

**CITY OF SUGAR HILL
LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT**

MAY 2005



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Introduction

The City of Sugar Hill is located in northern Gwinnett County, Georgia, approximately thirty miles northeast of Atlanta. Since its incorporation in 1939 the City has gradually expanded its corporate boundaries through annexation. Today, Sugar Hill encompasses approximately twelve square miles. According to the 2000 Census, the City's population was 11,399, and projections indicate the number of residents could double over the next twenty years. The City is bisected by Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, a divided four-lane arterial; Highway 20, a two-lane roadway that accommodates east-west commuter traffic; and the CSX Railroad. Buford Highway, the traditional north-south highway leading to Atlanta, traverses the eastern edge of the City limits. The City is bound to the northeast and east by the City of Buford and to the south by the City of Suwanee. Large swaths of unincorporated Gwinnett County lie to the north and south of Highway 20 and to the east of Buford Highway. Over time, annexations of "islands" of single-family neighborhoods have resulted in a patchwork of predominantly residential areas interspersed with developed neighborhoods and undeveloped properties in unincorporated Gwinnett County.

Recent planning efforts include the development of a Downtown Master Plan (on-going) for the traditional downtown core. The Sugar Hill Downtown Development Authority will be responsible for facilitating the implementation of the plan, which will recommend design guidelines, streetscape improvements, and appropriate sites for mixed use development. This intensified focus on downtown Sugar Hill and an interest in introducing mixed uses in the area prompted the City to revisit its Land Use Plan. In addition, the City seeks a greater balance between residential uses and commercial and industrial uses. The Land Use component of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan provides opportunities for non-residential uses; however, the Land Use component does not address the concept of mixed use, which the City wishes to incorporate on a fairly large scale throughout the City. As such, the City does not feel the 1998 plan accurately depicts its vision for the future. The City also recognizes that the continuing growth and development issues in the City and throughout Gwinnett County are high priorities to be addressed in its Land Use Plan. The amended Plan is intended to guide future growth within the City while also establishing a plan for land use in adjacent areas that may be annexed into the City at some future point.

Based on the requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the City's deadline for undertaking a Comprehensive Plan recertification is not until 2008. This Land Use Plan amendment is intended as an interim plan update to address the aforementioned growth and development issues facing the City.

The amendment has been guided by public input received at public hearings throughout the planning process and by input received by members of Council and of the Planning Commission at work sessions that were open to the public.

Existing Land Uses

Data provided by the Sugar Hill Planning Department and the Gwinnett County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department was used in conjunction with a City-conducted parcel to parcel land use survey to determine existing land uses. For planning purposes, land uses are identified under the categories listed below.

Residential

Defined: Land devoted to permanent living accommodations, including lots containing houses or manufactured homes, housing subdivision developments, and buildings containing multiple housing units attached horizontally (duplexes or townhomes) or vertically (apartments).

Thirty-nine percent, or 2485.61 acres, of all land within the City is devoted to residential uses, primarily in the form of detached single-family residences in established subdivisions. Eighteen percent has been developed for **Low Density Residential** uses (<2.5 units/acre; detached single-family homes), 18% for **Medium Density Residential** (2.6 to 4 units/acre; detached single-family homes, duplexes, quadplexes), 1% for **High Density Residential** (>4.1 units/acre; apartment complexes, townhomes), and 2% for **Mobile Home Parks**.

Commercial

Defined: Land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.

The City has broken down commercial uses into two land use categories: **Commercial/Retail** and **Office/Professional**. Commercial/Retail development occupies 123.76 acres, or 2%, of land in Sugar Hill. It is comprised primarily of smaller-scale service-oriented uses that are located along the major arterial corridors of Highway 20, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Buford Highway, and in the downtown area. Office uses comprise 1% or 50.73 acres of land inside the City limits and are also interspersed along the City's major corridors as well as throughout the downtown.

Industrial

Defined: Land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing, and wholesale trade facilities.

