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January 2026

Prepared by:



INTRODUCTION

1

PURPOSE

The purpose of planning and community development is to provide guidance for everyday decision-making by local government officials and other community leaders. Within Georgia, comprehensive plans are seen as both a useful tool for long-term government efficiency and for ensuring sound land use development. Over time, such documents foster a wise use of fiscal and environmental resources, help coordinate community improvements across agencies and enable citizen input in both fostering a vision for the future and outlining a practical means for achieving that vision. Further, as a measure designed to ensure State programs are being utilized wisely, State regulations require local governments to maintain their comprehensive plans to have access to various forms of State assistance.

This document, the *White County Joint Comprehensive Plan – 2026*, represents the culmination of the efforts to plan the well-being of the whole county. The residents and various stakeholders worked to identify the critical, consensus issues and goals for their communities, and implementing the plan will help the governments and their partners address critical issues while striving towards their visions for the future. Thus, local planning recognizes that assets can be improved, liabilities can be mitigated, and opportunities can be cultivated



SCOPE / PLAN ELEMENTS

This document addresses the community development of White County, Cleveland, and Helen, Georgia. Where needed, consideration has been given to neighboring areas and political entities that influence conditions within the county, but all the cited issues, objectives and opportunities discussed herein are solely focused on those communities.

This document meets the requirements and intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. In accordance with those standards, this plan contains at a minimum the listed required elements.

- *Community Goals/ Vision*
- *Statement of Needs and Opportunities*
- *Community Work Program*
- *Environmental Compliance Factors*
- *Assessment of Broadband Capacity*



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Comprehensive planning attempts to identify a viable, consensus vision for the community. As such, Georgia’s planning standards require opportunities for public participation a means for stakeholders to submit written comments, and an advisory committee involved throughout the process.

This joint planning process began in late 2024 as government staff and key stakeholders providing initial input and advising on the means for public participation. The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) then worked with County and City staff to evaluate needs and performance of local services, utilities, and programs. The GMRC also spoke with neighboring communities and selected State agencies to identify any opportunities for collaboration or conflict and assess development forces that might affect the White County area.

Public participation occurred via online surveys and public meetings held throughout 2025. The series of public meetings provided open discussion of key issues and a chance for participants to review data and draft materials. The online survey, meanwhile, was shared via government web sites and promoted across media and online platforms. This survey was available from June through September, ultimately yielding almost 1,000 unique participants. Survey responses addressed such topics as concerns about impacts from growth, needs in the areas of economic development and housing, and the level of satisfaction with various public services and facilities. Survey results provided key insight into the perceptions and desires of many residents, giving the Advisory Committee valuable material as they shaped the plan’s objectives and priorities according to citizen interests.

The public participation process helped identify those topics for which most everyone found consensus (concerns about traffic, support for agriculture) and topics in which there was disagreement (impacts of seasonal residents). While not every issue could be resolved through this process, a few key priorities were identified as well as a general direction for the communities. What was agreed is that White County and the cities shouldn’t sacrifice their rural character in the face of prospective growth and change.

Help Plan White County's Future!


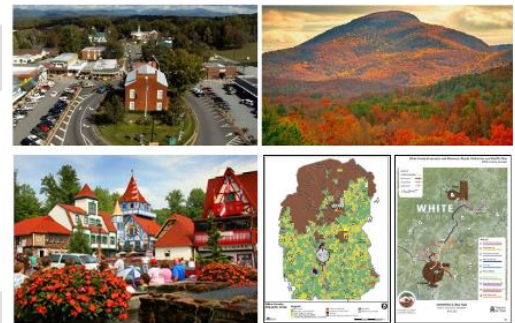
North Georgia is growing! Residents and businesses are drawn to the area for industry, the mountains and lakes, or the rural lifestyle of the many charming small cities and towns.

White County and its Cities are preparing! They're updating their joint *Comprehensive Plan*, the document that helps shape and coordinate local work programs.

They want to hear from you! A brief online survey asks citizens about their issues and priorities for the community. These surveys will be accessible through June 30, and all responses will be anonymous. There will also be public meetings held throughout the summer of 2025. Check the County's web site for meeting dates and locations.

For any questions or comments, please contact:
Adam Hazell, Planning Director
770.538.2637 | ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov

Take the Public Survey!
www.surveymonkey.com/r/WhiteCounty2025

COMMUNITY PROFILE

2



Set in northeast Georgia, White County and the cities of Cleveland and Helen are woven together by the scenic beauty and historic culture of the Appalachian Mountains. The area was once a part of the Cherokee Indian Nation before gold was discovered in Duke's Creek in 1828, drawing new settlers and beginning the Great Georgia Gold Rush. However, the communities have always been defined by their relationship with nature, from the farm fields in the south to the rising mountains and flowing streams of the north.

Today, **White County** blends a strong agriculture character with a blend of tourism and burgeoning commerce. Wineries, wedding venues, and waterfalls play a major role in the county's identity. Tourists, mostly from nearby metro Atlanta, flock to the multiple attractions in the area, including Unicoi State Park and Lodge, Anna Ruby Falls, the Chattahoochee National Forest, Hardman Farms historic site, and the Sautee-Nacoochee arts community. The Chattahoochee River, a prominent source of water across $\frac{3}{4}$ of Georgia, originates in White County before eventually winding its way down to the gulf coast.



Now White County and its cities are managing further evolution. As the suburban development forces and industries expand across north Georgia, White County faces both new challenges and opportunities. Growth can mean economic expansion and new investment but can also mean pressures on infrastructure and services. To preserve the best elements of its rural character, White County and its partners must navigate a variety of forces acting from without and within.



Named for a General of the War of 1812, the **City of Cleveland** was founded as the county seat in 1857 and incorporated as a town in 1870. The old White County Courthouse and Museum is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and houses the White County Historical Society. Today, Cleveland is known as the home of Truett-McConnell University and Babyland General Hospital, which produces the world-famous Cabbage Patch Kids dolls.



The **City of Helen** is nestled on the Chattahoochee River and has a rich history linked to the Cherokee Indians and the early settlers who arrived for gold and timber. When logging fell into decline, the city resurrected itself in 1969 as a re-creation of a Bavarian alpine town catering to tourists already lured by the nearby parks and national forests. Known for its festivals, shops, and tubing on the river right through downtown, the city has since become a prominent attraction within the Georgia mountains and a primary economic engine for the county.



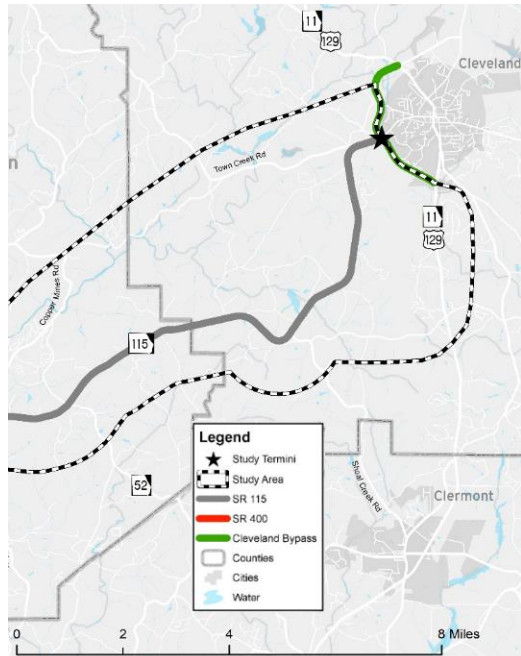
DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND INFLUENCES

North Georgia is growing. Metro Atlanta continues sprawling northward, with Hall and Forsyth Counties now both over 200,000 residents. Projects like the pending extension of GA 400 to Cleveland and the Blue Ridge Connector inland port (just north of Gainesville) slated to open in 2026 means that economic development is finding opportunity in the Georgia Mountains. With attractive educational and medical resources available in the region, some projections have White County surpassing 40,000 residents by 2040.

The cost of housing is increasing as the construction industry responds to post-pandemic supply issues, facing increasing competition for resources and high demand for affordable units. This puts pressure on rural areas where land is cheaper, which can drive up the cost of living for locals. Communities striving to stay small and rural face the prospect of change even if they don't pursue growth as landowners (especially farmers) sell to developers.

Similarly, the types of housing demanded are changing due to the **shrinking size of households**. More residents are marrying later, having fewer children, and living longer, and as a result more households are seeking alternatives to large single-family detached units. They seek to minimize property maintenance issues and prioritize access to community amenities over private space. Cities like Cleveland are attractive to such households, which will increase the demand for attached and multi-family options.

Access to outdoor recreation options is increasingly a premium amenity for communities. Trails and passive use parks, places for public art, and public access to water resources are ways communities define their appeal to residents and visitors alike and are oneway communities can retain their rural character in the face of new development by preserving greenspace and providing places for events that bring residents together.





AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

Analysis of prevailing development trends assists in the identification of preferred patterns for future growth. More specifically such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention regarding management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development. As part of this process, stakeholders and local governments are encouraged to evaluate the presence of subsets of their communities subject to special circumstances such as:

- ✓ *Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur*
- ✓ *Areas where the pace of development has/ may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation*
- ✓ *Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness*
- ✓ *Large, abandoned structures or sites, including possible environmental contamination.*
- ✓ *Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites).*
- ✓ *Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole*

Upon consideration of development trends and land use issues in White County, the following priorities stand out for the 2025 planning period:

- Cleveland continues to emphasize streetscape improvements and downtown revitalization. The City remains focused on assisting property owners' efforts to restore and preserve select structures while also introducing additional commercial space, done in compatible styles, where possible. Freedom Park in downtown has been well received, increasing the demand for parking and pedestrian connectivity across the city. *(Historic Downtown District)*
- Southern White County is already seeing growth pressures along Hwy 129 from the south and Duncan Bridge Road from the southeast. Eventually, the same is expected from the proposed GA 400 corridor from the southwest. As these areas develop, the County should seek to concentrate suburban-scale activity in targeted nodes and where infrastructure is suitable, while preserving agriculture as best as possible. Development guidelines should be considered to limit sprawl and blight in these areas so as not to sacrifice the defining characteristics and natural beauty that the community values. *(Growth Corridors)*
- Helen Highway/Hwy 75 between Cleveland and Helen continues to develop as its own commercial corridor. However, because of its Highway Commercial zoning, it is also attracting mini-storage facilities, auto repair and other less tourism friendly businesses. Development guidelines, such as a tourism corridor overlay, should be considered to improve the character and attractiveness of the main road that links downtown Cleveland with Helen. *(Helen Highway)*



Environmental Assessment

The State of Georgia requires local governments to comply with various environmental protection measures designed to preserve the integrity of local water resources and ecology. As pertains to local planning and land use management, local governments must demonstrate compliance with both the Water Management Plan for their applicable river basin and the implementation of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Part V development standards for environmentally sensitive areas. Compliance with these policies and documents is required for any local government (or related agency) seeking approval for resource-related permits.

Clean Water Act Compliance

Y	Any “not supporting” 303(d) listed waterbodies?
N	If yes, is any outstanding action required from the local government?
Y	Any 305(b) listed waterbodies?
N	If yes, is any outstanding action required from the local government?

There are environmentally sensitive areas located in the city, though most occur at smaller scales and limited to single properties. The city has adopted some form of protective measures in accordance with the DNR Part V criteria, though some should be reviewed for possible improved monitoring and enforcement.

White County has elements of each major environmentally sensitive area, particularly within the northern forests and along the Chattahoochee River corridor. Cleveland has few regionally critical features but has several perennial streams and must be mindful of stormwater mitigation as it builds out. Helen must give critical attention to stormwater, as well, given the scope of development along the banks of the Chattahoochee River and the prevalence of mountain slopes surrounding the narrow valley.

