



City of Avondale Estates Comprehensive Plan

DRAFT Community Assessment 2007-2027

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COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT
DRAFT FEBRUARY 12, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan of Avondale Estates serves as a guide for making decisions and setting policies for city officials and staff concerning the future development of the city. This ten year update provides policy for the 2007-2027 planning period, and is undertaken per the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), O.C.G.A. Chapter 110-12-1, effective May 1, 2005. The Community Assessment component of the Comprehensive Plan summarizes existing conditions for the community and identifies issues and opportunities that the City of Avondale Estates plans to address during the 20 year Comprehensive Planning horizon.

DCA rules structure the format of the Comprehensive Planning process such that three interlocking components comprise the final plan:

- **Community Assessment:** Summary of existing conditions with supporting data
- **Community Participation:** Program for providing public input opportunities
- **Community Agenda:** Policy goals and strategies for plan implementation

The **Community Participation Program** details what measures a local government will undertake for ensuring that community members can participate in the creation of an Agenda for future planning. This **Community Agenda** is the heart of the Comprehensive Plan; it articulates the community vision for a 20 year planning period and provides the policy that guides land-use decision making. It also specifies the strategies by which the community intends to pursue its vision.

The **Community Assessment** is a base-line resource from which community members can draw during the development of that Community Agenda. Summarizing salient data collected and documented within an attached Technical Addendum, the Community Assessment helps communicate the City's profile and proposes a Character Area map (categorizing areas of the City their respective character type) from which to guide future development. The Community Assessment should serve government officials and the public as a concise reference.



ORGANIZATION OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

This document contains four (4) substantive sections that incorporate DCA requirements:

Section I presents a summary profile of the City, based on a comprehensive review of existing City regulations, adopted plans, and the tables, graphs and data sources documented in an attached **Technical Addendum of Data**.

Section II presents potential Issues and Opportunities that the community may wish to address during the planning process; this list is generated from a review of the addendum data, existing official documents, field observations and input from the Steering Committee.

Section III analyzes existing development patterns and areas of the City that require special attention. This section presents an Existing Land Use map that also delineates potential "character areas." DCA uses the concept of "character areas" as a tool for identifying geographic areas that deserve special attention – whether to preserve or create special features, and/or to remedy problematic conditions; character area types are specific to the local context, and thus the special attention they receive during the formulation of the Community Agenda will vary in form. The community may recommend action such as sub-area planning, investment, regulations, or some other appropriate measure.

Section IV discusses how the "Quality Community Objectives," as formulated by DCA policy, were used to prepare Sections I and II. This section serves essentially as a policy reference for residents and decision makers.



THE PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the 2000 Update to the Short Term Work Program of its Comprehensive Plan, the City has undertaken several planning and development efforts since the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, including: the adoption of a Downtown Master Plan; implementation of its historic district preservation program; a 2004 amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use map; adoption of a CBD zoning and overlay ordinance; the 2005 preparation of a TAD Redevelopment Plan; the drafting of residential zoning ordinance amendments, and; initiation of a Master Plan for Lake Avondale.

While DCA requires that, at a minimum, jurisdictions update their Comprehensive Plan every ten years, local governments may conduct major or minor amendments at any time. If changing conditions render the adopted Future Development Map¹ untenable or otherwise inappropriate as a policy guide, an amendment should be considered to modify the map per the new policy context.

¹ The Future Development Map replaces the former DCA requirement of a Future Land Use map. The new rules aim to be more flexible, with more broadly defined "character areas." A Future Land Use map remains as an optional tool for local jurisdictions.



SECTION I DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Located in central DeKalb County, approximately seven miles east of downtown Atlanta, the City of Avondale Estates is distinguished as the only documented example in the southeast United States of an early-twentieth century planned new town. City officials and residents actively work to maintain and cultivate the city's distinctive character.



Population and Housing

In 2005, an estimated **2,933 people** lived in Avondale Estates. Since 2000, when the population was 2,609, the population has only increased slightly. As residential neighborhoods approach build-out and trends tend toward smaller household sizes, the percentage of population increase will likely decline.

Population growth may increase when new housing development occurs in the downtown. Without annexation, however, no significant increase in growth is anticipated. While Avondale Estates' officials and residents have not considered approving recent annexation requests, the

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



community may decide to carefully consider the costs and benefits of future annexation proposals that may lead to growth for the City.

Single family housing comprises most of the housing stock. **Home sales prices have increased 30% between 2001 and 2006**, with the 2006 median price reaching \$259,900 compared to nearby Decatur at \$249,450. In contrast, DeKalb County median home sales price was \$169,100 in 2005. The housing stock in Avondale Estates is in good condition, but aging.

The overall **residential profile is that of stability**: about 90% of the City's housing is owner-occupied, and nearly half of the City's residents moved to Avondale before 1990. This stands in contrast to the surrounding, 10 mile-radius market area, which has around 50% owner-occupied housing units.

In general, citizens of Avondale Estates enjoy higher incomes than DeKalb County and the State of Georgia; City **average household income in 2000 was \$89,415**. By comparison, DeKalb County average household income was \$63,079.

Still, of all home owner households, an estimated 115 people earned 1/2 or less than the Median Family Income (MFI) in 2000, translating into carrying a greater housing cost-burden. Elderly households are especially vulnerable to spending 30% to 50% or more of their income on housing costs. With rising home values and the associated increase in taxes, this number has likely increased since 2000.

Half the residents **are between the ages 25-54 years old**, and approximately **20% of the residents are 65** and over, according to Census estimates. Compared to surrounding DeKalb, the City has a greater percentage of people in the 65 and older age bracket and a smaller percentage of people under the age of 20. Both DeKalb County and the State of Georgia have approximately 30% of the population under the age of 20, while Avondale Estates has only about 20%. The City is predominately White, with other racial groups (African-American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and others) comprising only about 10% of the residential population. Of these groups, African-Americans primarily account for the diversity. The burst of Hispanic population growth experienced by the greater Metro-Atlanta region scarcely touches Avondale Estates, which counts only about 50 Hispanics within its population in 2005, indicating an increase of only ten since 2000.



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Economic Development

The City of Avondale Estates constitutes a very small economic unit of analysis; the city encompasses 738 acres (1.15 square miles). The dynamics affecting overall economic health depend upon DeKalb County and the greater Metropolitan Atlanta region, and nearly all employed residents work outside of Avondale Estates, **traveling 20 to 60 minutes for their work commute**. In 2000, only 164 residents worked within the City limits. One-third of the employed population works in the Education, Health and Social Services industries, and approximately one-third worked in the Information, Financial or Professional/Administrative/Management fields of employment.