Industrial uses in the City are predominantly classified as **Light Industrial** and are found in several industrial parks located in close proximity to the railroad and with access to major arterials, particularly Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Commerce Boulevard, Brogdon Road, and Buford Highway.

A few more intensive uses classified as **Heavy Industrial** also located in the same areas; a manufacturing facility also resides along West Broad Street. Industrial uses comprise 267.51 acres or 4% of land in Sugar Hill. Of that acreage, 242.29 acres have been developed for Light Industrial uses, and 25.22 acres have been developed for Heavy Industrial uses.

Park/Recreation/Conservation

Defined: Land dedicated to active and passive recreational uses. These lands may be publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, sports fields, recreation centers, public parks, nature preserves, national forests, wildlife management areas, golf courses, or similar uses.

Twelve percent of land in the City is classified as Park/Recreation/Conservation, with the largest portion of that land utilized as the Sugar Hill Golf Club. The 270-acre golf course is owned by the City and is located in the northwestern portion of the City boundaries adjacent to a national forest area that is owned by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. The City also operates the 34-acre E.E. Robinson Park, which has several active recreation facilities and an amphitheatre, as well as the 1.37 acre Town Green in the heart of the downtown area. Other land classified as Park/Recreation/Conservation is found as open space in detached single-family neighborhoods. A total of 941.13 acres found in the City are classified as Park/Recreation/Conservation.

Public/Institutional

Defined: State, federal or local government uses, and quasi-public institutions. Governmental uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, post offices and public schools. Institutional uses include churches, cemeteries, and other private non-profit uses.

Public/Institutional uses comprise 125.34 acres, or 2% of land in Sugar Hill. Sugar Hill City Hall, which also houses a satellite post office, is located in the downtown area. The Carl T. Buice Center and its Early Childhood Program facility are located behind the City Hall. A newly constructed City-operated community center is also in the downtown area adjacent to the Town Green. Sugar Hill Elementary is located south of the downtown along Level Creek Road. Other institutional uses are area churches and cemeteries, including a six-acre cemetery on West Broad Street.

Transportation/Communication/Utilities

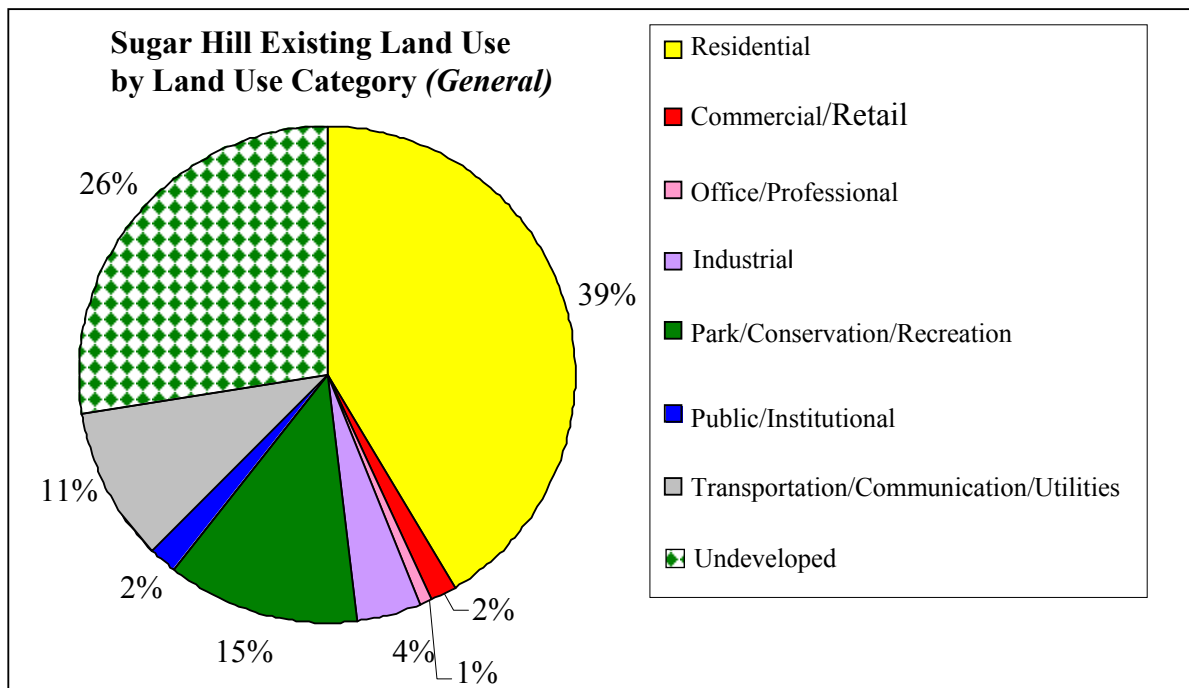
Defined: This classification includes such uses as power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, public transit stations, telephone switching stations, streets and highways.

