

Local Issues and Opportunities

From May to June 2009 ARC convened over thirty meetings with planning directors and staff from around the 20-county region. These meetings were held at a central location in each county and were attended by city and county staff, as well as members of ARC's Land Use, Transportation and Research Division planning staff.

During these meetings ARC staff presented information on the planning process for Plan 2040, with the remainder of the meetings spent discussing any planning issues the municipalities considered most pressing. Each jurisdiction's input played a critical role in the development of small area household and employment forecasts, later to be used in estimating the long-term travel needs of the region. Local input and knowledge garnered through these meetings was also used to better understand current and future local infrastructure and development challenges.

A one-page summary for each county was prepared that captures the primary discussion topics at the initial outreach meetings, as well as any key findings from regional review of local comprehensive plans. Local Issues and Opportunities were prepared for the 10-County RC planning area.

Cherokee County, Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- The development spectrum makes it difficult to forecast 2010, much less 2040- but all agreed this is a good time to plan. Having a county-wide conversation of what really makes sense to be more intensely developed, and where it should be rural would be very helpful.
- The County is having problems with federal money and feels the design parameters aren't feasible.
- Elected officials have trouble understanding character area narratives and think the future development map is not flexible.
- The County is likely very much over-retailed, but yet everyone still approves retail (particularly cities in the county).
- The Cherokee County map shows much more commercial farther up I-575 than the UGPM.
- Bells Ferry has a good overlay ordinance. Woodstock's Hwy 92 overlay needs to be revisited –has been a major handicap and is in many ways a detriment to development (doesn't recognize the real development potential).
- Piece of land without roads next to Etowah could be rural.
- There is a lot of Ag-Residential conflict in the County (nuisance issues, etc.).
- Waleska not interested in growing (NW part of county likely to be slow/no growth).
- E. Central Cherokee/Woodstock will be focal areas for growth.
- County wants increased density around nodes. Cities in the county have a fairly wide-range of densities they are pursuing.
- There are annexation conflicts in some cases, but in others the county has an agreement in place.

Transportation

- At a recent Civic League land use meeting the topic turned to transportation – 95% of people demanded the region address mass transit. The feeling is that if the region doesn't pay attention to transit, Atlanta will lose out to Nashville and Charlotte— seems to be real citizen support of massive transit expansion but a real disconnect with leadership.
- BRT is not the solution –real transit investment is needed.
- Lack of a good E/W route in Cherokee causes all existing state highways to have unusual traffic patterns. Hwy 92 has potential as a good east-west transit line (Acworth, Woodstock, Roswell). Hwy 20 and Hwy 140 are the worst. There is also a lot of cross county truck traffic.
- Development project has not improved SR20 & 575 interchange (no widening though they do have ROW).
- All state routes disconnect, e.g. through Canton, and no signage to enable access.

Housing

- Many people going through foreclosure have to leave the County because there are no affordable units; i.e. Woodstock has an 80% affordable senior development but rent starts at \$775/month. And most mobile home parks are being bought up.
- Cherokee County is not as bad on un-built lots as some other counties are, although the county does not have a good handle on the total number of un-built, semi-unfinished lots.
- There are fewer than (6-10) fully belly-up subdivisions in unincorporated county; cities are worse off with foreclosures.
- Senior Development: a lot along Hwy 92 in Woodstock, Canton has Laurel Canyon for seniors – Woodstock provides density bonus for senior development.

Economic Development

- Holly Springs recently saw its 8th builder bankruptcy; other cities are also facing multiple bankruptcies. Many believe that the next tidal wave will be the commercial businesses having to go back to the bank-big impact on local tax base.
- Much of the county's small businesses were construction related; they are now scrambling to keep themselves alive.

Community Facilities

- School board doesn't allow sidewalks on their property – this prohibits safe routes to schools.
- They (School Board) are building huge schools out in the county that are not close or easily accessed by anyone.
- Woodstock Greenprints –offers an opportunity for 62 miles of trail facilities.
- Reinhardt College (1,000 students) expansion is limited-they would have to provide sewer (not available in Waleska).

Clayton County - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- Opportunities for in-migration will be largely found in two development sectors: in-fill and higher density residential development. A limited number of undeveloped sites as well as relatively large lots containing only one dwelling are found in residential areas of the cities.
- There is currently very little land used for agriculture in Clayton County, and the bulk of this land is located in the Panhandle area.
- The Tara Boulevard corridor contains a number of older strip malls that are now in need of redevelopment, as does Riverdale Road.
- The few remaining undeveloped or vacant areas in the county are generally larger tracts in the southern Panhandle and northeastern Rex/Ellenwood areas
- The residents of the southern area of the county have indicated that they want to preserve the rural character of the area during public input workshops.

