

City of Buford

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April 3, 2014

Mr. Jared Lombard
Atlanta Regional Commission
40 Courtland Street NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

Re: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Dear Mr. Lombard:

The City of Buford has completed an update of its comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. §12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Bryan Kerlin, City Manager, at 770-945-6761.

Sincerely,

Phillip Beard
Commission Chairman

PB:sl

Attachments



City of Buford

Comprehensive Plan
2034 Update

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City of Buford

Comprehensive Plan

2034 Update

Acknowledgments

The planning process would not have been possible without the following people. Thank you for your leadership and involvement.

City of Buford Board of Commissioners

Phillip Beard, Commission Chairman

L. Chris Burge, Vice Chairman

Mrs. Michael Y. Smith, Commissioner

City of Buford Staff

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Steering Committee

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Joe Shoffner, AICP, GIS Lead

**Additional participants in Steering Committee*

Executive Summary

This Comprehensive Plan is the City of Buford Georgia’s overarching policy statement and blueprint for where it’s going in the future. The City has accomplished much since 2009 when the plan was last updated, including the construction of a new Community Center adjacent to City Hall, streetscaping and road projects throughout town, and strategic annexation of additional land to support a balanced tax base – just to name a few. **With this Plan as a guide and tool, the City will continue to move forward.**

The Comprehensive Plan is intended for daily and strategic use. City staff, the Buford City Commission, and local community leaders will utilize it in a variety of ways.

First, the Future Development Map and Future Land Use Map should be referenced in making rezoning and capital investment decisions. They provide a representation of the community’s vision and indicate where various types of land uses should be permitted. They take into consideration the land use patterns illustrated in the City’s Existing Land Use Map, the current zoning map, topographic characteristics, natural resource sensitivity, the availability of existing and proposed infrastructure, and the needs of anticipated population and employment growth.

Second, the Plan provides overarching goals and policies that will help guide day-to-day decisions. These policies are a reflection of community values and are in keeping with the overarching vision of the plan. They, too, will be used as guidelines in the analysis of rezoning decisions.

Third, the Plan includes an Implementation element that will help advance the community’s vision and priorities. Plan implementation is carried out through the application of regulations, such as zoning and development codes, and through projects and programs outlined in the Community Work Program. This plan recommends some considerations for enhancing the City’s land use regulations and codes to further promote economic development and preservation of the city’s historic character. It will be up to City staff and the City Commission to pursue such actions.

Fourth, the Plan is a testament to community members and interested investors that Buford Georgia has a clear path forward for its future. This plan can and should be leveraged to further private investment in the city.

The Comprehensive Plan is a living document. It should be updated regularly to reflect changing conditions and shifts in public policy, as directed by State planning requirements.

City of Buford Vision Statement: *The City of Buford is a place where great schools, a strong tax base, and an engaged citizenry come together to form a balanced community with a small town feel. Preservation of the city’s existing neighborhoods and natural and cultural resources along with visionary economic development will sustain Buford’s legacy as a desirable place to live and do business over time.*

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This Comprehensive Plan is the City of Buford Georgia's overarching policy statement and blueprint for where it's going in the future. It helps guide the long-term planning, policy decisions and investment decisions of the City. Maintaining and regularly updating this community-based Comprehensive Plan is an essential element of maintaining the City of Buford as a top-notch city for both residents and businesses.

► Chapter 1: Introduction

This Comprehensive Plan is the City of Buford Georgia's overarching policy statement and blueprint for where it's going in the future. While capturing the community's long term aspirations, the Plan is implementation-oriented and ensures that targeted goals, needs, and opportunities are realistic, practical, and achievable and will continue to responsibly move the community in the right direction. While the 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update formed the foundation of this document, several aspects of that version of the plan have been updated to account for changes in the community and broader economy since 2009. The City has accomplished much since 2009, including the construction of a new Community Center adjacent to City Hall, streetscaping and road projects throughout town, and strategic annexation of additional land to support a balanced tax base, to name a few activities. The plan has also been reorganized to meet new state planning rules adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in January 2013 and further amended in March 2014.

1.1 City Overview

The City of Buford has earned a well-deserved reputation as a community with quality services, well-planned infrastructure, and a high quality of life with a low cost of living. This reputation is in large part a result of City leadership having the foresight to think ahead, plan ahead, and put in place the infrastructure and services that are the critical bones of a healthy community. Maintaining and regularly updating this Comprehensive Plan is an essential element of maintaining the City of Buford as a top-notch city for both residents and businesses.

1.1.1 City Boundaries

Located in northern Gwinnett County and southern Hall County in the greater Atlanta region, the City of Buford has an attractive location with ease of access to I-985 and close proximity to I-85. The City's quality of life is complemented by its immediate adjacency to Lake Lanier, the region's major water source. Figure 1-1, on the following page, shows the City's boundaries at the time of this plan.

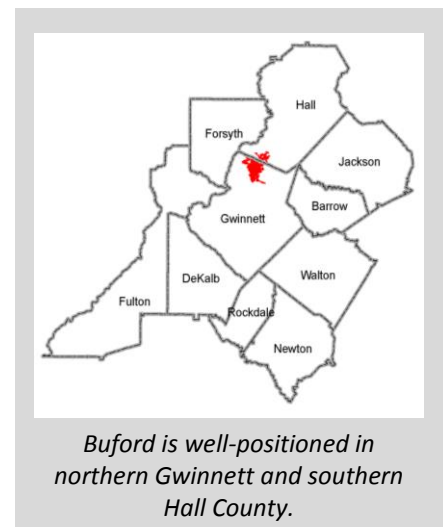
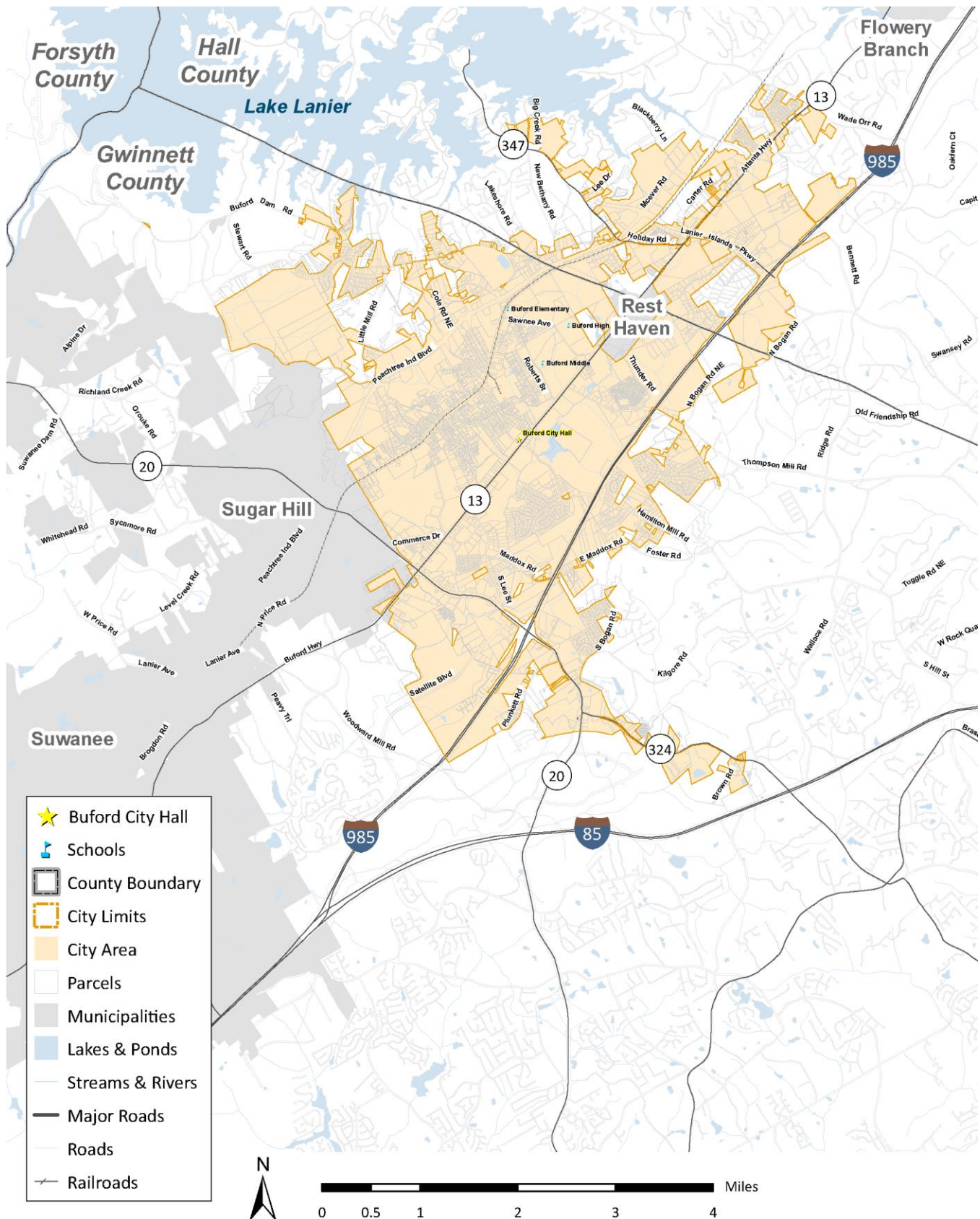


Figure I-1. City of Buford Boundary Map



1.1.2 Demographic Snapshot

At the start of the plan update process, the City paused to consider its current demographic characteristics and population growth since the plan was last updated. The City has grown at a steady, balanced pace while maintaining a diverse community in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and housing tenure

Population Change

The Buford population is estimated to have increased by just over 500 people between 2000 and 2010, with an estimated population of 12,735 in 2012. The City's population increased by 19 percent between 2000 and 2012, charting slower growth in population than Gwinnett County and Hall County at the same time.

Table I-1. Population Change, 2000-2012

	2000	2010	2011 Estimate	2012 Estimate	% Change 2000- 2012
Buford	10,668	12,225	12,492	12,735	19%
Gwinnett County	588,448	805,321	825,669	842,046	43%
Hall County	139,277	179,684	182,965	185,416	33%

Source: US Census Bureau: Census 2000 SFI, 2010 Census SFI, Population Estimates Program (2011 & 2012)

Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2010 Census, the City's population was 66 percent white, 14 percent Black or African American, 3 percent Asian, and 15 percent some other race. Approximately 20 percent are Hispanic or Latino.

Table I-2. Race and Ethnicity + Hispanic Population, 2010

Race	Buford	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.
White	65.8%	53.3%	74.1%
Black or African American	13.8%	23.6%	7.4%
Asian	2.9%	10.6%	1.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Some other race	14.7%	8.8%	13.9%
Two or more races	2.5%	3.1%	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino	Buford	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.
Hispanic or Latino	19.6%	20.1%	26.1%

Source: US Census Bureau: 2010 Census SFI DP-1

Other Demographic Characteristics

The following are other demographic characteristics of the Buford population, according to 2010 Census counts:

The median age of the Buford population in 2010 was 35; 13.5% of the population was above age 65; and 28% was 17 years old or younger.

The average household size of the Buford population was 2.74, which was smaller than the average household size in Gwinnett County (2.98) and Hall County (2.91).

56% of Buford's housing stock is owner occupied. This compares to 70% and 69% in Gwinnett and Buford, respectively. By comparison, Buford has a high renter population.

In 2010, Buford had a housing vacancy rate of 13%, compared to Hall at 12% and Gwinnett at 8%.

1.2 Background + Planning Process



The City of Buford last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2009, which included a short-term work program for 2009-2013. This 2030 Comprehensive Plan replaced the preceding iteration of the Comprehensive Plan completed in 1992 and updated the plan based on major changes in the Buford area that had occurred in the 1990s and 2000s, including the construction of the Mall of Georgia, the creation of new developments, and the increasing suburbanization of northern Gwinnett and southern Hall County as well as other changes to the city. The 2009 plan document brought the previous plan up-to-date by providing a new set of development strategies, policies, land use plans, and action items to be followed by the City. This Comprehensive Plan document is largely a repackaging of the City's 2009 major plan update.

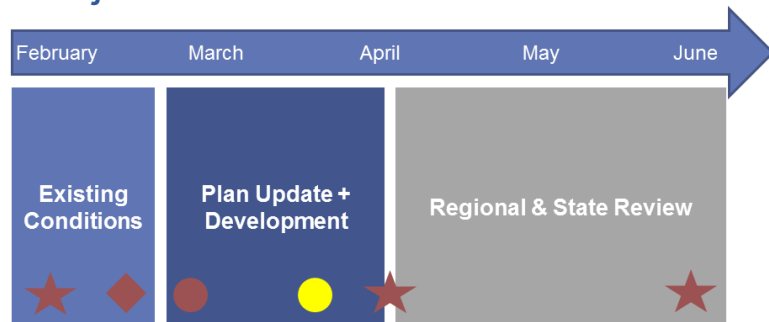
1.2.1 Update Process

The process of updating the Comprehensive Plan took place over a period of several weeks and was formally initiated at a public hearing in February 2014 and was followed by the following activities:



- Review of baseline conditions
- Interviews with community stakeholders
- Steering Committee meeting
- Community Workshop
- Development of revised Community Goals, Needs + Opportunities, and Implementation Program
- Open House
- Transmittal for Regional State Review (anticipated April 2014)
- City Council Adoption (anticipated summer 2014)

Project Schedule



★ Public Hearing

◆ Interviews + Steering Committee

● Public Meeting

1.2.2 Consistency State Planning Requirements

This 2034 update document was prepared following the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, which underwent a major revision since the last update and were made effective January 1, 2013 and further amended in March 2014. The Plan update requires a community engagement process that includes considerations of the community goals and priority needs and opportunities, including the Future Development Map and Future Land Use map.