In Sugar Hill, uses classified in this category consist of streets, highways, utility substations, and the CSX Rail corridor. Transportation/Communication/Utilities account for 705.57 acres, or 11% of land inside Sugar Hill.

Undeveloped

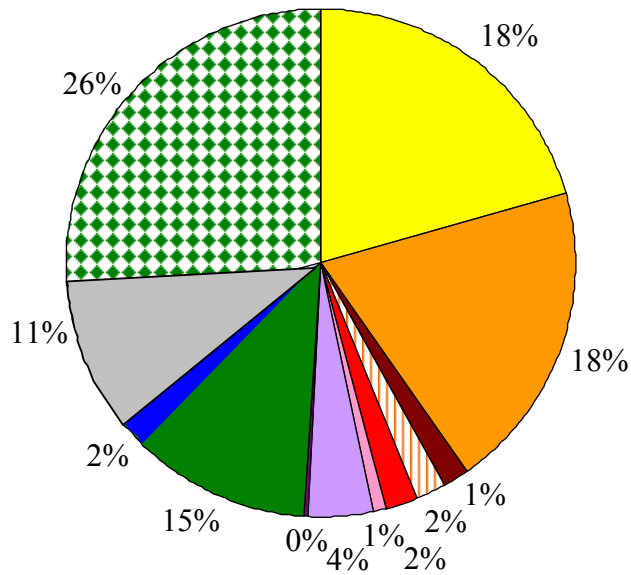
Defined: Land not developed or not being used for a specific purpose.

Undeveloped land is located on fairly large parcels throughout the City, with a significant concentration along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (PIB). Other undeveloped tracts are scattered throughout the City and in recently annexed areas. A total of 1,683.30 acres, or 26% of land in Sugar Hill, is currently undeveloped. Of that total acreage, 681.61 acres are located along PIB, a majority of which are undeveloped. Currently, 528.26 acres or 77.50% of land along PIB is undeveloped.