Transportation

- Sidewalks are generally not present on the major functional classes of roadways throughout Clayton County, including the Cities of Jonesboro and Forest Park.
- Of the residents commuting outside of the county for work most are commuting to neighboring counties, such as Henry, Fulton, Fayette, and DeKalb. Over half of the out-commuters are commuting into Fulton County.

Housing

- Housing growth has been primarily detached single family homes; almost two-thirds of the county's housing units are single family detached homes. Comparatively, multi-family housing is declining in share of housing in the county.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the extended stay hotels along the Tara Boulevard corridor are serving as semi-permanent residences for lower income, cost burdened and severely cost burdened households in Clayton County.
- The projected aging of the population indicates there will be a need for smaller low maintenance residences such as condominiums, retirement communities and assisted living facilities.

Economic Development

- Clayton County has a large number of programs and tools that can be utilized to foster local economic development, including industrial recruitment opportunities, business incubators, special tax districts, and industrial parks.
- There is a need to expand opportunities for education in professional technical specialties in order to fill local technical jobs with Clayton residents as well as a need to expand the office professional sectors in the County to provide more clerical and administrative job opportunities for residents.

Community Facilities

- Clayton high school graduation test scores and high school dropout rates have fallen behind neighboring counties.
- Clayton College & State University offers a great resource as an accredited, moderately selective four-year state university in the University System of Georgia whose enrollment exceeds 5,700.
- The county has plans to pursue a program of expanding water reclamation capacity to meet projected 2025 demand in accordance with the 2000 CCWA Master Plan

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Clayton County has a low proportion of open and green space to population. However, the county's numerous floodplains provide an opportunity for the conservation of open space and protection of the water supply and the development of additional areas for passive recreation.
- Clayton County Parks and Recreation Department maintains 670 acres of park land including a number of recreational facilities for the leisure and enjoyment of its citizens.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- The majority of the county's departments and entities involved in the delivery of services are unaware of the SDS and coordination between the county and cities is minimal.
- The county has taken steps to coordinate land use plans for the areas in proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport with the airport's long range plans.

Cobb County - Plan 2040, Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- Concerned that elected officials may start to panic over the lack of development, and would begin approving bad projects. The question was posed of how ARC or others could be involved presenting the best information obtained through this process to these officials.
- Because Kennesaw is almost built out the city is exploring infill redevelopment. Kennesaw is getting some proposals to build unfinished properties, but the standards will need to be relaxed (smaller units, not brick, etc.).
- Kennesaw has antiquated zoning and is looking to eliminate some of the existing zoning categories and to streamline the ordinance; they are also likely to do a senior resident overlay.
- West Cobb has a lot of un-built lots and conservation subdivisions where everything is sitting vacant. This part of the County experiences a slow-growth political environment.
- South Cobb wants to see redevelopment.
- East Cobb is open to mixed use/aging-in-place as long as it is a quality product; residents are concerned about retaining the suburban residential character.
- Need a model to identify industrial/distribution areas that should be protected as industrial land in the future (industrial preservation area) – could this something ARC could do region-wide.
- Mixed-use developments have not fulfilled Powder Springs' vision for traditional neighborhoods and there are no associated retail and office developments supportive of residential uses.
- Aging of the 1st ring suburban areas of South Cobb, Cumberland CID, Smyrna, and Marietta and their need to continue redevelopment efforts; aging shopping centers and vacant big box stores and their impact on commercial corridors.
- Acworth redevelopment: Working on mixed-use village of residential and commercial applicable to LCI.

Transportation

- The County is looking to do an Acworth, Kennesaw, Marietta transit linkage (loop shuttle looks most feasible).
- The City and County are trying to update the Delk Rd. LCI – when BRT went away the focus of the study wasn't accurate.
- The business community and residents desire to have rail transit in Cobb County as a way of providing alternative transportation modes for regional connectivity. People want rail on the US41/I-75 corridor somewhere.
- More focus should be on pedestrian and bicycle facilities, rather than just saying there needs to be transportation alternatives. Better connectivity of pedestrian facilities is needed.
- Regional freight traffic is an issue that negatively impacts Cobb County.