1.3 Plan Contents

The remainder of the plan document is framed around the core planning requirements:

Chapters 2 + 3 provide a high level overview of public engagement activities as well as the vision statement, community goals, and Future Land Use Plan

Chapter 4 includes a descriptive list of Needs and Opportunities that the community intends to address

Chapter 5 contains the implementation program for achieving that vision and addressing identified needs and goals, including general policies, actions the community will take over the next five years.

Appendices include the Report of Accomplishments for the 2008-2012 short-term work program and public involvement documentation.



1.4 Planning Time Frame



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The Community Goals are the policy umbrella for the Comprehensive Plan. They are backed by public input collected during the planning process and include the Vision Statement and General Goals, included in this chapter, and the Future Development Map and corresponding character area narrative, included in Chapter 3 Future Land Use. Altogether, these goals reflect the City's aspirations for where it is going in the long term.

► Chapter 2: Community Goals

The Community Goals capture the overall community consensus of where Buford is headed in the long-term. They include the Vision Statement and General Goals included in this chapter, and the Future Development Map and corresponding character area narrative, included in Chapter 2. The consensus surrounding these goals is a product of previous planning efforts, information obtained from City staff and leadership, and input collected from the public.

Overwhelmingly, City leaders, stakeholders, and other community members expressed that Buford is going in the right direction and should continue to be a City with high quality services and a home town feel. While there are some important decisions the City will need to make regarding long-term sustainability of its programs, there is pervasive agreement that the City should “keep on keeping on” or maintain the energy, leadership, and policy direction that has had for years and has brought it to where it is today.

The vision and goals outlined in this section (following an overview of public involvement) build upon the City's well-established tradition of planning for the future. The vision statement is a continuation of the vision established during the 2030 Update of the Comprehensive Plan in 2009, and the community goals are a product of input collected from the community in 2009 and then updated and reviewed with the public during this cycle.



2.1 Public Involvement Summary



Community input is the basis of Buford's community goals and overall Comprehensive Plan. Gaining public input played an important role in the planning update process. The planning team carried out a concise, yet meaningful, series of public input activities appropriate for a plan update process, which included the following:

1. Two public hearings with City Commission (one to announce the start of the planning process, and one prior to plan transmittal)
2. A Steering Committee
3. Stakeholder Interviews
4. Community Workshop
5. Open House
6. Communications to help promote public meetings



Details of each of these activities, along with the input collected, are provided in Appendix B. The overall findings of these activities include the following:

- The City's long-term vision established in previous planning efforts remains largely consistent with the community's aspirations for the future.
- The Future Development Map accurately depicts the community's place-based goals of how it should develop and redevelop over time to maintain a well-balanced land use mix and community character that is unique to Buford.
- Some of the City's priority needs and opportunities have changed or become more emphasized since the last update of the plan. Having a welcoming economic development environment and sustaining and growing those services that the public has become accustomed to or desires (such as curbside recycling) are top priorities. Quality schools, and solid and enhanced transportation, water, and other infrastructure remain top priorities.
- Continuing to enhance and grow the historic and new downtown core of the City, are essential to the City's sense of place. This includes building off the great success of the new Buford Community Center and recent improvements to historic Downtown via lighting, sidewalks, and other improvements.

2.2 Vision Statement

The vision statement to the right captures the community's long-term vision of what Buford will be 20 plus years from now in 2034 and beyond. Many of these characteristics are already in place today. The vision statement is the same as that established in the 2030 plan update.

The City of Buford is a place where great schools, a strong tax base, and an engaged citizenry come together to form a balanced community with a small town feel. Preservation of the city's existing neighborhoods and natural and cultural resources along with visionary economic development will sustain Buford's legacy as a desirable place to live and do business over time.

2.3 Goals

The following goals were extracted from public input collected during the 2030 update and then reviewed and updated to reflect input collected during the plan update. These goals further extrapolate the vision of the community, and the guiding ideas that the City should strive to achieve in its day to day operations and decision making.

- Preserve Buford's small town character and historic downtown.
- Maintain a favorable land use balance with a predominance of commercial/industrial over residential uses to continue to support the sustainability of the City's level of services.
- Promote reuse of vacant commercial and residential buildings by the private sector over greenspace development.
- Continue to provide high quality services to residents and businesses, with quality schools as a top priority.
- Increase the capacity of major roadways and reduce congestion.
- Implement transportation alternatives to driving alone.
- Grow the mix of housing choices in the city, including additional townhomes and senior-oriented options.
- Increase the number of parks and recreational spaces in the city.



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Two tools are presented here that will be used to guide future land use and capital investment decisions in Buford: the Future Development Map, and the Future Land Use Plan. The focus of the Future Development Map is defining local community character; it will be used to foster a better sense of community identity and sense of place. The focus of the Future Land Use Plan is on defining where different land use types should be allowed.

► Chapter 3: Future Land Use

3.1 Introduction

Following are two tools that will be used in guiding future land use and capital investment decisions in the City of Buford: (1) the Future Development Map, and (2) the Future Land Use Plan. Both maps are based on the community's vision for the future and were developed through the public outreach process and preexisting policies established by the City. The "Local Planning Requirements" adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) require all local plans contain at least one of these items. The Future Land Use Plan is a requirement of the City Zoning Ordinance, and the Future Development Map is a guiding policy document that furthers the community's future vision and goals.

The focus of the Future Development Map is on defining local character and helping foster a better sense of community identity and sense of place. The scale of this map is at the neighborhood or local community level and includes the entire area within and surrounding the city. Some of these character areas also cross over into unincorporated Gwinnett County and are a part of the City's sphere of influence. Each character area has its own vision, description, policies, and implementation strategies.

The focus of the Future Land Use Plan, on the other hand, is on defining where different land use types should be allowed to develop. The policies associated with this map refer to which land uses should be allowed in each future land use designation. The scale of this map is at the parcel level. Each Future Land Use category ties directly to an appropriate existing or proposed zoning category. In many respects, the Future Land Use Plan is a shorter range tool than the Future Development Map. It is intended to guide current rezoning decisions, and as such it more directly reflects current conditions and constraints on future development, such as the availability of supportive infrastructure like sewer and transportation.



3.2 Future Development Map

The use of character areas in planning acknowledges the visual and functional differences that exist today among the districts and regions of the City of Buford. They help guide future development through policies and implementation strategies that are tailored to each area of the city. These character areas can be used to define areas that (1) presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved; (2) have potential to evolve into unique areas; or (3) require special attention because of unique development issues. In some cases, different character areas are defined by existing land use and future land use in order to highlight appropriate transitions as the community evolves. The city's character areas are described and defined individually in the following fact sheets and are mapped in **Figure 3-1**.



The character of developed areas can be explained by looking at several typical characteristics, such as the following:

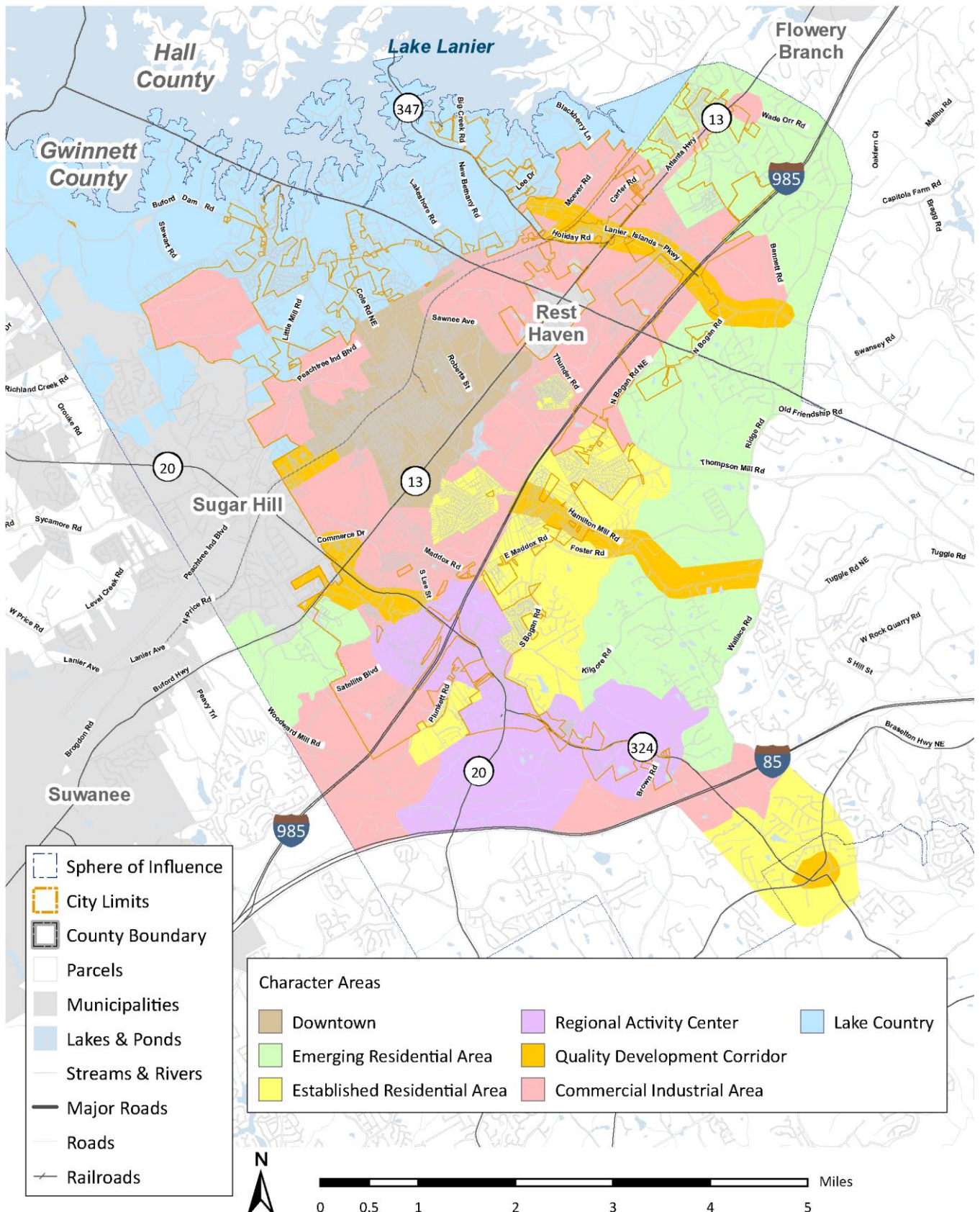
- Siting and configuration of lots.
- Site design features, such as degree and location of landscaping, parking, driveways, accessory structures, stormwater facilities.
- Street design.
- Intensity of development.
- Building location, dimensions, and orientation.
- Types and quantities of natural features.
- Location and type of civic buildings and public spaces.
- Relationship between uses within the area.



The Future Development Map and its character areas were updated as part of the Comprehensive Plan to:

- Supplement the role of the Future Land Use Map.
- Guide rezoning, special use, and development applications.
- Serve as a design and physical development guidance tool.
- Encourage and promote quality development/redevelopment.
- Define common themes among regions of the city.
- Be used as a tool in securing funding for projects.
- Identify and incorporate available community resources in the implementation of the character area programs.
- Provide a strong link between the community's vision, goals, and land use policy.
- Provide qualitative guidance to the development community.
- Lay the framework for urban design guidelines and changes to development regulations.

Figure 3-1: Future Development Map



Downtown

Existing Character Description:

The traditional central business district and surrounding residential, commercial, and civic areas. This area includes historic Main Street, as well as the surrounding residential neighborhoods of Old Town Buford. It also incorporates the newly developing area on Buford Highway containing the new City Hall and Buford Village mixed-use development which serves as an extension of the historic downtown area.

Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Retail, restaurants, public-institutional, single-family homes, mixed-use housing, and parks

Vision for the Future:

A vibrant downtown district that includes residential units, offices, restaurants, small-scale shops, cultural facilities and entertainment venues. Downtown should serve as the focal point of the community and become a destination for dining, shopping and cultural pursuits. There should be reinvestment in the housing stock in neighborhoods surrounding Main Street making them more attractive places to live.

Implementation Strategies:

Follow strategies, recommendations, and action items laid forth in the 2005 Buford Town Center Livable Centers Initiative Plan including:

- Improved streetscapes along Hill Street and South Lee Drive from Main Street to Buford Highway and on Shadburn Avenue from Fifth Street to Poplar Street.
- Promote mixed use development through the creation of a new mixed use future land use designation for the area.



- Follow the Concept Plan calling for additional park spaces, new roadways, and an expanded sidewalk network.
- Adhere to design guidelines established for buildings, sites, streets, parking facilities, sidewalks, signage, and parks.
- Explore opportunities to use Tax Allocation District (TAD) financing to fund public improvements that could spur new development, redevelopment, and neighborhood revitalization.
- Improve way-finding directional signage to the downtown area from major roadways in the city.
- Redevelopment within this area should respect and contribute to the unique sense of place.
- Promote infill development on vacant lots throughout the area.
- Expand housing options including warehouse to loft conversion, mixed-use residential, townhomes, and senior living units.
- Pursue efforts to protect and expand the historic attributes of downtown Buford.