Of all industries in DeKalb County, the greatest decline was experienced in its Retail Trade and other Service sectors between 1990 and 2000; however, evidence of change in trends has emerged in the past few years, such as the opening of Stonecrest Mall in the southeastern part of the County. More recently, the Memorial Drive area attracted new large-scale retail and restaurant franchises, such as the Wal-Mart mixed-use project on the old Avondale Mall site adjacent to Avondale Estates' south border, an ALDI food store, Goodwill Career Services Center, and a new Zaxby's all slated for construction or opening in 2007. In the residential market, the Atlanta Metropolitan area has experienced expansion with a new focus on mixed-use, town-center living makes the historic "authentic" small town character of Avondale Estates a highly valued distinction within the residential market.

The City hosts 122 employment establishments; of these, only six employed more than 100 people in 2004. According to 2005 estimates, **Avondale Estates had a total employment of 1,766** following the slow, continued growth documented by the 2000 Census, which showed an increase of about 350 jobs since 1990. Few new jobs will likely be generated until the downtown redevelops. The downtown area alone provided 1,153 private sector jobs (2004). If implemented as recommended, the Downtown Master Plan projects a 10% increase in Office, Retail and Food/Beverage employment every ten years, with an associated 10% decline in Auto and Industrial uses over the same time period.

Since the 1998 Comprehensive Plan update, the City has aggressively undertaken a series of steps to revitalize the economic potential for the downtown and take advantage of its

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



comparative advantage as a town with distinctive character. It established the **Downtown Development Authority** in 2001 and in 2004 developed and adopted the **Downtown Master Plan**. Among other resources developed to implement the plan, the City maintains an inventory of building condition (standard, dilapidated, etc) and vacant lots that is routinely updated. The map on the following page illustrates the downtown assessment of building conditions in 2004. At that time, slightly over 10% of the downtown area had deteriorating structures; windshield surveys suggest this remains approximately the same ratio in 2006.

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



Downtown Building Condition Inventory 2004

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



A potential change may be ahead for the downtown at the Fenner-Dunlap factory site, which straddles the DeKalb County and City boundary line. It functions as a conveyor-belt factory that employs approximately 250 employees (2006). The factory property owners began negotiating sale of the property with developers interested in mixed-use projects. The nearly 200,000 square foot mill makes a significant impact on the City but does not create the nuisance usually associated with industrial uses. As a potential re-development site, the Fenner-Dunlap site will carry important economic implications in the near future, both in terms of job loss and as a potential generator of redevelopment. In the 2006 land negotiations, demolition costs apparently are an impediment. Both the City and the County would have to approve any re-development project on the property.

Natural and Cultural Resources

In the 1980s, the **Historic District** was listed in the National Register of Historic places and the City subsequently built upon this achievement and established a local **Historic Preservation Ordinance** and Preservation Commission in the 1990s. The Historic District is identified on the Historic, Natural, and Community Resources Map. An inventory of specific historical markers is found in the Technical Addendum.

Avondale Estates is noted for the Tudor Revival architecture found on the two blocks near the Avondale Road/Clarendon Avenue intersection. The Tudor Revival style is characterized by multiple gables, half-timbering, multi-paned sash, tile roofs and a picturesque roof line. Buildings are constructed of brick, terra cotta tile and wood. Over time, some of the original styling elements of the Tudor Village have been altered, including storefront and window changes and the replacement of tile roofs with shingle. A few additional buildings along



New Tudor Revival on Avondale



A National Folk home on Locust St.

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



Avondale Road have attempted to incorporate this style, to varying degrees. City Hall, constructed in 1990/91, significantly continues the style. The Avondale Centre professional office building is also similar but its effect is mitigated by its perpendicular orientation to the street. The Waffle House incorporates slight cosmetic modifications to its standard design. The other most common style found is National Folk. Several National Folk homes are found west of Clarendon Road. Key characters of the National Folk style, include simple massing, usually front or side gabled roofs, and uniform roof heights. Buildings are usually clad in horizontal clapboard siding, with ample front porches and vertically proportioned windows. This style represents an interpretation of traditional local housing types utilizing mass-produced materials transported from other parts of the nation. As such, this style exhibits some geographic variations. In Avondale Estates the National Folk style serves a basis for the older pre-dating the Tudor Village; they are found north of Avondale Road and west of Clarendon Avenue, with other styles manifesting themselves through details.

The **natural areas along Lake Avondale** and the lake itself provide a valuable natural resource in the center of the City. City investments in park space since the 1998 Comprehensive Plan include a park at Wiltshire and Lakeshore, south of the Lake, and the purchase of a small amount of greenspace in the northeast part of the City.

There are **several small ovular parks** around the Downtown area, including the park where a landmark clock tower is located.



There are few environmentally sensitive areas in the City; the Natural Resource Inventory does not indicate flood plains, wetlands, or rivers of special protection, although a portion of the City may lie within a groundwater recharge area. The City of Avondale Estates General Code makes provisions for building in groundwater recharge areas. In 2005 regulations were adopted that also provide for stream buffer protection, soil and erosion control and conservation subdivision protection per the North Georgia Metropolitan Water District model regulations. In 2004, the City adopted the Stormwater Management Ordinance as well.

The City has a Tree Protection and Preservation Code; new development must meet tree density requirements as established in Section 5-409, Chapter 5 of the City's Municipal Code.

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



In 2005 the City established a Tree Bond for Reynolds Park dedicated to the replacement of trees as necessary.

Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination

In order to maintain a high quality of life for the citizens of Avondale Estates, facilities and services managed by the City of Avondale Estates Public Works Department include the following: Waste Collection, Facilities Management, Code Enforcement, Parks and Right-of-Way maintenance. In 2005 the City established a stormwater enterprise and associated fund for stormwater drainage repair. The City also supports a police department.

All other services and facilities are provided by DeKalb County (fire, water and sewer, solid waste management via service agreement, transportation improvement projects via state funding mechanisms) or DeKalb County School System. A complete chart of items included in the **County service delivery strategy** is included in the Technical Addendum (see page 41), but should be reviewed during the Community Agenda process for accuracy.

The above dependency means that the City of Avondale must work closely with county, state and nearby cities to ensure a variety of public services. Recently Avondale Estates negotiated with DeKalb County regarding the provision of a new fire station facility (fire station #3), which the County was willing to build provided bond funding is available. The State Legislature did not, however, approve the public safety facilities bond approval required for this undertaking during the 2006 general session. The City will bring this issue up in the 2007 session.

The community negotiated (and continues to stay active in the process) with the County over the terms of a new Wal-Mart mixed-use project on the old Avondale Mall site. The successful passage of the 2005 TAD Redevelopment Plan through County Board of Commissioners also speaks to the City's intergovernmental coordination efforts.

In December 2006, Avondale Estates worked with the City of Atlanta to obtain a Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Interoperable Communications Technology Program grant from the US Department of Justice to the City of Atlanta Police Department. It funds fundamental elements of regional collaboration and mutual aid response in public safety within the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Areas (AMSA). The grant provides a 75% match of financial resources for each organization in the AMSA. The City of Avondale Estates Police Department will be the recipient of five mobile digital radios and eleven portable digital radios.