Environmental Planning Criteria

	White Co.	Cleveland	Helen
<i>Floodplains</i>	X		
<i>Forest Lands</i>	X		X
<i>Ground Water Recharge Areas</i>	X		
<i>Plant & Animal Habitat</i>	X		
<i>Prime Agricultural Lands</i>	X	X	
<i>Protected Mountains</i>	X		
<i>Steep Slopes</i>	X		
<i>Water Supply Watersheds</i>	X	X	X
<i>Wetlands</i>	X		
<i>Protected Rivers</i>	X		X

During the planning process many stakeholders cited the abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities, the scenic beauty of the area, and especially for the abundance of agricultural activity that remains in the county. The extent of remaining forests and farmland contributes to the appeal of visiting and living in White County, and residents wish to see these elements preserved as best as possible. They generally favor policies that celebrate these traits and help protect the environment so that future generations can experience the same benefits.



State Listed Water Bodies in White County (Ga EPD - 2024)

NAME	LOCATION	SIZE (miles)	CAUSE	SOURCE
Assessment Pending				
Horton Creek	Headwaters to the Chattahoochee River	2.7		
Town Creek	Headwaters to Tesnatee Creek	13.4		
Non-Supporting				
Glade Branch	Headwaters to Town Creek	2.2	E Coli	NP
Chattahoochee River	Soquee River to Mossy Creek	6.4	E Coli	NP
Chattahoochee River	Headwaters to Jasus Creek	6.1	E Coli, Mercury	NP
Smith Creek	Unicoi Lake to Chattahoochee River	2.1	Bio F	NP
Shoal Creek	Headwaters to Tesnatee Creek	6.1	Bio F	NP
Turner Creek	Headwaters to Tesnatee Creek	6.5	Bio F	NP
Tesnatee Creek (previously Little Tesnatee Creek)	Freeman Creek to 0.2 miles upstream Hwy 129	1.9	Bio F	NP
Chattahoochee River	Jasus Creek to Ga. Hwy. 17 (near Ber Weg Rd), Helen	6.3	E Coli, Mercury	NP
Tesnatee Creek	0.2 miles upstream US Hwy 129 to Town Creek, Cleveland	4.6	Bacteria	UR
White Creek	Headwaters to Webster Lake, Cleveland	5.8	Bio F, Bio M	NP
Chattahoochee River	Ga. Hwy. 17 (near Ber Weg Rd), Helen to SR255	11.5	Bio F, E Coli, Mercury	NP
Chattahoochee River	SR255 to Soquee River	7.2	E Coli	NP
Flat Creek	Headwaters near Clermont to Lake Lanier	11.4	Bio F	NP, UR
Mossy Creek	Tributary at Caldwell Dr to the Chattahoochee River	8.8	Bio F, E Coli	NP
West Fork Little River	Headwaters to Jim Hood Road above Lake Lanier	12	E Coli	NP
Tesnatee Creek	Town Creek to Chestatee River	5.6	E Coli	NP

Legend

- NS Not Supporting
- FC Fecal Coliform
- Bio F Biota – Fish Impairment
- NP Nonpoint source pollution





(Areas Requiring Special Attention Map)

(Existing Land Use Map)

(County Short Term Rentals Map)

DRAFT



PUBLIC COMMENTS & COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The public comment period ran from March through November, featuring several public forums and the online survey which yielded 992 unique responses. Some conversations were topic specific, such as on housing or land use, but there were opportunities for open comments, as well.

Overwhelmingly, residents and stakeholders expressed a strong desire to sustain the rural character that defined White County, to minimize the impacts of new development, and to strengthen the home-town appeal of Cleveland. Improvements to facilities and services should emphasize how they benefit existing residents and businesses before appealing to more tourism or new industry. There remains strong support for agriculture, as well, and a desire to ensure land use policies don't inadvertently impair existing farms.

Many residents expressed acceptance that some change was inevitable, and that some opportunities could be had if growth was managed properly. This meant mitigating any strains from increased traffic, ensuring land use compatibility, and optimizing development patterns to keep infrastructure costs low. Many support continued investments in parks and trails and agreed that existing levels of police and fire services are very good.

There were issues that will need attention, however, depending on the scope and pace of growth. Economic development should focus on the needs and abilities of the existing labor force rather than importing new labor. Shifting demands in housing types means adapting local regulations while preventing incompatible designs. Land use must also balance development types to ensure a balanced tax base and a low cost of living.

(Insert quotes from public)



**WHITE COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
PUBLIC COMMENT MEETING
WHITE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

6:00 – 7:00 PM - Tuesday June 24, 2025

Sign In Sheet

Name

John Sell	Christy Traylor
Neil K McLean	Deena Siggelkow
Dean Oyer	ED Siggelkow
Robby Crane	Tony Dyer
Angelo Lembo	Sherril Finley
Paula Lembo	Johnna Wettle
Lori Martin	Bryce Barrett, WCBOC
Beth Truelove	Tom O'Bryen, City of Cleveland
Mike Meuse	James Sweeney, Sautce
Terry Goodner	Dennis Clines
JOHN ERBELE	Kaye Heeran
LINDA	Denise Kendrick - WCNews
Ridley Kinsey	Renee Allen
Samuel D Traylor	Jesse Lumsden
Mike Garbage	Diane Winslow
Stephchen Adams Goddard	Pat Glisson
PAT GLISSON	Kevin J. Harris
Carri Kinnel	
Kevin Harris	

Input on future of the area sought

by Linda Erbele
White County News

As part of the effort to update White County's joint Comprehensive Plan, a survey is available for citizens to provide input. Officials of White County and cities of Helen and Cleveland very much want to hear your opinion.

"This is the opportunity for members of the public to have input as to what White County will plan and do going forward," said John Sell, community and economic developer for the county. "Any time (we) apply for state funding of grants, they ask if (the project) is included in the comprehensive plan."

The comprehensive plan is a tool that can be used by the White County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners to help guide decisions about land use in the county. It also serves as a work plan for things the county wants to accomplish in the next five years.

It is updated every five years. When this type survey was used at the previous update, just over 400 responses were received. Beth Truelove, president of the White County Chamber of Commerce, told members of Cleveland's Downtown Development Authority at its meeting Oct. 16 that more than 800 responses have been received so far and planners hope to hear from as many as 1,000 before the Georgia Mountain Regional Commission (GMRC,) which helped develop the survey, closes it at the end of November.

A pair of open houses on the plan is scheduled for Nov. 11, at the Yonah Preserve Recreation Center, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 to 7 p.m. There will be displays offering information and images on topics ranging from development types, land use and preliminary lists of priorities raised during the public survey process. GMRC staff will be on hand to answer questions.

One of the aspects the plan will take into consideration is the impact of the new Northeast Georgia

Inland Port, also known as the Blue Ridge Connector, that is expected to open in about six months.

Truelove said White County will see an increase in small businesses that will serve the larger businesses that locate in Hall County to take advantage of the transportation opportunities the port will provide, such as diesel mechanics, interior design and refrigeration repair.

"Our goal is to prepare product and pads for (those) industries," she said.

She added that so far, citizen input to the survey reveal that quality of life is of high value to people here.

"It's important for us to help define a sense of place," she added. "We know we're going to grow. The plan helps define how we grow."

Of those who have responded, 35 percent live in the unincorporated county and almost 30 percent live in Cleveland. So far, only a few people have responded from Helen. Also, 23 percent of the respondents are retired, and 21 percent work outside the county. 20 percent have only lived here five years. Another 20 percent have been here between five and 10 years. Almost 40 percent said they moved here for the small-town character, and a similar number said maintaining that small-town charm is a high priority when considering future growth. Some 43 percent said creating job opportunities is also a high priority.

To participate in the survey, go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/whitecounty2025.



People have the opportunity for a say in the county's future. Hold your phone's camera on the QR code to fill out a short survey.



SWOT Analysis

One facet of the public input process asks residents and stakeholders to assess their community’s respective **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,** and **Threats**. In doing this analysis, communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions to better achieve the desired vision.

Results from these exercises reinforced the notion that residents wish to protect the community’s character and address growth with cautious optimism. Most understand that even if White County and its Cities aren’t actively seeking to grow, some new development and change is probable due to factors outside their control. As such, they desire to see their communities proactively manage growth by directing it toward existing utility and infrastructure capacity, be sure it’s done at an appropriate scale, and done in a way that protects against the most disruptive types of land uses. This way any change coming to White County, Cleveland, or Helen will enhance the existing fabric of the communities the residents already cherish.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forests/ Mountains / Yonah Mountain • Unicoi State Park • Smithgall Woods • Truitt McConnel University • Babyland General • Helen / Tourism • Chattahoochee River • Sautee-Nacoochee district • Strong arts community • Hardman Farms • Local parks & recreation center • Rural character / agriculture • Affordable cost of living • Regional resources (medical, tourism, etc.) • Friendly community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time residents vs seasonal residents • Traffic (at key intersections & corridors) • Aging housing supply • Increasing pressure on fire dept. • Helen becoming “too full” • Suburbanization = increasing costs • Downstream demands on the Chattahoochee • Limited financial resources • Limited medical services in the county • Trend of young adults leaving
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available space for some new business/ residents • Restoration and reuse of older properties • Opportunities for more parks and trails • Access to regional resources • Potential for more agritourism • Technology applications accessible to rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of losing character • Fear of impacts of growth (traffic, crime, costs) • Competition for water in Chattahoochee basin • Loss of surrounding agriculture • Uncertainty for local industries • Lack of control over State and federal roads



NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The planning process asks communities to assess the information and comments received to identify issues and opportunities that should be prioritized for the future. In doing so the communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions to as to better achieve the desired vision. For White County and its Cities in 2025, the following generalized goals and priorities represent the topics most frequently cited or cited with the greatest emphasis. While it is acknowledged that progress is underway with many of these ideas, the consensus is that if the communities focus on these issues their futures will be in synch with the goals and ambitions of area residents.

WHITE COUNTY

- ✓ Minimize impacts of growth
- ✓ Be cost efficient with investments
- ✓ Support agricultural industry
- ✓ Preserve rural character/ environment
- ✓ Growth strategy for southern White County
- ✓

CITY OF CLEVELAND

- ✓ Minimize impacts of growth
- ✓ Be cost efficient with investments
- ✓ Retain small-town character and scale
- ✓ Connect neighborhoods with downtown
- ✓ Support businesses that serve local needs/ labor

CITY OF HELEN

- ✓ Minimize impacts of growth
- ✓ Strengthen pedestrian infrastructure
- ✓ Don't "pave the mountains"
- ✓ Explore connections with neighboring destinations



Minimize Impacts of Growth / Be Cost Efficient with Investments

The prevailing fears about growth are how any change may either dramatically increase the cost of services or degrade the levels of services possible. For White County and other suburbanizing areas, this mainly concerns the traffic load on infrastructure and the pressure for more personnel in emergency services. To mitigate these impacts, development policies should seek to concentrate growth where utilities and infrastructure can be provided most efficiently.

- Maintain long-term utility plans; Coordinate land-use policies accordingly
- Encourage nodal development patterns, especially in and around the cities.
- Work with cities to support pedestrian connectivity where feasible
- Develop long-term plan for fire protection services

Support Agricultural Industries

White County has a robust agricultural sector, one that contributes to area tourism in addition to farm production and is actively supported through the schools. Preserving the rural character and cost of living of the community is strongly linked with keeping this industry thriving. This means ensuring land use policies don't inadvertently drive farmers out, and that agricultural businesses are supported as best as possible.

- Maintain long-term utility plans; Coordinate land-use policies accordingly
- Encourage nodal development patterns, especially in and around the cities.
- Target outdoor recreation, agri-tourism, and small business development

Preserve Rural Character / Environment

White County residents cherish their surrounding farms, mountains, and streams, and local businesses know what these amenities mean to area tourism. Making sure environmental protective ordinances are up to date and regularly enforced is vital, as is planning for new parks and trails and pursuing development patterns that optimize land use. The County must ensure development regulations don't unduly push out agriculture, while the Cities should seek to fill vacant properties before expanding outward.