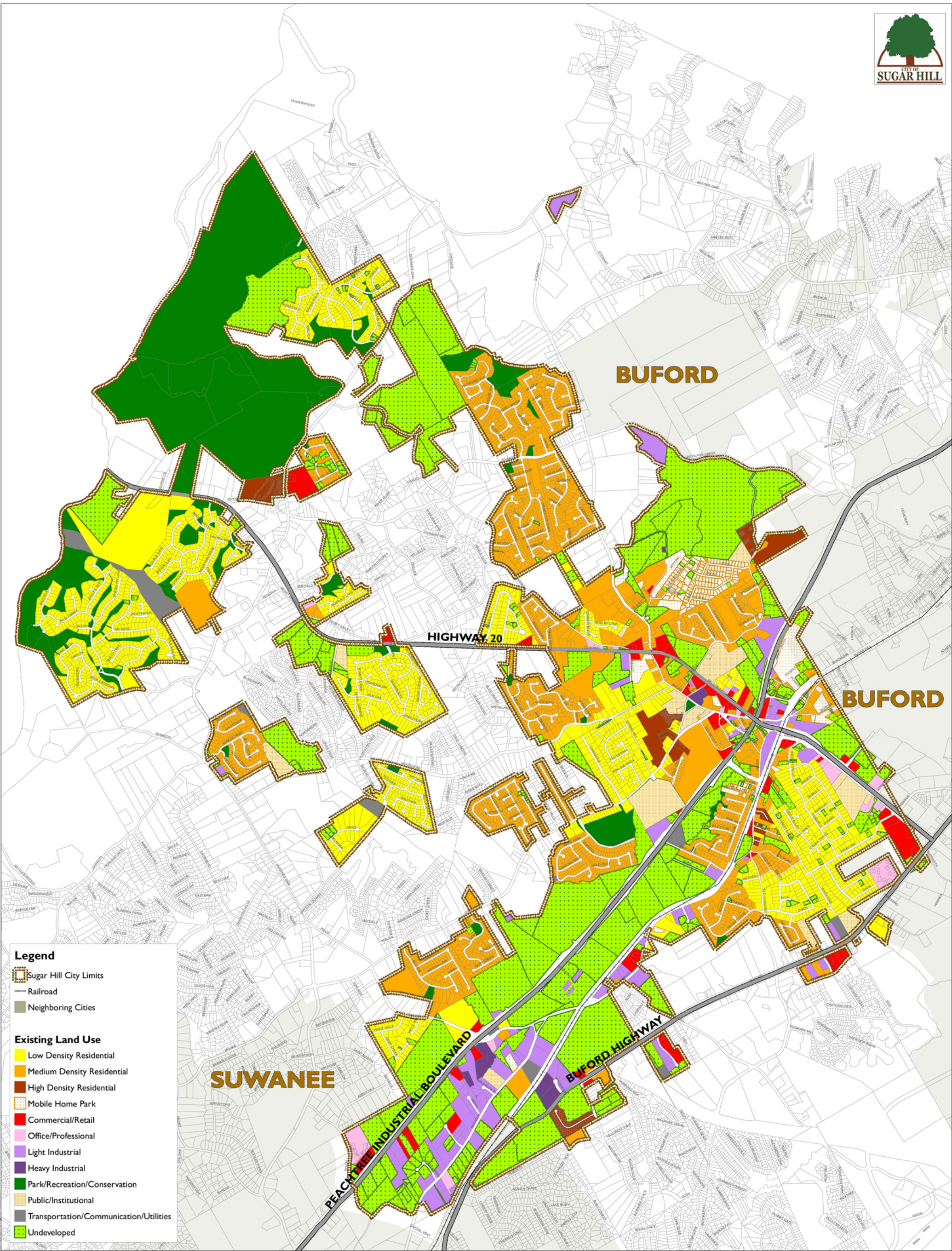
EXISTING LAND USE CATEGORIES	AREA (acres)
Residential	2485.61
Commercial/Retail	123.76
Office/Professional	50.73
Industrial	267.51
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	941.13
Public/Institutional	125.34
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	705.57
Undeveloped (Includes zoned land, but not yet built)	1683.30
TOTAL	6382.95

**Sugar Hill Existing Land Use
by Land Use Category (Detail)**



- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial/Retail
- Office/Professional
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Undeveloped

EXISTING LAND USE	AREA (acres)
Low Density Residential	1136.43
Medium Density Residential	1137.48
High Density Residential	97.27
Mobile Home Park	114.42
Commercial/Retail	123.76
Office/Professional	50.73
Light Industrial	242.29
Heavy Industrial	25.22
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	941.13
Public/Institutional	125.34
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	705.57
Undeveloped	1683.30
TOTAL	6382.95



Legend

- Sugar Hill City Limits
- Railroad
- Neighboring Cities

Existing Land Use

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial/Retail
- Office/Professional
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Undeveloped



0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 Feet

EXISTING LAND USE MAP

CITY OF SUGAR HILL | GWINNETT COUNTY | GEORGIA



May 2005

Influences on Future Development

Historic Patterns of Growth

The City of Sugar Hill is the second fastest growing city in Gwinnett County, which was one of the fastest growing counties in the United States between 1990 and 2000. The rate of growth in the County has slowed relative to that decade, but between 2000 and 2004 that rate of population growth was 17.47%. Much of that growth has taken the form of lower density residential, with 35.8% of existing land uses in unincorporated Gwinnett County classified as residential. Commercial and industrial development has lagged behind residential development, with 3.82% of existing land uses in the County classified as Commercial and 4.65% as Industrial.