City of Avondale Estates:
Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027

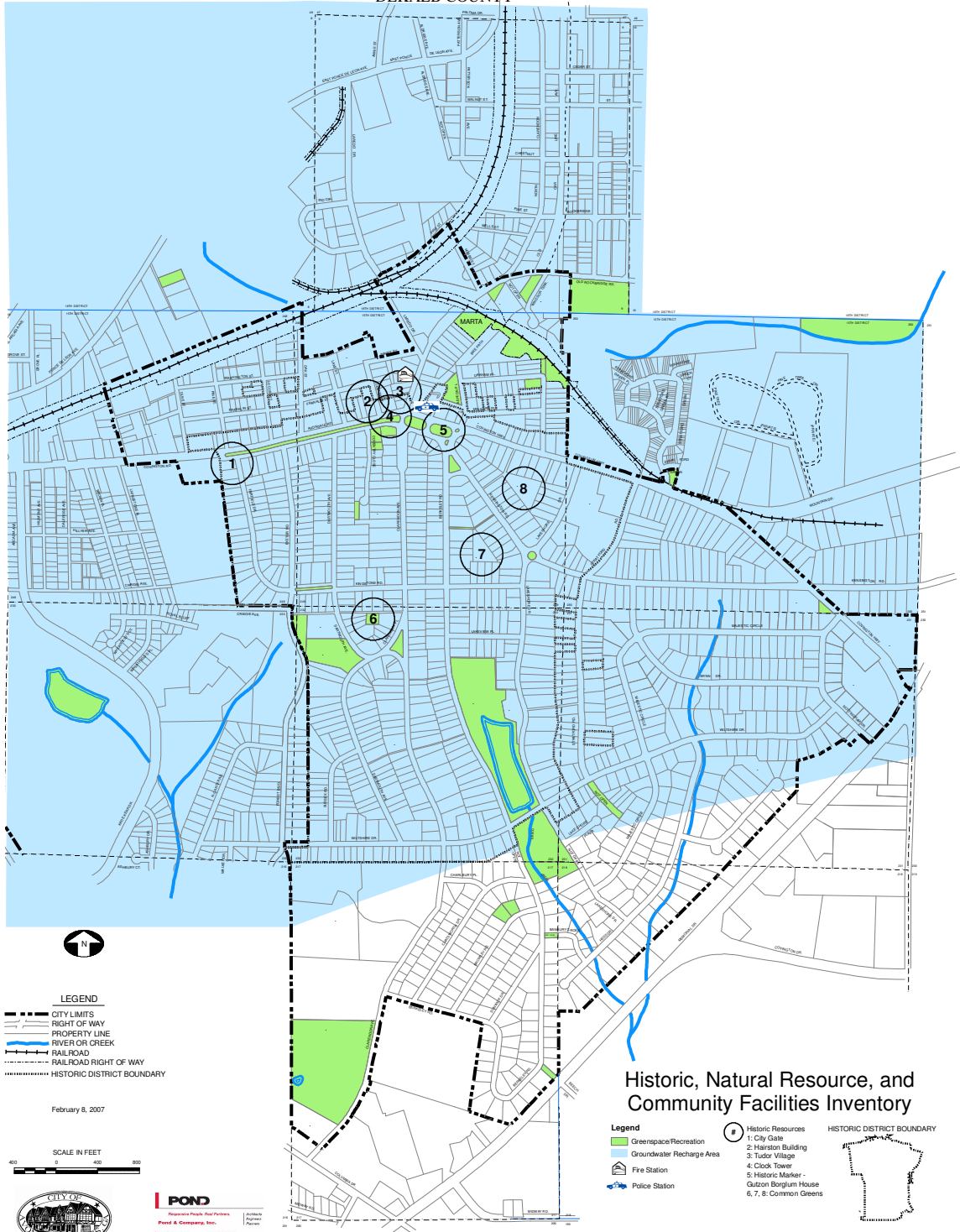


Natural, Cultural and Community Resources Map

As required by DCA, the map below identifies a series of resources; the map shows key historical markers, recreation features, environmental features and community facilities.

The blue area covering much of this map indicates groundwater recharge area, per the Department of Natural Resources inventory.

CITY OF AVONDALE ESTATES, GEORGIA DEKALB COUNTY





Transportation Systems and Road Network

County and Region-wide context.

As a policy issue, transportation and traffic congestion looms large over the Metro Atlanta Region. Restrictions in federal transportation funding make road improvements an even more contentious issue that impacts the entire region's quality of life. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) has oriented policy discussion toward making land-use decisions more intimately linked with transportation planning. One program that promotes this reorientation is the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), which funds studies and construction projects that develop alternative transportation modalities. In 2006, ARC "grandfathered" Avondale Estates' Downtown Master Plan into the program; while receiving no funds for the study completed in 2004, this new LCI status makes the City of Avondale Estates eligible for millions of transportation dollars earmarked for LCI projects, such as sidewalks or alternative modalities.

For major road construction improvements, the City of Avondale depends upon DeKalb County and the State Department of Transportation (DOT). DeKalb County's draft 2006 Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) divides the county into planning subareas; Avondale Estates lies within the Central Quadrant. All the major corridors within the Central Quadrant experience congestion during commute periods. Seventy-four percent (74%) of this subarea's population drive to work and only 9% use public transportation.

The County CTP has not yet been adopted and the short, medium and long-range funding commitments cannot be easily determined with confidence at this date. Of the total 14 projects recommended for road capacity improvements in the CTP within the Central Quadrant, none highlighted run through Avondale Estates; recommended operational improvements did include Memorial Drive. The Technical Addendum reports projects identified within the Regional Transportation Program (RTP).

Public Transportation.

MARTA's² East Line rail service serves Avondale Estates. The Avondale Station is located east of Decatur on the north side of the rail corridor; the Kensington Station is near the Covington/Memorial Drive intersection. MARTA is proposing a Park-and-Ride facility for the

² MARTA is the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



Avondale Station. MARTA bus routes that run near or through the City include Route 96 along Columbia Drive, Route 121 along N. Avondale/Covington Road, and Route 122 which runs north from Avondale Road on North Clarendon to Georgia Perimeter College. Route 114 stops at Covington Highway. and Memorial Drive.

DeKalb County's draft 2006 CTP identifies a Bus Rapid Transit facility targeted for the 2007 and 2010 planning period that would operate from Stone Mountain to the old Avondale Mall site. According to the 2006 MARTA Environmental Assessment, however, operations at the southern end would terminate at Kensington Station.

Road and Sidewalk Networks and Alternatives

Three major transportation corridors impact the City: College Avenue/Covington Highway (US 278/S.R. 10) forms the east-west spine; the CSX railroad corridor (formerly the Georgia Railroad), now shared by MARTA, forms a general boundary to the north of the City; and Memorial Drive (SR 12) forms the southeastern boundary. Covington Hwy/Hwy 278 is a designated STAA highway, for oversized trucks to move freight. Trucks currently passing through this main intersection in Avondale Estates create conflict with pedestrians, as the intersection is adjacent to a pedestrian-oriented town center.