Housing

- Kennesaw's biggest challenge is getting a balance of senior, workforce, and student housing to downtown in order to achieve mixed income, and a diverse housing stock.
- Marietta's Housing Authority is doing a lot of new projects and has added about 100 units per year.
- The rental dynamic issue– some areas have too much rental as it is; this becomes an issue of how to approve new proposed rental if there's a ton of old that is no longer a community asset, etc. but overall the urban area isn't meeting the market need right now for apartments. What's the changing face of rental housing in the region?
- Senior housing – can you build too much of it? Should we be concerned over this?
- Cumberland residential development– mixed uses aren't moving, single use apartments/townhomes are moving.

Economic Development

- The County is not experiencing construction– there have been some re-zonings, but not of the highest quality.
- Sandy Plains and East Piedmont are in need of redevelopment – this is perhaps the biggest need in the County.
- Marietta has a lot of developments with money in the ground, but nothing is going vertical.
- Marietta's Franklin Road – Global Green Technology Corridor – is flipping its use from residential to green technology; they are looking to do a feasibility study to see what it would take to encourage firms to relocate here.
- SPLOST projects have been very successful, with 27 ground breakings reported.
- There are lots of mixed use projects in Powder Springs that have stalled; the city has been approached by developers to restart the projects, but the projects would be less progressive than originally planned.
- Powder Spring's Ind/Off development have not kept pace with residential; these are needed to provide a balanced tax base.
- Limited access on US 278 limits Powder Springs' economic growth and the ability of the City to balance its tax base.

Community Facilities

- Paulding County is the only surrounding county whose growth places a great deal of stress on the local infrastructure.

DeKalb County (including City of Atlanta) - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- DeKalb County has identified the I-20 corridor as key to future development. The county is also proposing increased density along Buford Hwy, which may have opposition because of the stress it will put on existing infrastructure.
- DeKalb has been consistent with the unified plan (using mega corridors/MARTA stations for major development). But to redevelop existing apartment complexes developers need realistic densities, which the neighbors often oppose.
- Many DeKalb residents want their neighborhoods to stay the way it was when they moved in. Some of this is age difference, people over 50/60 do not want what the younger generation wants.
- Atlanta single-family neighborhoods are sacred; but there is support for rezoning non-residential areas around them.
- The link between planning and health is being given more attention, and this could be a good way to talk about density—talk about health, lifelong communities, quality-of-life and how it relates to development/ transportation.
- Atlanta focuses on sustainability, and is trying to reshape how the city does business to be more sustainable.
- The main development focus area in Dunwoody is the Perimeter Center area. Envisioned development: “higher and more dense” townhomes, condos- but not apartments. Currently the area has some big DRIs approved (waiting). Citizens have accepted that densification will occur here, but will “protect the rest” of the city.
- Other Dunwoody (re)development hot spots include a couple of nodes along I-285 (older ½ story office buildings), along PIB and Winters Chapel Road (older apartment buildings), abandoned Old Shallowford Hospital, and the “Village” (N. of Perimeter Center). The rest of Dunwoody consists of single-family neighborhoods.
- Most of the firms initially interested in the old GM plant in Doraville have pulled out.
- Due to undevelopable terrain, it is expected that much of SE DeKalb will see little development activity going forward.

Transportation

- Ideally the Plan2040 could help to highlight the region’s infrastructure deficiencies. DeKalb has to retrofit things, which puts stress on existing infrastructure—water, sewer, etc. A comprehensive infrastructure deficiency assessment could be beneficial to the process and county.
- In Dunwoody the transit station potential “has not really clicked yet”.
- Chamblee bought into the idea of TOD’s— created new zoning ordinance, and allowed supporting density. But then felt let down by MARTA guidance (lack-of) after these necessary steps were taken.
- Key priority areas should be MARTA stations.
- There are challenges/inconsistencies with TOD development proposed in LCI and comp plans, and what MARTA wants.
- The funding is not there for transportation improvements in high growth/dense areas.

Housing

- Southside DeKalb has many foreclosed, vacant subdivisions (south of I-20). A housing assessment could be beneficial to get a grip on the vacancies and foreclosures, priority areas, and what is happening in the county.
- In Atlanta luxurious, large homes affordable to 10% of population were overbuilt, so while there are a lot of housing units available now, they are not affordable to everyone. The \$500K house is overbuilt.
- In certain communities, no more affordable housing development is supported.

Economic Development

- Atlanta and DeKalb are highly affected by the collapse of housing, vacant office and foreclosed and/or abandoned homes.
- In Atlanta there is a distinct disadvantaged area with low graduation rate, jobs, income. These areas need addressing and actual strategies for improvements. These strategies must be different than traditional activity center strategies.

