. Such a mix would enable people to live in close proximity to their workplace. The intent of the mixed-use corridor designation is to provide a variety of tracts for heavy commercial uses, light industrial and employment uses that are limited to office and business parks, distribution/service, light industrial, high-technology and research, wholesaling companies and similar businesses that have no significant impacts on the environment. When located at the perimeter of a Future Land Use Map Commerce Corridor area, uses that are lower in intensity and scale to ensure minimal impact to adjacent properties is required.

From an urban design standpoint, the most critical element in creating a visually appealing mixed-use corridor is the enforcement of appropriate development standards to ensure adequate site plans and landscaping. Buffers are critical between incompatible uses and guidelines that address signage and lighting will help to mitigate the negative impacts of a high concentration of commercial uses

### **Primary Land Uses**

- Light industrial (only within the Bankhead Highway Corridor).
- Hotels and mixed residential uses.
- Medical and dental offices.
- Auto oriented services and repair shops.
- Highway type commercial, except for large land consumers such as car dealerships and mini warehouses

### **Character Area Guidelines**

#### **Site Design**

- **Mix of Uses:** Corridors are suitable for office buildings, research and development, research and development activities, restrictive industrial, warehousing, and light manufacturing which will not have an adverse impact upon the environmental quality of the village. Mixed use projects that feature vertical integration (such as ground floor retail with living units above), with an emphasis on greater street presence.
- Make entrances obvious and welcoming. Main entrances should be oriented to the street or internal plaza and pedestrian ways.
- Restricted light industrial should be located off of secondary roads or industrial park developments whenever possible.

- The number of restaurants with a drive through, car washes, automobile repair/service, or gasoline sales (combined or not combined with another business) is limited in number to a total of one per 10 acres or portions thereof.
- Drive through windows, menu boards, equipment and associated stacking lanes should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent residential areas and should be adequately screened from public view and view of adjacent sites.

#### **Parking, Circulation and Access**

- **Parking:** Decks should be "wrapped" by retail or residential uses". The providing of parking in an adjoining development manner among owners and developers of adjoining properties should be encouraged.
- **Roadway & Streetscapes**—the use of street trees, landscaped medians and improved lighting for safety and aesthetics.
- The parking or storage of trucks, trailers, or containers is prohibited within the minimum front setback.
- Accessory, temporary, outdoor storage of retail goods in containers may be considered in limited applications, and only when the following items are addressed:
  - Landscape setbacks are maintained;
  - Parking is maintained;
  - Views are blocked with walls or other acceptable method to the County;
  - Noise and fire concerns are addressed;
  - Access is maintained; and
  - The type of container is acceptable to the County.

#### **Workplace Center**

Considered major employment centers utilizing a mixture of commercial, office and some residential uses, these character areas are located primarily along major transportation connections. Corridor housing would provide a customer base for offices, café, restaurants, and retail uses located on the corridor, and also enhance the safety of the corridors by maintaining a continuous population base in a location that is

Shop, Work &  
Play in a  
Great  
Environment





typically unpopulated in the evening hours.

From an urban design standpoint, the most critical element in creating a visually appealing workplace center is the enforcement of appropriate development standards to ensure adequate site plans and landscaping. Buffers are critical between incompatible uses and guidelines that address signage and lighting will help to mitigate the negative impacts of a high concentration of commercial uses. Vast amounts of parking and loading/unloading areas should be screened from view. Where possible the parking areas should be distributed to two or more sides of the business to "visually scale down" the size of the parking lot. Inter-parcel access between sites should be used whenever possible. Grouping or "clustering" of shops with co-mingled parking, landscaping and pedestrian areas is encouraged.

#### Primary Land Uses

- "Showplace" operations such as offices and research facilities, sales and show rooms, medical complexes.
- Comprehensive and cohesive unified projects that integrate commercial, office and residential uses.
- High rise office buildings.
- Retail, dining, personal business and professional services that support the employment base and local residents.
- Major Commercial shopping, including department stores and "big box" uses that is integrated into the overall design of the complex.
- Warehouse, distribution and wholesaling businesses when transportation facilities are sufficient.
- Light industrial uses within planned centers.
- Convention hotels, motels.

#### Character Area Guidelines

##### Center Design

- Workplace centers should be designed as a coordinated whole, and integrated into surrounding character of the center. Office and industrial parks are encouraged.
- A sense of entry or arrive must be created at primary entryways into the development. Building placement, landscaping, gates, entry monuments, specialty lighting and other design elements can be used to create this design effect.
- Buildings should be designed to conform to architectural standards and oriented in close proximity to each other to facilitate walking instead of driving.
- The design of a building that occupies a pad or portion of a building within a planned project or shopping center should share similar design characteristics and design vocabulary. Precise rep-



lication is not desirable, instead utilizing similar colors materials and textures as well as repeating patterns, and rhythms and proportions found within the architecture of other buildings in the center can be utilized to achieve unity.