The City contends with an increasing **traffic congestion** problem that is largely out of its power to control. The same congestion conditions identified in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan - at Covington Highway (US 278) and at Clarendon Avenue - persist in 2006. According to the draft CTP, however, the Clarendon Avenue afternoon congestion ranks as "medium" level.

The State intends to place a rapid vehicular throughput along North Avondale Road (SR 10/278) in the long range; this conflicts with the pedestrian oriented policies and plans adopted by the City.

Movement within the downtown area is restricted because there are few east/west connections north of Avondale Road, and because Franklin Street does not connect with Clarendon Avenue. The large block between Maple and Olive Streets impedes flows; redevelopment there could create an improved street network. The dead-end along Ashton



Place also limits north-south connections. An analysis of Average Daily Trips generated within the downtown is presented in the Technical Addendum.

A **PATH trail** exists along the MARTA line. Most residential areas have **sidewalks**, but a severe lack of sidewalks exists in critical areas. The Downtown Master Plan elaborates fully on this issue: if all streets north of Avondale Road had sidewalks along both sides, there would be 31,000 linear feet of sidewalks. Currently, there exists only 9,550 linear feet, or 31% of the potential length.

The City's recent **streetscape program** implemented 4,300 linear feet of sidewalks, with a typical width of five feet and brick pavers on one or both sides; some areas include street trees. The improvements occurred on the north side of Avondale Road and along a portion of Clarendon Avenue. These new sidewalks are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and in good condition. However, the new sidewalks are generally too narrow for more than one person and are often small pedestrian refuges in-between large curb cuts. Beyond the streetscape project, facilities are severely lacking. Only a few lots in the downtown area have sidewalks on their property, representing a total of 5,250 linear feet. Overall, the condition of these sidewalks is fair to poor. Many are cluttered by utility poles and are too narrow to be effective.

Despite the lack of sidewalks, pedestrians can easily maneuver around the Downtown area because of the street grid and the fact that there is little traffic on the narrow streets to the north of Avondale Road. Pedestrian connectivity to the residential area to the east is easily achieved. However, two substantial **pedestrian barriers** exist between the downtown and adjacent areas: the rail lines on the northern edge prohibit access to this property across the tracks; and the heavy traffic, high-speed Avondale Road is difficult to safely traverse on foot.

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



Sidewalk near City Hall constructed as part of streetscape program.



Avondale Road creates a barrier for pedestrians.

The Downtown Master Plan recommends a detailed set of **transportation and street design recommendations**, summarized here:

- A street plan that includes:
 - New streets,
 - Street alignments
 - Implications and costs of a new Avondale Bypass
 - A list of priority and long-term sidewalks
- A proposal to re-route S.R. 10/US Route 278 to Columbia and Memorial Drives
- Local measures for mediating traffic movement along North Avondale



SECTION II ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Overview and Purpose

This section identifies a series of issues and opportunities that can help frame and prioritize the City's discussions when developing the Community Agenda. DCA offers a list of topic areas to consider. Only those that are relevant to the City are included here. As they assess the list of Issues and Opportunities here, community members may wish to also refer to Section IV, which reviews Georgia policy regarding "quality communities" and benchmarks that local governments should use in pursuing improved quality of life for their residents.

Several of the items below were drawn from the analysis and community outreach conducted during the production of the Downtown Master Plan. The Comprehensive Plan update process is a good opportunity to present the plan's results back to the community for affirmation or revision. While the Downtown Master Plan focuses on the town center, the data and recommendations contained therein address a broader range of City issues and opportunities. Below are **issues and opportunities** that emerge from a synthesis of several data sources.

Population Change

- An aging population. The proportion of the population that is over 65 years of age is increasing and this population group will require specialized housing and services in the future.
- Smaller young population. The smaller percentage of population under the age of 20 years may indicate dynamics in the community beyond an aging population, such as access to high-performing schools or affordability of housing (that is, the City may not be able to attract new households with small children).
- Potential Growth Factors. **The City has not approved recent annexation requests but may consider future proposals based on the costs and benefits of each;** for now it is anticipated that population growth will most likely occur only with the redevelopment of the downtown center and the associated multi-family units proposed by City policy.
- Diversity. Data regarding the population age distribution quantifies what prior planning exercises document as a positive feature of their community – the City currently enjoys a mix of older and younger residents. Prior planning exercises document resident celebration of this mix of all age groups.

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



- Sense of Community. The City is only very incrementally experiencing any other kind of diversification. While the lack of racial, ethnic and income diversity is not expected to change radically, incremental change means the City has an opportunity to continue cultivating the “strong sense of community” and accommodate households with new demographics in a way that benefits all residents.

Economic Development

Through the Master Plan Development process, the City documented a clear relationship between land-use changes and economic development opportunities for the City. The most salient opportunity for the City was the one it created for itself by developing and adopting the City’s Downtown Master Plan in 2004. Other opportunities and issues facing the community include:

- The City’s location and village form. Avondale Estates has close proximity to a major urban center, yet the City retains a unique form—as a planned community that can support neighborhood-scale commercial, with a well-defined downtown space created by the Tudor Village.
- Clear Development Plan. The Master Plan gives City officials and private sector actors a specific set of community-supported instructions for what transportation investment and development projects (form, mass and use/function) should look like in the Downtown, with a focus on transportation alternatives.
- Tax Allocation District (TAD). Based on the Master Plan, the City already performed several preparatory steps required to move the plan forward, such as the TAD Redevelopment Plan. While the DeKalb County School System Board continues to reject TAD participation at reporting time, the TAD received DeKalb County Government approval in December 2006 and is prepared to move forward, should School System officials change their policy in the future.
- Employment/Workforce. The City does not support a broad base of employment opportunities. New employment sources are unlikely until the downtown redevelops.
- Comparative advantage: Identity. Neighborhood business districts—particularly downtown Decatur due to its proximity—will be the most direct competitors of any new business and residential development within the City. Downtown Decatur, Virginia Highlands, Little Five Points, East Atlanta, Emory Village and the neighborhoods that surround them are, at varying levels, competitors of downtown Avondale Estates. The success of each of these neighborhood business districts, however, is largely tied to



their respective distinct identities. Per the Master Plan assessment, the City of Avondale Estates recognizes that the community's task is not to replicate competitors, but rather differentiate themselves. Qualities that position Avondale Estates with an **opportunity** to differentiate itself from its competitors include:

- Urban proximity but rural sensibility
- Civic autonomy from the County
- Architecture and Historic Districts
- Multi-generational community profile
- Public facilities and events – public swimming, Lake Avondale

Some of the economic development issues that continue to **challenge** the community include:

- Lack of anchor, destination businesses;
- Perception of restrictive government (e.g., business hours, signage);
- Limited pedestrian traffic;
- Underutilized commercial properties;
- Lack of parking;
- Visual blight caused by vacancies or disrepair of commercial along the key corridor entrances to the City;
- The community needs to consider how to position itself to take advantage of the destination traffic that the new development of the Avondale Mall site (bordering the City to the south) will generate and to avoid associated, negative impacts;
- Constraints for the Fenner-Dunlap factory redevelopment.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Historic District. Avondale Estates' cultivates its identity and "sense of place" based in large part by honoring and enhancing the historical significance of its roots as a planned community. The City established historic districts and their respective preservation rules and regulations. The community has made significant efforts to protect and enhance these shared resources; it retains a consultant on historic preservation and maintains an active Historic Preservation board. The Master Plan is replete with recommendations regarding specific historic features in the City.
- Architectural thematic. The Tudor Revival buildings create distinct identity for the City. The remaining historic homes west of North Clarendon Road provide a sense of



Avondale Estate's pre-Tudor heritage. The historic precedents present opportunities for revitalization themes.

- Additional historic landmarks. Homes identified as Modern (1945 – 1954) may become future historic landmarks. Early Modern buildings that are now more than fifty years old are being protected or preserved nationwide; they are likely become more valued for their historic character in the future.
- Downtown Parks. The Downtown Master Plan identifies a lack of parks and plazas; the landscaped median with clock tower on the Avondale Road provides visual interest and a visual buffer, but does not function as an active space for gathering. The oval parks south of City Hall are under-utilized.
- PATH Greenway Trail and Unused Land. The greenway trail that traverses downtown also crosses under-utilized or vacant parcels that could be acquired for park spaces.
- The Lake Avondale and Lake Park. A community-based, Master Plan effort for the Lake and Park will be completed in 2007 to preserve and cultivate these resources.
- Community Participation and Implementation Capacity: The City enjoys high rates of community engagement. In addition to neighborhood organizations and discussion boards, official planning events and informational meetings document high participation levels by the large numbers of Avondale Estate residents who attend these public forums. Furthermore, several City functions depend upon citizens to fill boards that exist to hear development related issues (historic preservation, trees and environment, planning and zoning, ad hoc task force/steering committees, etc). An active citizenry gives city officials public support (or even impetus) to implement the plans, policies and strategies they and their predecessors adopt. This is a cultural resource that can translate into real dollars as City officials seek ways to creatively use funding sources for community facilities and improvements. Funding agencies are more likely to direct resources to a local government that demonstrates public support and the institutional capacity to implement adopted measures.
- Strong Sense of Community. Another intangible resource - but no less real in what it implicates as an opportunity - is what Avondale Estates citizens identified as a "strong sense of community." Several features creating it include, among many others: the public pool and tennis facilities; a variety of community groups; annual activities; family-oriented events; tree-lined streets; a reputation as a great place to raise a family; well-built, historic homes, and; safety. The stability of the City is further promoted by the longevity of home-owner residency.



Housing

- Historic homes. The existing stock of historical homes is a resource protected and cultivated by the Historic District and Certificate of Appropriateness process.
- Housing Condition. Most of the downtown structures are in good condition; several of the remaining homes in the “Ingleside” neighborhood are adulterated or dilapidated potentially beyond salvation.
- Future Housing. Given the stable, built-out neighborhoods, changing densities in existing residential areas is not a likely or, according to preliminary community discussion, desired future. Under the Master Plan concept, there is an opportunity to direct new housing choices with possibly higher densities in the Commercial Business District.
- Housing Costs. Affordability for most residents does not appear to be a widespread issue, although housing prices have increased by one-third in recent years.
- Rental Housing. A strong apartment and other rental market exists within a ten mile radius of downtown Avondale Estates, but there are few rental options within the City.

Land Use

- Updated Policies. Building upon the success of implementing new zoning ordinances aimed to implement the Downtown Master Plan, enhancing enforcement capacities, establishing the Design Review Board and enhancing its capacities.
- Maintain Historic Preservation. Continuing to utilize a Historic Preservation consultant to work with the Preservation Board to maintain the intentions of the Historic District.
- Redevelopment Opportunities. Re-developing the sites identified within the Downtown Master Plan
- Implementation opportunities. Implementing the reconfiguration of the downtown.
- Permit coordination. Promoting better intergovernmental cooperation with DeKalb County regarding site development permits (establishing mechanisms to have greater participation).

Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

The Community Agenda development will consider how infrastructure can better accommodate growth (stormwater, water and sewer, and road capacity). At present, several areas of infrastructure needs are greater than the capacity to accommodate those



needs. The Downtown Master Plan provides an important road map for itemizing and prioritizing costs of transportation and public facilities improvements.

Transportation

- Avondale By-pass. The possible Avondale Bypass, a road running east of the American Legion, north of the rail line to Sam's Crossing could increase route options. **City discussions regarding the potential by-pass should refer to the by-pass study (2004) conducted by an appointed Citizens Committee and on record with the City Clerk.**
- New MARTA parking deck. Outside the City boundaries, the proposed MARTA parking deck may create a new set of transportation dynamics for the downtown area.
- Downtown Street Network. New development in the town center could compromise the downtown street network if not properly designed.
- Traffic Calming. Existing narrow streets and small blocks serve as traffic calming measures and provide multiple routes.
- Lack of sidewalks. The Downtown street system offers only around 30% of its full sidewalk potential, though some streetscape improvement has occurred in recent years.
- LCI status. An opportunity to remedy some of the impediments to creating a pedestrian-oriented town center exists now that the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) officially "grandfathered" the City's Downtown Master Plan as qualifying as a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study. Granting this status now makes the City eligible for millions of dollars of federal transportation dollars earmarked for projects (e.g., sidewalk or enhancement) only with the LCI status. While the City still must compete for these dollars, they do so among a small pool of qualified jurisdictions.
- Staffing and project execution challenges. Receiving LCI funds would, however, create a staffing challenge for the City, given that these funds have arduous federal rules and procedures for Right-of-Way and construction management.

Facilities and Services

- Stormwater Enterprise. The newly created fund needs monitoring to ensure reserves meet the targeted levels by the 2009 time frame.