Community Facilities

- Atlanta consistently hears about the lack of green space in the city; city is now finishing greenspace plan.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Local ordinances and regulations guide the county, but citizens and elected officials have other approaches on occasion.
- There is need for more training (through ARC) so local governments can implement concepts of Plan 2040. ARC could have training on how mixed use, density, transportation, transit works with high density to help local staff have the conversation with constituencies and elected officials because currently they can’t understand that increasing density does not automatically increase trips, and mixed use promotes multi-modal. Help is needed.

Douglas County - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- The Douglas County Board is considering allowing more density elsewhere in the county to compensate for the restrictions in the Dog River area. There are no plans for extending sewer to the Dog River area.
- The Highway 92 Corridor LCI is a likely target for future growth—mixed-use is being encouraged from I-20 to the county line in both directions, at a density of up to 8 units/acre.
- The new Manchester Tributary's planned build out population was 15,000, although that may not happen now.
- There is no major pending residential in eastern Douglas County, but it is zoned for low and medium density residential.
- Thornton Road is likely to stay Douglas' industrial corridor; an SR6 study encouraged the consideration of mixed-use here.
- What is going on in southern Fulton County (Foxhall development) will shape what happens in Douglas south of Hwy 166. The Douglas portion is mostly second homes, but success could spur additional development of primary residences.
- Most growth will be north of I-20, with avg. densities of 0.3 u/a, and 15% impervious restrictions on residential, 25% on commercial. This area is likely to develop before that south of Hwy 166. Some growth could push south of I-20.
- Douglasville is targeting the area south of I-20 between the western and eastern halves of the city for possible annexation.
- The Chapel Hill Road (Arbor Place) corridor's development could in the future "shift east" to around Hwy 92.
- Villa Rica has an agreement not to annex any more area in Douglas County; but much of their growth will be in Carroll.

Transportation

- The State is moving SR5 designation to the Brightstar Connector.
- There are two new park-and -ride lots in Douglas County.
- Douglasville is funding bike/ped under CMAQ, TE, and LCI funds with some local general funds. Douglas County also applied for safe routes to school funds.
- The Highway 92 project is looking to connect between neighborhoods with multi-use facilities.
- There is a lack of east-west connectivity in the county, resulting in I-20 being used for short trips.
- The interstates, railroad and the river are natural barriers for connectivity.

Housing

- Douglasville has done some residential redevelopment recently off Blair's Bridge Road in the Old Egg Farm area.
- Douglasville typically zones apartments at 8 units/acre, but in their DCDs (similar to PUDs) they allow up to 13-14 units/acre. Three years ago they had approved 4,500-5,000 units but that activity has stopped.
- There is likely to be some future multi-family development in the Hwy 92 corridor near the interchange with I-20, and around Lee Road. The Lee Road corridor on the whole is likely to be high growth.
- Douglas County has not zoned any multi-family units in the past eight years.
- The board is having trouble getting a handle on senior housing, and whenever it is built it fills up quickly.
- There are many incomplete subdivisions that have gone bankrupt.

Economic Development

- There is demand for a new conference center in Douglasville as the current one is booked a year in advance.
- Retail sales are down at Arbor Place Mall, and there have been big-box closures leading to 'greyfield' sites.
- Douglasville now has a development authority to develop empty big boxes.
- There is very little Class A office in the County, placing much of the tax burden on residential (66% of residents leave the County for work); there was some planned Class A at New Manchester Tributary, but this may not be built.
- There is a lot of vacant industrial speculative space in the County, and in general the area is close to build-out as difficult topography leads to high development costs. There could be some growth along Bankhead Highway but this is not a strong employment base for the County as productivity gains have reduced employees per square foot in this space (note: the Inner Harbor site in south County is 800 acres but has only five small buildings).
- WellStar Hospital and Arbor Place Mall are the major job centers; no new major employers are anticipated for the County.
- Arbor Place Mall is experiencing a lot of vacant retail and major chains are closing the stores within the area.
- There is a DRI for Douglasville Place (1 million sqft of mixed-use, including theater).
- There is no active SPLOST in the county.

Community Facilities

- The county has plenty of water supply, and Villa Rica is working on it agreements with Douglas and Carroll.
- Douglasville will build a new police building in the Hwy 92 LCI area.