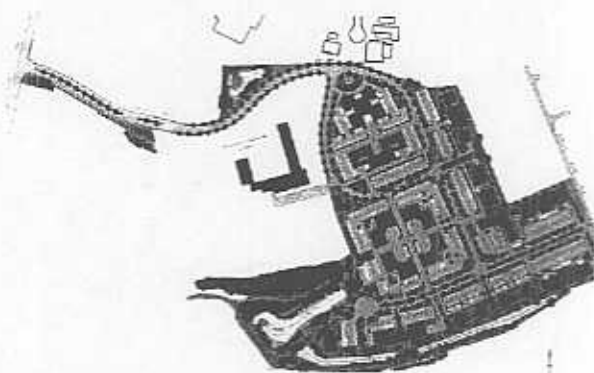
- A transition from low buildings at the site perimeter to larger and taller structures on the interior of the site is encouraged.
- Use lighting to draw attention to window displays, signs, and store information and buildings architectural details.
- Signage should be consistent in scale with other signs within the corridor/center, and that complement a building's architecture.
- Pedestrian scaled signs should be used with fonts and colors that are legible.

#### **Access, Parking and Circulation**

- Where parking structures have a strong relationship to the street or other pedestrian areas, the lower level of the structure should be activated with pedestrian related improvements, and storefronts or alternative uses and enhanced landscape treatment to soften the structure. Other sides of parking structures should also be landscaped with increasing intensity the more visible the parking structure is from surrounding uses.
- Workplace centers should include pedestrian spaces scaled with respect to the size and demands of the particular use. The space should incorporate landscaping, shaded areas and seating opportunities for customers and employees.

### **Commerce Center**

Under normal circumstances, certain types of industrial uses and major employment generators may place heavy demands on public facilities or cause significant impacts on the environment. The industrial uses allowed within the County are not intended to create such problems or demands. The intent of the Commerce Center is to provide a variety of tracts for industrial and employment uses that are limited to office and business parks, warehouse centers, distribution/service, large scaled commercial, light industrial, high-technology and research, wholesaling companies and similar businesses that have no significant impacts on the environment. Developments using planned development concepts are encouraged, such as business parks, campus settings and commercial/industrial mixed-use projects. When located at the perimeter of a Future Land Use Map Commerce Center area, uses that are lower in intensity and scale to ensure minimal impact to adjacent properties is required. In addition, certain commercial uses such as car dealerships, truck terminals and car washes require careful site planning to minimize curb cuts and reduce the perception of parking as the primary use.



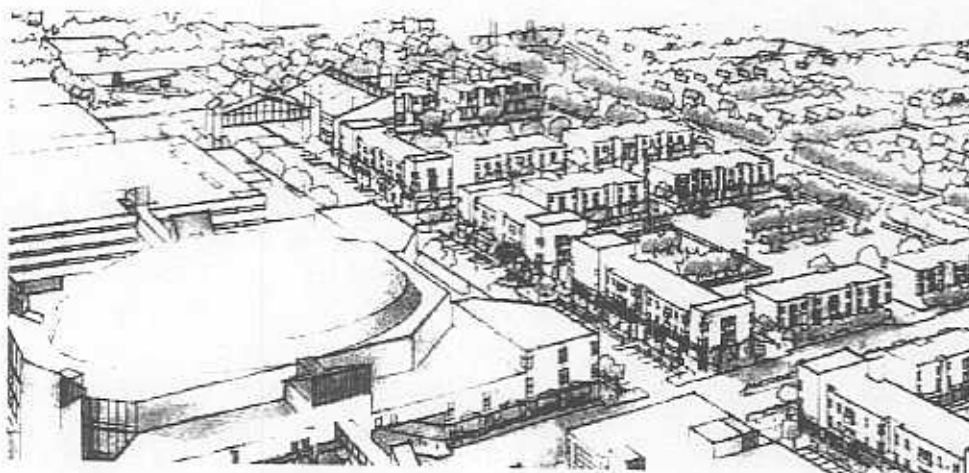
#### **Primary Land Uses:**

- "Highway Commercial" type uses that are integrated into an overall design, such as sales and show rooms, storage garages, car and mobile home dealers.
- Large scaled light and general industrial uses, office buildings and parks.

### Character Area Guidelines

#### Related Design to Site and Surroundings

- The building design and landscaping of any new development should be of a high quality and of an appearance that will enhance and be compatible with the character of the surrounding area.