- Police. Prior planning exercises identify excellent safety services as a community strength; like surrounding jurisdictions, however, the City faces the challenge of regular recruitment and retaining qualified personnel.
- Safety. The occasional break-in causes some concerns about safety, The community will want to assess this issue.
- School System Performance. One elementary school is located within the City boundaries, but an additional elementary, middle and high school are immediately adjacent to the City limits. Recent community organizing focuses on the poor performance of the DeKalb County School System serving the community. According to some sources, there is a growing group of home-school households resulting from concerns about the education level of quality. **The Avondale Education Association, a civic group of approximately 160 members is working to address this issue and what it portends if residents need to seek alternative education options.**
- School/community impacts. Forest Hills Elementary School is one of five schools that the DeKalb County Board proposes closing by the 2008-2009 school year. While outside the City boundary, the City will feel the impact of this closing. Members of the community mobilized around the issue of schools may find creative ways to work with the County regarding this existing elementary school site.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Nearby Cities. The City enjoys healthy relationships with surrounding cities; their cooperation with each other has been consistently good.
- DeKalb County. The City maintains service agreements with DeKalb County but would like to see areas of coordination improved (such as site development permitting).
- DeKalb County Board of Education. The relationship with the Board of Education is an important issue because of the reported low performance of the public schools servicing Avondale Estates' residents; parents may seek alternatives – either migrating out, or private schools outside the area (contributing to traffic). Additionally, though the Board of Education has rejected TAD participation in the recent past; however, maintaining communication on the subject is important for the City.



SECTION III EXISTING DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

The City is primarily comprised of stable, built-out single family neighborhoods, with a downtown targeted for commercial revitalization. New development potential to the south and southeast of the City may **impact** City residents. Along with new retail announced along Memorial Drive, the County continues to negotiate with the new owners of the old Avondale Mall site for a mixed-use project, supposedly with higher design standards. The 1998 Comprehensive Plan identified concerns about urban design decisions made by surrounding DeKalb County. Since that time, the County has undertaken six Livable Centers Initiative projects pursuing more pedestrian-friendly, design conscious activity centers. It also has adopted design overlays and new zoning districts for mixed-use projects with high design standards. The draft of DeKalb County's comprehensive plan (pending adoption 2006) emphasizes land-use and design as a high priority; the County passed two TADs further demonstrates creative efforts toward achieving redevelopment. **Few built products have emerged to evaluate whether these measures adequately address design concerns raised by Avondale Estate citizens.**

Existing Land Use and Character Areas.

Existing land use in Avondale Estates is shown on the map following the Character Areas discussion. The table below details the breakdown of acreage per land use within the city limits. The majority of land is devoted to single family residential neighborhoods, followed by commercial uses at 8.3% of the total land area. The amount of open space comprised of parks and recreation areas is almost equal to the land area occupied by commercial uses.

Existing Land Use Type	Acreage	Percentage
Single Family Residential	436.0	71.1%
Multi-Family Residential	32.6	5.3%
Commercial	50.9	8.3%
Public/Institutional	25.3	4.1%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	10.1	1.7%
Park/Recreation/Conservation	49.5	8.1%
Undeveloped/Vacant	9.1	1.5%
Total	613.4	100.0%



Character Areas were created for the City and overlain on the Land use map shown on the following page. The character areas were delineated per the DCA guidelines, primarily based upon the adopted Downtown Master Plan and the Future Land Use Map, as amended in 2004. This portion of the Community Assessment also includes the Future Land-Use Map because it was so recently adopted; thus it should be presented to the community during the Comprehensive Plan update process to evaluate whether the designations are still appropriate or need re-assessment. The City character is essentially split between the Residential neighborhoods south of Avondale Road and the Downtown area. The Downtown area comprises 116.1 acres, of which about 13% remains vacant. Each Character Area is described in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Central Business District

The Central Business District of Avondale Estates is comprised of its historic core, including the Tudor Village and a mixture of industrial and auto-oriented uses. This combination of businesses has evolved over time; in the future the City envisions a mixed-use downtown featuring restored historic buildings and a range of retail, employment and open space options tied together by new streets, greenways, and pedestrian facilities.

Traditional Neighborhoods

All of the residential areas in Avondale Estates are considered Traditional Neighborhoods for several reasons. Many of these neighborhoods have historic value in that the homes were designed and built in the style and tradition of notable American architectural periods. Additionally, they are largely well-maintained, there has been recent investment in many home renovations, and the underlying street network and neighborhood fabric is sustainable. The residential neighborhoods make up the majority of the land within the city and serve to connect other areas of the city. Thus, the neighborhoods are a well integrated and well-connected part of the City.

Office Node

Currently, government offices are renting commercial space within an office building on the east side of Covington Highway, making this area a combination of public and