Similar development patterns have occurred in Sugar Hill, which developed as a “bedroom” community and continues to experience low- to medium- density residential development. The overall growth rate in the City declined after the boom years of 1990-2000, but between 2000 and 2004, the City still experienced a significant amount of growth at 27.98%. In that time period, building activity remained fairly steady, with the issuance of the following building permits: 24 for mobile homes, 256 for multi-family units, and 908 for single-family homes.

Residential land uses account for 44% of the area inside the City limits. Much of the residential development emanates from the intersection of Highway 20 and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, which is the City’s traditional core. Annexations have also contributed to the increase in residential uses inside the City, particularly to the north and south of Highway 20, where numerous existing neighborhoods in unincorporated Gwinnett County abut the City limits. Commercial and industrial development has occurred more sporadically along the City’s major arterial corridors, and commercial and industrial uses comprise 2% and 1% of the City’s existing land composition, respectively.

Just as the City has grown, so too have adjacent municipalities. The Cities of Suwanee and Buford now adjoin Sugar Hill to the south and northeast, which impacts the extent to which the City is physically able to grow.

Land Use and Infrastructure Patterns

Sugar Hill is dependent on water and sewer capacity at the County level, as Gwinnett County Public Utilities provides water and sewer service to the City. Several planned or recently completed projects are anticipated to allow the County and its municipalities to accommodate its current rate of growth. These projects include construction of the 75 million gallon per day (MGD) Shoal Creek Filter Plant; construction of a second Raw Water Intake/Pump Station on Lake Lanier; design of a 1.5 billion gallon raw water reservoir to meeting peak day water demands and shaving peak power demand; start-up of the Central Service Area Pump Station with two 10 million gallon water tanks and a 40 MGD pump station; design of the 20 MGD North Service Area Pump Station; and rehabilitation of two existing tank/pump station facilities.

The existing roadway system in the City services a variety of trip lengths and purposes. Three major transportation corridors bisect the City: Highway 20, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, and Buford Highway. Highway 20 serves east-west through traffic with some destination-oriented residential and commercial uses along the corridor. It is scheduled to be widened from two to four lanes with a forty-four foot median; construction is anticipated to commence in 2006-07. Peachtree Industrial Boulevard is predominantly a thru-way as much of it is undeveloped. Its proximity to the railroad has led to the development of some industrial uses at the southern end of PIB adjacent to the railroad and Buford Highway. The presence of the railroad has also encouraged additional industrial uses along the railroad and along Buford Highway. Much of the land abutting Buford Highway, the original north-south corridor to Atlanta, is in unincorporated Gwinnett County.

A nineteen-mile east-west connector road, called the Cross-County Connector, is proposed by Gwinnett County and would link Sugar Hill to Lawrenceville. A four-mile portion would be located inside the City limits, connecting Highway 20 and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. The four-lane connector would follow the path of the previously planned Northern Arc and would primarily serve through traffic. In amending the Land Use Plan, the City is introducing two mixed use land use classifications that would guide development of undeveloped properties in the vicinity of the proposed roadway.

There is no existing transit in the City of Sugar Hill. The closest commuter bus stop served by Gwinnett Transit is located in the vicinity of the Mall of Georgia, which is approximately 4.5 miles east of the City.

The City's Short Term Work Program identifies several transportation related improvements including the construction of 7.9 miles of sidewalks, several of which have been constructed in and around the downtown to improve non-vehicular linkages to surrounding residential areas.