#### Internal Circulation

- All developments should be designed with internal pedestrian circulation patterns. Sidewalks are required and should be identified in the design phase and provided for the design process. These include linkages to individual buildings, neighboring properties and parking. Inter-parcel site access and shared driveways are desirable between similar uses.

### ■ Intensive Industrial

This area is established to provide for intensive industrial uses such as landfills, quarries, and other industrial uses that are potential public nuisances, are identified as environmentally hazardous or are potentially dangerous to health, safety or general welfare of the county. These manufacturing and industrial uses impact the surrounding environment differently than other industrial uses due to transportation requirements, waste storage and disposal, and chemical byproducts from production and processing. Such uses require a special consideration in order to be located anywhere in the County.

The Bad,  
the Ugly,  
but  
Necessary

## ■ Other Land Use Categories

### Transportation/Communications/Utilities

This category designates existing electric substations, telephone facilities, cable TV, transmission towers and satellite downlink operations in the County. There are no known plans for future locations for such facilities, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The category also includes all streets and highways in the County.

### Parks/Recreation/Open Space



The Parks/Recreation/Open Space land use classification is for those areas within the County that has been developed for park or recreation use or is designated open space. The recreation and park areas illustrated on the map include neighborhood, community and regional parks, recreation facilities and golf courses. Not all developed or needed open space areas are indicated on the Future Land Use Plan map. Open space is required in all zoning Master Plans submitted

to the County and is required in other developments when necessary to address recreational and aesthetic concerns, or to create a buffer between different land uses, or as required by the Unified Development Code.

### Public/Institutional

This designation includes sites and facilities in public ownership for such uses as medical, educational, cultural, governmental, administrative and protective services, and cemeteries. Churches, though institutional in character, are not singled out in this category; rather, they are included within the categories of surrounding properties.



### Agriculture/Forestry

Two major farms have been identified in the south end of the county

### Undeveloped

There are no areas are designated to be Undeveloped on the Future Land Use Plan map. As shown on the Future Land Use Table, the County will be built out by the year 2025. Although some lands may remain vacant and undeveloped by that time, their locations cannot be anticipated.





## Section VI. Land Use Assessment

Through careful planning, Douglas has positioned itself toward becoming a "Signature City" of well-designed residential and non-residential projects. Although growth is projected to continue, the County is maturing. Demand for both residential and non-residential development will continue to be high, in fact, without changes in land use policy and annexation the County will not be able to accommodate projected growth. Over the next few years Douglas will review innovative development techniques and land use policies that can potentially accommodate growth. The challenge for the County over the next few decades will be to balance the built and non-built environment, while at the same time continuing to offer amenities such as Greenspace that have created the high quality of life within the County.

- Since 1980, unincorporated Douglas County's population has more than doubled, increasing by 105% to an estimated 81,200 today.
- Past trends suggest that the population in the unincorporated area could double again, increasing 110% to 170,400 by the year 2025.
- The age group 35 to 54 years old comprises the largest percentage of the population (32%). This group statistically is usually single-family homeowners that have school age children.
- Although currently more than half of the population is comprised of young families with children, the mature population with older children is steadily increasing.
- As the county's age characteristics continue to diversify, community facility improvements and housing should also diversify to meet the wide range of ages and lifestyles.
- Overall income levels and educational levels are below regional levels.
- The County will continue to growth and experience demand pressures due to its location within metro Atlanta.
- The population chapter should serve as the background for other chapters, and provides the demographic basis for an overall assessment of needs for the county, infrastructure expansion and investment, determination of residential mix and density, determination of residential and non-residential mix, and sets the stage for designing the future land use plan map.

### ■ Assessment

- There are currently 27,300 jobs among all economic sectors outside of the City of Douglasville. By the year 2025 the number of jobs could more than double to 67,500, a 148% increase.
- Douglas County is still primarily a bedroom county to the Metro area. 63% of residents commuted outside the county in 2000.
- A strong and diverse economy is important to provide a stable and balanced tax base.
- Commuter patterns suggest that there are limited employment opportunities for upper management, professional and skilled employees living within the county.
- Education levels lag below surrounding counties. Continued economic growth and stability will depend on increased educational levels for all age groups and degree levels.

- Legitimate start up businesses cannot afford even the low commercial lease rates that Douglas County has to offer. County needs to develop mechanisms for fledgling companies to effectively do business and get off the ground.
- Infrastructure and available land will play a critical role in attracting the appropriate mix of employment opportunities.
- Upwards of 600 acres of additional office and commercially zoned land is needed to accommodate future retail and service uses, both of which will be attracted to the county by its population growth and resulting increase in disposable income.