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027

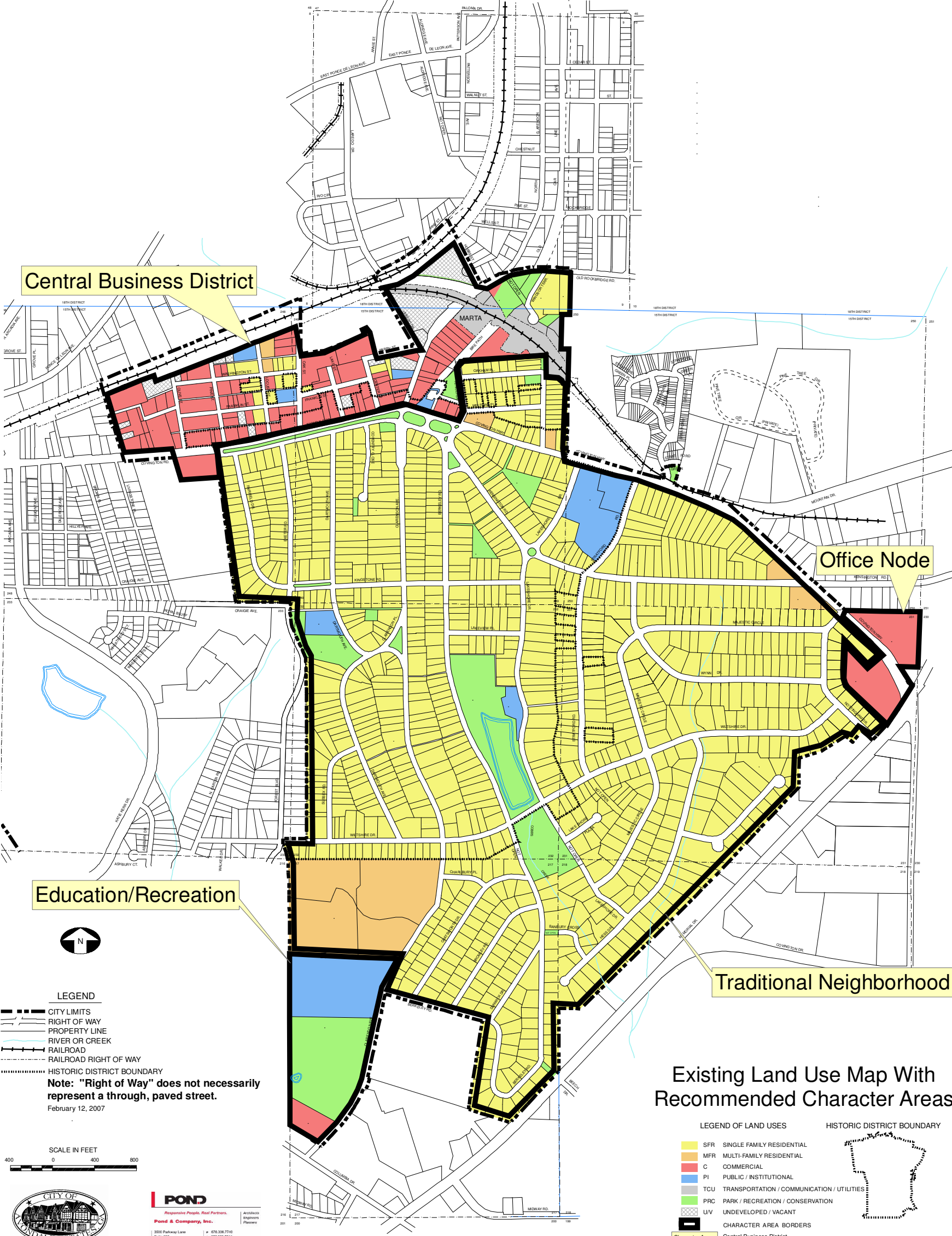


institutional uses rather than the pure commercial use shown on the future land use map. There are also neighborhood scale commercial uses such as a CVS drugstore.

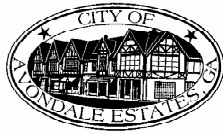
Education/Recreation

This area is comprised of recreational fields associated with adjacent institutions, both public and private schools.

CITY OF
AVONDALE ESTATES, GEORGIA
DEKALB COUNTY

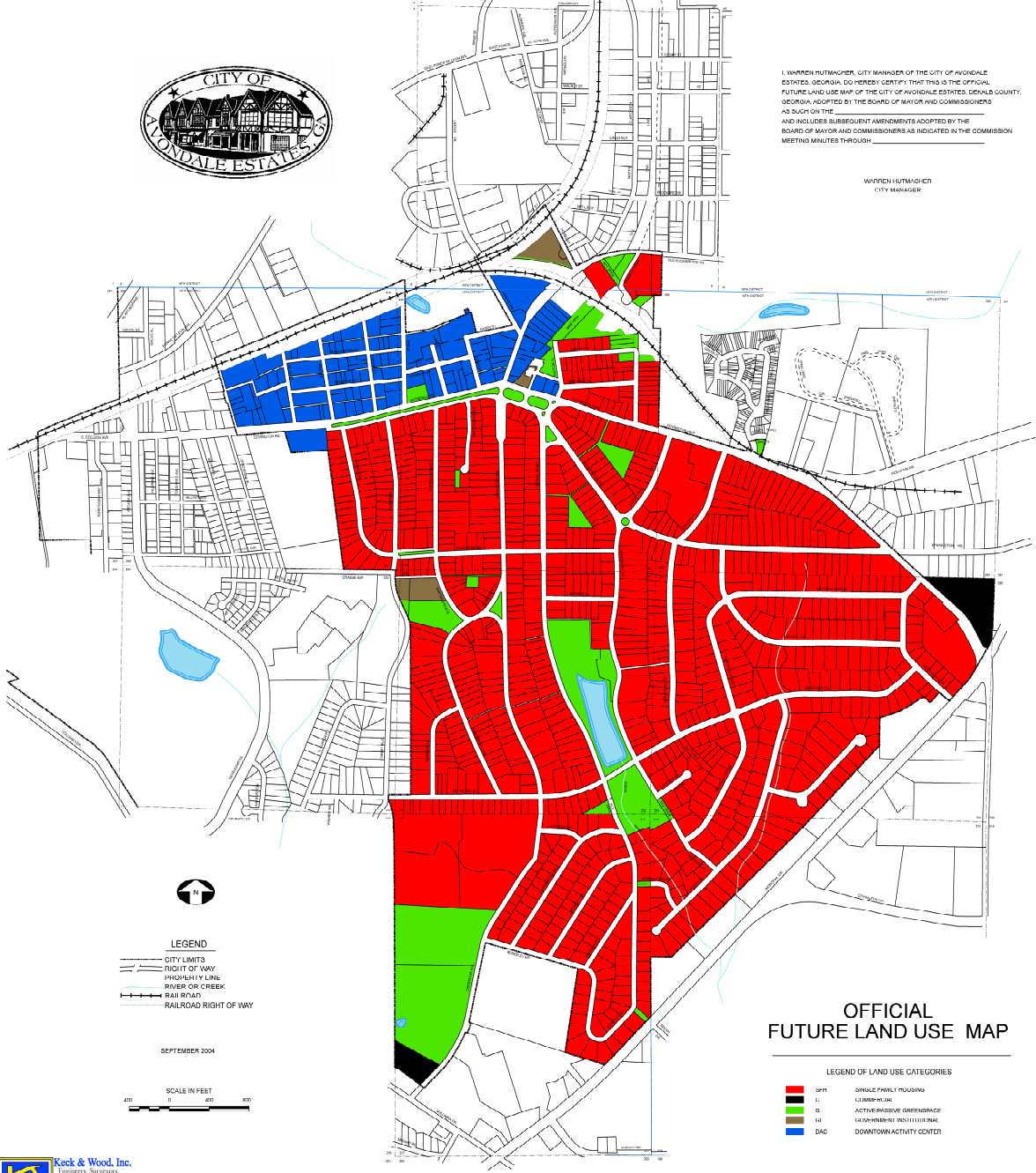


CITY OF AVONDALE ESTATES, GEORGIA DEKALB COUNTY



I, WARREN HUTMAGHER, CITY MANAGER OF THE CITY OF AVONDALE ESTATES, GEORGIA, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS IS THE OFFICIAL FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE CITY OF AVONDALE ESTATES, DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS AS SUCH ON THE _____ AND INCLUDES SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS AS INDICATED IN THE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES THROUGH _____.

WARREN HUTMAGHER
CITY MANAGER



LEGEND

— CITY LIMITS
— RIGHT OF WAY
— PROPERTY LINE
— RIVER OR CREEK
— RAILROAD
— RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY

SEPTEMBER 2004

SCALE IN FEET
0 100 200

OFFICIAL FUTURE LAND USE MAP

LEGEND OF LAND USE CATEGORIES

■ SFR	SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCIAL
■ LD	LOW-DENSITY RESIDENCIAL
■ AG	ACTIVE/PASSIVE GREENSPACE
■ UI	UNINCORPORATED INSTITUTIONAL
■ DAC	DOWNTOWN ACTIVITY CENTER





Areas requiring special attention

Areas that deserve special attention and the reasons they need particular attention are summarized below:

1. Downtown: areas needing revitalization. The abandoned or obsolete commercial structures on the west side of the downtown deserve special attention, as does the Fenner-Dunlap industrial site. To address these areas, redevelopment goals, the Downtown Master Plan conceptualizes 250 total new housing units; 75,000 square feet of new office space; 73,000 square feet net of new retail/restaurant space, and; 1.91 acres of new park space;
2. Downtown: areas ready for redevelopment may outpace infrastructure. When redevelopment occurs in the downtown, the City will need to carefully plan street improvements per the Master Plan, so that infrastructure improvements keep pace with the new development;
3. Lake Avondale recreation area: environmental resource. Problems with erosion and maintenance identified in other planning documents will now be addressed as part of the Lake Avondale Master Plan during 2007, and;
4. Areas with Historic Value. As mentioned in other sections, the City already protects areas with historic value through Historic District regulations.