Natural and Historic Resources

The City is dedicated to protecting sensitive natural areas and has adopted several ordinances to protect these areas, include the adoption of Soil and Erosion Control and Floodplain Management Ordinances. In addition, tree protection measures are included in the City's Landscape, Buffer, and Tree Ordinance. The City's western boundary is comprised of forested lands having frontage on the Chattahoochee River. This area is owned by the Army Corps of Engineers and is classified as Park/Recreation/Conservation. The City is also dedicated to preserving and enhancing its downtown core. While few historic structures exist, the City seeks to retain the traditional character of the area and is undertaking a Downtown Master Plan that will recommend design guidelines for new development and streetscape improvements.

Areas in Need of Redevelopment

The City does not contain large districts of blight or substandard housing; however, opportunities for redevelopment do exist. The downtown area is a primary example, in part due to the presence of an aging manufacturing facility in the heart of traditional town center, as well as a vacant cabinet manufacturer on the edge of downtown. The two facilities are located on acreage that is sufficient in size and location for redevelopment. Support for mixed-use development in the downtown area was expressed at public hearings during the Land Use Plan amendment process, and it is bolstered by the City with its creation of a Downtown Development Authority. The downtown is beginning to experience some redevelopment of areas that are transitioning from underutilized commercial areas to mixed use developments with in-town living and retail and office space. The existing commercial node at Broad Street and Hwy 20 is another area subject to redevelopment due to the razing of a commercial building and the intersection's potential to be a gateway to the downtown area.

Opportunities for In-fill Development

Several opportunities for in-fill redevelopment exist in the City of Sugar Hill. For example, the downtown area has already been identified as an area appropriate for redevelopment. The provision of new sidewalks and the existence of water and sewer infrastructure make the area a suitable choice for new mixed-use development. In addition, undeveloped parcels that are interspersed with existing industrial uses on the southern end of the City yield opportunities to increase a light industrial base that can provide local employment opportunities and help build the City's non-residential tax base. In-fill is an appropriate type of development for the City given the fact that potential annexation of large, undeveloped tracts is diminished with the presence of other municipal boundaries and already developed properties that abut the City limits. There still remain large, undeveloped tracts inside the City limits that may be developed, in particular along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (PIB). However, sewer capacity is currently not available along the entire length of PIB, making it necessary for the City to continue to coordinate with the County on plans for sewer expansion.

Existing Development Patterns

The City first developed as a small town comprised of single-family residences with few local businesses. Any major shopping or entertainment needs were addressed by traveling to adjacent, larger cities with more established downtowns, such as Buford. For the past twenty years Sugar Hill has primarily developed as a low- to moderate- density residential commuter community, with major retail and office opportunities located outside of the City limits, including the Mall of Georgia. The 1998 Land Use Plan introduces a greater percentage of non-residential uses in the City to strike a better land use balance, in particular along Peachtree Industrial Corridor and the four quadrants of the Highway 20/Peachtree Industrial Corridor. However, discussions at planning sessions during the Land Use Plan amendment process turned away from the segmentation of uses recommended in the 1998 plan and instead focused on finding a

balance of uses utilizing mixed-use land use classifications. Anticipated growth would therefore be accommodated with a residential component, while providing additional goods/services and employment opportunities that are accessible to local residents.

Future Land Use Plan

Community Vision

The City of Sugar Hill will be a community that retains its small-town atmosphere and established residential neighborhoods while providing for new business opportunities in its redeveloping downtown and along its major corridors.

With the development of the proposed Future Land Use Map, the City has focused on several goals:

- The protection of existing neighborhoods
- The introduction of mixed-use land use classifications
- The redevelopment of its downtown area
- The provision of additional commercial opportunities in the City
- The promotion of quality new development on vacant parcels of land
- Consistency between the land use map and recent rezonings and annexations
- Future uses for proposed annexation areas
- Enhancing and increasing pedestrian connections

Future Land Use Needs

Residential

2985.49 acres of land are classified as residential (**Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, and High Density Residential**). A majority of residential-classified land reflects its existing land use classification. To accommodate the projected increase in residents, additional residential opportunities have been provided along Suwanee-Dam Road, Whitehead Road, Highway 20, and south of South Richland Creek Drive. These areas are currently undeveloped and are adjacent to existing neighborhoods. Other smaller undeveloped properties that abut existing residential areas are also classified as residential.