- Develop a greenspace strategy
- Annually review EPD water quality data; Cross reference with development patterns
- Coordinate with USFS and State Park in maintaining forests
- Support local agriculture

Retain Small-town Character and Scale

Downtown Cleveland has made strides with their historic district and the cultural center of the community. Not only does everyone want to see downtown retain its architectural character, but they also want it to thrive as an active, prosperous commercial hub. Now the City must act to secure pedestrian safety against growing traffic concerns and ensure the viability of local businesses in the face of new commercial competition.

- Maintain regulations for development, signage, use, & lighting
- Maintain & expand pedestrian infrastructure
- Long-term plan/ support for public art & festivals



Connect neighborhoods with downtown / Strengthen Pedestrian Infrastructure

The cities have strong networks of sidewalks, but the scale of adjoining neighborhoods and proximity to other amenities means there is the potential for even more pedestrian connectivity, especially in Cleveland. An expansion of the network and the introduction of pocket parks and trails could greatly enhance the character of each community, strengthen adjoining neighborhoods, and reduce some local traffic.

- Develop sidewalk expansion plans
- Identify space for future parks & trails
- Develop plan for bike route between the cities
- Update long-term parking strategy for Helen

Support businesses that serve local needs/ labor

Residents stressed the desire to avoid recruiting new industry that can't utilize the existing labor pool. Instead, White County and the cities should focus on helping existing businesses grow and recruit businesses that cater to existing residents' needs. Goods production operations that dramatically change the scale or character of the community should be restricted.

- Target outdoor recreation, agri-tourism, and small business development
- Annually review "leakage" data and status of commercial vacancies
- Minimize opportunities for heavy industry

Improve Intergovernmental Communication

The nature of how people and organizations exchange information is dramatically different compared to just 10 years ago. Citizens have different ways to look for news and search for civic information, governments have new tools for use in sharing data and communicating with the public, and this evolving landscape means new challenges in getting messages out or avoiding legal issues. Cities and County should ensure their communications policies and practices are both up to recommended standards and in tune with residents' aspirations. This also includes striving to maintain constructive relations across governments and other partners.

- Concerns outward (public, partners) and internal
- Review/ Evaluate existing practices
- Have & celebrate benchmarks for transparency
- Maintain records of received comments & requests
- Have protocol for "putting out fires"

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3

VISION STATEMENTS



Previous planning standards for Georgia defined a community vision as something “... *intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.*” It is required as an element of the comprehensive plan so that communities can truly establish a pure and simple ideal for themselves in a format that is easily expressed and understood.

Visioning provides communities with an opportunity to pause and consider the “big picture” as well as to attempt to clearly define their ideal future. Developing a vision means that community has at least tried to identify current values, describe how they are to be realized in the future and use that image as a foundation for short and long-term planning. As a process, this also requires the community to develop a consensus on what conditions to change or to preserve.



WHITE COUNTY

“The preservation of its environment, beauty and history are important priorities for White County that are weighed when planning for the county’s growth and needs of the future. White County will be the premier mountain community providing quality services for our residents, businesses, and visitors.”

CLEVELAND

“The City of Cleveland, Georgia, envisions a vibrant mountain community that honors its rich heritage while embracing sustainable growth, innovation, and opportunity. We strive to foster a welcoming environment where families thrive, businesses prosper, and the natural beauty of our surroundings is preserved for future generations.”

HELEN

“The City of Helen will focus to remain a place of pride that protects it’s natural resources and entrepreneurial spirit by providing quality services. The City will seek business and development services for local citizens and tourists by enhancing the local economy in ways that add to the region’s scenic and outdoor spirit.”

DRAFT



DRAFT



RECOMMENDED CHARACTER AREAS

Character area planning incorporates the concept of community function and feel to identify neighborhoods or communities of similar interaction, process, and character. Defining character areas is useful for identifying unique characteristics that provide a sense of community and to discern localized functions within the larger city or county context. Once character areas are established, community leaders can develop and implement strategies to promote the unique qualities of each character area.

The prevailing character and context of a community influences development forms and scale. Such elements are often identified as sub-areas within the community, such as neighborhoods, defined by architectural scale and style, functions and roles, traffic flow, and other factors that differentiate one area from the next. As such, a character area is a specific geographic area that meets the following criteria:

1. Has unique or special characteristics.
2. Has potential to evolve into a unique area with guidance; or
3. Requires special attention due to unique development issues.

Character areas are often identified based on environmental and/or physical characteristics of an area and it is not uncommon for communities to define their physical spaces based on a combination of both.

The Recommended Character Areas shown in the Comprehensive Plan represent a starting point in the discussion to create the Future Development Map that is a key component of the document. General areas shown in the Comprehensive Plan Recommended Character Area map will be refined through the community participation and continued planning analysis to include boundaries, descriptions, and vision statements for future development.

Preferred Land Uses for each Character Area

<i>Character Areas</i>	<i>White County</i>	<i>Cleveland</i>	<i>Helen</i>
Second Home Residential/Short-Term Rentals	X	X	X
Single Family Residential/PUD	X	X	X
Single Family Low Density	X	X	X
Agricultural and Low Density	X	X	
Agriculture/Forestry	X	X	X
Community Commercial	X	X	X
Tourism Commercial	X	X	X
Commercial Corridor/PUD	X	X	X
Industrial	X	X	
Historic Downtown District		X	X
Scenic Heritage Corridors	X		X
Helen/Chattahoochee Riverfront			X

Second Home Residential/ Short-Term Rentals

These are areas where the majority of second home developments have taken place throughout the county. Short-term rentals are excluded from subdivisions but allowed throughout the county. These areas often include larger lots because they are associated with mountain and hillside protection. They usually have views and the lots with steeper slopes and with more sensitive soils. The mountain protection standard protects the environment and particularly the view shed, which is important to the local community and the tourism-based economy in White County and both cities. Some future residential development could allow conservation subdivisions, where the carrying capacity of the land will allow such developments. This area includes gated communities such as Innsbruck Golf Club and also unincorporated areas of White County.



Development Encouraged

- Single family residential development (attached or detached)
- Light office, commercial and institutional uses conditional
- Short-Term Rental (see Short-Term rental map)
- Rural/ Mountain themed design elements featuring:
 - Pitched roofs
 - Wood, brick, or stone siding
 - Front porches

Implementation Measures

- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Develop design guideline reference material
- Develop *Iconic Images* database



Single Family Residential/PUD

These are areas in the county where local residents live full-time. Lot size and density levels should be modified according to each city's preferred zoning standards. Future developments in these areas should encourage traditional design guidelines for individual homes and Planned Unit developments (PUD).



Development Encouraged

- Single family residential development (attached or detached)
- Light office, commercial and institutional uses conditional
- Rural/ Mountain themed design elements featuring:
 - Pitched roofs
 - Wood, brick, or stone siding
 - Front porches

Implementation Measures

- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Develop design guideline reference material
- Develop *Iconic Images* database



Single Family Low Density

These are areas in the county that are very low density. These areas will continue to have large amounts of open space and green belts in its view shed. This area should truly focus on the use of conservation subdivisions. The slopes and soils are such that they can support the clustering of lots and other mixed uses while preserving the best locations for view shed, green space and common areas.



Development Encouraged

- Single family residential development (attached or detached)
- Light office, commercial and institutional uses conditional
- Rural/ Mountain themed design elements featuring:
 - Pitched roofs
 - Wood, brick, or stone siding
 - Front porches

Implementation Measures

- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Develop design guideline reference material
- Develop *Iconic Images* database





Agricultural and Low Density

Agriculture will continue to thrive in portions of White County. The promotion of the county’s agricultural program and its products is an important way to keep the agricultural value in these areas and prevent them from converting to other types of land uses. Traditional row crops, livestock, poultry, and development of new agricultural and horticultural produce, such as grape and nursery plants, add value to the preservation of the land and to the local economy. Land conservation easement should be encouraged in these areas in order to help the farmer keep their costs (and taxes) at a minimum. If necessary, a farmland protection program could be developed to look for additional ways to preserve and enhance agricultural uses in the community. Residential land uses in these areas should mostly be related to farm management uses and intra-family land transfers to keep families together, one acre lots are allowed for families. The agricultural areas in the county are some of the most historical as well. It is important to recognize these lands and corridors and provide protections and incentives to preserve these historic areas.

Development Encouraged

- Large-lot (10+ acres) single-family detached
- Agricultural uses
- Churches
- Small-scale institutional
- Minimize surface parking
- Should blend with architectural character of community
- Conservation design subdivisions

Implementation Measures

- Maintain development regulations; Refine as needed (Policy)
- Support preservation of existing agricultural lands and structures (Policy)
- Maintain/Pursue policies that encourage appropriate infill development (Cities)

Public Lands

These are areas in the county that are gateways into the mountains and historic communities. It is important that these be maintained as much as possible because they are part of what draws millions of visitors to the area. Development should be kept at a minimum and if it takes place should appear in a manner that does not compromise the gateway view shed and minimizes the impact on the existing uses.



Development Encouraged

- National forest and preserved utility land
- State Parks and wildlife management areas
- Minimal construction
- Preference for unpaved roads

Implementation Measures

- Maintain cooperation with USFS, DNR, and utility providers (Policy)
- Attain/ enforce State environmental standards (Policy)
- Update floodplain and environmental mapping data every 5 Years



Community Commercial

These are mainly where crossroads exist, and nodes of mixed activity are most likely to develop. Uses should be kept to moderate densities with a mix of smaller retail businesses and services that are of a convenience to the local areas. Architecture, site design and signage should blend with the unique nature of each community node. This can be accomplished through the plan review process for all commercial sites in White County.



Development Encouraged

- 0/Near lot line development for the cities and buffers or visual separation for development in the county
- Mix of uses; preference for commercial along Main Street/historic downtown
- Minimize surface parking along main road; Preference for public lot
- Parking should be dispersed
- Office, institutional and residential uses acceptable
- Should blend with architectural character of the neighborhoods and historic downtown
- Wood, brick, or stone siding

Implementation Measures

- Support preservation of existing structures
- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Develop design guideline reference material
- Develop *Iconic Images* database
- Develop/implement streetscape plans
- Connect to greenways and parks when possible
- Conduct study assessing opportunities for new park space
- Create development plans for Gateway Corridors



Tourism Commercial

White County and its cities play hosts to millions of visitors each year. It is anticipated that the tourism industry in the area will more than double the current number of visitors over the next ten years. These particular areas are mainly focused within the City of Helen and in the northern parts of the county (Robertstown, Sautee-Nacoochee, and Chimney Mountain). They include corridors such as S.R. 17 east from Helen to the county line, S.R. 255 from Sautee Junction into Habersham County, S.R. 75 north from Helen to Unicoi Gap, and S.R. 356 from Robertstown and Unicoi State Park north to the county line. These corridors include exquisite views and historic areas. Signage and site setbacks and buffer are most important and should be emphasized in the site location and design of future tourism venues and related facilities. As these corridors and centers develop, they should take place with pedestrian and alternative transportation modes in mind. Many of these alternative modes are identified in the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and will be programmed in the State Department of Transportation Improvement Plan as state transportation facilities are improved.