Industrial Commercial Area

Existing Character Description:

This area is characterized by commercial uses, including strip shopping centers, restaurants, large chain stores and car dealerships. It also includes industrial uses in the form of manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution facilities. It is typified by significant vehicular traffic, large building set-backs, parking lots and an overall low pedestrian orientation.

Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Retail, restaurants, industrial and warehousing

Vision for the Future:

The highest priority of this character area should be to support local business and commerce. This includes the free movement of freight, employee, and customer related traffic throughout the character area. The supportive transportation network should move residents and business traffic quickly, safely, and efficiently. This area should also be aesthetically pleasing featuring high quality design elements including superior building materials and landscaping. Steps should be taken to ensure new industrial development within city is 'green' and does not have negative impacts on Buford's environmental quality.



Implementation Strategies:

- To preserve traffic speeds along major corridors access management techniques should be employed. These include limiting curb cuts and encouraging inter-parcel connections between developments. Rear access roads that serve multiple businesses should also be encouraged.
- Future developments in these areas should continue to exhibit superior design features found in recent construction in the city. Emulating industrial development at I-985 and Hamilton Mill Road and commercial development in the "The Plaza" development on GA 20.
- Support the creation of a new interchange on I-985 in particular, ramps at Thompson Mill Road to support truck traffic.
- Continued job creation in these areas should be pursued to further expand job opportunities to residents.
- Improve mobility by requiring a variety of transportation options through the addition of sidewalks, bicycle lanes and multi-use greenway trails.
- Maintain adequate communication with Rest Haven to ensure proper connectivity and appearances.
- Visual clutter in the form of billboards should be controlled.

Established Residential Area

Existing Character Description:

This area is characterized by standard forms of suburban residential subdivisions. It typically has low pedestrian orientation and feature curving roads and cul-de-sacs. Most of the subdivisions in this area have been built in recent decades.

Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Low-density residential, small-scale commercial and some public/institutional uses

Vision for the Future:

Stable and safe residential areas that maintain their value over time. Easy and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between neighborhoods and schools, parks, library, and businesses are prevalent. Neighborhoods are adequately buffered from the negative impacts of adjacent commercial and industrial development.



Implementation Strategies:

- Reduce cut-through traffic and slow vehicular speeds with the use of traffic calming devices where appropriate including speed bumps, speed tables, and landscaped medians.
- Enhance pedestrian connections between commercial uses and adjacent residential areas.
- Work with Gwinnett County to ensure the construction of a proposed multi-use trails along Suwanee and Ivey Creeks. Connections from the surrounding neighborhoods to these trails should be encouraged.
- Ensure adequate code-enforcement is conducted to maintain the existing upkeep of neighborhoods.
- Encourage small-scale neighborhood commercial uses at major intersections to reduce auto-dependence, to serve residents retail needs, as well as provide them with increased employment options.
- Work with Buford Public schools to sustain safe routes to schools.
- Encourage numerous housing choices at a variety of price points.
- Promote infill redevelopment to prevent it from becoming an issue down the road.

Emerging Residential Area

Existing Character Description:

This area features newly developing subdivisions, undeveloped land, and large lot residential that may be consolidated into new subdivisions. This area is likely to experience the greatest development pressures over the planning period. The availability of water and sewer service in these areas makes suburban residential development very likely.

Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Single-family homes, large lot rural residential, undeveloped land, and neighborhood commercial

Vision for the Future:

A residential area that develops in an orderly and well-planned fashion. An area where contiguous and connected development occurs and not ‘leapfrog’ development. As a part of new development portions of the land are conserved in perpetuity as open green space.

Implementation Strategies:

- Encourage the use of the city’s Conservation Subdivision Overlay District for new subdivisions so a portion of land is set aside as public greenspace.
- To increase connectivity, require a minimum number of entrances and street connections and limit the length and number of cul-de-sacs.
- Enact a tree preservation ordinance that applies to new residential developments to prevent clear-cutting.
- Ensure the site design of new residential developments result in a compact, walkable pattern that integrates them with open space,



schools, parks, recreation, retail services and other amenities.

- Work with Buford School System to coordinate new housing development with related school system needs.
- Regularly review and amend subdivision regulations as appropriate to ensure new housing reflects the community’s preferences.
- Continue to ensure that roads have the ability to handle increased travel prior to permitting new housing construction.
- Utilize sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and multi-use trails to connect residents to activity centers as an alternative to the automobile.
- New Development should include principles of traditional neighborhood design by including street grids, sidewalks, street trees, and the ability for children to walk to parks.
- To maintain the city’s quality of life, ensure adequate community services are available before permitting new developments.

Quality Development Corridor

Existing Character Description:

These are heavily traveled local arterial roadways that serve as a major connections between major activity hubs in the city. Commercial uses constitute a growing percentage of the road frontage as new development occurs, and older residential uses are under pressure to transition to non-residential uses in this area.

Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Single-family homes both standalone and attached, commercial, office, and mixed-use

Vision for the Future:

A corridor that develops with high-quality commercial and mixed-use development. Commercial development along this corridor should exhibit superior design features, similar to those exhibited in the Mall of Georgia area. At major intersections mixed-use development is appropriate. Adequate connections should be made to ensure residents of nearby subdivisions can access commercial areas by foot.



Implementation Strategies:

- Utilize Mall of Georgia Overlay District to ensure high quality design features including building materials, lighting, landscaping, and façade design.
- Develop pedestrian friendly mixed-use nodes at major intersections. Limiting the scale of mixed-use development to 2-3 stories would be in keeping with the character of neighboring residential areas.
- Encourage shared driveways and inter-parcel access for adjacent commercial uses.
- Create, safe convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections to the neighborhoods and subdivisions that are adjacent to the commercial corridor.
- Building siting, building materials, architecture, signage, parking and lighting should reinforce a residential scale.
- When a residential conversion to a commercial or office use is permitted next to other residences the scale and appearance of the residence should be maintained.
- Ensure quality design, proper commercial uses and mixed-use nodes to help establish a unique sense of place.

Regional Activity Center

Existing Character Description:

This area serves as a regional activity center attracting visitors from around the region to the Mall of Georgia and ancillary commercial uses. It is comprised of predominately commercial uses and numerous apartment and townhome communities. This area has a high degree of access by vehicular traffic, large parking lots and large land parcels.

Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Office, mixed use, commercial, medium and high density residential

Vision for the Future:

The vision for this area is for it to develop into a major employment center that provides residents with increased and varied employment options. A significant amount of multi-story offices will be added to the area around the Gravel Springs Road corridor. Mixed-use development and the redevelopment of commercial properties should contribute to its unique sense of place and make the area more pedestrian friendly.



Implementation Strategies:

- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear to promote pedestrian convenience.
- Incentives should be offered for employers to locate in this area to help establish it as an office/professional center.
- Require pedestrian and bicycle connections between developments to reduce reliance on the automobile.
- Work with Gwinnett County to ensure that new, adjacent developments in both jurisdictions are complementary.
- Provide a variety of housing choices including multi-family apartments and condominiums, townhomes, and single family homes.
- New development should emulate features of traditional neighborhood design including compact development, the mixing of uses within easy walking distance, and human-scale development.
- Encourage multi-story office development to provide the city with additional office/professional jobs it currently lacks.

Lakeside Area

Existing Character Description:

Lake Sydney Lanier is the major focal point of this area. The area is comprised of single-family year-round and vacation homes. Commercial uses in this area are almost exclusively boat-related, including boat sales, storage, and equipment sales. The defining feature of this area is its orientation towards the lake.



Predominant Land Uses to be Encouraged:

Single-Family residential, commercial, with limited fee-simple townhomes and public uses

Vision for the Future:

This will be a resort destination with vibrant neighborhoods and commercial areas that serve both residents and visitors. Though in many ways a continuation of the low-density single-family neighborhoods surrounding it, the area will develop with a unique identity and avoid generic “corporate architecture.” New development in the area will respect the proximity to a major water supply and will not impact water quality negatively.

Implementation Strategies:

- Assure adequate erosion and sedimentation control measures are taken in the watershed to protect the drinking water reservoir.
- Limit the amount of multi-family vacation rental units to preserve the single-family character of the area.
- To improve the aesthetics of commercial areas limit the amount of outdoor storage.
- Prohibit incompatible uses such as new sanitary landfills, junkyards, heavy industry and the use of toxic substances to protect water quality.
- Encourage vernacular architecture to provide a unique sense of place.
- Enhance pedestrian connections to reduce the dependence on the automobile.

3.3 Future Land Use Plan

The recommended future land use plan for the City of Buford is a parcel-specific map that is intended to serve as a guide in making rezoning and capital investment decisions. The map assigns a future land use designation to every parcel in the City and within the unincorporated area of Gwinnett County that lies within the City's Sphere of Influence. The future land use categories shown on the map are listed and defined in the following table. The definitions also describe what zoning districts are appropriated for each future land use category.

Table 3-1. Future Land Use Categories and Definitions

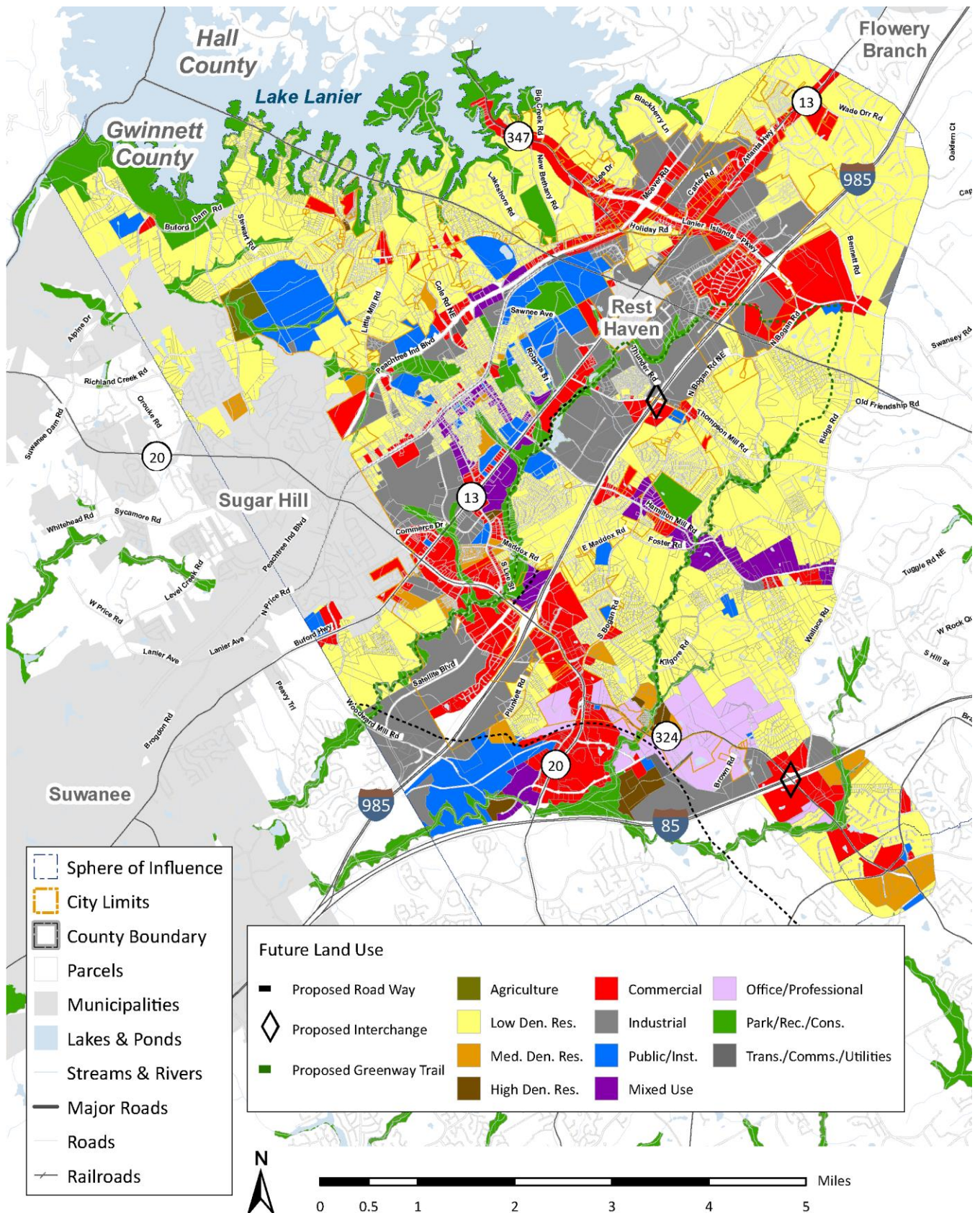
Future Land Use Category	Definition
Agriculture	These are lands which will retain their rural character during the planning period. This includes all land used for agricultural purposes, such as cropland, livestock production, and commercial timber. This category may also include farm houses or single-family homes on 10 acres or more. Corresponding Zoning District: RA-200, P
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Conventional residential subdivisions as well as conservation subdivision, with supportive recreational amenities and small-scale public institutional uses. Lots sizes are less than 3 units per acre. Corresponding Zoning Districts: R-140, R-100, MHS, MH, P, RL.
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Single-family residential areas including duplexes with between 4 to 6 units per acre. Corresponding Zoning Districts: RMD
High Density Residential (HDR)	Apartments, town homes, or duplexes on lots of 15,000 to 80,000 sf (up to 8 units per acre). Corresponding Zoning Districts: RM, RM-6, RM-8
Commercial (COM)	Property where business and trade are conducted; includes retail stores, shopping centers, and office buildings. Corresponding Zoning Districts: C-2.
Mixed Use (MX)	Allows a variety of commercial, residential, and civic uses typically found in a village, tied together with good street and pedestrian connectivity. Could be the core of a future development node. Corresponding Zoning Districts: Special use permit.
Office/Professional (O/P)	Properties that accommodate business concerns that do not provide a product directly to customers on the premises, or do not as a primary activity involve the manufacture, storage or distribution. Corresponding Zoning Districts: O-1
Industrial (IND)	Property used for warehousing, distribution, trucking and manufacturing. Corresponding Zoning Districts: OBP, M-1 and M-2.
Public/ Institutional (PI)	Areas used for local government's community facilities, general government, and institutional land uses. Examples include schools, city hall, health facilities, churches, libraries and police and fire stations. Corresponding Zoning Districts: All Districts

Table 3-1. Future Land Use Categories and Definitions

Future Land Use Category	Definition
Transportation/ Communications/ Utilities (TCU)	Areas used for transportation, communication or utility related activities, such as power generation plants, sewage and water treatment facilities, landfills, railroad facilities, radio towers, public transit stations, telephone switching stations, airports, port facilities, or similar uses. Corresponding Zoning Districts: All Districts
Park/Recreation/ Conservation (PRC)	Areas developed or proposed to be developed for park or recreation use or are designated as open space. Includes Public Parks, Private Recreation areas, lands held for Conservation, and Floodplain. Corresponding Zoning Districts: All Districts
Road Right-of-Way (ROW)	Land dedicated to road right-of-way, a form of TCU. Corresponding Zoning Districts: All Districts.