Fayette County - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- The unincorporated area is characterized as an exurban/rural area containing single-family residential subdivisions, large estate/agricultural lots, and some commercial/industrial areas.
- Unincorporated Fayette County has primary residential zoning areas of 2-acre lots, and has some areas that zoned for estate lots (5 acres per unit).
- The existing incorporated areas, especially those served by a public water system and a centralized sewerage system, are the centers of intensity and density in terms of development in Fayette County.
- The historic Courthouse Square in Fayetteville should be a destination point containing specialized retail and restaurant opportunities for residents of Fayetteville and the surrounding areas, as well as tourists.
- The area around the Piedmont Fayette Hospital on Hwy 54 is a key growth area. The area has been master planned to provide medical services and job opportunities to the Fayette County area.
- The reconfiguration of SR 74 on the edge of the downtown has created two “main” streets for which desired transportation roles need to inform the type of development allowed along them.
- As opposed to a centralized “downtown” area, Peachtree City’s master plan identified a series of villages with distinct village retail centers.
- All the State Route corridors in unincorporated Fayette County are regulated by overlay zones in the Zoning Ordinance. Due to annexations, many of the primary development areas are not consistently controlled by city or county development practices and regulations.
- Fayette County has about 1 decade worth of available land; Fayette has been consistent on their message about non-expansion of sewer, but there will be septic failures that will demand the issue be addressed.

Transportation

- The State Routes are key transportation corridors in the county.
- Currently, there are no mass transit opportunities available within Fayette County other than Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) vanpools.
- Peachtree City has over ninety miles of multi-use paths. The County is also interested in developing multi-use paths throughout the county.

Housing

- Over the next 20 years, the Baby Boomer generation will enter their retirement years. Tyrone will need to consider additional local healthcare, housing options, and senior services.
- In Fayette County new development should include a mix of housing types including traditional neighborhood development style residential subdivisions.
- The County anticipates slower growth, and therefore demand for housing over the next decade.
- Fayetteville’s Comprehensive Plan calls for alternative housing types that appeal to “empty nesters,” single adults, and childless couples.
- Small, neighborhood-based businesses and mixed-use developments are needed to revitalize the Downtown Historic District in Fayetteville.
- Foreclosures have been focused in the northern half of the county.

Economic Development

- The hospital area in Fayetteville is becoming an important economic engine for the entire county.
- New College and University satellite campuses have been discussed in the county.
- Currently the county and cities are performing relatively well in terms of keeping commercial and office space occupied.
- Development Authority is expecting an overall balance between jobs lost and gained during this recession.
- The overall economic goal for the County is to attract businesses that provide employment of a highly educated workforce matching the demographics of the county.
- Tyrone currently lacks excess sewer capacity. Tyrone will need to add capacity via private systems, public investments in wastewater plant(s) or contracting with another municipality.

Community Facilities

- Peachtree City owns and maintains approximately 30% of the total acreage in the city as dedicated greenbelts or open space.

North Fulton - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- The City of Milton intends to establish the City as being unique among the cities of northern Fulton County by nurturing its equestrian, agricultural, and rural residential community to set the City apart from the surrounding cities.
- Johns Creek currently has no central gathering place. The City has an opportunity to create this area, allowing for more control over design features.
- Alpharetta anticipates that the rapid commercial development of the past twenty years will plateau and that the city will mature from a bedroom residential community to an economic center of significant proportion.
- Many of Roswell's existing activity centers could accommodate redevelopment, including more intense, mixed uses and pedestrian amenities. Though many people still consider it a 'bedroom community' and resist major redevelopments.
- There is opposition to change occurring in single-family neighborhoods surrounding high density nodes where development will occur.
- Forested areas within Sandy Springs help define the character of the city and should be preserved.
- The potential redevelopment of suburban non-residential uses (such as one-story an automobile-oriented commercial and office facilities and campus style office parks) is critical to creating mixed-use development in Milton.

Transportation

- Due to Alpharetta's growth in both its residential and non-residential populations, traffic congestion has become a problem within the city.
- Roswell has limited road capacity to help manage growth. Other areas in north Fulton have invested heavily in transportation facilities that have ultimately induced more demand for access and development pressure along these corridors.
- Limited roadway connectivity funnels almost all traffic through already congested intersections. These congested intersections constrain the overall capacity of these arterial corridors.
- Neighborhoods are not well connected to schools, parks and community facilities with sidewalks and bicycle facilities.
- Longer distance bicycle and trail routes are needed to provide access to community amenities and alternatives to automobile trips for commuting or errands.