Sugar Hill Population Projections* (Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs)					
	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Total Population	13,664	15,929	18,193	20,458	22,723

**Projections are based on trends calculated using Census figures and do not utilize population estimates, which may be higher than the figures shown.*

The downtown area, located west of the Highway 20/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard intersection, is anticipated to receive higher-density residential development in a mixed-use setting. A new land use classification, **Mixed Use Commercial/Office/Residential**, is proposed for much of the downtown in accordance with the Town Center Study. Public input received during the study indicated a strong preference for residential uses located above shops, restaurants, and offices in three-story buildings that are oriented to the street.

The new mixed-use classification is also proposed along much of Highway 20 west of the downtown. Mixed Use Commercial/Office/Residential is envisioned to accommodate new commercial and office uses on the heavily traveled corridor while integrating residential development, which is the predominant use to the north and south of the roadway. This classification will also make goods and services accessible to the surrounding residential areas, which currently have limited options for commercial and office uses inside the City limits. The south side of Buford Highway is also proposed to be classified as Mixed Use Commercial/Office/Residential, which is consistent with recent commercial development that is in close proximity to existing neighborhoods.

Commercial

1398.09 acres are proposed for commercial uses, the bulk of which are reflected in two new classifications, the aforementioned **Mixed Use Commercial/Office/Residential**, and **Mixed Use Commercial/Office**. The latter classification is focused primarily along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, which is largely undeveloped and is recommended in the current land use plan to be developed for industrial and commercial uses. The City wishes to relegate industrial uses just to the east of PIB where they are already found next to the railroad. Along PIB, the City recommends a full range of commercial uses to accommodate shopping, dining, and entertainment needs, as well as professional offices. The uses may either be mixed, such as a traditional shopping center with a variety of retail and office uses, or can just focus on one aspect such as an office park. The Mixed Use Commercial/Office classification is also proposed along the northern portion of Buford Highway and on Highway 20 east of the downtown area, where there is an established mix of commercial and office uses. The substantial increase in commercial-oriented uses will accommodate anticipated increases in employment and will bolster the City's non-residential tax base.

Sugar Hill Employment Projections <i>(Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs)</i>					
	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Total Employed Civilian Population	7,306	8,547	9,789	11,030	12,272
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	45	54	63	72	81
Construction	705	830	956	1,081	1,207
Manufacturing	918	1,022	1,127	1,231	1,336
Wholesale Trade	529	612	695	778	861
Retail Trade	1,095	1,284	1,473	1,662	1,851
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	204	232	259	286	313
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	618	731	843	956	1,069
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	858	1,027	1,195	1,364	1,533
Educational, Health and Social Services	1,142	1,351	1,561	1,770	1,980
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	443	526	610	693	777
Other Services	279	325	370	416	462

The Town Center has been identified as an area to concentrate commercial uses, particularly in the fashion of a traditional downtown setting with a dense mix of restaurants and cafes, specialty retail shops, professional offices, and upper-story residences. The Mixed Use Commercial/Office/Residential classification is intended to allow the mix of businesses. City residents desire to help the town center become a retail and dining destination. The construction of new sidewalks in the area will promote greater accessibility to the redeveloped downtown area, and amended zoning classifications will promote the type of uses the City would like to see based on public input from the Town Center Study.

Industrial

231.10 acres of land is proposed for Light Industrial uses, much of which reflects existing industrial uses. In particular, industrial uses are proposed to the east of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard along Brogdon Road, which over time has developed as an industrial area; several undeveloped properties remain. With the City choosing to concentrate industrial uses in this area, most other existing industrial pockets are recommended to transition to the Mixed Use Commercial/Office or Town Center land use classifications. The downtown area has been identified by the City as an area having potential to redevelop into a pedestrian-friendly activity center with a mix of uses. Several long-standing industrial properties are underutilized and do not contribute to the City's long-term vision for its downtown. Heavy Industrial uses are not recommended in the plan due to the City's desire to accommodate less intensive industrial development.