On the following page is a reduced copy of the Future Land Use Plan, **Figure 3-2**. A PDF of a larger 30" x 40" sized version of the map is available from the City of Buford Planning Department.

Figure 3-2: Future Land Use Plan



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The needs and opportunities identified in this chapter correspond to policies, implementation strategies and action items found in Chapter 5 of the Plan.

► Chapter 4: Needs and Opportunities

The following sections detail key needs and opportunities the City should address over the planning period. These do not include all the needs and opportunities presented to the public as part of the public involvement process of this plan, but rather those key needs and opportunities that City leadership and the community identified as critical to the implementing the City's future vision and that can best be addressed by the City rather than at the county, regional or state level. These were derived from the "issues and opportunities" identified in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update and adjusted based on feedback from interviews, the Steering Committee, the public workshop, and discussion with City staff.



The needs and opportunities identified in this section correspond to policies, implementation strategies, and action items found in Chapter 5 of this document. They are divided into six separate categories:

1. Land Use
2. Transportation
3. Economic Development
4. Community Facilities and Services
5. Natural and Cultural Resources
6. Other (including Housing)



4.1 Land Use

4.1.1 Small-Town Character and Main Street Revitalization



In the face of growth, Buford has maintained its small-town character. Recent downtown investment has revamped the city's small-town appeal and is restoring its vitality. While improvements have been made, Buford should still recognize the impacts of continued strip commercial and residential subdivision development on the city's character. The small-town character is the reason many residents have chosen to live in Buford and it should continue to be preserved. A critical component of the City's small town character is the continued revitalization of Main Street. This is a major opportunity for the City. Several enhancements have been made since the 2030 Update of the plan. Main Street provides a unique sense of place, unlike many other areas in Gwinnett County. This environment attracts visitors from surrounding Gwinnett and Hall Counties and beyond, who spend money and contribute to tax revenues in the city.

4.1.2 Land Use Balance and Fiscal Health



There is wide support for the City to maintain its current development policy of encouraging more commercial and industrial development. Limitations placed on residential development have maintained the City's fiscal health and resulted in keeping the school system small. As part of this, the City should pursue a strategic annexation plan that emphasizes opportunities to expand the tax base through annexation of commercial and industrial land. Although annexation of some residential land may be strategic for maintaining a balanced community, such decisions should be carefully considered to ensure they are in the best interest of the City's fiscal health.

4.1.3 Code Enforcement

Many Buford residents have noticed and are benefiting from the City's improved code enforcement. The City should strive to maintain current levels of enforcement, particularly related to residential areas.

4.2 Transportation

4.2.1 Expansion of Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

There is an identified need for more bike and pedestrian facilities in the city. Residents want to see more sidewalks, bike paths, and walking paths strategically placed and connecting neighborhoods to activity centers within the city.

4.2.2 Traffic Congestion

With the continued growth of residential and commercial development in Buford, there traffic congestion continues to be a concern. Community members have identified this as a priority issue in need of attention. Two of the major contributors to the congestion problem are the need for road improvements and truck traffic mitigation.

- *Road Improvements* – Strategic road improvements in the city will help ameliorate congestion at critical intersections. These include increasing capacity on State Route 20, near the Mall of Georgia, and providing additional access points to I-985. Many improvements require coordination with county and state transportation partners, as well as availability of funding.
- *Truck Traffic Mitigation* - With a significant amount of commercial and industrial uses in the city, truck traffic is an issue. The high volume of truck traffic contributes to congestion. The City should continue to investigate opportunities for alternative routes for trucks within the city, including a new potential access point to I-985 in the long term. Pursuing such opportunities will help alleviate resident concerns and further Buford as a good place to do business.



4.2.3 Downtown Parking

The need for additional parking spaces downtown has been mentioned as an issue by many residents and was identified as part of the LCI Study in 2004, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update, and in the 2034 update process. To further enhance and expand the business community on Main Street the city should pursue adding additional parking spaces or implementing a shared parking system.



4.3 Economic Development

4.3.1 Rehabilitation of Old Town Buford

Main Street and several neighborhoods adjacent to Main Street are in need of revitalization. The rehabilitation of these neighborhoods will strengthen the economic viability of Buford and contribute to increased property values throughout the city. A major part of this effort should be continuing to follow recommendations of the LCI plan completed in 2004, which identified action items the City should pursue to further revitalize and improve the downtown area. The City has made progress in implementing the recommendations of the plan and should continue to further its progress.

4.3.2 Implementation of creative financing tools to promote revitalization/attract new employers



The City has the legal rights to administer Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) and Opportunity Zones. TADs are special taxing districts put in place in economically disadvantaged areas to help pay for redevelopment costs. As new development occurs in a TAD area, the additional tax revenues collected from it are used to fund further redevelopment efforts. Funds can be used for infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, roads, lighting, stormwater facilities), environmental clean-up, or developer incentives. TADs along with other creative financing tools, such as Opportunity Zones, represent a significant opportunity for the Buford to revitalize and redevelop blighted areas of the city. At the time of this update, the State of Georgia was revising its Opportunity Zone regulations. The City should monitor and stay abreast of this evolving situation.

4.3.3 Promote Pro-Business Environment

Participants in the public effort of this plan identified the need to attract more small businesses and office professional jobs and create a more supportive environment for small businesses. The City should review its business licensing and other related processes to streamline its interactions with small businesses and to reduce red tape.

4.4 Community Facilities and Services

4.4.1 Maintain Independent School System

The independent school system is the pride and heart of the community. This is unique in Gwinnett County and should be preserved in the future. It results in a greater sense of community and enhanced civic-mindedness. It helps the City attract quality employers and businesses. The administrative offices of the school system are currently housed in a substandard building. The City should work with a school system to ensure adequate facilities are provided for proper functioning of the school system over the planning period. Many residents also expressed concern about the growing size of schools in the community as this is the reason why many residents have chosen to live in Buford. Steps should be taken to preserve the small school size.



4.4.2 Additional Public Recreational Opportunities

The public continues to identify the need for additional park space in the city and improved recreational trail connections. Additionally, there is an opportunity to expand the recreational facilities offered to residents, particularly available after regular work hours, which have been identified as lacking by many residents. The City should work with Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation to better promote their nearby facilities and parks to area residents and promote extension of their operating hours to better serve Buford residents.



4.4.3 Maintain High Quality City Services

City services within Buford are considered to be affordable and well-run. This presents the opportunity to attract high-quality employers to the city and should be continued.

4.4.4 City-Led Recycling Program

Participants in the public effort identified a strong need for a recycling program offering curbside pickup. Buford residents have long showed pride and confidence in their city owned utilities, thus the City has the potential to expand upon this feeling by implementing a City-led recycling program instead of outsourcing the business elsewhere. Currently, members of the public must drive out of the city to recycle their wastes.

4.5 Natural and Cultural Resources

4.5.1 Preservation of Historic Buildings

Buford contains a rich cultural heritage including many historic buildings. These buildings serve as an important link to the past and should be preserved whenever possible. A prime example of a historic building worthy of preservation is the Tannery on Main Street.

4.5.2 Preservation of Tree Canopy

Many Buford residents are concerned about the loss of vegetation and tree canopy in the community. The City should be rigorous in ensuring that the City's tree protection ordinance is adhered to as development occurs while still allowing pruning to ensure public safety and visibility of street signs and signals. Expanding the City's greenspace can also contribute to the City's overall tree canopy.

4.6 Other

4.6.1 Aging Housing Units

A significant number of housing units in the city are older and aging. Older housing units can present both issues and opportunities. Issues could include a lack of running water, lead paint, and structural safety concerns. Opportunities include the inherent value in rehabilitated historic homes. Within Gwinnett County historic properties are relatively scarce. Having an architectural heritage sets the community apart from others in the County and can help attract residents and employers to the city.

4.6.2 County, State and Regional Coordination

Buford should make regular efforts to coordinate with Gwinnett and Hall Counties on a variety of topics, including transportation improvements, land use decisions in the sphere of influence, and collaborative projects that can pool county and city funding to meet joint needs.



The implementation component is arguably the most important element of Buford's Comprehensive Plan as its where the vision and goals are actualized by establishing strategic investments, programs, policies, and initiatives that the City will take over the planning period. The 2014-2018 Community Work Program of five year actions is the pinnacle element of the plan.

► Chapter 5: Implementation

The implementation element is arguably the most important element of Buford's Comprehensive Plan as its where the vision and goals are actualized by establishing strategic investments, programs, policies, and initiatives. It includes a series of general policies as well as ongoing, short term (0-5 years), and long-term (5+ years) actions that the City intends to pursue to implement the vision and goals laid out in Chapters 2 and 3 and meet the priority needs and opportunities described in Chapter 4.

This element of the plan will help shape the capital investment planning of the City as well as help guide the regular policy decisions and actions that the City undertakes. The chapter is organized with policies by substantive element first, in Section 5.1, and is followed by the overall implementation program in Section 5.2. Finally, Section 5.3 provides the five-year Community Work Program (formally called the Short Term Work Program). The City will track and monitor its progress in achieving these five-year actions. The Community Work Program is an evolving element of the plan that requires an update every five years at minimum, to account for achievements the City has made and to lay out the next strategic actions for moving the City forward.

5.1 General Policies

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Needs and Opportunities. The policies listed below are intended to be general in nature and applied citywide, particularly at the time of rezoning, permit review and budget preparation. Many of these policies will be referenced in staff reports for future rezonings and may influence conditions of zoning that maybe placed on future development. Geographic based policies are listed in Chapter 3 as a part of the description of the Future Land Use. The following policies are organized around the six major elements:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Land Use | 4. Community Facilities + Services |
| 2. Transportation | 5. Natural + Cultural Resources |
| 3. Economic Development | 6. Housing |





5.1.1 Land Use

- Integrate green space throughout our community: within neighborhoods, along streets, in parking lots, and within commercial and industrial developments.
- Encourage the use of landscaping, lighting, signage, building design standards, and underground utilities to enhance the aesthetics of our community.
- Support the redevelopment of abandoned industrial and commercial sites located within our community.
- Protect future industrial, warehouse-distribution, and office areas from encroachment by residential development.
- Regularly review and update the Comprehensive Plan to keep it current with changing demographics, development trends and public initiatives.
- Implement the recommendations of the City's Livable Centers Initiative.
- Collaborate with Rest Haven area to improve aesthetics and consider opportunities to integrate with City of Buford.
- Maintain and enhance the integrity and character of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Maintain staff position(s) dedicated to enforcing the City's zoning and development codes.



5.1.2 Transportation

- Connect streets, sidewalks, open space and paths in adjacent developments to each other and stub out to adjacent undeveloped land.
- Encourage the construction of traffic calming methods, such as splinter islands, speed humps, and rumble strips, to reduce traffic speed in neighborhoods.
- Promote new development that is conducive to walking and biking.
- Provide for the routing of truck traffic around congested areas.
- Seek to reduce the number of curb cuts onto arterial streets and roadways to mitigate traffic congestion, through the requirement of inter-parcel access where appropriate.
- Support the use of shared parking in commercial development.

- Coordinate with Gwinnett and Hall Counties on implementing sidewalk and bicycle improvements on county roads.
- Ensure adequate parking is provided for new uses in the Downtown through City’s zoning and permitting process.

5.1.3 Economic Development

- Target reinvestment in declining, existing neighborhoods to further encourage private sector redevelopment and accommodate future growth.
- Promote local tourism, including historic and sports tourism.
- Promote Cultural and Community Events Downtown.
- Support, whenever possible, job training programs such as Georgia Quick-Start and the Job Training Partnership Act.
- Support efforts to consider establishing a Community Improvement District for the City’s industrial areas.