Development Encouraged

- 0/Near lot line development for the cities and buffers or visual separation for development in the county
- Mix of uses; preference for commercial along Main Street/historic downtown
- Minimize surface parking along main road; Preference for public lot
- Parking should be dispersed
- Office, institutional and residential uses are acceptable in the cities and conditional in the county
- Should blend with architectural character of the neighborhoods and historic downtown
- Wood, brick, or stone siding

Implementation Measures

- Support preservation of existing structures
- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Develop design guideline reference material
- Develop *Iconic Images* database
- Develop/implement streetscape plans
- Connect to greenways and parks when possible
- Conduct study assessing opportunities for new park space
- Create development plans for Gateway Corridors

Tourism Commercial





Commercial Corridor/PUD

This is the economic and social center of the cities and White County, and it is projected that this will continue over the time frame of this plan. The four highway corridors leading into the cities from unincorporated White County are projected to be commercial corridors, with U.S. 129 being the primary commercial corridor. It is important that future development stay within these corridors and highway nodes. New development will set back appropriately through local and state requirements which may include buffers, access roads, inter-parcel connecting roads, shared driveways, all reducing curbs and maintaining safe traffic flow on the state facilities. The gentrification of abandoned or older dilapidated commercial centers should be encouraged rather than new developments springing up. Cities will focus uses through their zoning, provision of community services and as Planned Unit developments (PUD). Signage should be appropriately modest, low, and minimally lighted, and properly set back.

Development Encouraged

- Commercial, office, churches, public or institutional uses
- Limited, managed access onto Hwy 129
- Rural/ Mountain themed design elements featuring:
 - Pitched roofs
 - Wood, brick, or stone siding
 - Front porches
- Appropriate buffering from adjoining properties
- Parking should be dispersed
- Properties should feature pedestrian network accessibility
- Limitations on large, monolithic designs for multi-unit structures

Implementation Measures

- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Consider guidelines for signage and lighting
- Review property maintenance codes and enforcement policies; Amend as needed

Commercial Corridor/PUD



Industrial

These uses will be kept near current industrial zoned areas such as the Telford Hulsey Industrial Park, Whitehall Circle and to those areas zoned in the City of Cleveland for industrial use. Future consideration for industrial growth along Duncan Bridge Road for growth from the Inland Port as referenced in the 2022 White County Strategic Economic Development Plan. These areas are where the existing infrastructure is available. It is doubtful and undesirable that such infrastructure would be extended to any other location in the county. The future focus of industrial development in White County is to encourage small light industries that need anywhere from 1,000 to 5,000 square feet of space and employ 3 to 20 employees. The idea behind this concept is to allow small business entrepreneurs to develop and grow in the county and become not just an industry, but part of the community.



Development Encouraged

- Industrial, low-impact mining, warehousing, and distribution
- Wastewater treatment
- Large-scale institutional uses
- Requirement for appropriate buffering from adjoining Properties

Implementation Measures

- Inventory all potential industrial sites
- Develop utility and commercial traffic assessment for growing industry



Historic Downtown District

This is more than just a business district, but an area that will promote community activity. The City of Cleveland focuses on the management of downtown. Revitalization activities, community promotions and events, and maintaining the historic character and sense of place are being emphasized in downtown Cleveland. The development of design guidelines for downtown structures and new construction and beautification elements for the pedestrian-oriented streetscape are important goals for the area.



Development Encouraged

- 0/Near lot line development
- Mix of uses; preference for commercial along Main Street/historic downtown
- Minimize surface parking along main road; Preference for public lot
- Parking should be dispersed
- Office, institutional and residential uses acceptable
- Should blend with architectural character of the neighborhoods and historic downtown
- Wood, brick, or stone siding

Implementation Measures

- Support preservation of existing structures
- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Develop design guideline reference material
- Develop *Iconic Images* database
- Develop/implement streetscape plans
- Connect to greenways and parks when possible
- Conduct study assessing opportunities for new park space
- Create development plans for Gateway Corridors



Scenic Heritage Corridors

These areas include S.R. 17, S.R. 254, S.R. 255, S.R. 356, and S.R. 384 from its intersection of S.R. 255 to S.R. 75. These areas either include extremely beautiful view sheds such as the Russell-Brasstown Scenic Highway or are very important to the historic community, often both. Each corridor has their defining features and development guidelines that should be modified to be appropriate to their context and maintain their character. Not only is this important for community appearance and vitality, but also for traffic flow and appropriate land uses.

Development Encouraged

- National forest and preserved utility land
- State Parks and wildlife management areas
- Minimal construction

Implementation Measures

- Maintain cooperation with USFS, DNR, and utility providers (Policy)
- Attain/ enforce State environmental standards (Policy)
- Update floodplain and environmental mapping data every 5 years
- Review and amend development guidelines/regulations as needed



Helen/Chattahoochee Riverfront

This area/corridor would begin in the Chattahoochee River in Robertstown, traverse through the City of Helen and end below Nacoochee Village at the Hardman Farm. Part of this concept is proposed in the White County Resource Team Report as well as in the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. However, a local and visitor pedestrian amenities plan should be developed to provide guidance and oversight for the community to capitalize on the river as a quality-of-life amenity. The plan should include appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities that parallel the river and flow around existing structures and properties. There should be linkages to the riverfront from community facilities and visitor venues. The plan should include buffers that are required for environmental protection.

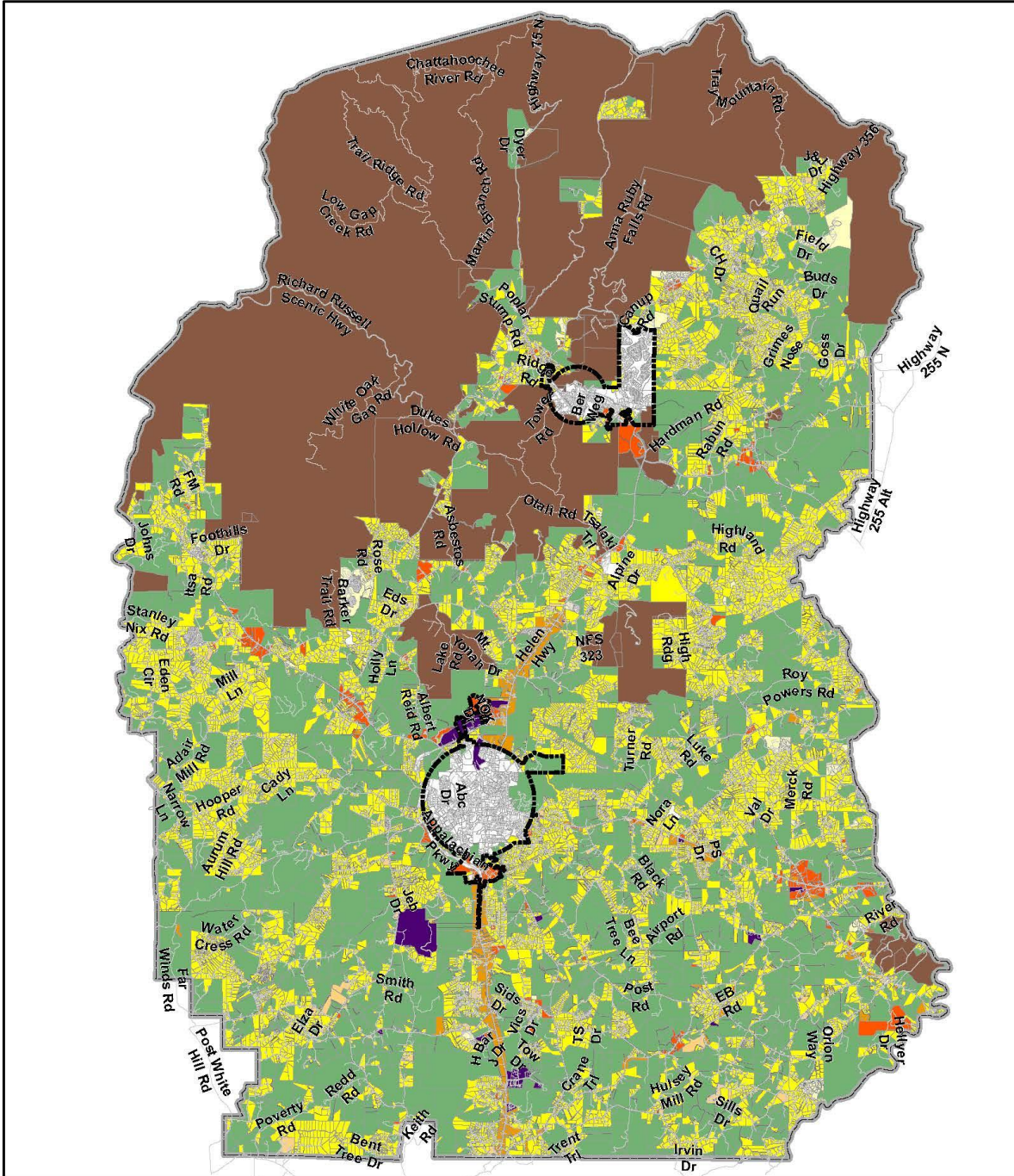
Development Encouraged

- Single-family Residential, attached or detached
- Small-scale commercial buildings
- Small-scale resort structures
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Rural/ Mountain themed design elements for development featuring:
 - Pitched roofs
 - Wood, brick, or stone siding
 - Front porches

Implementation Measures

- Conduct forum reviewing/amending development regulations as needed
- Enforce State environmental standards (Policy)
- Update floodplain and environmental mapping data every 5 years





**White County
Character Areas**

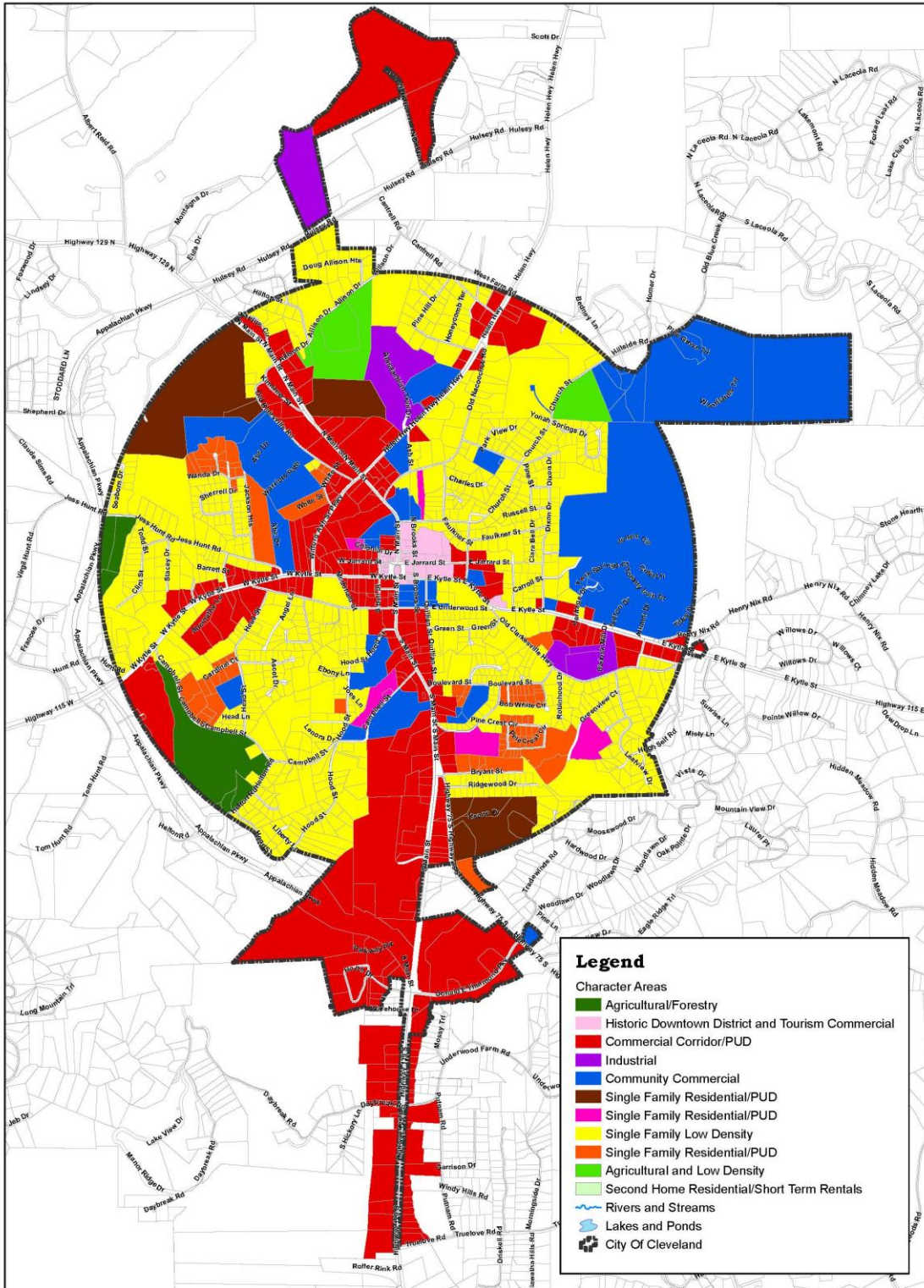
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Character Areas