Housing

- A variety of housing types, including multi-family should be permitted in transit-oriented live-work areas in Sandy Springs. Higher density housing should be placed near commercial centers, transit lines and parks, to enable more walking, biking and transit.
- A large portion of the Mountain Park community is changing to become rental.
- As the residents of Sandy Springs age, there may be a need for new and different group quarters accommodations, such as nursing homes. "Life cycle" or "mixed generation" communities that provide for persons of different age groups (including seniors) should be encouraged. Other jurisdictions in north Fulton also see the need to accommodate individuals that would like to age-in-place.
- High income and high housing cost create a lack of mixed income housing in Johns Creek; this creates challenges for the work force including teachers, police and firemen, as well as other service providers who would like to live where they work.

Economic Development

- Economic development efforts in Sandy Springs will focus primary attention on redevelopment – including the implementation of specific strategies for the revitalization and redevelopment of the Roswell Road corridor and the Town Center area. Redevelopment areas in Sandy Springs should be pedestrian and transit friendly.
- The northeast portion of Roswell contains almost exclusively nonresidential development.
- There may be additional opportunities for centers within Milton, but these sites would need to be carefully considered before they could be identified as neighborhood or community centers.

Community Facilities

- The Chattahoochee River corridor is a critical natural resource in north Fulton and is shared by many jurisdictions in the area.
- There are significant issues related to the location and ownership of sewer lines and facilities.
- It is becoming increasing difficult to provide the same levels of service in north Fulton that residents and property owners are accustomed to.

South Fulton - Plan 2040, Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- Fulton County is working on a plan to maximize the potential of the Fulton Industrial Boulevard area. Currently, there is no overlay or TAD/CID in the Fulton Industrial area.
- Commercial areas are looking to intensify within existing nodes.
- It is the same distance from Buckhead to Downtown Atlanta as it is from Downtown to College Park.
- About half the neighborhoods in College Park want to see redevelopment, others may be resistant.
- Hapeville is open to higher densities. In fact, Hapeville has some the higher allowed densities in the region, but no MARTA station.
- In 2006 Fairburn doubled its size through annexation. Most of the land is agriculture or low density, and most of the residents don't want change south of I-85. All of it should be rural within the future (1 acre lots are larger).
- East Point has a lot of vacant properties.
- The College Park LCI has not been incorporated into the city's comprehensive plan.
- College Park has 150 acres of redevelopment potential (AirTran property). However, the City of Atlanta owns land that College Park wants to buy and Atlanta won't sell – This is a challenge for redevelopment.

Transportation

- Campbellton-Fairburn Road should be widened.
- An access management plan for Old National Highway is needed.
- Could a shuttle be beneficial for the Tri-City area? Where could the shuttle run?
- Fairburn's big concern is transportation interchanges at I-85 at GA 74—a new interchange is needed to serve the CSX facility. CSX doubled traffic at their facility, and added two large industrial parks. All is being funneled onto GA 74 interchange with commuter traffic (causing obvious issues).
- Is commuter rail through south Fulton to Peachtree City a viable option?
- Fairburn is a good location to serve commuters with rail infrastructure and interchanges.
- The area would like to see better transit than a single bus addition.
- College Park wants commuter rail but current council is very opposed to density.

Housing

- College Park has an issue with absentee landlords; 80% of housing is rental.
- College Park residential development has been dead in the water; some infill but nothing significant.
- East point has many housing options, but also has problems with a lot of vacant properties.

Economic Development

- There is a lot of crime in the Fulton Industrial Boulevard area.
- South Fulton CID has been a great partner and is successful in keeping projects going.
- The downtown Fairburn property owners are long term property owners and do not necessarily want to improve their properties.
- Fairburn opened a college campus with Georgia Military (but no student housing yet); MARTA has helped by adjusting their bus routes.

Community Facilities

- Islands of unincorporated land in the county make a service delivery difficult.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- College Park is the 4th largest historic district in the state.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Coordination with Cobb County would be beneficial in dealing with the Six Flags area.
- College Park needs better coordination with the Airport—there have been lawsuits between the airport and property owners.
- East Point, Hapeville, College Park don't cooperate and coordinate as much as they should.
- East Point staff is moving ahead with planning, and formulated a good master plan, but staff is unsure if it will be approved by Council.