5.1.4 Community Facilities and Services

- Provide adequate staffing, training, and equipment to support efficient and effective delivery of services of City Services.
- Coordinate the timing, location, and capacity of community facilities with desirable patterns of land use and development.
- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure before making new investments in capital projects that will increase operating and maintenance costs.
- Supply the City’s residents with well-designed, functional, and versatile recreational opportunities.
- Support and maintain professional public safety departments.
- Encourage the availability of health care services to all local residents.
- Coordinate with Gwinnett and Hall Counties and other local governments in implementing the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Board’s three comprehensive plans to ensure adequate supplies of drinking water, to protect water quality and to minimize the impacts of development on the District’s watersheds and downstream water quality.
- Provide sufficient utility capacity to meet future demand.
- Support efforts to create a local Chamber of Commerce.
- Work with Gwinnett County to maintain sufficient County police presence within the City.



- Coordinate with County to ensure adequate animal control services.

5.1.5 Natural and Cultural Resources



- Preserve, protect, and promote Buford's unique cultural and historic character and the resources that contribute to this character. Encourage the maintenance of historic structures and, when appropriate, their adaptive reuse.
- Encourage the preservation and planting of trees and other vegetation that enhance community livability and appearance. Preserve and restore trees and tree canopy in developed and developing areas.
- Encourage construction practices that minimize soil erosion and sedimentation. Require erosion control during and appropriate landscaping immediately after development.
- Promote and pursue the preservation of scenic and environmentally sensitive areas for their ecological and aesthetic value, and for the common enjoyment.
- Support community and cultural activities.
- Support efforts to establish a historical society for the City of Buford.
- Continue to implement tree ordinance to ensure adequately addresses the City's tree preservation needs.

5.1.6 Housing



- Accommodate our diverse population by supporting master planned developments that provide a variety of housing types, styles, and price ranges toward the goal of creating "lifecycle" housing in the community.
- Encourage the design and construction of walkable, safe neighborhoods with pleasant, accessible public gathering places. Encourage the dedication of adequate space for recreational use in all neighborhoods.
- Support the elimination of substandard or dilapidated housing in our community through restoration of nuisance abatement to help ensure that quality housing is available for all residents.

5.2 Implementation Program

The Implementation Program identifies specific ongoing, short-term (2014-2018), and long-term (beyond 2019) action items to address each of the priority community needs and opportunities laid out in Chapter 4. Action items are organized by priority need or opportunity. Each action item either requires staff time and/or a cost. These actions are supported by the General Policies, provided in Section 5.1, which also address priority needs and opportunities for the future.

5.2.1 Land Use

Small-town Character and Main Street Revitalization

Short Term

- Consider establishment of a zoning overlay for downtown to protect the City's historic integrity.
- Work with the Atlanta Regional Commission to identify opportunities for pursuit of its Lifelong Communities Initiative within Buford.



Preserve Buford's Historic Integrity

Land Use Balance and Fiscal Health

Ongoing

- Revise zoning ordinance and other regulations as necessary.
- Pursue opportunities to annex land by the Mall of Georgia.

Short Term

- Coordinate annexation strategy with Buford City Schools and population and housing trends.
- Attract various retail businesses including grocers, staple type and other service-oriented business such as health care.
- Move City ordinances to Municode to facilitate access by community members.



Attract retail, such as a grocery store

Photo credit: Forbes.com

5.2.2 Transportation

Expansion of Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Short Term

- Complete South Lee Street streetscape, including sharrows. (summer 2016)
- Complete GW-341 (PI 0008906) South Hill Street Pedestrian Improvements from Main Street to SR 13 (Buford Highway) (spring 2014)
- School Drive pedestrian safety and facility improvements.

Long Term

- Consider sidewalk and road improvements on Bona Road, Forest Street, and New Street (connecting to downtown).
- Consider installation of sidewalks on:
 - the remainder of Harris Street,
 - along (Old) Hamilton Mill, and
 - along East Maddox.

Traffic Congestion

Short Term

- GW-099C (PI 132950) Buford Highway Widening from Sawnee Ave to Friendship Road (SR 347) (ROW acquisition ongoing Winter 2014; let Winter 2015)
- GW-308C (PI 0006925) Sugarloaf Parkway Extension – Phase 3 from SR 20 (Buford Hwy/Mall of GA Pkwy) to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (ROW in 2015, CST Long Range)
- Continue road maintenance program.

Long Term

- GW-308C (PI 0006925) Sugarloaf Parkway Extension – Phase 3 from SR 20 (Buford Hwy/Mall of GA Pkwy) to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (Construction)
- Pursue opportunity for new access point to I-985 from the City of Buford at Thompson Mill Road.
- Consider Satellite Boulevard Extension to Maddox Road.
- Consider traffic operation improvements at South Lee Street and Maddox Road.
- Consider traffic operation improvements at Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Little Mill Road.

Downtown Parking

Short Term

- Pursue LCI implementation funding or other sources to provide for additional parking supply in Historic Downtown.
- Build approximately 30 parking spaces along South Lee Street in coordination with the LCI project if funding and property can be acquired.



Expand parking in downtown

5.2.3 Economic Development

Rehabilitation of Old Town Buford

Ongoing

- Continue to work with Buford Business Alliance.

Short Term

- Pursue LCI funding for pedestrian and streetscape improvements at Moreno Street and Church Street. *(placed under Transportation work program)*

Implementation of creative financing tools to promote revitalization and attract new employers

Short Term

- Revisit potential of pursuing designation of an opportunity zone within the city.
- Consider a Redevelopment Plan to support an application of the Opportunity Zone.

Long Term

- Consider possibility of implementing a Tax Allocation District in area of city target for public/private investment.



Work with the Buford Business Alliance and businesses such as Cartridge World

Photo credit: Cartridgeworld.com

Promote Pro Business Environment

Ongoing

- Continue to work with the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce to recruit business and industry.

Short Term

- Complete audit of City's Code of Ordinances and regulations to identify code and regulation improvements that would improve the small business environment.

Long Term

- Hire an economic development director to oversee the City's economic growth.
- Consider hiring an information officer to help serve public information needs and promote the City to potential businesses and employers.

5.2.4 Community Facilities and Services

Maintain independent school system

Ongoing

- Maintain City staff involvement in planning processes for Buford City Schools.

Additional public recreational facilities

Ongoing

- Consider opportunities for adding new parks and recreation facilities.

Short Term

- Explore opportunity to establish trail(s) along creek directly south of City Hall.
- Complete Master Plan for 32 acre recreation site on easterly side of Buford Highway, across from the intersection of Buford Highway and Sawnee Avenue.
- Pursue grant for greenspace project.

Maintain high quality City services

Ongoing

- Regularly monitor and project local demographic trends to determine future public service needs.
- Coordinate new school facilities with improvements to the City's infrastructure and services.
- Coordinate with Gwinnett County to better promote senior service offerings to the Buford community.
- Continue to maintain, expand and support needs of natural gas and electric infrastructure; provide funding for capital improvements.

Short Term

- Upgrade Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant and treatment capabilities. (completion 2018)
- Upgrade water treatment plant. (completion 2018)
- Renewal of Water and sewer lines in Historic Buford and surrounding areas and upgrades of transmission lines.
- Continue studying long-term sustainability of City's existing utility rates and maintenance needs.
- Develop five year marketing plan for Community Center.



Aerial snapshot of the landfill

Photo credit: Cabinetmagazine.org

Long Term

- Identify long-term opportunities for City's waste disposal needs, including access of new landfill or expanding current landfill.
- Develop succession plan for City's departments to help prepare the City for maintenance of current operating proceedings in long-term.

City-led recycling program

Ongoing

- Support community-led efforts to provide recycling resources and programs to City residents.

Short Term

- Consider feasibility study of curbside recycling program.



Potential for Curbside Recycling

Photo credit: Treehugger.com

5.2.5 Natural and Cultural Resources

Preservation of Historic Buildings

Short Term

- Consider establishment of a zoning overlay for downtown to protect the City's historic integrity.

Preservation of Tree Canopy

Ongoing

- Continue to support and participate in Georgia's Greenspace Program by identifying and acquiring properties for greenspace.

5.2.6 Other

No specific ongoing, short, or long-term actions for other priority needs and opportunities (including Housing) were identified for City pursuit at the time of this Plan update. Please see Section 5.1.6 for general housing policies that the City plans to follow.

5.3 Community Work Program (2014-2018)

The Community Work Program identifies actions that the City of Buford, or other entities, intend to take during the first five years of the planning period. The Items in the Community Work Program directly include all ongoing and short-term actions laid out in the Section 5.2 Implementation Program, which comprehensively addressed the priority needs and opportunities identified by the City's leadership and community members for the short and long term. The Work Program includes a brief description of the activity, the timeframe for undertaking the activity, responsible party for implementing the activity, estimated cost (if any), and funding source (if applicable). *The Report of Accomplishments from the previous five year work program (2008-2012) is provided in Appendix B.*

Table 5-1: Community Work Program

Planning Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Land Use								
1. Revise zoning ordinance and other regulations as necessary.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City Commission	N/A
2. Consider establishment of a zoning overlay for downtown to protect the City's historic integrity.		X				\$15,000	City Commission	General Fund, LCI supplemental funds
3. Work with the Atlanta Regional Commission to identify opportunities for pursuit of its Lifelong Communities Initiative within Buford.	X		X		X	Staff time	City	N/A
4. Coordinate annexation strategy with Buford City Schools and population and housing trends.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	N/A
5. Attract various retail businesses including grocers, staple type and other service-oriented business such as health care.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	N/A

Planning Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
6. Move City ordinances to Municode to facilitate access by community members.	X					\$10,000	Planning Department	N/A
7. Pursue opportunities to annex land by the Mall of Georgia.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City Commission	N/A
Transportation								
1. Complete LCI South Lee Street streetscape, including sharrows.		X	X			\$3.2 million (construction)	City	SPLOST, local
2. Complete GW-34I (PI 0008906) LCI South Hill Street Pedestrian Improvements from Main Street to SR 13 (Buford Hwy)	X					\$1.2 million (construction)	City	Local, LCI
3. School Drive pedestrian safety and facility improvements.	X					\$200,000	City	
4. GW-099C (PI 132950) Buford Highway Widening from Sawnee Ave to Friendship Road (SR 347) (ROW acquisition ongoing Winter 2014; let Winter 2015)	X	X	X			\$18 million City funding: \$1.25 million (Design); \$3.25 million total investment	GDOT/City (design)	State/ SPLOST
5. GW-308C (PI 0006925) Sugarloaf Parkway Extension – Phase 3 from SR 20 (Buford Hwy/Mall of GA Pkwy) to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (ROW in 2015)		X				\$2 million (ROW)	GDOT/ Gwinnett County	Federal/ local/ other

Planning Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
6. Continue road maintenance program.	X	X	X	X	X	\$1 – 1.5 million	City	City General Fund/ SPLOST
7. Pursue LCI implementation funding or other sources to provide for additional parking supply in Historic Downtown.	X	X	X			Staff time	City	N/A
8. Build approximately 30 parking spaces along South Lee St. in coordination with LCI project if funding and property can be acquired.			X	X		\$150,000 (excluding land acquisition)	City	SPLOST/ City General Fund
9. Pursue LCI funding for pedestrian and streetscape improvements at Moreno Street and Church Street.	X	X				Staff time	City	N/A
Economic Development								
1. Revisit possibility of pursuing designation of an opportunity zone within the city.			X			Staff time	City	N/A
2. Consider a Redevelopment Plan to support an application of the Opportunity Zone.			X			TBD	City	City General Fund
3. Complete audit of City's Code of Ordinances and regulations to identify code and regulation improvements that would improve the small business environment.		X				\$10,000	Planning Department	City General Fund

Planning Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
4. Continue to work with Buford Business Alliance.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	City	N/A
5. Continue to work with the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce to recruit business and industry to Buford.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	City	N/A
Community Facilities								
1. Explore opportunity to establish trail(s) along creek directly south of City Hall.	X	X	X			\$1 million	City	
2. Complete Master Plan for 32 acre recreation site on easterly side of Buford Highway across from the intersection of Buford Highway and Sawnee Avenue.	X					\$20,000	City	N/A
3. Pursue grant for greenspace project.	X	X				Staff time	City	N/A
4. Continue to maintain, expand and support needs of natural gas and electric infrastructure; provide funding for capital improvements.	X	X	X	X	X	\$5 million	City	Enterprise Funds
5. Upgrade Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant and treatment capabilities.				X	X	\$20 million	City	Bonds/ SPLOST/ General and Enterprise Funds
6. Upgrade water treatment plant.				X	X	\$10 million	City	Bonds/ SPLOST/ General and Enterprise Funds

Planning Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
7. Renewal of water and sewer lines in Historic Buford and surrounding areas and upgrades of transmission mains.	X	X	X	X	X	\$3 million	City	Enterprise Fund/ SPLOST/ General Fund/ Grants
8. Continue studying long-term sustainability of City's existing utility rates & maintenance needs.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	N/A
9. Develop five year marketing plan for Community Center.		X				TBD	Buford Community Center	General Fund
10. Consider feasibility study of curbside recycling program.		X				\$10,000	Staff Time	General Fund/ Enterprise Fund
11. Maintain City staff involvement in planning processes for Buford City Schools.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	N/A
12. Consider opportunities for adding new parks and recreation facilities.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	City	N/A
13. Regularly monitor and project local demographic trends to determine the future need for public services.	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	Planning Department	N/A
Natural and Cultural Resources								
1. Continue to support/participate in GA's Greenspace Program by identifying and acquiring properties for greenspace.	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	City	General fund, grants

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Appendix A: Report of Accomplishments

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Table A-1: Report of Plan Accomplishments – City of Buford 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program