- Agriculture and Low Density
- Single Family Low Density
- Single Family Residential/PUD
- Second Home Residential/Short-Term Rentals
- Tourism Commercial
- Commercial Corridor/PUD
- Industrial
- Agricultural/Forestry and Scenic Corridors

- City Limits
- White County Boundary





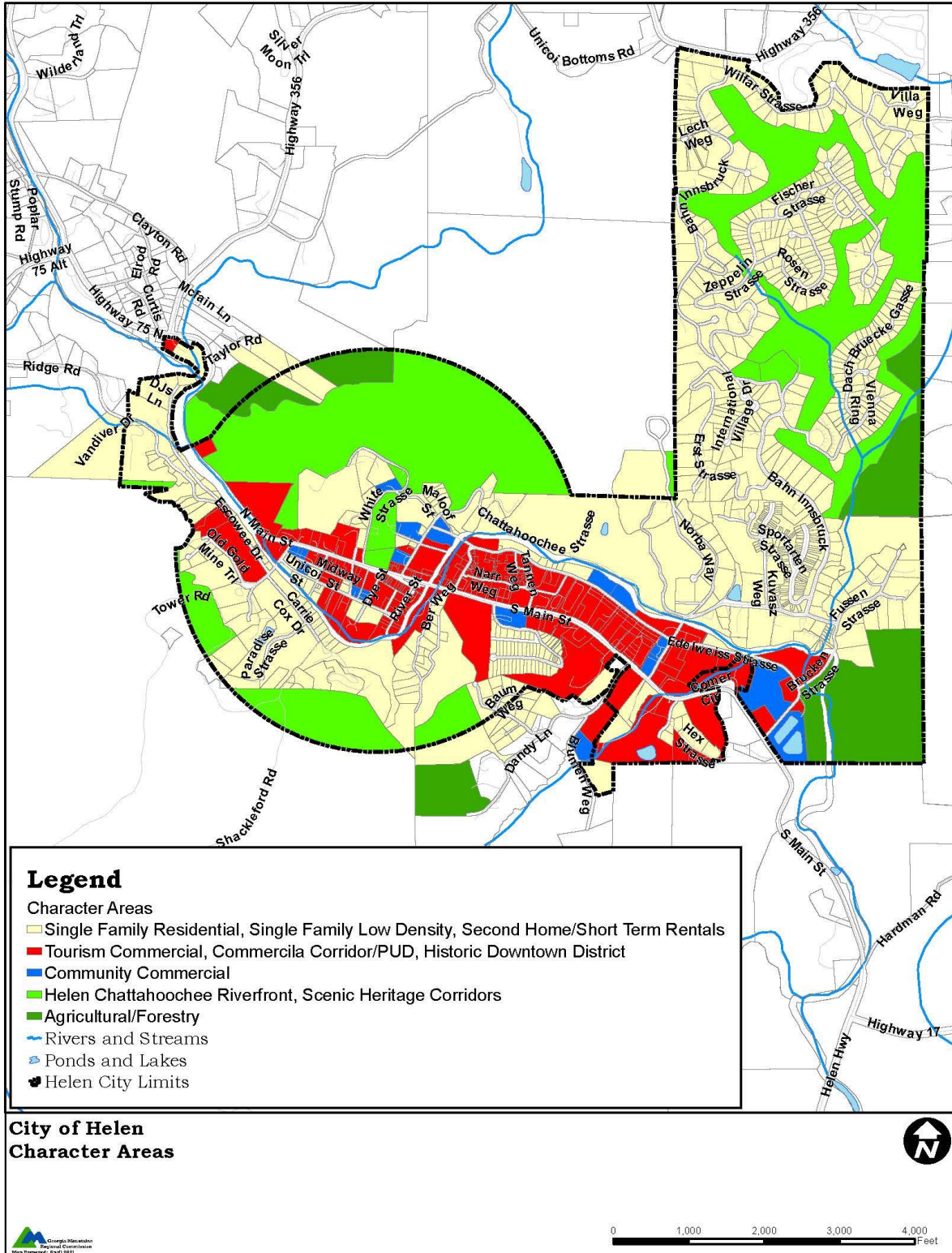
Legend

Character Areas

- Agricultural/Forestry
- Historic Downtown District and Tourism Commercial
- Commercial Corridor/PUD
- Industrial
- Community Commercial
- Single Family Residential/PUD
- Single Family Residential/PUD
- Single Family Low Density
- Single Family Residential/PUD
- Agricultural and Low Density
- Second Home Residential/Short Term Rentals
- ~ Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- C City Of Cleveland

**City of Cleveland
Character Areas**





Community Needs and Opportunities

The planning process asks communities to assess the information outlined to identify issues and opportunities that should be considered when trying to plan for the future. In doing so the communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions so as to better achieve the desired vision.

The following represents a refined listing of Needs and Opportunities for White County. Most of these were carried over from the first part of the planning process, identified during the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The list has been confirmed and/or refined based on the discussions and analyses throughout the planning process.

Economic Development

	Needs and Opportunities	Mitigation Strategies
<i>C, H</i>	1.) Desire for more/ diversified commercial options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop study assessing potential for infill and redevelopment in select areas. • Develop infill inventory and targeted marketing campaign for downtowns and beyond the square in Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP). • Develop comparative commercial activity profile in URP. • Utilize educational destinations such as Truett-McConnell for meeting destinations and partnerships. • Promotion of mixed-use development around the east side of the square.
<i>C, H</i>	2.) Need meeting/convention space within the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop study assessing potential for redevelopment of underutilized commercial resources. • Work with hotels to provide locate and provide convention space.
<i>C, H, WC</i>	3.) Limited utilities infrastructure including water, sewer, power, and telecommunications/broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop utility improvement and expansion plan as market demands. • Include Utility/infrastructure as part of the 2022 White County Strategic Economic Development Plan.
<i>C, H</i>	4.) Limited pedestrian infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sidewalk connections and crosswalks as roadway, terrain and property improvement allows. • Streetscape plan update highlighting walkability and wayfinding.

C, H, WC	5.) Concern over impacts of over utilized traffic networks and corridors coming into town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop coordinated proposal for traffic calming, signalization, and turn-lanes for improved management within city limits. • Develop right of way (ROW) access standards with County, City, and State stakeholders to ensure coordination with all partners. • Work with GDOT for roundabouts
C, WC	6.) Demand for increased educational opportunities at public schools, colleges, universities, and technical colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop report profiling options for local education facilities as cities and county grow. • Develop report focusing on healthcare needs. • Study broadband network and identify expansion priorities. • Create partnership with Truett-McConnell, University of N. GA, and North GA Tech for educational opportunities.
C, H, WC	7.) Potential for building underutilized assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop formal agri-tourism strategy; Farm-to-Table program. • Perform study to identify additional outdoor recreation amenities, trails, and recreational networks. • Develop a promotional campaign encouraging citizen involvement in local clubs and charities. • Explore mixed-use development options for eastside of square. • Assess needs for coworking spaces. • Target areas for infill development for commercial, residential, and mixed-use.
C, H, WC	8.) Need employment opportunities for residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/ sustain marketing plan for vacant office and industrial space. • Inventory all potential industrial and commercial sites for redevelopment. • Develop utility and commercial traffic assessment for growing industry. • Develop relationships with leading employers/Chamber/GDOL for employment events. • Develop entrepreneurship support programs.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement 2022 White County Strategic Economic Development Plan.
C, H, WC	9.) Demand for increased support for agriculture, agri-tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop formal agri-tourism strategy; Farm-to-Table market program. • Develop agricultural sustainability program for areas outside the cities. • Improve wayfinding for parking.
WC	10.) Demand for recreational activities and sporting events that can increase both local health and welfare as well as tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue developing Yonah Preserve for outdoor recreational events. • Develop food truck criteria and land use criteria for them to be at recreational events.
WC	11.) Desire for increased promotion for each community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update/develop brands and marketing themes for communities. • Update/develop websites for communities. • Wayfinding/tourism study for CVB and Chamber of Commerce program development. • Utilize primary tourist destinations such as Cabbage Patch Kids: Babyland General Hospital for city promotion activity.
C	12.) Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess needs and locations for various sized parks and amenities such as splashpads, playgrounds, walking trails, activity/fitness areas. • Assess need for greenspace connectivity and utilization for optimized access with residential areas and points of interest in the community.. • Identify ADA accessibility of parks and recreational areas. • Utilize primary tourist destinations such as Cabbage Patch Kids: Babyland General Hospital for city promotion activity.

Natural and Historic Resources

	Needs and Opportunities	Mitigation Strategies
C, H, WC	1.) New development threatens wild and scenic identity, small town sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of conservation design subdivision guidelines in any update of subdivision regulations. • Maintain State and local <i>Mountain Protection</i> standards. • Implement Historic Preservation overlay. • Promote smart growth best practices to preserve neighborhood character of developing areas. • Develop design standards for lot size, connectivity, size and mass, building setbacks to reflect city character in town for infill development, in scenic areas, rural areas, etc. • Identify what Cleveland's sense of place is to ensure housing built reflects Cleveland's small town
C, H, WC	2.) Increased growth raises potential risk of wildfires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage full participation in Firewise/ Fire Adapted Communities programs. • Continue to work with USFS in maintaining wildfire management plan. • Continue to evaluate fire station needs as county grows.
C, H	3.) New development threatens aquatic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of conservation design subdivision guidelines • Adopt/maintain State <i>Vital Area</i> standards. • Maintain River Corridor, Watershed Recharge and Watershed Protection Standards. • Review of stormwater practices to address flash flooding mitigation and promote the use of best practices to address this such as permeable surfaces, properly sized drainage pipes, etc.
C, H, WC	4.) Historic sites and areas should be protected and promoted to enhance tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct historic resource survey to assess area's historic sites that can be promoted to showcase the city and county's history. • Partner with local historic societies, DDA, social media groups, and other

		<p>history groups to identify historic resources that are underutilized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Historic Preservation ordinance and overlay. • Participate in the Better Hometown and Main Street Programs. • Continue to implement and utilize 2024 Blueways and Greenways Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
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Community Facilities and Services

	Needs and Opportunities	Mitigation Strategies
C, H	1.) Need to expand/improve wastewater disposal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop coordinated sewer system improvement and expansion strategy as market and infrastructure demands.
C, H, WC	2.) Need to expand telecommunications/broadband access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support construction of communication improvements in select areas. • Continue connections to North Georgia Network (fiber-optic) as needed. • Partner with providers to seek funding opportunities to improve coverage. • Continue with Broadband Ready Community Certification.
C, H, WC	3.) Need to improve/sustain public safety abilities throughout the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade Fire Stations facilities as needed. • Develop County-wide Firewise and Fire Adapted Community campaign. • Develop coordinated water-line improvement and expansion strategy. • Develop plan for a second well for the Water Authority. • Develop long-range plan and budget for public safety emergency services facilities and equipment.
C, H, WC	4.) Coordinated effort of improving all infrastructure including water, natural gas expansion, sewer, power, and telecommunications/ broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop coordinated strategy to improve connections by all utility/ infrastructure stakeholders as development occurs.
C, H, WC	5.) Need to expand/improve sidewalk and trail system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop sidewalk maintenance and expansion plans as necessary to