Avondale Estates Downtown Master Plan: Concept Map

The concept map on the following page illustrates the policy adopted by City officials for the future of the downtown area, in terms of land-use and key elements. The concept map is supported by the Downtown Master Plan text which details the strategy for actualizing the plan.





SECTION IV QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES DISCUSSION

DCA adopted the Quality Community Objectives as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. As a planning tool, the Quality Community Objectives Assessment delineates a series of indicators for 15 policy objectives, organized into the form of a checklist meant to help conduct the analysis for the Community Assessment.

While generating the Community Assessment summary, including Issues and Opportunities, each indicator of these objectives was reviewed. Those objectives that the City achieves (or falls short of meeting) are relevant for the City were included within the text above. The 15 Objectives are abbreviated below along with the policy statement in italics (for a full copy of the assessment tool, see

<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/downloads/PQGAsessment.pdf>.

A comment is made only for those that are *not* elaborated upon in the preceding Sections I and II. The purpose of itemizing these issues is to demonstrate consideration of them, per State mandate; however, given the size of the City, its limited resources, and the location relative to a larger county and regional economy, most of the QCOs with comments are more appropriately addressed through other levels of government involvement or are not feasible for the community to address. This is something, however, that should be evaluated through the public participation process in developing the Community Agenda.

1. Development Patterns: *Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of on each other, and facilitating pedestrian activity.*

The following sections address the Development Patterns Quality Community Objective:

- Section I: Economic Development
 - Transportation Systems and Road Network
- Section II: Economic Development
 - Housing
 - Land Use
 - Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services



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

COMMENT: The City does not have brownfield sites, but greyfield sites that need redevelopment are addressed within the Downtown Master Plan.

COMMENT: The City does not allow small lot development (5,000 square feet or less). Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Economic Development

Transportation Systems and Road Network

Section II: Population Change

Economic Development

Housing

Land Use

Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

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

The following sections address the Sense of Place Quality Community Objective:

Section I: Economic Development

Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural, Cultural, and Community Resources Map

Transportation Systems and Road Network

Section II: Population Change

Economic Development

Natural and Cultural Resources

Housing

Land Use

Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

4. Transportation Alternatives: *Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.*



COMMENT: Avondale Estates enjoys some degree of a sidewalk network, but there are places (identified in the Downtown Master Plan) where sidewalk facilities are not sufficient. However, development regulations require sidewalk improvements with any new project. The design of the Master Plan is structured to maximize walking opportunities and create a live-work-play activity center. Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Transportation Systems and Road Network

Section II: Natural and Cultural Resources

Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

5. Regional Identity: *Each region should promote and preserve a regional "identity," or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.*

COMMENT: The architectural style is not characteristic of the region, but has on the contrary cultivated a distinctive architectural thematic. Avondale Estates does not have a program for encouraging businesses associated with some regional heritage nor does it partner with the State's Department of Economic Development. Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Economic Development

Natural and Cultural Resources

Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination

Section II: Economic Development

Land Use

Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

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

The following sections address the Heritage Preservation Quality Community Objective:

Section I: Economic Development

Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural, Cultural, and Community Resources Map

Transportation Systems and Road Network

City of Avondale Estates: Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027



Section II: Economic Development
Natural and Cultural Resources
Housing
Land Use

7. Open Space Preservation *New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.*

The following sections address the Open Space Preservation Quality Community Objective:

Section I: Natural and Cultural Resources
Natural, Cultural, and Community Resources Map
Section II: Natural and Cultural Resources
Land Use

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

COMMENT: The City meets Part V planning criteria; the Community Assessment identifies whether protected natural features exist, and those that do have local regulations that meet the State's minimum standards. The City of Avondale Estates relies upon the Department of Natural Resources for its inventory of natural resources. However, the City's Master Plan for Lake Avondale will provide comprehensive information regarding this resource and the immediate surroundings. The City recognized that it may be within a groundwater recharge area and thus has development regulations regarding this issue in the City Code.

Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Natural and Cultural Resources
Natural, Cultural, and Community Resources Map
Section II: Natural and Cultural Resources

9. Social and Economic Development: Growth Preparedness *Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These*



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might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.

The following sections address the Growth Preparedness Quality Community Objective:

- Section I: Economic Development
 - Natural and Cultural Resources
 - Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination
 - Transportation Systems and Road Network
- Section II: Population Change
 - Economic Development
 - Natural and Cultural Resources
 - Housing
 - Land Use
 - Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

10. Social and Economic Development: Business Appropriateness *The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.*

COMMENT: Avondale Estates does not have a program to recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products. The City does not enjoy a very diverse job base, as indicated by the employment data in the assessment.

Please see the following sections for additional information:

- Section I: Economic Development
 - Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination
- Section II: Population Change
 - Economic Development
 - Land Use
 - Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

11. Social and Economic Development: Employment Options *A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.*

COMMENT: The city does not have an entrepreneur support program. Please see the following sections for additional information:

- Sections I & II: Economic Development



12. Social and Economic Development: Education Opportunities *Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.*

COMMENT: While the City of Avondale Estates does not provide workforce training options, there are a variety of resources available at nearby education facilities and through DeKalb County, as identified within the text of Sections I and II above. Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Economic Development

Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination

Section II: Population Change

Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

13. Social and Economic Development: Housing Choice *A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.*

COMMENT: Zoning regulations do not allow garden apartments for rent or financial gain; the City is near build out and there are not available vacant lots for multi-family developments, although the Master Plan provides for them within Downtown redevelopment projects. The smallest lot for multifamily housing is 5,445 square feet. The median rents and home sale prices indicate that there is not housing available within the City limits for all income levels, but an analysis of the surrounding rental and housing markets suggests there is nearby access to a variety of price points. The community should discuss whether there are indicators for special housing demand. Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Population Change

Economic Development

Natural and Cultural Resources

Section II: Population Change

Economic Development



Natural and Cultural Resources
Housing
Land Use

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

The following sections address the Governmental Relations Quality Community Objective:

Section I: Natural and Cultural Resources
Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination
Transportation Systems and Road Network
Section II: Economic Development
Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services

15. Governmental Relations: Regional Cooperation. *Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.*

COMMENT: Improved cooperation with DeKalb County is desired. Please see the following sections for additional information:

Section I: Economic Development
Natural and Cultural Resources
Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination
Transportation Systems and Road Network
Section II: Economic Development
Land Use
Transportation, Public Facilities, and Services



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