Planning Activity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Completed? (yes [Y], underway [U], postponed [P], or cancelled [C])	Status Update (if underway, provide projected completion date; if postponed, explain why and when it will be resumed; if cancelled, explain why not being pursued)
Economic Development										
1. Continue working with the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce regarding the recruitment of business and industry.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	y	ongoing (City has contract with Chamber for services paid for by hotel/motel tax revenue)
2. Work with the City's Downtown Development Authority in business relocation and downtown development	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	p	appointments necessary by City Commission to the Authority (downtown activities currently managed by City Commission)
3. Continue providing sufficient utility capacity to meet future demand.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	y	ongoing
4. Promote Cultural and Community Events Downtown	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	y	There are several events annually (holiday parade is one example)
5. Utilize Georgia's legal redevelopment tools to revitalize central business districts (DCA Model Code 5-5).		X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	p	Consideration of opportunity zone will be revisited once DCA completes rework of OZ standards.
6. Pending potential changes in the pertinent state enabling legislations, explore the use of Tax Allocation Districts to improve target areas in need of specific attention or revitalization, such as the downtown. Make improvements through the issuance of bonds, which will in turn be paid off by increased tax revenue that the project generates once improvements attract developers.		X				NA	City	NA	y	City completed cursory evaluation of TAD feasibility; economic environment poses challenges. City may reconsider at future date when economy recovers.
Natural and Cultural Resources										
1. Continue supporting community and cultural activities.	X	X	X	X	X	\$18.7 M	City	NA	y	Buford Community Center opened July 2012 featuring Sylvia Beard Theatre, Museum of Buford and a Ballroom hosting a variety of events. City hired a Community Center director to oversee activities.
2. Continue support of and participation in Georgia's Greenspace Program by identifying and acquiring properties for greenspace.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	y	City has bought some land; inventory has been maintained as greenspace
3. Provide information on the city website about planting, growing, and preserving trees.		X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	c	The tree protection ordinance is on website; other information is not requested and therefore not priority for website.
Community Facilities										
1. Upgrade Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant	X	X	X			\$20 M	City	Bond/Local	p	Capacity adequate; targeted completion in 2018
2. Upgrade water treatment plant	X	X	X			\$100,000	City	Bond/Local	p	Capacity adequate (City completed 70% engineering); targeted completion in 2018
3. Continue to expand, upgrade, and improve gas system	X	X	X	X	X	\$1 M/YR	City	Local	y	

Planning Activity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Completed? (yes [Y], underway [U], postponed [P], or cancelled [C])	Status Update (if underway, provide projected completion date; if postponed, explain why and when it will be resumed; if cancelled, explain why not being pursued)
4. Continue to expand, upgrade, and improve sewer system.	X	X	X	X	X	\$200,000/YR	City	Local	y	
5. Continue to expand, upgrade, and improve electrical system.	X	X	X	X	X	\$250,000/YR	City	Local	y	
6. Continue resurfacing City streets	X	X	X	X	X	\$250,000/YR	City	Local/LMIG	y	
7. Undertake a Recreation Master Plan to identify appropriate sites for new parks and facilities				X	X	\$15,000	City	Local	u	Master plan for identified (32 acre) site for active recreation underway. Completed Buford Youth Sports Complex (includes three youth fields, concession, and seating).
8. Continue to coordinate the planning process between School officials and City Council staff and officials that will facilitate review of rezoning applications for their impacts on schools and to coordinate school siting with the Future Development Map.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	y	City Commission Chairman is Chairman of School Board by law.
9. Regularly monitor and project local demographic trends to determine the future need for public services.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	NA	y	City annually reviews Census data and completes impact analysis.
10. Study the possibility of providing a citywide recycling program			X	X		NA	City	NA	y	Negotiated during 2012 with Republic Services Commercial Sanitation contract; Central recycling location container service; implementation pending (likely in 2017).
11. Carry out a study of alternative financing for infrastructure and community facilities, and develop and apply evaluation criteria and identify a priority list of alternative funding sources to consider implementing in Buford.			X			\$25,000	City	Local	p	City may reconsider at future date if warranted.
Housing										
1. Continue encouraging the provision of affordable housing.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	Housing Authority	N/A	u	City Commission continues appointment of Buford Housing Authority Board members.
2. Remind property owners on the City website of the City code requirements, and periodically send notices of where to find this information in city utility bills.		X	X	X	X	NA	City	N/A	u	Website updates ongoing process; incorporation on Municode targeted for 2014.
Land Use										
1. Update the Comprehensive Plan, including revising the Future Land Use Map as necessary.	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	N/A	y	Revision in 2013.
2. Revise zoning ordinance and other regulations as necessary (see list of potential revisions in the end notes) ¹	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	N/A	u	See status of proposed revisions at end of table.
3. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Livable Centers Initiative	X	X	X	X	X	NA	City	City, TE grant	u	East Main Street pedestrian and streetscape; South Hill Street Pedestrian Facility Improvements ongoing.

Planning Activity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Completed? (yes [Y], underway [U], postponed [P], or cancelled [C])	Status Update (if underway, provide projected completion date; if postponed, explain why and when it will be resumed; if cancelled, explain why not being pursued)
Transportation										
1. Add bicycle lanes, bicycle-friendly shoulders, or parallel multi-use paths to roadways consistent with the Gwinnett County Transportation Plan and during all widening and new construction projects for all collector and arterial streets.		X	X	X	X	NA	City	N/A	u	ROW and funding has limited these activities; South Hill Street section includes new bicycle facilities (completion Spring 2014); South Lee Street streetscape to include sharrows (completion summer 2016).
2. Conduct a local parking study to analyze where parking is adequate or lacking, to project future parking supply/demand, and to review local policies and programs affecting parking			X			\$30,000	City	N/A	y	Added 26 parking spaces in downtown per SPLOST
3. Main Street Improvements		X	X			\$900,000	City	TE Grant, Local	y	
4. Main Street Additional Parking	X					\$225,000	City	SPLOST, Local	y	
5. Little Mill Road improvements and streetscape	X					\$600,000	City	SPLOST, Local	y	
6. South Lee Street Improvements	X					\$225,000	City	SPLOST, Local	u	Project completion Summer 2016
7. GW-341 (PI 0008906) South Hill Street Pedestrian Improvements from Main Street to SR 13 (Buford Highway)		X	X	X		\$5.5 M	City	Local, LCI	y	Project completion Spring 2014
8. GW-099C (PI 132950) Buford Highway Widening from Sawnee Ave to Friendship Road (SR 347) (Design in 2009, Construction Long Range)		X	X	X	X	\$1.25 M Design \$3.2 M (total investment)	GDOT	SPLOST, Local	u	ROW acquisition ongoing Winter 2014; let Winter 2015
9. GW-301 (PI0006826) SR 20 (Nelson Brogdon Blvd/Buford Drive) ATMS from SR 13A (Peachtree Industrial Blvd) to Satellite Blvd		X	X			NA	GDOT	NA	y	FY 2011 CST L230
10. GW-308C (PI 0006925) Sugarloaf Parkway Extension – Phase 3 from SR 20 (Buford Hwy/Mall of GA Pkwy) to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (ROW in 2009, CST Long Range)		X	X	X	X	NA	GDOT	NA	p	Per 2012-2017 TIP, ROW in 2015 (CST Long Range)
11. AR-941 (PI 0008738) Metro Arterial Connector (MAC) Corridor Development Study		X	X			NA	ARC	NA	p	Deleted from TIP in 3rd Quarter of 2010 Admin modifications by ARC

¹Recommended revisions to the City Zoning Regulations to addressed in short-term:

- 1. Amend the Development Regulations to require new large scale developments to set aside a portion of their property as public space in proportion to their development. (C; DETERMINED INAPPROPRIATE FOR CITY)
- 2. Update existing community design standards or guidelines as needed to ensure that the physical appearance of new development (or improvements to existing properties) is compatible with the character of Buford, is built to a high standard, and has a pleasant appearance, such as that already in place around the Mall of Georgia. (U; ONGOING, SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATES COMPLETED)
- 3. Adopt typical street cross sections for urban and suburban street types that require all new streets to draw from traditional street design patterns and widths found in Buford. Typical street cross sections would include all street types from alleys to arterials. (C; DETERMINED INAPPROPRIATE FOR CITY)
- 4. Amend the City Zoning Ordinance to include a mixed-use zoning classification that allows density incentives for quality mixed-use development. (Y; MIXED USE DISTRICT CREATED)
- 5. Amend the Development Regulations to require new residential developments to implement traffic calming design measures such as traffic circles, narrow lanes, and street trees. (C; DETERMINED INAPPROPRIATE FOR CITY)
- 6. Adopt standards in the Development Regulations allowing for shared parking in other special situations by way of administrative exception. (C; ADDRESSED THROUGH SUP PROCESS)

Appendix B: Public Involvement Documentation

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Summary Notes of Interviews

Interviewees

Interviews for the Comprehensive Plan Update included members of the City’s Planning and Zoning Board, pastors of local churches, a representative of Buford City Schools, a representative the Buford Community Center, and residents. Interviewees had collectively lived in the Buford area for over 150 years. Interviews were held during February 2014.

What People Like Most about Buford

- Deep rooted sense of community.
- Sense of family.
- City strives for its best and is top notch in various service areas: school system, road improvements, housing, a pro-business environment.
- Balanced tax base.
- Awareness of and help address people’s needs.
- City’s responsiveness.
- Government structure (three at large commissioners, formal relationship between school and commission chair).
- City owned utilities (water, sewer, etc.)
- Downtown is a small nostalgic area.
- Gas commodity has 40,000 customers and runs all the way to Monroe
- Buford is a City of excellence
- Family atmosphere.
- Small town feel.
- City Schools and Schools working together (mentioned several times).
- Good leadership/smart governing.
- Vision and forethought.
- The City continues to progress forward.
- The City provides a high caliber of services in every aspect.
- The City’s focus on healthy growth management is paramount to success.
- The responsiveness of the City.
- The cooperation between the City and School Board, both of which are strategically focused on the future.
- The City of Buford attracts people from around the region.

Notable Changes Experienced by the City over the Past Five Years

- Falling out of economy postponed and staggered development and also affected implementation of the plan.

- Economy is coming back – notably new subdivisions.
- The services, schools remained the same.
- Improvement in look of city; beautification.
- Building and opening of Community Center is a major addition to the community. The facility is used for a variety of community events, including activities by the Buford City Schools, community organizations, etc. Artists performing at the Community Center have also been able to coordinate with area schools.
- New parks and recreation facilities.
- Increased traffic congestion.
- Annexations, some of which have been good.
- Some changed policies – for example, the special use permit now expires after one year if it is not used. This helps the city better control growth.
- The population of the city has increased.
- Traffic has increased.
- The improvements in Downtown are phenomenal.
- More people that were not born in Buford area moving in.
- Improvements have been made to the infrastructure, including the city park, streetscapes, and general improvement in appearance – the city has a more modern feel.
- The City has brought more entertainment to the community. Outdoor concerts and theatre has been very successful.
- Improvements of the streets.
- A high quality has been brought to all improvements made by the City.

Challenges Faced in Past Five Years

- Downturn in the economy.
- People suffering more due to the economy, elderly in particular.
- Passing away of community members has been a challenge, but the close knit nature of the community and positive City leadership has made a difference.
- Rest Haven area creates visual clutter and challenges for Buford's image and development.
- Bicycling groups pose challenges.
- Annexation and ensuring balanced growth.
- Bringing in clean industry that builds the tax base and at the same time controlling for undesirable businesses, such as pawn shops.
- Getting people to understand what the community center is all about and to embrace the arts. Marketing and growing the patron base is an ongoing need of the community center.
- Funding to complete and move projects forward has been limited, particularly for transportation improvements.

Greatest Opportunities in Buford's long- term (20 year or longer) Future

- Twenty years from now, we will be immersed in the suburbs. Growth potential is tremendous and Buford will be even more attractive for living and investing. The city's in a unique position near Lake Lanier and the mountains.
- The City needs to consider immigration (Hispanic and Asian) as well as diversity and what it means for businesses.
- Maintenance of a strong sense of community as we grow.
- Doing what's best for the whole community, not a few.
- Grow the school system in a coordinated way with new, planned growth. This includes building the infrastructure of the school system.
- Capital improvements and beautification in in the city.
- A new interchange at Hamilton Mill Road or Thompson Mill road is needed.
- There's a great opportunity to connect Satellite Boulevard northward to Hamilton Mill and Thompson Mill. This will help ease traffic on State Route 20.
- Potential annexation of mall area – this would require a cost benefit analysis first and desire of property owners to be annexed.
- Potential annexation of land near and at mall.
- Maintaining the feel that the City has.
- Managing growth as to avoid decline that often happens in mall areas over time (Gwinnett Place as an example). The City will need to control residential growth.
- Creating a hub of activity and getting to the point of having an entertainment district with a constant flow of events.
- Overcoming the divide that Buford Highway creates in the city.
- Making the new Downtown and Historic Downtown as populated as possible with boutique shops, restaurants, etc. with the Community Center remaining as the people center of the community.

Top Priorities for the Next Five Years

- Traffic is still a problem. Mall traffic is a hindrance. Widening of roads and other treatments.
- A grocery store is needed in the city between Peachtree Industrial and Buford Highway.
- Medical connections are needed; currently, you must travel to Cumming, Gainesville or Lawrenceville to access medical services. There was a hospital in Norcross, but a decision was made to close it. There are a few immediate care facilities in Norcross.
- The City should look into lifelong communities – there seems to be a need for additional housing to support our growing senior population. (garden homes were referenced) Right now there are three senior housing oriented developments in the city and two assisted living homes.
- Maintenance of infrastructure.
- Maintaining and growing the tax base.
- Revitalization projects – reviving old vacant buildings versus buildings remaining vacant.
- Repurposing of ball fields.