Gwinnett County - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- There is limited space left in Norcross for any greenfield development.
- Older shopping centers in Lilburn are doing well, no tear downs along US29; desire to redevelop Lilburn's Old Town area.
- Sugar Hill has developed/expanded as "islands" due to flexibility afforded to developers.
- Norcross contains a lot of late 70's / early 80's office buildings and parks that have become empty the last 2-3 years. These are now Class C office and have trouble competing with office parks in the NE corridor along I-85. A huge incentive for redevelopment of these office parks would be MARTA or light rail extension through Norcross.
- There are many aging in place seniors around downtown Norcross that are resistant to development.
- There is interest in Loganville for vacant properties for more senior development. The City is also discussing with Walton added sewer capacity to support development in unincorporated area along Hwy 78.
- Snellville is historically resistant to density, no more multifamily projected. No recent re-zonings (used to be 20 a month).
- Suwanee has a 27% retail vacancy, but it is still hard to convince developers to stop building retail.
- According to Stakeholders in the County's 2007 Regional Assessment, the County's existing Development Regulations do not sufficiently promote the quality of the built environment nor adequately protect the county's environmental resources.
- Gwinnett has significantly aged demographically the last 10-15 years, which has led to Partnership Gwinnett initiatives to develop places/ activities for younger residents.

Transportation

- There is an ongoing study for Buford Hwy, which could involve widening, with lower intensity and slower speeds.
- The County anticipates that future congestion may lead to out migration of important employers as well as current residents.
- Land use decisions need to be related to the efficiency of our road and transit system.
- The county and State should continue to explore commuter rail to improve good air quality and relieve road congestions; the potential for commuter rail lines along both the CSX and Norfolk Southern lines should be fully explored and evaluated.
- The County's residential and non-residential communities are in need of more effective internal and external connectivity.
- Opportunities for additional pedestrian and bicyclist mobility need to be explored.

Housing

- Code enforcement difficulties are endemic.
- Norcross believes housing will be OK when the economy turns, but lowered price points are critical. Hope for increased affordability with recessionary changes.
- There is a 1,000 lot supply with 6 abandoned subdivisions in Loganville. Grayson has 100s of abandoned units, at least 40 abandoned subdivisions; City anticipates subdivisions asking for changes in conditions – smaller lots, higher density, etc.
- The core is the only area of multifamily zoning in Sugar Hill; there won't be any more such zoning outside the current area.
- Gwinnett's housing choices and the housing needs of its evolving demography and employment base need to be better matched. Research should be conducted to identify the needed types of housing that are not presently being provided.

Economic Development

- Buford Highway through Norcross is an "income divider" with northern incomes 2x greater than south of Buford Hwy.
- 145,000 square feet of office space in Suwanee, where the Falcons used to be, will become an employment center (Opus Gateway / Falcons Nest). Currently the city experiences 48% office vacancy; although a 5-story office building was just finished, which could be inflating the number.
- Major growth in biotech along Hwy 316 expected in unincorporated Gwinnett County.
- The County's average wages and incomes are declining as the lower-wage service jobs are increasing.
- The county anticipates the I-85 corridor will continue to evolve from commercial-light industrial to a more office and services orientation.

Community Facilities

- Lilburn recently bought a 25-lot subdivision for a library site, and City Hall is proposed @ Hwy 29 and Main – the city will also redevelop on 10 acre site between these two sites (library and City Hall).

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Opportunities to set aside significant open and green spaces will diminish over the next 20 years. Many of the County's older areas need "green space" retrofitting.

Henry County - Plan 2040, Local Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- There is a need to promote new developments that create a sense of place and preserve valued elements in the county. In the past the County and its cities have been reactive to the needs of a growing population, rather than being supportive of where growth can best be supported.
- Henry County is rapidly losing its vacant developable land, agricultural land, scenic areas, and open space to development. In 2009, growth and annexations have slowed compared to previous years.
- Land use could play a larger role in small water supply watershed protection. Currently there is a conflict between lot size and impervious surface in the watershed district.
- Matching School Board actions and policies related to siting and design is crucial for local governments.
- County planning staff has not been able to get buy-in on mixed use development. The Comprehensive Plan needed to be amended to reflect commercial as a future land use in areas originally planned for mixed-use development.
- Cities and Henry County are using small area planning efforts (like LCI) to determine appropriate densities in the county's activity centers. These activity centers are to be strategically located throughout the county and serve as focal points for development. They also should be designed so as to provide opportunities for walking and biking.
- Henry County does have a new comprehensive land use and transportation plan, but many of the assumptions that the plan is based on may not hold true with the new economy.

Transportation

- Existing north-south and east-west corridors are impacted by congestion. Poor coordination within the county and other stakeholders hampers the overall transportation network.
- The county's role as a major center for warehouse/distribution centers has resulted in significant problems with truck traffic in some locations.
- Overall the county's transportation system is dominated by highways, but the county is looking to have Park-and-Ride lots at every interchange along I-75 to support GRTA bus operations. Commuter rail is also desired in the City of Hampton.