		<p>ensure pedestrian accessibility to pedestrian and bicycle networks and elimination of gaps in sidewalk network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify locations for crosswalks to promote pedestrian safety. • Continue to promote pedestrian access to urban and rural destinations such as city parks, recreation department amenities, and natural resources. • Promote non-motorized linkages from Truett-McConnell and Dixon Drive. • Implement 2024 bike and pedestrian plan recommendations. • Develop greenway trail systems in natural resource areas. • Develop walking trails in select areas. • Work with GDOT, DNR in developing pedestrian access to area natural resources including Unicoi State Park and Lodge, Anna Ruby Falls, Chattahoochee National Forest, Hardman Farm, Sautee-Nacoochee, and the Russell–Brasstown Scenic Byway. • Improve pedestrian connections between school campuses and neighborhoods through Safe Routes to Schools program.
C, H	6.) Maintenance facility and service utility vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and acquire as needed.
C, H, WC	7.) Need to expand/improve water system and develop future water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop coordinated water-line improvement, and increased water capacity and expansion strategy as needed.
C, H	8.) Facility upgrades for public park for events and public benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand park facilities as needed. • Develop needs assessment and plan for park and recreational facilities.
C, H	9.) Upgrade/maintain parks and recreation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase park amenities and events as desired. • Develop needs assessment for specific user groups.
C, H, WC	10.) Several public roads and corridors remain in need of improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain road improvement schedule. • Develop right of way (ROW) access standards with County, City, and State stakeholders to ensure coordination

		<p>with all partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct transportation study to access vehicular movement in city and county.
C, H, WC	11.) Growing population increasing demand for medical facilities/ emergency transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade facilities, as necessary. • Continue working with Chamber to market to medical providers.
C, H	12.) Demand for cultural spaces within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase locations offered in proportion to demand for cultural events require.
C, H, WC	13.) Community Beautification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain landscaping as necessary. • Develop nuisance ordinance.
C, H, WC	14.) Improve signage and wayfinding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Streetscape Plan and maintain gateway/welcome signs as well as directional signage to area destinations. • Assess parking strategy for area destinations and development.
C, WC	15.) Improve Library services and facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use grants and SPLOST funding to build new facility. • Continue to support e-book and computer offerings.
C	16.) City Municipal Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify development needs for facilities including City Hall, Council Meeting Room, Community Room, Police, City Park, and walking trail.

Housing

	Needs and Opportunities	Mitigation Strategies
C, H, WC	1.) Promotion of housing choices that enrich and promote an affordable community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals for independent living facilities and retirement and elderly housing as needed. • Develop sidewalk maintenance and expansion plan. • Improve emergency service access in proportion to development. • Promotion of accessory dwelling units (ADU's) that follow city design standards.
C	2.) Residential neighborhoods losing character through improper and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop design guidelines for compatible infill and new construction

	substandard development	development to protect the community's identity, sense of place and character defining features. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce minimum building lot requirements.
C	3.) Concern over blighted and substandard properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review property maintenance codes and enforcement policies; Amend as needed.
C, H, WC	4.) Need to balance demand for housing with small-town and rural character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop design standards and guidelines for lot size, connectivity, size and mass, building setback to reflect city character in town for infill development, in scenic areas, rural areas, etc. • Identify what Cleveland's sense of place is to ensure housing built reflects Cleveland's small town character. • Conduct forum reviewing zoning and development regulations including density and lot size requirements. • Develop and enforce Planned Unit Development (PUD) design requirements as needed when large areas of development are proposed. • Update Rural Workforce Housing Study as needed.
C/WC	5.) Zoning challenges as residential properties are converted to commercial properties or encroach on residential areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend land use policy as needed. • Enforce and amend zoning policy as needed. • Maintain STR subdivision map.
WC	6.) Homeless/ transitional housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plan for appropriate housing options to assist those in need.

Land Use

	Needs and Opportunities	Mitigation Strategies
C, H, WC	1.) Concern overgrowth altering area's character, diluting scenic beauty, threatening tourism, and historic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct forum reviewing zoning and development regulations. • Review sign regulations and property maintenance codes; Amend as needed. • Assess performance of mountain protection regulations. • Amend/review development guidelines/regulations as needed. • Review of stormwater practices to address flash flooding mitigation and promote the use of best practices to address this such as permeable surfaces, properly sized drainage pipes, etc.
C, H, WC	2.) Improve wayfinding (for parking, shopping, area tourist destinations, government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new streetscape strategy from Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP).
C, H, WC	3.) Demand for more greenspace and outdoor recreational areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the greenway initiatives in desired areas. • Identify/pursue land for urban park/partnership with proposed developments such as Yonah Preserve. • Develop walking trails for greater connectivity to region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop running track at Yonah Preserve.
C	4.) Highway 129 corridor unattractive, lacks cohesion; lack of proper gateway into Cleveland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new streetscape strategy • Design guidelines needed for compatible infill development • Conduct forum reviewing zoning and development regulations
WC	5.) Helen Highway corridor unattractive, lacks cohesion, lack of continuity between Cleveland and Helen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend design guidelines to encourage tourism friendly development.

IMPLEMENTATION

4

The Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision and for addressing each of the Community Needs and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals. Identifying these items helps the community organize their actions

POLICIES AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

While the future development strategy projects the physical conditions expressed within the Vision, the Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Vision and for addressing each of the Community Issues and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals.

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy and long-term objectives. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may compliment single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

All

- Continue to support the Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and other economic development organizations.
- Continue to work with US Forest Service in maintaining wildfire management plan.
- Adopt/maintain State Vital Area standards.
- Support and promote greenway projects.
- Support the Medical Care Advisory Committee.
- Continue to invest in maintaining and improving utilities, infrastructure, facilities, and services.
- Support Historic Preservation efforts, including support for Historic Society and other organizations activities.
- Support Adult Literacy Program.
- Support the White County Beautification efforts and code enforcement efforts.
- Maintain, and routinely assess, existing development regulations.
- Support agricultural lands and structures in rural areas.
- Continue to promote tourism in the area.
- Implement parking improvements for tourism.

White County

- Continue to support education curriculum enhancements for workforce preparation and partnerships with local educational institutions.
- Promote relationships with educational institutions and local businesses for job training and career counseling.
- Support small business entrepreneurship growth and business incubation opportunities.
- Support and attract more employment opportunities in growing fields such as health care, hospitality, information technology and also in business retention.
- Support housing and real estate efforts for families and workforce.
- Improve the county's attractiveness to younger demographics to diversify its population base as a great community for families.

- Continue to grow and diversify the tourism sector including agri-tourism, eco-tourism, heritage, wedding/events, adventure, resort, and small meeting market.
- Work with cities and local authorities to expand utility capacity and services.
- Continue infrastructure improvements as demand and growth requires it.
- Balance growth and development with preserving the county's natural and historic resources.
- Continue to develop Yonah Preserve and other recreation opportunities.
- Continue to update/renovate County facilities such as the courthouse.
- Build new library.
- Continue to add fire services to support improving ISO ratings.
- Consider adopting property management standards.

Cleveland

- Continue streetscape beautification measures and wayfinding improvements for historic downtown areas and commercial corridors
- Implement measures to restore the Talon building to include: City Hall, Police Dept., Fire Dept., Council meeting room, community room, walking trail and City Park.
- Address the city's future upgrade needs for police, fire, public works, and administration departments.
- Develop and market historic attractions.
- Promote more tourism activities as economic development drivers.
- Establish Historic Preservation District and development guidelines.
- Establish partnerships with successful businesses and educational institutions.
- Completion of a wayfinding and tourism study.
- Completion of an Urban Redevelopment Plan for the downtown historic area.
- Work with merchants and White County Chamber of Commerce to beautify Cleveland.
- Participation in Safe Routes to Schools and Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs.
- Continue equipment upgrade and maintenance program through SPLOST.

Helen

- Explore new opportunities for eco-tourism.
- Continue to improve pedestrian amenities along Main Street, including sidewalk and pedestrian bridge projects and wayfinding improvements.
- Continue improvements to Unicoi (Pete's) park and Riverside Park.
- Work with GDOT, DNR in developing pedestrian access to area natural resources including Unicoi State Park and Lodge, Anna Ruby Falls, Chattahoochee National Forest, Hardman Farm, Sautee-Nacoochee, and the Russell–Brasstown Scenic Byway.
- Explore new ways to market Innsbruck Golf Course to the public.
- Continue water and sewer infrastructure improvements.



C. Community Work Program

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the Community Work Program (WP). This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the twenty-year planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.

Many programs listed will explore assistance through the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) via their discretionary contract elements with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Note: Where applied, "DCA funding" is used to indicate potential funding source for GMRC support of an item eligible for the Local Discretionary Assistance element of the RC/DCA contracts

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COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM – WHITE COUNTY

DESCRIPTION	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Redesign and implement new White County Website to include “Improve and expand Building and Code webpage information and date”	X	X				\$30,000	SPLOST
Work with Planning and GIS to track building permits to help determine development patterns	X	X	X	X	X	No cost	
New aerial maps for the county				X	X	\$50,000	General Fund
Personal Property Audit		X	X			\$20,000	General Fund
Encourage the development of quality health care facilities and services	X	X	X	X	X	No cost	
Create opportunities for broadband expansion throughout the county	X	X	X	X	X	\$2.5 million	Public Private Partnerships/ State/Fed Grants/SPLOST
Create a workforce development program that links local education to local business and industry	X	X	X	X	X	No cost	
Annually or as needed revise county E911 mapbook	X	X	X	X	X	No cost	
Revise county road map and inset maps		X		X		No cost	
Update mapping for Part V and for floodplain		X		X		No cost	
Update Land Use Map as needed	X	X	X	X	X	No cost	
Provide assistance to Fire Department with station site selection	X	X	X			No cost	
Continue Managerial Training Program	X	X	X	X	X	\$15,000	General fund
Locate and construct new facility in Cleveland		X	X	X	X	\$3,000,000	SPLOST
Grow the E-book program	X	X	X	X	X	\$1,500 annually	General fund
Diversify library activities to include community programs	X	X	X	X	X	TBD	General fund and fees
Create a historic overlay district/map for the land use ordinance	X	X				No Cost	
Develop a Wayfinding signage program for tourism	X	X	X	X	X	\$50,000	White County Chamber/CVB



industry							
Update Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	X	X				No Cost	GMRC technical assistance
Locate and construct a new convenience center				X	X	\$750,000	SPLOST
Develop policies to encourage senior housing and workforce housing	X	X	X	X	X	No cost	
Review and Update Service Delivery					X	No cost	Local/GMRC/DCA
Create strategic economic development plan	X	X				\$100,000	Dev. Authority/ARC grant
Implement economic development plan			X	X	X	\$1,000,000	SPLOST
Canine Stainless-Steel Cages Quarantine Room	X					\$10,000	General Fund
Replace Transport Vehicle New F150 Transport Unit		X				\$40,000	SPLOST
Feline Steel Cages Quarantine Room			X			\$10,000	General Fund
Replace Transport Vehicle F250 Transport Unit				X		\$50,000	SPLOST
Parking Lot – Pavement and Striping					X	\$85,000	SPLOST
Computer Aided Dispatch/Records Management		X				\$420,000	SPLOST
Ongoing Replacement/Upgrades Base Stations, Repeaters	X	X	X	X	X	\$60,000 Annual	Restricted Wireless
Ongoing Replacement/Upgrades User Devices		X		X		\$60,000 Annual	Restricted Wireless
Outdoor Warning Siren Sautee, Mossy Creek FS#4, FS#2 Barrett Hill, HS, JP Nix, Duncan Bridge, White Creek Academy, White Co HS/Relocate 129N	X	X	X	X	X	\$25,000 annually	Grant Fund
Generator Replacement County Admin/Morgue		X				\$100,000	Grant Fund
Weather Alert Radio's School System	X					\$1,000	School Safety Funds
Station Driveway/Parking Repairs In Priority Order of 2, 4, 7, 5 and 3.	X	X	X	X	X	\$100,000 per site	SPLOST
Station Addition Fire Station 6 – 1200 Sq. Ft.	X					\$105,000	SPLOST