- A new pricing structure is needed for water, sewer, and sanitation services.
- A walking trail is needed. The City owns some land by East Sheridan that could contribute to this. The creek corridor could also hosts a walking trail to South Lee Street. See City of Suwanee for a model.
- Making good decisions that support the schools is critical.
- A new (or bigger) high school and new middle school will be needed.
- Roads and transportation should be a priority. Hamilton Mill Road truck traffic is a challenge. A new interchange is needed to provide another entry point to 985. An on/off ramp would be helpful at Thompson Mill and Hamilton Mill Road.
- Addressing mall and industrial traffic should be a priority.
- Continued improvement of infrastructure.
- Main Street and Buford Highway should be top priorities for infrastructure improvements.
- Adding energy to the Town Center development area by minimizing vacancy rates.
- Continuing to increase and enhance activities at the Community Center – including festivals and events. Development of a five year marketing plan would help further the effort.
- There is a need to have a more consistent design in the Historic Downtown area. This includes filling in vacant spaces and redeveloping some of the properties. Reinvestment is needed in housing near Historic Downtown.
- Additional parking – a parking deck – is needed in the Historic Downtown area.
- Hill Street should be a top priority.
- Buford has no historical society. One is needed.

Recommendations to Improve the Look and Feel of the City

- The City is already doing a good job – continue to move things forward. This was repeated by most people.
- Growth is controlled well – good water, gas, etc.
- Continue good code enforcement.
- The roads are maintained well – continue to maintain these resources.
- The Rest Haven area needs to be addressed, but it's outside the city limits so poses challenges to addressing.
- The City's zoning code seems to be working well.
- The City is doing a good job in improving the look and feel of the city with its streetscape projects.
- Conditions of zoning approval help control aesthetics.

Improvements Needed to Community Services

- None.
- City addresses all.
- The “rec park” could be improved. We have a 50 year lease for the property, so there are challenges with improving it.
- Senior citizens may need help, but that’s not the City’s role.
- Nothing is needed now, but growth could hinder City services if not done well.
- Growth should be controlled as to maintain the high quality of schools.

Other Comments

- The City’s building code has strong building standards.
- The City currently works with the City of Suwanee and other communities to ensure that events do not conflict.

Improvements Needed to Connect City’s Schools to Rest of Community

- We do not need anything; we are already doing this well.

Connections between Buford Schools and Broader Community

- Approximately 120 students are involved in area businesses through the schools’ support.
- Older students help with lower school levels.
- There are many opportunities for school kids to remain in city after graduation and attend one of the region’s many higher educational institutes. 16 colleges and universities are within 50 miles of Buford.

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Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: February 19, 2014

Meeting: City of Buford Comprehensive Plan Update
Steering Committee Meeting

Attendees: City of Buford (Bryan Kerlin, Kim Wolfe, Rhonda Cunningham),
Jacobs (Jim Summerbell, Amanda Hatton)
Community Members (Bob Perkins, Mary Alice Beard, Joy Davis, Todd
Cleveland, Sondra Jones)

Prepared by: Jacobs

Discussion Item	Key Points/Outcome
Welcome & Introductions	Bryan Kerlin, City Manager, welcomed everyone and thanked all for attending. The City is required to update its comprehensive plan every five years per state requirements and to remain eligible for state grants and loans. The City thanks the group for helping with this effort. Attendees introduced themselves to the group.
Meeting Objectives & Overview of Update Process	Amanda Hatton, Jacobs project manager, highlighted the objectives of the meeting: to begin to identify key needs and opportunities for the next five years and to identify changes needed to the community vision and goals (including the Future Development Map) since the last plan update. The planning process will take place over a short time frame, with transmittal for regional review anticipated at the April Commission Meeting. The public is invited to provide input at the Community Workshop on February 25 and also at an Open House on March 18.
Existing Conditions Snapshot	Amanda gave a brief overview of the components of the 2030 Plan Update and accomplishments since its completion. The group was briefed on existing demographic characteristics of the City. The community has grown by 19 percent since 2000, with its 2012 population estimated at 12,735.
SWOT Analysis	<p>Jacobs led the group through a brainstorming session to help inform a list of priority needs and opportunities for the City moving forward. The group identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that will impact the City's future.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combined Utilities• Utilities keep up with growth

Discussion Item	Key Points/Outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision (30-40 years of thinking long-term) • Fiscal responsibility • Recreation/community facilities • Central location • The mall • Excellence as a standard way of business • Healthy growth • Responsive government • Being a big, little town • Institutional knowledge (City is run by long-term community members) • Consistent leadership • Community pride • School system is exceptional • Affordable housing • Easy access to highways • City and schools work together • Daycare is provided for employees of Buford City Schools <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to access new landfill • Sustainability of current utility rates • Sufficient County Police Presence • Potential removal of historic resources <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility rate for water and sewer is low (there is a disparity between long- term costs of maintaining the system and fees collected) • Garbage pick-up cost is low but will need to increase when the landfill is no longer nearby (estimated to fill in 2028) • Ability to move traffic through city is limited due to having only one interchange with 985 <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grey water system • Cisterns (individual) • Partnering with the Counties on road projects (SPLOST) • New interchange • North/south industrial road (industrial park to Thompson Mill) • Widen Bogan Road – need operational improvement at key

Discussion Item	Key Points/Outcome
	<p>intersections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of Plunkett Road to South Bogan Road • Extension of Satellite Blvd to Hamilton Mill Road • Community Improvement District for industrial area • Tax Allocation District • Preservation of historic resources • Continue to grow parks (activities for youth) • Walking areas (Suwanee as a good example)
Vision and Goals Discussion	<p>Jim Summerbell, senior project advisor with Jacobs, led the group through a discussion of the current vision statement and a list of goals extracted from the 2009 planning process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group agreed that the vision statement is still accurate. It was commented that it nearly parallels the vision statement identified in the Buford City Schools planning process. • The group identified the following edits to the goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adjust “Maintain a favorable land use balance with a predominance of commercial/industrial over residential uses” to include “to continue to support the sustainability of the City’s level of services” (or something similar) ○ Change “Grow the mix of housing choices in the city, including additional townhouses, multi-family units” to remove “multi-family units” (the City already has a high renter population) and potentially add senior-oriented options • The topic of annexation was brought up. There is a need to strategically expand the boundaries of the community to meet the right balance of residential and commercial/industrial. • The question was asked about how the City currently manages economic development. Bryan Kerlin responded that the city manager serves as acting economic development director in coordination with working with the Gwinnett Chamber. The development community is a big driver of attracting businesses. • The group then reviewed the City’s current Future Development Map, discussing edits needed to the character area districts and corresponding vision and character area comments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The portion of land just west of Bogan Road that is labeled as “commercial industrial area” should be changed to “emerging residential area” ○ For the “Downtown Area” remove “apartments” and replace with “mixed-use housing” for predominant land

Discussion Item	Key Points/Outcome
	<p>uses to be encouraged. Downtown needs more people living in it and more parking, potentially a deck.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Rest Haven area is a challenge for the city. In order for Buford to have influence here, Rest Haven would need to request de-annexation, then the county could better enforce its land use regulations or potentially annex the area into the city.
Community Workshop Preparation	Amanda briefly reviewed the proposed format for the February 25 workshop. The group agreed that the format was appropriate.
Adjourn	Bryan Kerlin closed the meeting by thanking all for participating. The group is encouraged to stay involved through the duration of the planning process and to encourage fellow community members to attend the upcoming public meetings.

Community Workshop Summary

Buford City Hall, February 25, 2014 (5pm-7pm)

Overview

The City of Buford held a Community Workshop on Tuesday, February 25, 2014 to help support the five year update of its Comprehensive Plan. Approximately 20 community members attended. The workshop included a brief presentation outlining the planning process, followed by small group interactive exercises to collect input on the community's needs and opportunities. Input from the meeting will help shape the update of the plan, including the community goals as well as formation of a new, five-year work program.

Welcome + Intro Presentation

Bryan Kerlin, City Manager, welcomed attendees to the meeting, highlighting the background behind the update and thanking attendees for contributing input. Welcoming remarks were followed by an introductory presentation given by Amanda Hatton, Jacobs Project Manager. The presentation highlighted:

- The purpose of a comprehensive plan
- Why Buford's updating its plan
- Project schedule and planning timeframe
- Plan components
- What's in the current plan
- Accomplishments since the last plan update
- Input collected from interviews & the Steering Committee
- Current population characteristics



Small Groups

Meeting attendees participated in small group discussions for the bulk of the meeting, focusing on needs and opportunities for the City's future as well as the City's vision as captured by the Future Development Map.

- The discussion was initiated by presenting a list of needs and opportunities from the 2009 Plan Update. Participants were asked to consider how the priority needs and opportunities have changed.
- Following this activity, the group identified specific community improvements that are needed, by indicating on a map with corresponding stars, dots, and text of what is needed.
- The last activity of the small groups was reviewing the Future Development Map and corresponding vision statements and land uses to be encouraged.

Meeting Findings

Prior to adjourning, attendees reconvened to present the key discussion items from respective groups. The following topics were common across both groups. *A full list of notes from both groups is included at the end of this summary.*

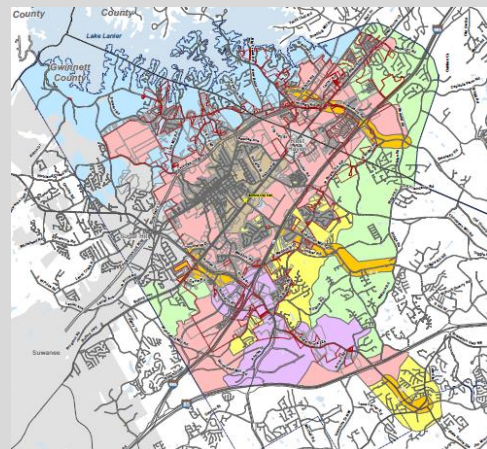
- The City's Comprehensive Plan should take into account needs related to school expansion.
- Economic development enhancements are needed for small business support and to help address vacant office/commercial space.
- Additional parking is needed in Historic Downtown.
- There is a strong desire for a City-managed recycling program.
- Resources and programs to support historic preservation are needed.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS ACTIVITY

-  Road improvement needed
-  Sidewalk, bike or transit improvement needed
-  Other infrastructure improvement needed
-  Opportunity for a community park or other facility
-  Opportunity for redevelopment or private investment



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP



- Consistent and sufficient police presence is a priority.
- There is a need to continue growing the City’s recreation space.
- Buford should support housing/ facilities to further the city as a continuing care, lifelong community.
- Tree preservation is a priority.

Specific place-based improvements varied; however, the need for more sidewalks and strategic road improvements dominated the discussion of specific improvements. Other topics introduced included the need for a grocery store, redevelopment in parts of downtown, and new recreation space.

Overall, both groups voiced support for the place-based, long-term vision from the current plan as laid out by the Future Development Map. Two adjustments were suggested for the Quality Development Corridor (QDC) character area: one being expanding the district to include portions of Main Street approaching Downtown; the other being converting some of the QDC area along State Route 324 to residential, west of the intersection of Braselton Highway and State Route 324.

Comment Form Feedback

All attendees were provided a comment form for additional feedback on the meeting. The following topics were introduced.

Additional Comments on Buford’s Needs and Opportunities

Tree preservation

Recycling program

Recycling – either a city-wide recycling service with pick-up or centralized recycling center (maybe located at the new recreation fields to be built off Buford Highway)

Urban Blight redevelopment – Flowery Branch and Oakwood applying for opportunity zone

Business development focus needed- formally through City of Buford administration and/or Buford Chamber of Commerce

Recycling!!! We are willing to pay for this. Think green.

Continuing Care Community. We have one skilled nursing. Please check into a community that has independent living, rest home level of care – assisted living and skilled nursing in one area!!

Buford needs its own Chamber of Commerce to attract new business to the area. A dual role could be an information officer – i.e. Lynne DeWilde in Suwanee.

Additional Comments on Buford's Future Development Map Discussion

Sidewalks wherever possible to foster more walking and less dependence on automobile
Do some research on federal funds available for developing business in historical areas.

Other Comments

Great idea to hold workshop. Amanda and Jim did a superb job!
My husband has a PhD in economics and sent resumes to six different Buford leaders in the City Hall offering his services to the town and did not hear from anyone. He has so many ideas to help this community too!
The City information officer could put news and events in the water and gas bills.