Housing

- Housing prices in Henry County are considered relatively affordable compared to urban counties in the region, but until the previous recession costs have risen more rapidly than incomes.
- There are a growing number of non-family member households that have limited housing options in the county.
- Henry County should be prepared for meeting the needs of Baby Boomers as they making choices about where to relocate. Many are looking for alternatives to large-lot, single family dwellings.
- The county has many vacant subdivisions, particularly in western Henry County.

Economic Development

- Education and increasing the educated workforce is the biggest issue within the county. There are currently limited post-secondary education opportunities. A local technical college is needed to improve the skills of the labor force.
- The County has a low jobs-housing balance illustrating that is currently a 'bedroom community'. This results in a fiscal imbalance, as well as longer commutes.
- Past success in developing industrial/warehouse space has lead to many speculative buildings which are currently vacant.
- The Atlanta Motor Speedway attracts tourism, but could help attract nation and international industries to the county.
- There is an opportunity to nurture emerging medical, technical and other professional fields, but the cities and county must find appropriate areas to promote office development.
- Economic development is an issue within the county. Currently there is no economic development department, except the Development Authority whose main focus is attracting warehouse/distribution facilities.

Community Facilities

- The County is facing growing demand for many of the services that they provide.
- Location of community facilities (including schools) could be a way for the county to foster a sense of community, including clustering these uses in major activity centers.

Rockdale County - Plan 2040, Issues and Opportunities

Land Use

- Rockdale County might be close to its capacity for land use and growth.
- Majority of growth occurs along both sides of I-20 within a 2-3 mile zone north and south of interstate. Employment and population growth is expected to continue along this corridor. Any growth north of the I-20 buffer will be minimal, because of very rocky soils (one unit per acre or less).
- North of East Hightower Trail in the county is a watershed area, and is not expected to develop much.
- Conyers zoning ordinance needs updating.
- Conyers focus is in the Historical District. From the RR track south, and all the way to the city is where development is going to occur, including the possibility of higher-density multifamily south of I-20.
- Conyers LCI area on West Avenue is developing with mostly new construction anticipated rather than redevelopment.
- The willingness to increase density is going to be a new discussion for the county; development pressure in LCI Area is 30-40 units/acre, In S. Rockdale density is about 1 unit/acre.
- The area around the hospital and Old Town needs supportive density.

Transportation

- Rockdale County and Conyers need to become attractive to younger residents; commuter rail could be an attractive draw to the county, although Conyers wonders if light rail is feasible in this plan 2040 process.
- It is tough to sell the density without the transit discussion.

Housing

- The county has seen no new permitting activity and has roughly 20-25 abandoned subdivisions.
- Long term goal for Hwy 138 is increased residential to balance with commercial development already present.

Economic Development

- Small-scale commercial development and prime retail exist south of 2-mile beltway (138 and 212) in Conyers, and further east along Salem Road near I-20 (mixed-use).
- Hwy 212 and Hwy 138 development could be further leveraged if the Daniels Road DRI (in DeKalb) gets traction.
- SR138 corridor employment southeast of Conyers expected to decrease and residential development to increase.
- SR138 & Union Church has a small commercial node; if tunnel goes through, increased development pressure is expected.
- Rockdale wants to transition from a bedroom community to a mixed use community to provide better jobs.
- The area around Stonecrest could be a potential new center (LCI study area).
- The area around the horse park was envisioned to be high-tech jobs, but this has yet to significantly materialize.
- Conyers has lost a lot of its industrial base.
- The county is trying to get more information and tech-type jobs into the county, but there is a lot of competition for these jobs.

Community Facilities

- There are some geologic restrictions to sewer capacity. There are plans for expansion of sewer sometime in the future in areas south of I-20 (138 Salem Road side). While all of Conyers has sewer, increasing capacity near DeKalb will depend on DeKalb's development around Stonecrest. New development will have issues with sewers.
- The Path's plan for Arabia Mountain is driving expanded pedestrian byways and parks.
- Tunnel concept plan (interbasin) is proposed at far southwestern corner of the county, across Rockdale from DeKalb into another part of DeKalb. There could be some capacity increase associated with this that might allow development of a smaller-scale at the I-20 corridor from Pole Bridge to Henry line.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- There are protected areas near Arabia Mountain and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. Arabia Mountain and the horse park are key important resources.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- There is currently no intergovernmental agreement for sewer or water.