Replace Tanker 5 1500GL FS#5 New 2000GL Tanker	X					\$265,000	SPLOST
Replace Extrication Equipment		X				\$262,000	SPLOST/Grant
Replace Ford F150 QRV New Ford F150		X				\$45,000	SPLOST
Replace Engine 2 FS#2 New 1250GPM/1000GL	X					\$444,000	SPLOST
Replace Engine 7 FS#7 New 1250GPM/1000GL 4X4			X			\$400,000	SPLOST
Replace Engine 5 FS#5 New 1250GPM/1000GL				X		\$430,000	SPLOST
Replace Tanker 6 FS#6 New 3000 GL Tanker				X		\$285,000	SPLOST
Fire Station 9 – Panorama Building/Apparatus/Equipmen t					X	\$1,350,000	SPLOST
Implement Yonah Preserve Recreation Plan	X	X	X	X	X	\$2,500,000	SPLOST/DNR Grants/SORBA
Create YP Recreation Master Plan	X	X				\$30,000	SPLOST
Pay off debt on new ballfield facility @ YP	X	X	X	X	X	\$3,000,000	SPLOST
Addition double gymnasium facility at YP		X	X	X	X	\$5,000,000	SPLOST
Identify and complete LMIG projects annual	X	X	X	X	X	\$500,000 annually	LMIG/SPLOST match
Design and build Claude Sims Road Extension	X	X				\$300,000	SPLOST
Vehicle replacement	X	X	X	X	X	\$45,000 per vehicle	SPLOST
Continue drug education programs	X	X	X	X	X	\$10,000	General Fund
Courthouse renovation/addition	X	X	X			\$5,000,000	SPLOST
Addition/renovation and 2 nd drive through	X	X				\$600,000	SPLOST
Chattahoochee River access improvements at Hwy. 255 Bridge		X				\$130,000	GMRC/Ga. DNR/SPLOST
Chattahoochee River access improvements at Hwy 17 bridge				X		\$130,000	GMRC/GaDNR/SPL OST
Total						\$32,414,500	



COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM – CLEVELAND

DESCRIPTION	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES
Additional ground water well in service to support water resources	X	X				\$200,000	Water Sewer Fund; SPLOST
Repair and replace aging water and sewer lines. Continue to loop dead ends	X	X	X	X	X	\$2,500,000	SPLOST, Water Sewer Fund; GEFA; CDBG
Widen, repave streets, build sidewalks, culverts throughout city	X	X	X	X	X	\$1,500,000	SPLOST, General fund, GDOT, GDDS, Federal funds
Build Talon City Municipal Complex – city hall, police, fire, council room, community room, city park and walking trail	X	X	X			\$10,000,000	General Fund, SPLOST, Loan, Grant funds
Upgrade wastewater treatment plant to meet new environmental standards and future growth	X	X	X			\$12,500,000	SPLOST, Water Sewer Fund, GEFA loan, Grant funds
Update City Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Requirements	X	X				No costs	City Staff, Planning Commission, City Attorney
Update City Personnel Policy		X	X			No costs	City Staff
Review and Update Service Delivery Strategy	X	X		X		No costs	City Staff
Develop housing strategy and plan		X	X			No costs	
Update Comprehensive Plan					X	\$5,000	General Fund, GMRC
Develop Gateway Corridor Plan, including entry signage and by-pass nodes			X	X	X	\$20,000	General Fund, GMRC
Total						\$26,725,000	



COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM – HELEN

DESCRIPTION	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	ESTIMATED COST; DEPT. RESPONSIBLE	FUNDING SOURCES
Land Application System (LLS) Improvements- Rehabilitation of spray fields.			X	X	X	\$875,000 Sewer Dept.	Bond, SPLOST
Improvements to Unicoi (Pete's) park and Riverside Park to include additional playground equipment and picnic areas.	X	X	X	X	X	\$120,000 Public Works	Hotel/Motel Fund
Continue Community programs through the Police and Fire Departments	X	X	X	X	X	\$60,000 Police & Fire Dept.	Donations and General Fund
Improving water and wastewater management through training and State Certification of additional operations	X	X	X	X	X	\$6,000 Administrative and Water/Sewer Dept.	Water and Sewer Fund
Install additional wells to support limited water resources, including Well #11			X	X	X	\$495,000 Administrative	Bond, SPLOST, Water and Sewer funds
Extension and Improvements of Sewer Lines and Pump Stations	X	X	X	X	X	\$300,000 Administrative	SPLOST, User Fees
Sidewalk additions and Replacement	X	X	X	X	X	\$180,000.00 Administrative	SPLOST
Police Dept. Facility	X	X	X	X	X	\$1,300,000	Bond, SPLOST
Continue to provide building and revenue for the Helen Library	X	X	X	X	X	\$500,000 Public Works Department and Administrative	General Fund, Grants
Replace Main Sewer Lift Station		X	X	X	X	\$1,450,000 Water and Sewer Department	Bond, SPLOST
Sewer System Improvement (SSES)			X	X	X	\$1,500,000 Sewer Dept	Bond, SPLOST
Chattahoochee River Sewer Line	X	X	X			\$375,000 Sewer Dept	Bond, SPLOST
Ground Water Development	X	X	X			\$25,000 Water Dept	Bond, SPLOST, User Fees
Meter Replacement	X	X	X			\$595,000 Water Dept	Bond, SPLOST, User Fees
Solids Removal WWTF	X	X	X			\$425,000 Sewer Dept	Bond, SPLOST
Improving conservation of water usage through public education	X	X	X	X	X	\$10,000 Water Department	Water and Sewer user fees
Install additional streetlights and replacement of existing streetlights	X	X	X	X	X	\$100,000 Public Works Department	SPLOST State Grants



Continue to improve building and support to Arts Center	X	X	X	X	X	\$250,000	Private Donations, Grants, Fund Raising
Continue to participate in the Tree City USA program, Improve Tree Ordinance, and Celebrate Arbor Day	X	X	X	X	X	\$35,000.00 Administrative, Public Works Department, Tree Board	General Fund, Grants
Use available areas for additional planting and landscaping	X	X	X	X	X	\$60,000.00 Administrative Public Works Department	SPLOST, Grants, General Fund
Allocate Percentage of Hotel/Motel tax for the promotion of Tourism	X	X	X	X	X	\$2,000,000.00 Administrative	Hotel/Motel Tax
Continue utilizing manned convenience center for recycling	X	X	X	X	X	\$19,500 per yr. White County Solid Waste Dept.	White County Solid Waste Dept.
Continue utilizing manned transfer station for recycling	X	X	X	X	X	\$2,400 White County Solid Waste Dept.	White County Solid Waste Dept.
Contract with private company for collection and disposal of residential solid waste	X	X	X	X	X	Private contract \$45,000	Public Works Dept. Solid Waste Dept.
Commercial establishments to contract for collection	X	X	X	X	X	Private contract	Commercial establishments
Annual Christmas tree recycling and chipping service	X	X	X	X	X	\$10,000 Public Works Dept.	Public Works Dept. Solid Waste Dept.
Education program using local media, in conjunction with White County	X	X	X	X	X	Minimal cost Staff	Public Works Dept. Solid Waste Dept.
Participate in the Adopt –A-Highway program	X	X	X	X	X	Minimal cost Public Works	Public Works Dept. Solid Waste Dept.
Public Education to Increase Awareness of Recycling and Composting	X	X	X	X	X	Minimal Cost Administration	Administrative
Begin Comprehensive Plan Update				X		\$15,000	Local/DCA
Complete Comprehensive Plan Update					X	\$15,000	Local/DCA
Review and Update Service Delivery					X	\$1,000	Local/DCA
Total						\$10,768,900	



APPENDICES

A

REPORTS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

QCO ASSESSMENT

BROADBAND ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SURVEYS AND MEETINGS

CLEVELAND, HELEN, WHITE COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

CLEVELAND, HELEN, WHITE COUNTY AREA LABOR PROFILE

SAMPLES OF PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS/ INVOLVEMENT

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REPORTS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This is the review of the Community Work Program from the previous five years. As a new work program is produced every five years, the items within the previous work program must be identified for their status as complete, in progress, either postponed or cancelled. Those items that have been postponed or are in progress must be shown in the next Community Work Program where appropriate, while those items that have been postponed or cancelled must also include a reason for their status.

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REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS – WHITE COUNTY

Action	Status	Comment
Redesign and implement new White County Website to include “Improve and expand Building and Code webpage information and date”		
Work with Planning and GIS to track building permits to help determine development patterns		
New aerial maps for the county		
Personal Property Audit		
Encourage the development of quality health care facilities and services		
Create opportunities for broadband expansion throughout the county		
Create a workforce development program that links local education to local business and industry		
Annually or as needed revise county E911mapbook		
Revise county road map and inset maps		
Update mapping for Part V and for floodplain		
Update Land Use Map as needed		
Provide assistance to Fire Department with station site selection		
Continue Managerial Training Program		
Locate and construct new facility in Cleveland		
Grow the E-book program		
Diversify library activities to include community programs		
Create a historic overlay district/map for the land use ordinance		
Develop a Wayfinding signage program for tourism industry		
Update Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan		
Locate and construct a new convenience center		
Develop policies to encourage senior housing and workforce housing		
Review and Update Service Delivery		
Create strategic economic development plan		
Implement economic development plan		
Canine Stainless-Steel Cages Quarantine Room		
Replace Transport Vehicle New F150 Transport Unit		
Feline Steel Cages Quarantine Room		



Replace Transport Vehicle F250 Transport Unit		
Parking Lot – Pavement and Striping		
Computer Aided Dispatch/Records Management		
Ongoing Replacement/Upgrades Base Stations, Repeaters		
Ongoing Replacement/Upgrades User Devices		
Outdoor Warning Siren Sautee, Mossy Creek FS#4, FS#2 Barrett Hill, HS, JP Nix, Duncan Bridge, White Creek Academy, White Co HS/Relocate 129N		
Generator Replacement County Admin/Morgue		
Weather Alert Radio's School System		
Station Driveway/Parking Repairs In Priority Order of 2, 4, 7, 5 and 3.		
Station Addition Fire Station 6 – 1200 Sq. Ft.		
Replace Tanker 5 1500GL FS#5 New 2000GL Tanker		
Replace Extrication Equipment		
Replace Ford F150 QRV New Ford F150		
Replace Engine 2 FS#2 New 1250GPM/1000GL		
Replace Engine 7 FS#7 New 1250GPM/1000GL 4X4		
Replace Engine 5 FS#5 New 1250GPM/1000GL		
Replace Tanker 6 FS#6 New 3000 GL Tanker		
Fire Station 9 – Panorama Building/Apparatus/Equipment		
Implement Yonah Preserve Recreation Plan		
Create YP Recreation Master Plan		
Pay off debt on new ballfield facility @ YP		
Addition double gymnasium facility at YP		
Identify and complete LMIG projects annual		
Design and build Claude Sims Road Extension		
Vehicle replacement		
Continue drug education programs		
Courthouse renovation/addition		
Addition/renovation and 2 nd drive through		
Chattahoochee River access improvements at Hwy. 255 Bridge		