Discussion Notes

Group 1: Facilitated by Jim Summerbell

Needs and Opportunities Brainstorming

- Expansion of the school, impact and plans should be included in the plan
- High vacancy rates in office and commercial space. Opportunities for redevelopment
- County Chamber does not meet local needs. City should consider creating its own Chamber to help address this issue.
- Need to attract small businesses
- Tools for redevelopment needed
- City Information Officer needed to help promote city, like Suwanee and Norcross have
- Opportunity for more recreation space off of South Harris Street between Buford Hwy and New Street
- Foot bridge over Buford Highway needed
- Buford Drive traffic congestion is really bad several times of the day
- Downtown parking needed to be addressed
- City should look into adding a shuttle to better serve downtown businesses. This could be a public/private partnership opportunity.
- What are the minimum size requirements for housing in the mixed-use district? Are they lined up with market realities?
- What are the affordable housing issues in Buford? Is this really an issue?
- Recycling is really needed. The County offers it, why can't the City?
- Better coordination between local businesses and homeowners is needed.
- Buford should become known as a Continuing Care Community. More facilities are needed to help care for our aging population.
- Financial tools for historic preservation should be available
- More of a Police Presence is needed, in certain areas crime is an issue

- SPLOST funds should be included in the plan
- Animal Control is an issue. Coyotes are becoming common place
- Need lighting controls, particularly close to residential areas

Priority Map

- Interchange at Hamilton Mill and I-I-985 is not a good idea
- Portions of Friendship Road have been renamed Lake Lanier Islands Parkway – needs to be updated on the map
- Sidewalks are needed along Plunkett Rd leading to the Environmental Center
- There is a drainage issue along Harris Street, and more sidewalks are needed
- Is the Satellite Road Extension really being considered?
- More sidewalks needed along South Bogan Road, Hamilton Mill and East Maddox Road
- A local grocery store is needed, since Kroger left
- Traffic congestion is bad along GA 20 and Friendship Road (Lake Lanier Islands Pkwy)
- Traffic operation improvements are needed at Lee Street and Maddox Road, and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Little Mill Road
- More greenspace is needed across Buford Highway from City Hall, near Hamilton Mill and I-985, GA 20 and I-985 and close to Buford Elementary School
- Citywide WiFi would be a good way to attract business
- Continuing Care Community should be located close to Lake Lanier
- A farmers market or food trucks events would be good to have close the community center and city hall on an occasional basis
- The city needs a tree preservation ordinance

Future Development Map, Vision and Goals discussion

- Add a Quality Development Corridor along Main Street leading to the Historic Downtown on both the east and west side
- Add tree preservation and the addition of more green space as a goal of the plan

Group 2: Facilitated by Amanda Hatton and Kyle Van Klompenburg

Needs and Opportunities Brainstorming

- Work to increase percent of home ownership
- School system – plan to handle the influx of students for tuition and resident students
- Day to day athletic facilities/playgrounds
- Road improvements outside and on the edges of downtown
- Expansion of connected sidewalk and trail network, including benches

- Additional bicycle facilities
- Ensuring sufficient police protection with growth
- Shared parking lot system for downtown parking
- Reducing congestion from FedEx
- Easy access to I-985 (need for a new interchange)
- Encourage small businesses by reducing red tape and making it easier to operate a business in the city
- City wide recycling center and curbside pickup
- Preserving Buford’s historic character downtown
- Tree limbs blocking street signs and signals in select places
- Annex new land according to a plan – reduce “annexation islands”
- Expand gym hours at Bogan Park (and others); there are no facilities for recreation after work hours
- Animal control issues-coordination with County

Priority Map

- Sidewalk and road improvements on Bona Road, Forest Street, New Street, and Washington Street (connecting to downtown)
- Creek trail along creek directly southwest of City Hall
- Road resurfacing and sidewalks on east Maddox Road
- Connect Mill Center Parkway to Thompson Mill Road
- I-985 interchange at Thompson Mill Road
- Potential for park at southwest corner of East Main Street and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard
- Continued annexation around Mall of Georgia

Future Development Map, Vision and Goals discussion

- Concerns about current landfill and future locations
- Concerns about Quality Development Corridor along State Route 324 south of I-85

Open House Summary

Buford City Hall, March 18, 2014 (5:30pm-6:30pm)

Overview

The City of Buford held an Open House on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 to communicate changes made to the five-year update of its Comprehensive Plan and collect public input. Approximately 15 community members attended. The Open House included three stations, highlighting 1) updates to the vision and goals, 2) individual character areas and future development map, and 3) implementation program. There was a brief presentation highlighting the updated elements of the Comprehensive Plan followed by a group Question and Answer session during which City staff and the planning team fielded comments and questions from the public.

Presentation

Bryan Kerlin, City Manager, thanked the attendees for participating and encouraged their continued input throughout the entire process. This was followed by a presentation by Amanda Hatton, Jacobs Project Manager. The presentation highlighted:

- The purpose of a comprehensive plan
- Why Buford's updating its plan
- Project schedule and planning timeframe
- Input collected from the Community Workshop
- What's in the updated plan

Questions & Answer Session

Following the presentation, attendees were invited to ask questions and provide comments on the draft plan. Additional comments collected during the informal portion of the meeting are also documented below. Attendees were encouraged to complete comment forms regarding any outstanding concerns, recommendations, or ideas. *No comment forms were returned.*



Record of Comments (C), Question (Q), and Responses (R)

- **Q:** What has the City been doing to address economic development needs other than working with the Buford Business Alliance and Gwinnett Chamber?
- **C:** One community member stated that he's heard Buford is unfriendly to small businesses.
- **C:** Another community member responded by saying he owns a business around the corner from City Hall and has been pleased with the City's actions and services. Twenty-five years ago not much was in Buford; many new developments have come due to the City's efforts.
- **R:** The City responded that much of what attracts businesses is good infrastructure and high quality of life, both of which Buford excels at. The City continues to pursue several infrastructure projects to maintain this pro-business environment. The City was ranked as a top city for small business a few years ago. The Plan includes other actions to enhance economic development efforts, which are in the implementation program.
- **Q:** What type of business is the City trying to attract?
- **R:** The City does not target specific industry types.
- **Q:** What is Buford doing compared to Gwinnett Place to attract businesses?
- **R:** The City has three spec buildings currently being built and also works with the Gwinnett Chamber to help promote Buford to business prospects.
- **C:** A concern was raised about drainage issues on residential property on the eastern side of I-985.
- **R:** The City does not provide wastewater service to City of Buford residents on the eastern side of I-985. Gwinnett County provides service to these areas as a part of their jurisdictions' Service Delivery Strategy. The City has been working with the County to address related issues along Thrasher Road.
- **Q:** Is an extension planned for Lanier Islands Parkway, heading east towards the lake?
- **R:** No specific plans for that roadway are programmed at this time.
- **C:** The City should better promote public meetings; it was difficult find out about this one.
- **R:** The City had information on the City's website for multiple weeks and promoted the meeting in the local paper and on City Hall doors.
- **C:** The Plan should clarify the location of the 32 acre recreation site that is in the Implementation Program.
- **R:** That will be addressed in the plan.
- **C:** A concern was raised about the closed marina at Lake Lanier.
- **R:** This is outside the City's control, yet equally noted as a concern for the community.

Ads and Flyers

February 25 Public Workshop Ad

The public is invited to a Community Workshop on Tuesday, February 25 from 5pm to 7pm at Buford City Hall to share ideas for the City of Buford's future. The workshop will help shape the City's five year update to its Comprehensive Plan, the City's guiding long-term vision and policy document. Community members are encouraged to attend to share your input.

The workshop will be interactive in nature, including a brief overview of the planning process, small group discussions, and related hands on activities. Discussion topics will include overall city goals, needs, and opportunities as well as the future development vision. The City wants to hear from you!

The planning process was kicked-off at the February 3 City Commission meeting. A second public meeting will be held on March 18 to present the draft plan at an open house, prior to its finalization.

Amanda Hatton is the workshop coordinator. Please email Amanda at Amanda.Hatton@jacobs.com if you have any questions.

March 18 Open House Ad

The City of Buford wants to hear from you! The public is invited to an Open House on Tuesday, March 18 from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm at Buford City Hall to review and comment on the update of the City's Comprehensive Plan, the City's guiding long-term vision and policy document. The meeting will be informal in nature with an opportunity for community members to review, at their own pace, displays that highlight key elements of the plan, including the new five year work program and other changes since the plan's last update in 2009. A brief presentation and question/answer session will take place at 6:00pm. Community members are encouraged to attend and share input.

The planning process was kicked-off at the February 3 City Commission meeting. This is the second and final public meeting prior to preparing a final draft of the plan for regional and state review. A public hearing to collect final comments and transmit the plan for review will take place at the April 1, 2014 Commission Meeting.

Please email Amanda Hatton, meeting coordinator, at Amanda.Hatton@jacobs.com if you have any questions.

THE CITY OF BUFORD WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Buford Community Members are Invited

Review and Comment on the 2034 update of the City's Comprehensive Plan
the City's guiding long-term vision and policy document

Open House

Tuesday, March 18

5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Buford City Hall

Learn about and provide input to the City's plans for the future!

- ✚ A brief presentation and question/answer session will take place at 6:00 pm.
- ✚ The remainder of the meeting will provide an opportunity for attendees to review plan displays and discuss recommendations with the planning team.
- ✚ This is the second and final public meeting prior to preparing a final draft of the plan for regional and state review.

For more information: Email Amanda Hatton, meeting coordinator, at amanda.hatton@jacobs.com

Appendix C: Consistency with Regional Water Plan + Environmental Planning Criteria

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Consistency with Regional Water Plan + Environmental Planning Criteria

The City of Buford's development regulations include a series of provisions that maintain consistency with regional water plans and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) environmental planning criteria. Gwinnett County and its member municipalities, including the City of Buford, have adopted Part V of the Georgia Planning Act, the environmental planning criteria developed by the DNR. These standards include requirements governing development in water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains (DNR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria). Although Buford does not contain any groundwater recharge areas or mountains, it is part of the Upper Chattahoochee water supply watershed and is in close proximity to Lake Lanier, a major regional water supply reservoir, making water resource planning an important consideration.

Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Water Plans

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District was established in 2001 to establish policy, create plans, and promote intergovernmental coordination for all water-related issues in the 15-county metropolitan Atlanta area. The goal of the district is to develop comprehensive regional water resources plans that protect water quality and water supply in and downstream of the region, protect recreational values of the waters in and downstream of the region, and minimize potential adverse impacts of development on waters in and downstream of the region. The planning district also facilitates multi-jurisdictional water-related projects and enhances access to funding for water-related projects among local governments in the district area. The District adopted comprehensive updates to the district regional water resources plans in 2009. Among provisions of the plans are guidance for stormwater management, sedimentation control, and pollution prevention. Buford's Code of Ordinances addresses these and other related items. Other items are addressed as identified under DNR Environmental Planning Criteria, discussed below, and City's regular activities.

DNR Environmental Planning Criteria

STREAM BUFFERS AND SETBACKS

DNR defines a water supply watershed as land in a drainage basin upstream of governmentally owned public drinking water supply intake. Buford is located in the Upper Chattahoochee water supply watershed as defined by the DNR. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has special requirements for municipalities related for water supply watersheds. Their criteria, which include buffers around streams and maximum densities of pervious surfaces, are intended to allow cities to develop within these watersheds while maintaining a supply of water clean enough that it can be treated to drinkable standards.

- Cities may exempt existing land uses and mining activities from provisions of water supply protection plans, and it may exempt utilities and agriculture from the stream buffer and setback requirements of these plans under certain conditions.
- Land within a 7 mile radius upstream of the reservoir must maintain a 100 feet stream buffer around all perennial streams, and no impervious surfaces, septic tank, or septic drainfield may be constructed within 150 feet of a perennial stream bank.

- The City’s Stream Buffer Protection Ordinance (City of Buford Code of Ordinances, Section 1313) restricts development with a 50 foot buffer on both banks of streams and with an additional 25 foot setback for impervious surface beyond the undisturbed natural vegetative buffer.

GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREA

No portion of the City of Buford is located in a groundwater recharge area. The closest groundwater recharge areas are located to the west in Forsyth County and to the east in Gwinnett and Hall Counties.

CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER CORRIDOR

Buford lies outside the jurisdiction of any protected rivers. The closest is the Chattahoochee River which is protected by the Metropolitan River Protection Act (MRPA), a state law passed in 1973, which instituted a 2000-foot protection corridor along both sides of the Chattahoochee River, which the city’s boundaries are outside of currently. Despite this, the City’s regulations do include a stipulation that requires consistency with the Metropolitan River Protection Act for all development within 2000 feet of the bank of the Chattahoochee River.

The 1997 Metropolitan River Protection Act requires the Atlanta Regional Commission to adopt a plan to protect the Chattahoochee River Corridor and to review development proposals for consistency with the plan. Local governments along the corridor are required to implement the plan by issuing permits based on ARC findings, monitoring land-disturbing activity in the corridor, and enforcing the act and plan. The ARC Chattahoochee Corridor Plan defines the Chattahoochee Corridor as “all land within 2000 feet of the banks of the Chattahoochee River, including any impoundments thereon, or within the flood plain, whichever is greater, from directly below Buford Dam downstream to the downstream limits of Fulton and Douglas counties, including the entire bed of the river and any improvements and all islands therein.”

WETLANDS

According to DNR rules, local governments must consider wetlands in their planning decisions, mapping and identifying them in land use plans. DNR outlines a number of considerations that must be addressed and the minimum types of wetlands that the City must identify. And under federal policy, development should not alter or degrade wetlands without showing that there will be no adverse impacts or net loss of wetlands. These items have been addressed by the City’s zoning and development ordinances. Buford’s development regulations contain standards for development in wetlands that are consistent with the US Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permitting process.

FLOODPLAINS

The Gwinnett County Unified Plan identified Buford as having a significant amount of land within the 100 year floodplain (the probability of an annual flood in these areas is at least 1 percent). Most of these areas are along streams and are associated with Richland Creek in the western portion of the city and Suwanee Creek, east of Buford Highway. Within these floodplains, construction may not alter the area’s flood characteristics or create hazardous velocities of water. Development in the floodplains is restricted to public parks, agriculture, dams, bridges, parking areas, fences, public utility facilities, and signs and sign structures by the City’s floodplain ordinance, which contains additional requirements for these areas. Floodplains are included on the City’s Future Land Use Map (see Chapter 3) as a part of the Park/Recreation/Conservation areas