Chattahoochee River access improvements at Hwy 17 bridge		
Station Addition Fire Station 6 – 1200 Sq. Ft.		
Replace Tanker 5 1500GL FS#5 New 2000GL Tanker		
Replace Extrication Equipment		
Replace Ford F150 QRV New Ford F150		
Replace Engine 2 FS#2 New 1250GPM/1000GL		
Replace Engine 7 FS#7 New 1250GPM/1000GL 4X4		
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Design and build Claude Sims Road Extension		
Vehicle replacement		
Continue drug education programs		
Courthouse renovation/addition		
Addition/renovation and 2 nd drive through		
Chattahoochee River access improvements at Hwy. 255 Bridge		
Chattahoochee River access improvements at Hwy 17 bridge		



REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS – CLEVELAND

Action	Status	Comment
Additional ground water well in service to support water resources		
Repair and replace aging water and sewer lines. Continue to loop dead ends		
Widen, repave streets, build sidewalks, culverts throughout city		
Build Talon City Municipal Complex – city hall, police, fire, council room, community room, city park and walking trail		
Upgrade wastewater treatment plant to meet new environmental standards and future growth		
Update City Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Requirements		
Update City Personnel Policy		
Review and Update Service Delivery Strategy		
Develop housing strategy and plan		
Update Comprehensive Plan		
Develop Gateway Corridor Plan, including entry signage and by-pass nodes		

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REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS – HELEN

Action	Status	Comment
Land Application System (LLS) Improvements- Rehabilitation of spray fields.		
Improvements to Unicoi (Pete's) park and Riverside Park to include additional playground equipment and picnic areas.		
Continue Community programs through the Police and Fire Departments		
Improving water and wastewater management through training and State Certification of additional operations		
Install additional wells to support limited water resources, including Well #11		
Extension and Improvements of Sewer Lines and Pump Stations		
Sidewalk additions and Replacement		
Police Dept. Facility		
Continue to provide building and revenue for the Helen Library		
Replace Main Sewer Lift Station		
Sewer System Improvement (SSES)		
Chattahoochee River Sewer Line		
Ground Water Development		
Meter Replacement		
Solids Removal WWTF		
Improving conservation of water usage through public education		
Install additional streetlights and replacement of existing streetlights		
Continue to improve building and support to Arts Center		
Continue to participate in the Tree City USA program, Improve Tree Ordinance, and Celebrate Arbor Day		
Use available areas for additional planting and landscaping		
Allocate Percentage of Hotel/Motel tax for the promotion of Tourism		
Continue utilizing manned convenience center for recycling		



Continue utilizing manned transfer station for recycling		
Contract with private company for collection and disposal of residential solid waste		
Commercial establishments to contract for collection		
Annual Christmas tree recycling and chipping service		
Education program using local media, in conjunction with White County		
Participate in the Adopt –A-Highway program		
Public Education to Increase Awareness of Recycling and Composting		
Begin Comprehensive Plan Update		
Complete Comprehensive Plan Update		
Review and Update Service Delivery		

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QCO ASSESSMENT

Since 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs has identified various Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as value statements of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve her unique cultural, natural, and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to her fullest potential.

These ten objectives are adapted from generally accepted community development principles to fit the unique qualities of Georgia's cities and counties. Although these objectives are only recommendations, we are convinced that implementing these principles will result in greater efficiency and cost savings for local governments and a higher quality of life for their citizens.

- **Economic Prosperity:** Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.
- **Resource Management:** Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.
- **Efficient Land Use:** Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.
- **Local Preparedness:** Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.
- **Sense of Place:** Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

- **Housing Options:** Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; instituting programs to provide housing for residents of all socio-economic backgrounds; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.
- **Transportation Options:** Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.
- **Community Health:** Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents; instituting programs to foster better health and fitness; or providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.



BROADBAND

The growing importance of access to reliable and high-speed, high-capacity internet connections cannot be overestimated. Unserved and underserved areas of Georgia will not remain economically competitive without sufficient internet infrastructure, as this technology becomes the default utility for all manners of communication. To address this issue the Georgia General Assembly amended the provisions of local planning in Georgia by passing the "*Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act*" to facilitate the enhancement and extension of internet access in communities. The State will add future support programs and initiatives aimed at delivering the community improvement that reliable, high-speed internet access can provide to even the most difficult-to-serve citizens, schools, and businesses.

Achieving these goals at the local level begins with communities pursuing the *Broadband Ready Community Designation*, demonstrating that they have taken steps to reduce obstacles to broadband infrastructure investment by incorporating a broadband assessment into their comprehensive plan and has adopted a model ordinance. Here the ACE Act requires all local governments to incorporate the "*promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services*" into their local plan. Once these are in place the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Economic Development will identify and promote facilities and developments that offer broadband services at a rate of not less than 1 gigabit per second in the downstream to end users that can be accessed for business, education, health care, government.

One of the first products to come out of the Georgia Broadband Initiative was an inventory of general conditions across the State regarding access to high speed/ high-capacity broadband technology. Utilizing demographic data from the US Census Bureau and cross-referencing that information with knowledge of broadband infrastructure, the Department of Community Affairs produced a series of maps depicting the state of broadband accessibility in rural areas. (See *map below*).

White County:
Unserved Locations: 3,254
Served Locations: 13,151
Percent Unserved: 20

Legend

GBDI Petitions

Served & Unserved Areas

Served
Unserved
No Locations

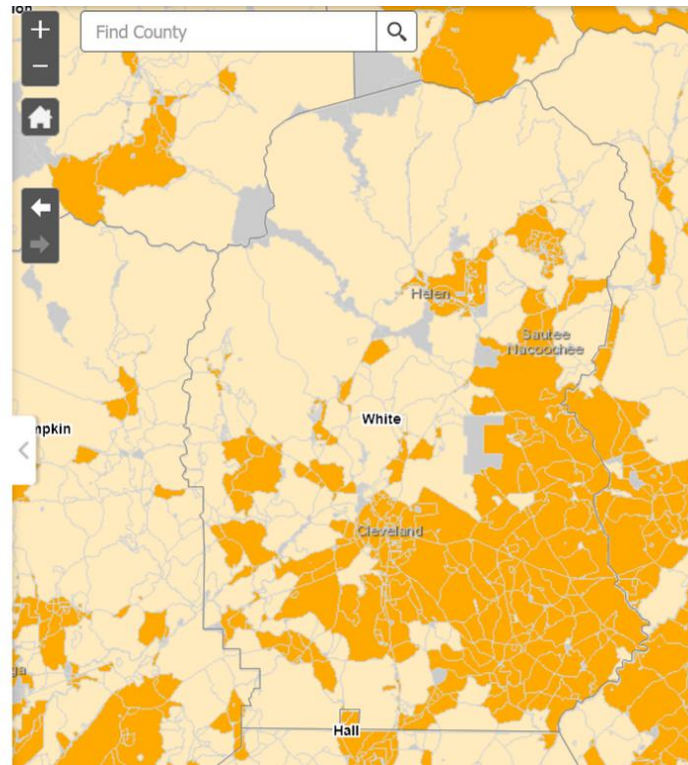
Description

This map focuses on unserved broadband statistics for Georgia counties. Click in the map or search by county to see county statistics. Census block level availability will appear once zoomed in.

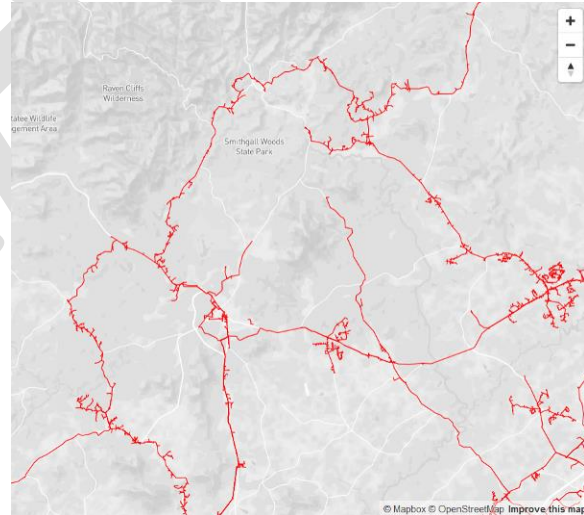
County statistics are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, and where the broadband service is available to more than 80% of locations in a census block. Census blocks that did not meet this definition are delineated as 'Unserved'. The map depicts access to broadband, not subscription to broadband.

Broadband data is provided by the various Internet Service Providers of Georgia.

Location data are from commercially available sources.



White County rates well in that they do have access to the North Georgia Network (NGN), an incorporated cooperative providing a regional fiber optic system with over 1,600 linear miles of infrastructure. The NGN was conceived as part of visions for a more prosperous rural Georgia, with the knowledge that a fiber optic network that is fast, reliable, and affordable is vital to modern economic development. The NGN provides infrastructure that loops through the northeast Georgia mountains with 100 gigabit core line and connects to almost all the schools and colleges in the region as well as reaching many government structures and prominent business parks.



Priorities for Future Network Enhancements

- Ability to increase “last-mile” connections
- Higher-capacity trunk lines westward from NGN
- Expansion of NGN

As an additional reference White County were included in the 2014 Georgia Mountains Digital Economy Plan (DEP), one of several such plans developed for each region across Georgia in accordance with standards defined by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA). The DEP was designed to identify and coordinate the resources and efforts related to improving the region’s infrastructure in support of hi-tech



industries and economies. As each regional plan is completed, the State and its partners can begin directing their energy and resources with clearer focus and understanding of needs from every part of Georgia. While specific investment actions have not been identified as part of this initial process, the DEP provides a work scope that addresses key focus areas and recommendations that will help the GMRC, its member governments and regional stakeholders move forward with an understanding of the regional and state context for building network connectivity, improving educational resources and fostering technology hubs. With continued coordination and monitoring of progress, it is hoped these efforts will make the region a more effective and efficient place enabling all manners of business to realize their potential in accessing and utilizing electronic data.

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SWOC Assessment – GMRC Digital Economy Plan

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Workforce/ Education	Higher Educational Institutions – University of North Georgia, Brenau, North Georgia Technical School, Lanier Technical School,	Limited existing hi-tech labor force	Economic and demographic growth of metro Atlanta	Attraction/ Retention of top technology talent
	Faster Business Start-up Time	Low family income	Job fairs held within the region by GMRC Workforce Development	Competition from other metro areas
	Dawson GigCenter – Business start-ups			
	GMRC Workforce Development			
Strong Development Authorities and Chamber offices to assist start-up businesses and industries				
Infrastructure	Cooperative EMC’s that deliver good products	System Redundancy. Residents and Businesses need more choices for internet service.	Tourism/outdoor recreation related industry	Topographically the GMRC Region is difficult to traverse for aerial line installation
	North Georgia Network	Cost prohibitive		
	Access to metro Atlanta	Geographic isolation		
	Ga 400 – Technology Corridor			
	Residents ability to telecommute			
Local Government	GMRC fostering cooperation	Limited funding resources	Educating local government on importance of broadband access	Finding Grant funds for broadband projects
	Quality Development Authorities and Joint Development Authorities	State needs to put more emphasis on education		Need a better way to communicate to State Legislators what is going on in the GMRC Region regarding broadband needs, initiatives and projects
<p>Goal: <i>Ensure new telecommunication networks for needed accessibility and reliability to support the growth of the regional economy.</i></p> <p>Strategy: <i>Prepare to meet industry and business telecommunication needs by assisting with fiber optic network development. The purpose of this strategy is to support, develop, and provide educational opportunities regarding telecommunication systems in the region.</i></p> <p>Strategy: <i>Promote and support the use of health information technology (IT). The purpose of this strategy is to encourage local partnerships between health providers and local leaders in using telecommunications and other information technology to improve care to patients and lower health costs.</i></p>				



SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SURVEYS AND MEETINGS

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CLEVELAND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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HELEN DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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WHITE COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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SAMPLES OF PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS/ INVOLVEMENT

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